

The Bedfordshire and Luton Wildlife Sites system

District Wildlife Site Panel Terms of Reference, Roles and Responsibilities

“A local site system should be fair, open, transparent and work to common principles, and should follow standard guidelines both in terms of site selection and administering the system” English Nature, Local Sites Position Statement, 2002.

The role of the District Wildlife Site Panel

To act on behalf of the Bedfordshire and Luton Local Sites Partnership in respect of the detailed and complex process of maintaining the District Wildlife Site (DWS) system to the above standard and in particular to:

- set, monitor and review the DWS selection guidelines. Guidelines to be adopted and published by the Local Sites Partnership.
- ensure that the selection guidelines and principles of the DWS system follow national guidelines for such systems.
- oversee the DWS system, develop and draft the 'rules' for managing the system to be discussed, amended and adopted by the Bedfordshire and Luton Local Sites Partnership.
- advise on application of guidelines and ensure consistency of application.
- work closely with the Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre to ensure effective and efficient maintenance of the DWS database and records.
- consult outside organisations on the guidelines and system and invite external scientific help as and when necessary.
- act as mentor to other organisations or individuals submitting a DWS proposal or wishing to challenge identification of a site.
- vet proposals from a scientific perspective and advise planning authorities and other bodies accordingly.
- Support local planning authorities in the defence of DWS through the planning process by providing expert evidence and witnesses as and when required.

The DWS Panel does not have any formal planning responsibility.

The membership of the DWS Panel

“ A panel of relevant experts with a good knowledge of ecological processes and a sound understanding of local flora and fauna and its relationship to international, national and regional biodiversity – both in its current and historic state.”

The group will include suitably qualified and experienced representatives from:

Natural England, The Environment Agency, The Wildlife Trust, Bedfordshire Natural History Society, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre, Ecology/Nature Conservation staff of Bedford Borough Council (inc. Bedford Museum), Central Bedfordshire Council, Luton Borough Council, Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity, The Greensand Trust.

Decisions will not be made without the input of representatives from at least four of the member organisations, one of which will be the Wildlife Trust.

Chair and Secretariat to be approved by the Local Sites Partnership every two years, for the current period of 2013 to 2014 to be:

Chair: Laura Downton, Wildlife Trust

Secretariat: Keith Balmer, Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre

The role of members of the District Wildlife Sites Panel members

- To represent their organisation on the Panel, in respect of the organisation's functions related to nature conservation and ecology.
- To scrutinise the scientific content of the information used in DWS proposals for accuracy and precision and assess whether the criteria have been applied correctly.
- The Local Authority representatives, will ensure, as far as is possible, that all services within the Local Authority that they represent have access to an accurate and regularly updated DWS alert system.

The role of the Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre

- Maintain an accurate and up to date ecological database for all DWS.

The role of the Wildlife Trust

- Manage and make available to the DWS Panel DWS selection guidelines, operating procedures condition assessments and other relevant data which will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Panel and the DWS system.

The role of the Secretariat

- Regularly update all agreed holders of DWS alert systems as and when DWS are identified, altered or deleted.
- Maintain a record of all Panel meetings.

Approved: 17/01/2013