



Wildlife and
Countryside



Joint Links Fitness Check Evidence Submission 25/03/2015 (Updated 29/04/2015)

Annex VI: Relevance Case Studies

Case Study R1 (i): Pressure on bats

Across Europe there is pressure on bat species from development. Bat Conservation Trust works closely with the Wildlife Crime Unit, the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Law Commission in the UK to develop operating procedures and sentencing that is dissuasive whilst retaining a proportionate approach. Our investigations project logs all infringements and suspected crimes providing support and data on an annual average of 300 bat related crimes, approximately 50% of which are referred to the police. Of this figure, 80% are a result of development¹.

Case Study R1 (ii): Steart Marshes (See also Bristol Deep Sea Container Terminal under Y7)

WWT Steart Marshes is a constructed saltmarsh reserve that works with nature, rather than against it, to manage rising sea levels in the Severn Estuary. It's a compensatory project that will replace some of the 1,500-3,500ha of saltmarsh being lost within the Severn Estuary Special SPA/SAC as sea levels rise and the estuary expands up against existing flood barriers. By replacing the submerged habitat, it means wildlife including 70,000 birds will continue to have a source of food and shelter. It also means the estuary's flood barriers can stay where they are, which is a much cheaper and easier option than moving them inland. There are currently 100,000 properties along the estuary, worth £5bn, at risk of flooding along the estuary.

Because the Birds Directive has provided an opportunity to build a new saltmarsh from scratch, we can design it to do much more than simply provide habitat for wildlife. It will directly protect properties on the Steart peninsula from flooding, by absorbing the energy of storm surges crashing against new, improved flood barriers - so the barriers will last longer. The saltmarsh will provide productive seasonal grazing land and the creeks will become nurseries, supplying the fishing industry in the Severn. It will also absorb and store more carbon than any other habitat could. A freshwater wetland above the marsh will purify run-off from surrounding farmland into the sea. The marsh is a local community asset with hides, walking and riding facilities, good disabled access and much of the work has involved local volunteers, students and businesses.

The value of goods and services that will be provided by the new saltmarsh is estimated at between half to £1 million per year, which is significantly more than the grazing land it replaces. It will pay for its £20m cost within 40 years. The project is funded by the Environment Agency and supported by local communities.

¹ http://www.bats.org.uk/data/files/bat_crime_annual_report_2013.pdf

Case Study R4 (i): East Kent Green Infrastructure Partnership

The report, “An East Kent Approach to Green Infrastructure and Recreation, With Particular Reference to ‘Natura 2000’ sites”, commissioned by the East Kent Green Infrastructure Partnership (EKGIP) collated information on visitors to Natura 2000 sites in East Kent. The report highlighted that:

‘The Kent coast continues to be a popular destination for tourists, many of whom visit the European designated sites. These sites are also popular with local residents, and many use them as their local open space and dog walking area’.

The report noted that these sites are visited by between 10k and 200k visitors per annum, with reasons for visiting highlighted as walking, exercise, peace and quiet, fresh air, enjoyment, relaxation, scenery².

Case Study R4 (ii): Shorewatch volunteers

The WDC Shorewatch Programme³ supports volunteers to become citizen scientists, conducting standardised watches at a community site. Volunteer watchers are all trained to follow a specific protocol and use the same equipment so that their effort is consistent, comparable and scientifically robust. Sites are selected based on their suitability for shore-based watching (height, aspect, access) and to provide a wide geographical spread, particularly in areas where monitoring might be impractical by more formal methods. Monitoring along the coast and observing whether cetaceans use local sites, Shorewatch can identify particular areas of importance and changes in presence over time, informing conservation measures and working toward meaningful protection at local and regional levels⁴. Shorewatch also promotes awareness of Scottish cetaceans and raises the profile of watching for whales and dolphins from land: leaflets are distributed around the coastline, staff run events and talks at local sites and Shorewatchers wear branded, high-visibility vests and talk to the public while doing watches. Shorewatch was piloted at the WDC Scottish Dolphin Centre in 2005 and expanded to wider sites beginning in 2009. WDC has trained around 600 Shorewatchers thus far; 131 volunteers were active data contributors in 2014 with many others choosing to remain engaged with the programme through talks and outreach even when they are unable to continue watching or have moved away from the local area. Sightings are uploaded to the NBN database annually, and from spring 2015, volunteers will be able to enter, access and map their data online through a new database.

Case Study R4 (iii): Migratory Birds for People⁵

‘The Migratory Birds for People (MBP) initiative is an active network led by 16 wetland education centres at Nature 2000 sites, important for migratory birds. Each site delivers extensive visitor engagement activities, aiming to raise the profile of why the site is important, and how it fits within the East Atlantic Flyway. Site designation under the habitats directive is very useful in highlighting the importance of the site, and included in the awareness-raising amongst local stakeholders. The network uses the European protection to show that these sites are not just important locally, but at an international level.’

² <http://www.dover.gov.uk/Planning/Planning-Policy/PDF/An-East-Kent-Approach-to-Green-Infrastructure-and-Recreation-Report-April-2014.pdf>

³ http://www.wdcs.org/national_regions/scotland/shorewatch/index.php

⁴ Embling, C.B., Walters, A.E.M. and Dolman, S.J. (accepted). ‘How much effort is enough? The power of citizen science to monitor trends in coastal cetacean species’. *Global Ecology and Conservation*.

⁵ <http://wli.wwt.org.uk/regions/europe/europe-regional-initiatives/migratory-birds-for-people-programme/>

Case Study R.5 (i): Severn Barrage

When the UK Government proposed constructing a barrage across the Severn Estuary concerns were immediately raised by environmental NGOs about the number of sites and species that would have been adversely affected. Although the developer proposed compensating for this damage, there are not enough areas in the UK where equivalent compensation could be delivered. In 2009 protests included a 'stop the barrage' campaign⁶, and a survey concluded that 80 percent of those asked said they did not want a barrage if it means reduced habitat for birds and other wildlife in the estuary.⁷

⁶ <http://www.stopthebarrage.com/index.html>

⁷ http://www.gazetteseries.co.uk/news/3802574.People_say_no_to_River_Severn_barrage_plans/