

**Screening: Habitat Regulations Assessment of  
Mitcheldean  
Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) to 2026  
(Plan version 9 January 2019 (Draft))**

**Commissioned by: Mitcheldean Parish Council on behalf  
of the Neighbour Development Plan  
Group**

**Undertaken by: Forest of Dean District Council**

 <p>Forest of Dean DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	Version Final – March 2019 Assessment Version Vr9 January 2019	Assessor: AC	Reviewer: CL
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## Contents

Summary.....	3
1. Introduction .....	4
2. Mitcheldean NDP Overview .....	6
3. Habitat Regulations Assessment.....	8
4. European Site Information.....	9
5. HRA Screening process .....	10
6. Consultation.....	11
7. Conclusions .....	11
Appendix 1 – Screening as to whether the plan should be assessed .....	12
Appendix 2 – Policy Screening.....	13
Appendix 3 – European Designated Sites – Site Characteristics & Objectives .....	14
Appendix 4 – Responses from Statutory Consultees.....	30

## Summary

In February 2019 the Forest of Dean District Council were commissioned by Mitcheldean Parish Council to undertake a Habitats Regulations screening assessment for the Mitcheldean Neighbourhood Development Plan (M-NDP).

This report sets out the Habitats Regulations Assessment <sup>1</sup>(HRA) of the M-NDP

The plan was screened for likely significant effects in relation to the following European Designated sites:

- Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat SAC (Adjoining / Within plan area W)
- Wye Valley Woodlands SAC (Nearest location 8km W)
- River Wye SAC (Nearest location 1.5km W)
- Severn Estuary SAC/SPA Ramsar (Nearest location 10km S)
- Walmore Common SPA Ramsar (Nearest location 5km SE)

The screening assessed the version 9 of the plan (January 2019), which included 13 policies. The screening process did not identify any policies which had the potential to have likely significant effects on the European designated sites.

It has been concluded that the NDP will not result in any likely significant effects, alone or in combination, on European designated Nature Conservation Sites.

Natural England and the Environment Agency were consulted on the outcome of this screening opinion and raised no objections to the conclusion that the NDP will not result in any likely significant effects.

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<sup>1</sup> EEC Directive 92/43/EEC The Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora; The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 In February 2019 the Forest of Dean District Council were commissioned by Mitcheldean Parish Council to undertake a Habitats Regulations screening assessment for the emerging Mitcheldean Neighbourhood Development Plan (M-NDP). As the qualifying body the NDP Community Steering Group is required to assess its Neighbourhood Plan in relation to the Habitat Regulations 2017 (as Amended)<sup>2</sup> a process referred to here as Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).
- 1.2 This report details the findings of the first, screening stage, of the process of Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the M-NDP.
- 1.3 Combined with other planning policy such as the National Planning Policy Framework, Forest of Dean Core Strategy and the Forest of Dean Allocations plan the M-NDP provides locally derived planning policy to support the implementation of a vision for the area. The NDP sets out the following vision and objectives for the plan area:

*“For Mitcheldean to increase employment opportunities whilst retaining the Village community, and at the same time not to detract from the rural aspect”*

### **Objective 1.**

*To protect the local character not only of the village itself, but also the outlying open countryside and forested areas of Abenhall, Wigpool, Plump Hill, Wilderness, Jubilee Road.*

### **Objective 2**

*To encourage employment particularly at Vantage Point Business Village, Stenders Business Park and Ladygrove Business Park so that there is less migration of people of working age during the daytime*

### **Objective 3**

*To avoid Mitcheldean becoming a dormitory town.*

### **Objective 4**

*To encourage a community where people at all stages of life will contribute to and benefit from its outstanding rural location.*

### **Objective 5.**

*To support new housing in appropriate locations at the Old Bus Depot, Building 5 at Vantage Point and redevelopment of The George. Any future development to be focussed on brownfield sites within the settlement boundary.*

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<sup>2</sup> The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

**Objective 6.**

*To ensure that appropriate infrastructure plans are in place with any new development especially health services and transport*

**Objective 7.**

*To ensure a sustainable village 40% affordable housing will be required in developments over 10 dwellings.*

**Objective 8.**

*Not to support development in the sensitive outlying areas of the village envelope (including Wigpool, land adjoining Gloucester Road, Castiard Valley, The Wilderness, and land north of Carisbrook Rd) in order to protect the countryside, landscapes, rare ecology, valued views and character setting of the village.*

**Objective 9.**

*Any new development must retain the local character of the village and be constructed using local materials where appropriate.”*

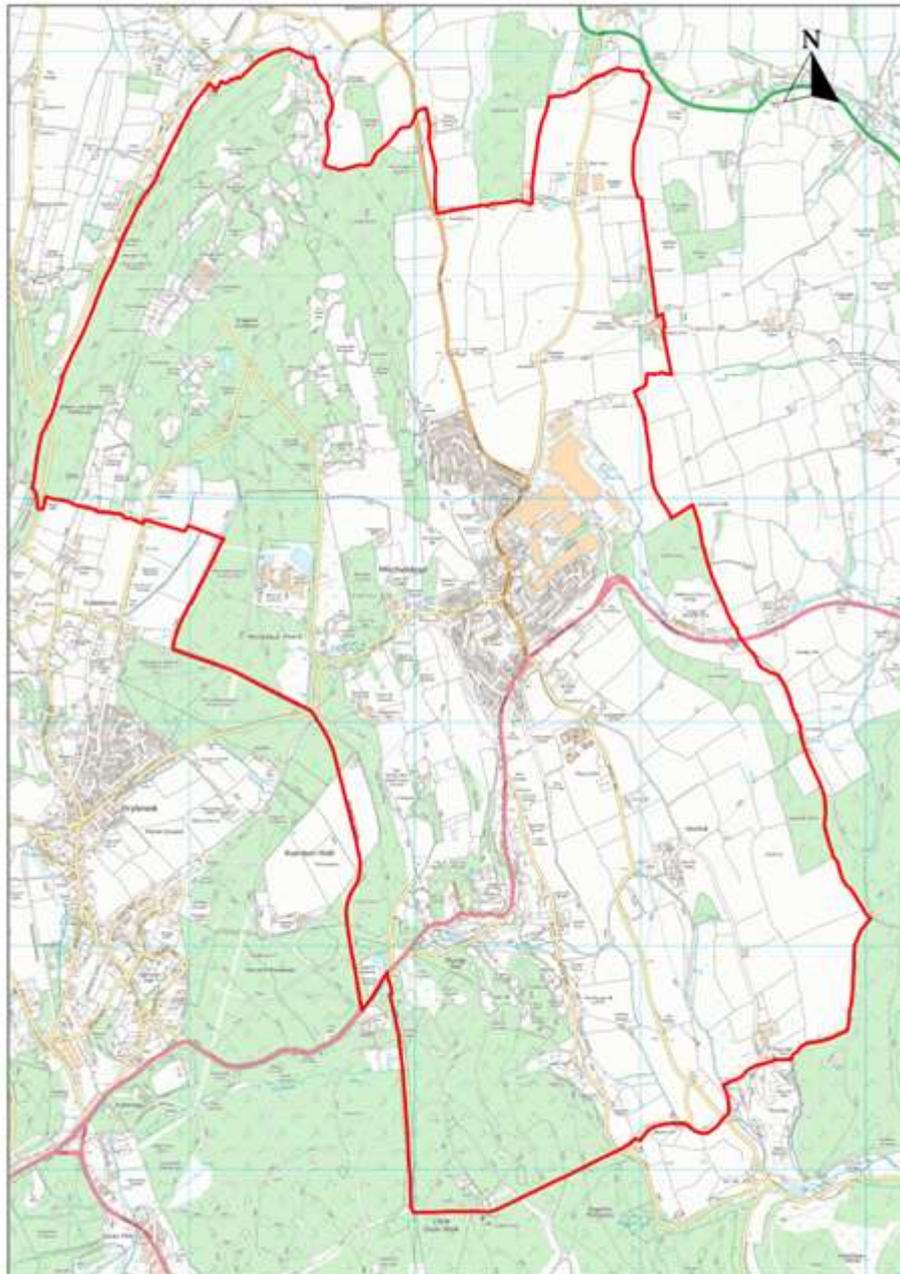
- 1.4 The plan contains 13 policies set with in a framework of five identified key areas; Housing, Business & Employment, Amenities &Community, Environment and Transport.
- 1.5 The aim of this HRA screening report is to assess whether there are any likely significant effects on nearby European designated nature conservation sites.
- 1.6 In producing this HRA screening report, the following best practice guidance has been used: Tyldesley, D., and Chapman, C., (2013) The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook, ( Updated November 2018) UK: DTA Publications Limited, [www.dtapublications.co.uk](http://www.dtapublications.co.uk)

## 2. Mitcheldean NDP Overview

2.1 The plan area (Figure 1) covers an area of approximately 1000ha with a population of around 3000. The majority of the area is countryside with the plan centred on Micheldean. A large proportion of the plan area is countryside including Plump Hill, Abenhall and Wigpool.

2.2

Figure 1 NDP Area



- 2.3 Mitcheldean itself is located within a valley (running NW-SE) with the village centre at around 150m (AoD). The plan area includes the entire Parish including Abenhall to the south and Wigpool and Plumhill to the west. The latter two areas containing extensive area of mines which form part of the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat SAC. The Westbury Brook starts in the plan area flowing towards the Severn Estuary some 5km or more downstream.
- 2.4 The Parish has a population of around 3000 and covers over 1000ha. The village centre is designated a conservation area (Historic) with notable buildings dating to the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century's. Mitcheldean contains a major office/light industrial site 'Vantage Point', formally a Rank Xerox manufacturing site. The site covers 27 hectares and provides employment for in the region of 3,000 people.
- 2.5 The main connection routes within the plan area are the A4136 (Monmouth to Huntley) and the B4224 towards Ross on Wye.
- 2.6 The plan area is within the Forest of Dean and Lower Wye National Character Ares (105) and the 'Ridges and Valleys' Character Area of the Forest of Dean District Landscape Character assessment.
- 2.7 The plan contains 13 policies set with in a framework of five key areas; Housing, Business & Employment, Amenities &Community, Environment and Transport.
- 2.8 Policy H1 is a criteria based policy with its main focus being the acceptability of new housing proposals. The policy's focus is on brownfield land or the reuse of sites avoiding the loss of green space or employment sites. No specific sites are allocated in the plan.
- 2.9 Policy H2 is a policy seeking to limit development with the plan area outside of the Mitcheldean defined settlement boundary.
- 2.10 Polices B1, B2 and B3 are criteria based polices to support the diversification of the local economy and the protection of the wider environment and plan area.
- 2.11 Polices AC1 & AC2 support the retention of important community facilities, amenity and green space.
- 2.12 Policies E1 & E2 set out key design considerations in relation to new development and relationships to heritage assets.

- 2.13 Policies E3, E4 & E5 focus on the environment in terms of landscape character and biodiversity. The policies set out to protect and enhance landscape and biodiversity across the plan area.
- 2.14 Policy T1 sets out a requirement for transport assessment in relation to new development and identifies thematic opportunities for improvements to services. No specific schemes are identified.

### 3 Habitat Regulations Assessment

- 3.1 The Habitats Regulations<sup>3</sup> are in place to transpose European legislation set out within the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) and the Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/147/EC). These are the key pieces of European legislation that seek to protect, conserve and restore habitats and species that are of upmost conservation importance and concern across Europe.
- 3.2 Neighbourhood plans have a legal requirement in relation to Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA). National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) explains:

*“European directives, incorporated into UK law, may apply to a draft neighbourhood plan or Order. Where they do apply a qualifying body must make sure that it also complies with any specific publicity and consultation requirements set out in the relevant legislation. The local planning authority should provide advice on this. The legislation that may be of particular relevance to neighbourhood planning is:*

- *the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended)*
- *the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)*
- *the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 (as amended)*

*It may be appropriate, and in some cases a requirement, that the statutory environmental bodies [Historic England](#), the [Environment Agency](#) and [Natural England](#) be consulted. For example, a draft neighbourhood plan proposal must be assessed to determine whether it is likely to have significant environmental effects. The environmental assessment consultation bodies*

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<sup>3</sup> The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations were revised in 2017 and subject to amendments. The Regulations are generally referred to as the Habitats Regulations.

*must be consulted as part of this process (see also guidance on [Strategic environmental assessment](#)).*”

Paragraph: 051 Reference ID: 41-051-20150209

3.3 The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as Amended) states:

"The making of the neighbourhood development plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site (as defined in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010(d)) or a European offshore marine site (as defined in the Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2007(e)) (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects)."

3.4 The Habitats Regulations assessment is undertaken on a precautionary basis: the assumption is that a plan will have a significant effect until/unless it can be shown that it will not. HRA involves up to four steps:

1. Screening (inc Preliminary & Re-screening): Determining whether the plan - 'in combination' with other plans and projects - is likely to have an adverse effect on a European site. If it doesn't, the plan can proceed, else it needs to go to step 2.
2. Appropriate assessment: Determining whether, in view of the site's conservation objectives, the plan - 'in combination' with other plans and projects - would have an adverse effect (or risk of this) on the integrity of the site (s). If it doesn't, the plan can proceed, else it needs to go to step 3.
3. Assessment of alternative solutions: Where the plan is assessed as having an adverse effect (or risk of this) on the integrity of a site(s), there should be an examination of alternatives
4. Assessment where no alternative solutions remain and where adverse impacts remain

## 4 European Site Information

4.1 The first step of the screening process is to consider the European sites that could be affected by a plan. There are five potential sites:

- Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat SAC (Adjoining / Within plan area)
- Wye Valley Woodlands SAC (Nearest location 8km W)
- River Wye SAC (Nearest location 1.5km W)

- Severn Estuary SAC/SPA Ramsar (Nearest location 10km S)
- Walmore Common SPA Ramsar (Nearest location 5km SE))

4.2 Details of the sites are provided in appendix 3

## 5 HRA Screening process

5.1. Policies can operate in a variety of ways from the aspirational to detailed requirements for individual parcels of land. Policies can therefore be categorised into policy types. Individual policies can reflect more than one policy type. Policies can be categorised in the following ways:

- a) General statements of policy / aspiration
- b) Policies listing general criteria for testing or evaluating acceptability of proposals
- c) Policies referred to but not proposed by the plan
- d) Policies that cannot lead to development or other change in their own right.
- e) All other policies

5.2. In terms of HRA policy types A-D above can be 'screened out' in respect of likely significant effects as the policies are either very general, primarily reiterate a policy in another existing plan or do not trigger development as they are about a specific issue e.g. design. Policy assessment outcomes are set out in Appendix 2.

5.3. The next step in the screening assessment is to consider all those policies that fall within policy type E; as to whether they could (possibly) result in likely significant effects on a European designated nature conservation site either alone or in combination with other plans and policies or; policies can be amended to remove or reduce the likelihood of significant effects.

5.4. Version 9 (January 2019) the NDP has been used to undertake this assessment. It is acknowledged that the plan is at Regulation 14 draft stage and may be subject to revision at later stages. For the purposes of HRA assessment we have been instructed that whilst some text may change the overall policy objectives and content is not expected to substantially change.

- 5.5. Following assessment as set out above and in Appendix 2, having regard to the conservation objectives for European sites and the precautionary principle; it was considered that there will be no likely significant effects as a result of the plan.
- 5.6. The plan contains polices for the assessment of the acceptability of proposed development and does not promote or identify sites for development. Therefore the plan itself does not lead to new development.
- 5.7. There are a number of polices (E3,4 &5 for example) which are intended to restrict the extent and impacts of development as well as safeguard the environment.

## **6. Consultation**

Natural England and the Environment Agency were consulted in February 2019 on the outcome of this screening opinion and raised no objections to the conclusion that the NDP will not result in any likely significant effects.

## **7. Conclusions**

- 7.1. It has been found that version 9 (January 2019) of the Mitcheldean Neighbourhood Development Plan will not have any likely significant effects on European designated sites either alone or in combination.

## Appendix 1 – Screening as to whether the plan should be assessed

Habitats regulations Assessment - Should the Plan be subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment?

Name of Plan	Mitcheldean NDP		
Date	11/02/2019		
Assessor(s)	Alastair Chapman		
	YES	NO	
Is the whole of the plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site for nature conservation purposes?		X	If answer is YES the plan does not need to be assessed
Is the plan a 'strategic development plan' or 'local development plan' or 'supplementary guidance' (regulation 85A), or a core path plan (regulation 69A) or a revision thereof?	X		If answer is YES the plan should be assessed - proceed to stage 2
Does the plan provide a framework for deciding applications for project consents and / or does it influence decision makers on the outcome of applications for project consents?	X		If answer is YES the plan should be assessed - proceed to stage 2
Does the plan contain a programme, or policies, or proposals which could affect one or more particular European site?	X		If answer is YES the plan should be assessed - proceed to stage 2
Is the plan a general statement of policy showing only the general political will or intention of the plan making body, and no effect on any particular European site can reasonably be predicted?		X	If answer is YES the plan does not need to be assessed

## **Appendix 2 – Policy Screening**

See separate document

## Appendix 3 – European Designated Sites – Site Characteristics & Objectives

### Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Bat Sites

Designation: Special Area of Conservation (SAC)  
Location: Forest of Dean / Fynwy (Monmouthshire)  
Grid Reference: SO605044  
Area: 142.7ha

#### 1. The characteristics of the European Site:

General Site Character: Broad-leaved deciduous woodland (26.2%) Other land (including areas, villages, roads, waste places, mines, industrial sites) (73.8%).

Vulnerability: The site is composed of parts of a number of buildings in everyday use (mainly roof-spaces) used by the bats for breeding and a series of mines used by bats for hibernation. Within the roost the bats are vulnerable to disturbance at critical times, structural alteration and changes in the characteristic ventilation patterns. The designated sites only cover the major maternity and over-wintering roosts. The bats also depend on features outside the designated sites including intermediate roosts, foraging grounds and hedgerows/tree belts that the bats use as commuting routes. Impact on these features can also affect the integrity of the site. Any proposed changes which are likely to have an impact on the bat populations within the breeding roosts will be discussed with the relevant owners and occupiers. Where appropriate to any populations potentially damaging works will be addressed through appropriate planning regulation, management agreements and monitoring of individual roosts. Regular liaison takes place with site-owners.

The human use of the mine systems (continued mineral working and recreational caving/research) is regulated by Forest Enterprise in consultation with Natural England where appropriate. Site Management Statements have been agreed with the owners of working mines to secure conservation of the populations alongside continued working. In addition, the preparation of Cave Conservation Plans will be promoted to maintain and enhance the underground environment for bats.

Source: Natura 2000 Standard Data Form –.

#### 2. Qualifying Features:

Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site:

Lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros*

- for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.

This complex of sites on the border between England and Wales contains by far the greatest concentration of lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros* in the UK, totalling about 26% of the national population. It has been selected on the grounds of the exceptional breeding population,

and the majority of sites within the complex are maternity roosts. The bats are believed to hibernate in the many disused mines in the area.

Greater horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*

- for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.

This complex of sites on the border between England and Wales represents greater horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum* in the northern part of its range, with about 6% of the UK population. The site contains the main maternity roost for bats in this area, which are believed to hibernate in the many disused mines in the Forest. Source: JNCC.

### 3. Conservation Objectives

With regard to the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated:

Avoid the deterioration of the qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species, and the significant disturbance of those qualifying species, ensuring the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes a full contribution to achieving Favourable Conservation Status of each of the qualifying features. Subject to natural change, to maintain or restore:

- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species;
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species;
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species rely;
- The populations of qualifying species;
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.
- Favourable condition to be assessed in terms of: cave and roof roost space extent; woodland extent at roost entrances (Devils Chapel and Old Bow only) ; presence; population size (no drop in excess of 25% below notification population); disturbance; site security; roost condition (external/internal); roost access.

<b>Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat SAC</b>		
Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Bat Sites SAC Conservation Objectives	08/02/2016 (JNCC/NE)	<a href="http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/6564127446138880">http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/6564127446138880</a>
Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Bat Sites SAC Citation	26/06/2014 (JNCC/NE)	<a href="http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/5725464458952704">http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/5725464458952704</a>
Site Improvement Plan: Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites	11/3/2015 (JNCC/NE)	<a href="http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6102625057505280">http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6102625057505280</a>
A Strategy for the Conservation of Horseshoe Bats in the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean (2016)	2016 Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Strategy partnership	<a href="https://www.fdean.gov.uk/media/5420/wye-valley-and-forest-of-dean-bat-strategy-may-2016.pdf">https://www.fdean.gov.uk/media/5420/wye-valley-and-forest-of-dean-bat-strategy-may-2016.pdf</a>

## River Wye

Designation: Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Location: Forest of Dean / Fynwy - Monmouthshire / Herefordshire / Powys

### 1. The characteristics of the European Site:

General Site Character: Tidal rivers. Estuaries. Mud flats. Sand flats. Lagoons (including saltwork basins) (9.5%) Salt marshes. Salt pastures. Salt steppes (1.5%) Inland water bodies (standing water, running water) (52.5%) Bogs. Marshes. Water fringed vegetation. Fens (3.1%) Heath. Scrub. Maquis and garrigue. Phygrana (1%) Dry grassland. Steppes (5.3%) Humid grassland. Mesophile grassland (2.4%) Improved grassland (10.4%) Broad-leaved deciduous woodland (12.3%) Inland rocks. Screes. Sands. Permanent snow and ice (0.2%) Other land (including areas, villages, roads, waste places, mines, industrial sites) (1.8%).

Vulnerability: Water quality impacts arising from changing agricultural land-use within the catchment are having direct and indirect effects on the SAC interests through effects of diffuse pollution such as nutrient run-off and increased siltation. Natural England and the Countryside Council for Wales are seeking to address such issues through improved targeting of existing and new agri-environment schemes and through improvements in compliance with agricultural Codes of Practice. Water quality is also affected by synthetic pyrethroid sheep-dips and by point-source discharges within the catchment. The impact of sewage treatment works on the SAC is being addressed through the Asset Management Plan process and review under the Habitats Regulations. Loss of riparian habitat is occurring as a result of changes in agricultural land-use practices and other factors, including riverside development and the loss of alder tree-cover through disease. These impacts and concerns over water quality will be identified and actions recommended within the joint Natural England/Environment Agency/Countryside Council for Wales conservation strategy for the river.

Fishing activities are implicated in the decline of the salmon but it is apparently Irish trawlers rather than local fishermen which have had the greatest impact. The trawler problems have now been resolved. There is increasing demand for abstraction from the river for agriculture and potable water. This is being addressed through the Environment Agency's Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy as well as the Review of Consents process. Demand for increased recreational activities is a source of potential concern for the future. Regularisation of the functions of the competent authorities, currently being sought, should reduce the risk of damage to the SAC as a result of developments for such activities. Source: Natura 2000 Standard Data Form – JNCC & consultation response from Natural England – Feb 2007.

### 2. Qualifying Features:

Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site:

Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation

Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site:

Transition mires and quaking bogs

Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site:

White-clawed (or Atlantic stream) crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes*

Sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus*  
 Brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri*  
 River lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis*  
 Twaite shad *Alosa fallax*  
 Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar*  
 Bullhead *Cottus gobio*  
 Otter *Lutra lutra*

Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection:  
 Allis shad *Alosa alosa*

### 3. Conservation Objectives

Subject to natural change, to maintain the transition mire and quaking bog (Wales only) and river in favourable condition (or restored to favourable condition if features are judged to be unfavourable), with particular reference to any dependent component special interest features (habitats, vegetation types, species, species assemblages etc.) for which the land is designated including. In particular to:

- To maintain the designated features in favourable condition, which is defined in part in relation to a balance of habitat extents. Favourable condition to be assessed in terms of: river length; SSSI area and; extent (in ha) of river types.
- To maintain the freshwater and species on the River Wye SSSI /SAC in favourable condition, with particular reference to relevant specific designated interest features. Favourable condition to be assessed in terms of: presence/absence of white clawed crayfish; fish biomass; otter presence, maintenance of population and fish biomass; presence of suitable habitat; no increase in pollutants.
- To maintain the freshwater and species on the River Wye SSSI /SAC in favourable condition, with particular reference to relevant specific designated interest features. Favourable condition to be assessed in terms of: Biological and Chemical General Quality Assessment Class (dissolved oxygen, BOD or ammonia); un-ionised ammonia; suspended solids; soluble reactive phosphorus; flow regime; siltation; channel form; bank and riparian zone vegetation naturalness; in channel vegetation species composition; macrophyte extent; invertebrate habitat quality and extent; invertebrate assemblages; habitat loss/damage; enrichment; alien/ introduced/invasive species; in stream barriers; fish introductions.

<b>River Wye SAC</b>		
River Wye Conservation Objectives	05-02-2016	<a href="http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/5412246543925248">http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/5412246543925248</a>
Site Improvement Plan River Wye	04-11-2014 (NE)	<a href="http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5178575871279104">http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5178575871279104</a>
River Wye SAC Citation	01-04-2005 (NE)	
River Wye draft updated River Basin Management Plans	August 2014 (NE)	<a href="http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/5350815669682176">http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/5350815669682176</a>

## Wye Valley Woodlands

Designation: Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Location: Forest of Dean / Monmouthshire / Herefordshire

### 1. The characteristics of the European Site:

General Site Character: Heath, Scrub, Maquis and Garrigue. Phygrana (10%) Dry grassland. Steppes(0.2%) Broad-leaved deciduous woodland (87%) Coniferous woodland (0.7%) Inland rocks. Screes. Sands. Permanent snow and ice (0.6%) Other land (including areas, villages, roads, waste places, mines, industrial sites) (1.5%)

Vulnerability: A significant proportion of the SAC is already managed sympathetically by Forest Enterprise (now the Forestry Commission), Natural England (as one of the owners\*) the Woodland Trust and county Wildlife Trusts. Principal pressures are from lack of management (particularly traditional management, e.g. coppice), increasing deer numbers and inappropriate management proposals which would alter the recognised woodland stand types. Felling license approval and Forestry Commission consultation with Natural England/Countryside Council for Wales are adequate in addressing the latter issue. Positive management is being promoted through management plans (CCW), Site Management Statements (EN) and management agreements, and the Woodland Grant Scheme (including specialised targeting) is being encouraged where possible and appropriate to return some woods to active management. \*'Highbury' and 'The Hudnalls' are both National Nature Reserve sites in the Wye Valley Woodlands.

### 2. Qualifying Features:

Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site:

*Asperulo-Fagetum* beech forests: for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.

The Wye Valley contains abundant and near-continuous semi-natural woodland along the gorge. Beech stands occur as part of a mosaic with a wide range of other woodland types, and represent the western range of *Asperulo-Fagetum* beech forests. Such a variety of woodland types is rare within the UK. In places lime *Tilia* sp., elm *Ulmus* sp. and oak *Quercus* sp. share dominance with the beech. Structurally the woods include old coppice, pollards and high forest types. Lady Park Wood, one of the component sites, is an outstanding example of near-natural old-growth structure in mixed broad-leaved woodland, and has been the subject of detailed long-term monitoring studies.

*Tilio-Acerion* forests of slopes, screes and ravines: for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.

The woods of the lower Wye Valley on the border of south Wales and England form one of the most important areas for woodland conservation in the UK and provide the most extensive examples of *Tilio-Acerion* forest in the west of its range. A wide range of ecological variation is associated with slope, aspect and landform. The woodland occurs here as a mosaic with other types, including beech *Fagus sylvatica* and pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* stands. Uncommon trees, including large-leaved lime *Tilia platyphyllos* and rare whitebeams such as *Sorbus porrigentiformis* and *S. rupicola* are found here, as well as locally uncommon herbs, including wood barley *Hordelymus europaeus*, stinking hellebore *Helleborus foetidus*, narrow-leaved bitter-cress *Cardamine impatiens* and wood fescue *Festuca altissima*.

*Taxus baccata* woods of the British Isles: for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.

Wye Valley is representative of yew *Taxus baccata* woods in the south-west of the habitat’s range. It lies on the southern Carboniferous limestone, and yew occurs both as an understorey to other woodland trees and as major yew-dominated groves, particularly on the more stony slopes and crags.

Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection:

Lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros*: for which the area is considered to support a significant presence.

### 3. Conservation Objectives

The Conservation Objectives for this site are, subject to natural change, to maintain Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland habitats and geological features in favourable condition (or restored to favourable condition if features are judged to be unfavourable ), with particular reference to any dependent component special interest features (habitats, vegetation types, species, species assemblages etc.) for which the land is designated. In particular:

- To maintain the Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland (W7,W8, W10, W12c, W14, W16) habitat at this site in favourable condition, with particular reference to relevant specific designated interest features. Favourable condition is defined in terms of: area; structure and natural processes; regeneration potential; composition; indicators of quality/local distinctiveness
- To maintain the hibernating population of horseshoe bats at this site in favourable condition. Favourable condition is defined in terms of: entrance condition, security and vegetation; cave condition; disturbance; use by bats (Upper Wye Gorge only).

<b>Wye Valley Woodlands SAC</b>		
Wye Valley Woodlands Conservation Objectives	05-02-2016 (NE)	<a href="http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/6016657158832128">http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/6016657158832128</a>
Site improvement plan Wye Valley Woodlands	14-01-2015	<a href="http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4735117343850496">http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4735117343850496</a>
Wye valley Woodlands SAC Citation	01-04-2005	<a href="http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/4729640186806272">http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/4729640186806272</a>

## Walmore Common

Designation: Special Protection Area (SPA) & Ramsar site

Location: Forest of Dean

### 1. The characteristics of the European Site:

General Site Character: Walmore Common SPA is a low-lying basin in the Severn Vale adjacent to the River Severn, which is subject to extensive winter flooding and high, artificially maintained water levels in summer.

The site supports a range of unimproved and improved wet grasslands overlying a large area of peat and is of botanical and ornithological importance. There is also a large network of ditches that has an important hydrological function as well as supporting a diverse community of flora and fauna.

The common is part of a series of sites within the Severn Vale which, in winter, form an important refuge and feeding area for wildfowl. The highest bird numbers are seen during the harshest winters, when Walmore Common provides an essential feeding and roosting area.

A large part of the catchment is used as a feeding and roosting site for nationally and internationally important numbers of Bewick's Swan and for regionally important numbers of other wintering waterfowl.

This seasonally-flooded wetland is drained by a network of open ditches. Approximately 60% of the neutral grassland has been reseeded with rye grass. The eastern area, however, is still unimproved with a tussocky structure and a wider range of plants dominated by grasses and rushes. The ditches have a fairly rich flora including species such as yellow iris *Iris pseudacorus*, purple loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria* and flowering rush *Butomus umbellatus*.

Vulnerability: The site is a Ramsar site, a Special Protection Area and a Site of Special Scientific Interest. A water level management plan, currently in preparation, will ensure appropriate conditions are retained for the wintering bird interest. The marsh grassland and ditches will be maintained and enhanced by maintaining high water levels from spring to autumn.

### 2. Qualifying Features:

This site qualifies under Habitats Directive 79/409/EES Article 4.1 by regularly supporting (in winter) internationally important numbers of Bewick's swan *Cygnus columbianus bewickii*. During the five winter periods 1986/87 to 1990/91 the average peak count was 207 birds (1% of the NW European population and 3% of British. Source: SPA citation.

This site qualifies under Ramsar criterion 6 by supporting species/populations occurring at levels of international importance: The qualifying species/populations (peak counts in winter) is Bewick's swan *Cygnus columbianus bewickii*, 43 individuals, representing an average of 0.5% of Great Britain's population (5 year peak mean 1998/9 – 2002/3).

### 3. Conservation Objectives:

With regard to the SPA and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified, and subject to natural change;

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features
- The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features
- The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely
- The population of each of the qualifying features, and,
- The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.

<b>Walmore Common SPA, SAC, Ramsar</b>		
Walmore Common SPA Conservation Objectives	30-06-2014 (NE)	<a href="http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/4554611981549568">http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/4554611981549568</a>
Walmore Common SPA Citation	30-01-1996 (NE)	<a href="http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/4900105425518592">http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/4900105425518592</a>
Site Improvement Plan: Walmore Common	13-11-2014 (NE)	<a href="http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/6299182977515520">http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/6299182977515520</a>

## Severn Estuary

Designation: Special Area of Conservation (SAC) / Special Protection Area (SPA) / Ramsar site

Location: Stroud, Forest of Dean, South Gloucestershire, Monmouthshire, Bristol City, North Somerset, Newport, Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan

There is a vast amount of existing data on the Severn Estuary over and above what can be repeated here in this report. The NE/CCW report (see below) is an important as a source of much more detailed information on conservation objectives and particular vulnerabilities as well as additional detail on condition, advice on operations and various methods of assessment.

The Severn Estuary / Môr Hafren European Marine Site comprising: The Severn Estuary / Môr Hafren Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The Severn Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA). The Severn Estuary / Ramsar Site Natural England & the Countryside Council for Wales' advice given under Regulation 33(2)(a) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994, as amended. June 2009"

This report is available at:

<http://www.ccw.gov.uk/landscape--wildlife/protecting-our-landscape/special-sites-project/the-severn-estuary-european.aspx?lang=en>

### 1. The characteristics of the European Site:

General Site Character: The estuary's classic funnel shape, unique in Britain, is a factor causing the Severn to have the second-largest tidal range in the world (after the Bay of Fundy, Canada). This tidal regime results in plant and animal communities typical of the extreme physical conditions of liquid mud and tide swept sand and rock. The species-poor invertebrate community includes high densities of ragworms, lugworms and other invertebrates forming an important food source for passage and wintering waders. A further consequence of the large tidal range is the extensive intertidal zone, one of the largest in the UK, comprising mudflats, sand banks, shingle, and rocky platforms. Glassworts and annual sea-blite colonise the open mud, with beds of all three species of eelgrass occurring on more sheltered mud and sandbanks. Large expanses of common cord-grass also occur on the outer marshes. Grazed saltmarsh fringes the estuary with a range of saltmarsh types present. The middle marsh sward is dominated by common saltmarsh-grass with typical associated species. In the upper marsh, red fescue and saltmarsh rush become more prominent. The estuary is an important habitat for migratory fish.

Vulnerability: The conservation of the site features is dependent on the tidal regime. The range is the second highest in the world and the scouring of the seabed and strong tidal streams result in natural erosion of the habitats. The estuary is therefore vulnerable to large scale interference, including human actions. These include land-claim, aggregate extraction/dredging, physical developments such as barrage construction flood defences, pollution (industrial, oil spillage), eutrophication and tourism based activities and disturbance. These issues are being predominantly addressed through existing control measures. The Severn Estuary Strategy (a non statutory plan developed since 1995) has been working towards the sustainable management of the site, through the involvement of local authorities, interested parties and local people. In addition the marine part of the European site is managed under a Management Scheme prepared by the Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities (ASERA) to ensure that the occurrence of current activities of all the Relevant Authorities are compatible with the site's conservation objectives.

### 2. Qualifying features

Qualifies as a SAC as follows:

The Severn Estuary has been designated an SAC on the basis that it supports occurrences of habitat types and species listed in Annexes I and II respectively of the Habitats Directive that are considered important in a European context and meeting the criteria in Annex III of the Directive. The designation includes an overarching “estuaries” feature within which subtidal sandbanks, intertidal mudflats and sandflats, Atlantic salt meadows and reefs (of *Sabellaria alveolata*) and three species of migratory fish are defined as both features in their own right and as sub-features of the estuary feature. In addition hard substrate habitats including eel grass beds, the estuary-wide assemblage of fish species and the assemblage of waterfowl species (for which the Ramsar Site and SPA are specifically designated) are identified as notable estuarine assemblages which are an intrinsic part of the estuary ecosystem – these are therefore covered by the “estuaries” feature.

Interest Features of the SAC

SAC details, qualifying features:

Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site;

- Estuaries
- Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide
- Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*)

Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site;

- Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time
- Reefs

Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site

- Sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus*
- River lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis*
- Twaite shad *Alosa fallax*

Qualifies as a SPA as follows:

The Severn Estuary was classified as an SPA on 13 July 1995 (subsuming a previously designated SPA called the Upper Severn Estuary). It should be noted that since designation changes in bird numbers have occurred in relation to the qualifying thresholds, which have themselves changed.

The SPA within the European Marine Site boundary includes saltmarshes and the adjacent extensive areas of intertidal mud, sand and rocky shores. All these habitats provide essential food and resting places for the wide range of wintering and migratory waterfowl and are therefore identified as key “supporting habitats” for the conservation of these species.

The Qualifying Features and supporting Habitats of the SPA

**Information on populations of bird species using the Severn Estuary European Marine Site at the time the Severn Estuary SPA was classified (1995). (Also note the species listed in point 2 of the footnote.)**

<b>Internationally important populations of regularly occurring Annex 1 species</b>
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Species	Population ( 5 yr peak mean :1988/9 to 1992/3 )	
<i>SPA interest feature 1: Bewick's swan</i>	289 birds	4.1% Great Britain 1.7% NW Europe
<b>Internationally important populations of regularly occurring migratory bird species</b>		
Species (wintering)	Population ( 5 yr peak mean: 1988/9 to 1992/3)	
<i>SPA interest feature 2: European white-fronted goose</i>	3,002	50% British, 1% North West Europe
<i>SPA interest feature 3: Dunlin</i>	41,683	2.9% East Atlantic flyway
<i>SPA interest feature 4: Redshank</i>	2,013	1.3% East Atlantic flyway
<i>SPA interest feature 5: Shelduck</i>	2,892	1.2% North West Europe
<i>SPA interest feature 6: Gadwall</i>	330	2.8 % NW Europe
<i>SPA interest feature 7:</i>		
<b>An internationally important assemblage of waterfowl</b> <i>(Assemblage includes above species plus the following listed nationally important populations)</i>		
Importance	Population ( 5 yr peak mean: 1988/9 to 1992/3)	
The Severn Estuary supports over 20,000 wintering waterfowl.	68,026 individual birds comprising 17,502 wildfowl and 50,524 waders	
<b>Nationally important bird populations within internationally important assemblage of waterfowl</b>		
Species	Population ( 5 yr peak mean: 1988/9 to 1992/3)	
Wigeon	3,977 birds	1.6% Great Britain
Teal	1,998	2.0% Great Britain
Pintail	523	2.1% Great Britain
Pochard	1,686	3.8% Great Britain
Tufted duck	913	1.5% Great Britain
Ringed plover	227	1.0% Great Britain
Grey plover	781	3.7% Great Britain
Curlew	3,096	3.4% Great Britain
Whimbrel	246	4.9% Great Britain
Spotted redshank	3	1.5% Great Britain
Notes :		
<p>1. Previous advice issued in respect of the Severn Estuary SPA in February 2005 excluded Gadwall for the listed species of internationally important populations of regularly occurring migratory birds as they were considered not to use the European Marine Site area to any significant degree. Further recent evidence (2002/03 Low Tide Bird Counts) has demonstrated that this species does make use of areas within the European Marine Site and has consequently now been included.</p> <p>2. The SPA review has identified that since the classification of the Severn Estuary SPA in 1995 the Severn Estuary now supports nationally important populations of Mallard, Lapwing and Shoveler.</p>		

Ramsar Features:

**Table 5 : confirmation of Ramsar features in context of 1995 and 2005 Ramsar criteria**

Ramsar Features (for which conservation objectives have been written)	Criteria at designation (1995) (original criteria)	Revised Criteria (2005) (criteria currently used on JNCC website)
<p><b>Ramsar interest feature 1:</b></p> <p><b>*Estuaries</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- characteristic physical form and flow, estuarine habitat communities and species assemblages</li> <li>- estuarine habitat communities and species assemblages</li> </ul>	<p><b>Criterion 1</b> : qualifies due to its immense tidal range affecting both the physical environment and biological communities present</p> <p><b>Criterion 2b</b> : qualifies due to its unusual estuarine communities, reduced species diversity and high productivity. The high tidal range leads to strong tidal streams and high turbidity, producing communities characteristic of the extreme physical conditions of liquid mud and tide swept sand and rock</p>	<p><b>Criterion 1</b> : qualifies due to immense tidal range (second-largest in world), this affects both the physical environment and biological communities.</p> <p><b>Criterion 3</b> : qualifies due to its unusual estuarine communities, reduced diversity and high productivity</p>
<p><b>Ramsar interest feature 2:</b></p> <p><b>Assemblage of migratory fish species :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sea Lamprey</li> <li>River Lamprey</li> <li>Twaite Shad</li> <li>Allis Shad</li> <li>Salmon</li> <li>Sea Trout</li> <li>Eel</li> </ul>	<p><b>Criterion 2c</b> : qualifies as it is important for the run of migratory fish between sea and river via estuary. Species include Salmon <i>Salmo salar</i>, sea trout <i>S. trutta</i>, sea lamprey <i>Petromyzon marinus</i>, river lamprey <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>, allis shad <i>Alosa alosa</i>, twaite shad <i>A. fallax</i>, and eel <i>Anguilla anguilla</i>.</p>	<p><b>Criterion 4</b> : qualifies as it is important for the run of migratory fish between sea and river via estuary. Species include Salmon <i>Salmo salar</i>, sea trout <i>S. trutta</i>, sea lamprey <i>Petromyzon marinus</i>, river lamprey <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>, allis shad <i>Alosa alosa</i>, twaite shad <i>A. fallax</i>, and eel <i>Anguilla anguilla</i>.</p>
<p>* The wider estuarine fish assemblage is covered as</p>		<p><b>Criterion 8</b> : qualifies as the fish assemblage of the whole estuarine and</p>

Ramsar Features (for which conservation objectives have been written)	Criteria at designation (1995) (original criteria)	Revised Criteria (2005) (criteria currently used on JNCC website)
<i>a “notable species assemblage” sub feature of the SAC “Estuaries” feature</i>		river system is one of the most diverse in Britain, with over 110 species recorded.
<p><i>Ramsar interest feature 3:</i></p> <p><b>Bewick’s Swan</b></p> <p><i>Ramsar interest feature 4: European white-fronted goose</i></p> <p><i>Ramsar interest feature 5: Dunlin</i></p> <p><i>Ramsar interest feature 6: Redshank</i></p> <p><i>Ramsar interest feature 7: Shelduck</i> <i>Ramsar interest feature 8: Gadwall</i></p> <p><b>ie Internationally important <u>populations</u> of waterfowl</b></p>	<p><b>Criterion 3c</b> : qualifies by regularly in winter supporting internationally important populations (1% or more) of species of waterfowl</p> <p>Bewick’s swan</p> <p>European white-fronted goose</p> <p>Dunlin</p> <p>Redshank</p> <p>Shelduck</p> <p>Gadwall</p>	<p><b>Criterion 6</b> : qualifies as it regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of waterbird.</p> <p><b>Species with peak counts in winter - at designation:</b></p> <p>Tundra/Bewick’s swan</p> <p>Greater /European white-fronted goose</p> <p>Dunlin</p> <p>Common redshank</p> <p>Common shelduck</p> <p>Gadwall</p> <p><b>Populations identified subsequent to designation:</b></p> <p>Ringed plover (spring/autumn) Eurasian teal (winter)</p> <p>Northern pintail (winter)</p> <p>Lesser black-backed gull (breeding)</p>
<p><i>Ramsar interest feature 9:</i></p> <p><b>Internationally important <u>assemblage</u> of waterfowl</b></p>	<p>Qualifies under <b>Criterion 2c</b> as it is particularly important for migratory birds during passage periods in spring and autumn. Nationally important populations of :</p>	<p><b>Criterion 5</b> : qualifies as it supports an assemblage of international importance - (1998/99-2002/2003 5 year peak mean was 70,919 waterfowl</p>

Ramsar Features (for which conservation objectives have been written)	Criteria at designation (1995) (original criteria)	Revised Criteria (2005) (criteria currently used on JNCC website)
<p>This feature incorporates :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• waterfowl which contribute to the total peak <b>winter</b> count (criterion 3a)</li> <li>• the above internationally important <b>wintering</b> populations (qualifying under criterion 3c)</li> <li>• the migratory <b>passage</b> species (qualifying under criterion 2c)</li> <li>• the nationally important populations (identified under other notable features of the Ramsar Site citation)</li> </ul> <p>The species are as follows :</p> <p>(w = wintering and p = passage):</p> <p><b>Bewick’s swan (w)</b></p> <p><b>European white-fronted goose (w)</b></p> <p><b>Shelduck (w) Dunlin (w, p) Redshank (w, p)</b></p> <p><b>Gadwall (w)</b></p> <p><b>Ringed plover (w, p)</b></p>	<p>Ringed plover</p> <p>Dunlin</p> <p>Whimbrel</p> <p>Redshank</p> <p><b>Criterion 3a</b> : qualifies by regularly supporting in winter over 20,000 waterfowl - (1988/89 to 1992/93 average peak count was 68,026 waterfowl: 17,502 wildfowl and 50,524 waders)</p> <p><b>Other notable features :</b></p> <p>Nationally important wintering populations of:</p> <p>Wigeon, teal, pintail, pochard, tufted duck, ringed plover, grey plover, curlew and spotted redshank. Also nationally important breeding population of Lesser Black backed gull</p>	

Ramsar Features (for which conservation objectives have been written)	Criteria at designation (1995) (original criteria)	Revised Criteria (2005) (criteria currently used on JNCC website)
<b>Whimbrel (p) Teal (w)</b> <b>Pintail (w)</b>  <b>Wigeon (w) Pochard (w)</b> <b>Tufted duck (w) Grey plover (w) Curlew (w)</b> <b>Spotted redshank (w)</b>		

### 3. Conservation objectives Severn Estuary SAC

The protection and management of the SAC in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, including in particular the consideration of plans and projects under Article 6(3) and 6(4), should be carried out in view of the conservation objectives as detailed below.

Note: Note this is a summary - for the full details see the 2009 CCW / NE report and or the JNCC website. Only the SAC conservation objectives are detailed in this report due to the fact that (a) there are considerable overlaps with the SPA & Ramsar objectives. For the SPA and Ramsar conservation objectives, the 2009 CCW / NE report should be (and will be) referred to in relation to this HRA.

The Conservation Objectives for this site are, subject to natural change, to maintain estuaries, intertidal mud and sand flats, saltmarsh and associated transition habitats and rocky littoral shores in favourable condition (or restored to favourable condition if features are judged to be unfavourable), with particular reference to any dependent component special interest features (habitats, vegetation types, species, species assemblages etc.) for which the land is designated. In particular to:

- To maintain the estuaries feature in favourable condition, with particular reference to relevant specific designated interest features. Favourable condition to be assessed in terms of: extent; morphology; tidal regime and flow; sediment budget; sediment size, range and distribution; water quality (physio-chemical parameters); phytoplankton; macroalgae; toxic contaminants; estuarine habitat extent, variety and spatial distribution; abundance of notable species/assemblages.
- To maintain the intertidal mudflats and sandflats in favourable condition, with particular reference to relevant specific designated interest features. Favourable condition to be assessed in terms of: extent; mudflats and sandflats extent and variety; distribution; community composition; topography; sediment character.
- To maintain the saltmarshes in favourable condition, with particular reference to relevant specific designated interest features. Favourable condition to be assessed in terms of: extent; distribution; extent of spartina anglica; zonation of vegetation; species composition; sward structure; morphology.
- To maintain the hard substrate habitats in favourable condition, with particular reference to relevant specific designated interest features. Favourable condition to be assessed in

terms of: extent and variety; spatial distribution; community composition; abundance of Eel grass.

- To maintain the vascular plant assemblage in favourable condition, with particular reference to relevant specific designated interest features. Favourable condition to be assessed in terms of: rare/notable vascular plant presence; population size; vegetation structure; physical damage; disturbance; hydrology.
- To maintain the assemblage of waterfowl and nationally important populations of waterfowl in favourable condition, with particular reference to relevant specific designated interest features. Favourable condition to be assessed in terms of: population size; distribution; disturbance to feeding/roosting areas; habitat (extent, food availability, vegetation characteristics, feeding/roosting sightlines).
- To maintain the migratory fish assemblage in favourable condition, with particular reference to relevant specific designated interest features. Favourable condition to be assessed in terms of: barriers to migration (water quality, water flow, physical barriers); population size; prey species abundance.

Severn Estuary		
European Site Conservation Objectives for Severn Estuary SPA (UK9015022)	05-02-2016 (NE)	<a href="file:///C:/Users/alastair.chapman/Downloads/UK9015022-Severn-Estuary-SPA-V3.pdf">file:///C:/Users/alastair.chapman/Downloads/UK9015022-Severn-Estuary-SPA-V3.pdf</a>
European Site Conservation Objectives for Severn Estuary SAC (UK9013030)	05-02-2016 (NE)	<a href="file:///C:/Users/alastair.chapman/Downloads/Severn%20Estuary%20SAC%20Conservation%20Objectives.pdf">file:///C:/Users/alastair.chapman/Downloads/Severn%20Estuary%20SAC%20Conservation%20Objectives.pdf</a>
Severn Estuary Standard Data Form	15-12-2015 (JNCC)	<a href="file:///C:/Users/alastair.chapman/Downloads/UK9015022.pdf">file:///C:/Users/alastair.chapman/Downloads/UK9015022.pdf</a>
Severn Estuary Site Improvement Plan	19-03-15 (NE)	<a href="file:///C:/Users/alastair.chapman/Downloads/SIP150413FINAL1.0%20Severn%20Estuary.pdf">file:///C:/Users/alastair.chapman/Downloads/SIP150413FINAL1.0%20Severn%20Estuary.pdf</a>
Severn Estuary EMS Regulation 33 Conservation Advice Package,	29-11-12 (NE)	<a href="file:///C:/Users/alastair.chapman/Downloads/severn%20estuary%20Regulation%2033advice%20(1).pdf">file:///C:/Users/alastair.chapman/Downloads/severn%20estuary%20Regulation%2033advice%20(1).pdf</a>
Severn Estuary European Marine Site Management Scheme	ASERA (2018-2023)	<a href="http://sites.cardiff.ac.uk/aser/files/2018/05/Severn-Estuary-EMS-Management-Scheme-2018-2023-May-2018-2.pdf">http://sites.cardiff.ac.uk/aser/files/2018/05/Severn-Estuary-EMS-Management-Scheme-2018-2023-May-2018-2.pdf</a>

## Appendix 4 – Responses from Statutory Consultees.

Date: 12 March 2019  
Our ref: 274805  
Your ref: Mitcheldean SEA and HRA Screening



Alastair Chapman  
Sustainability Team Leader  
Forest of Dean District Council

Horbeam House  
Crewe Business Park  
Electra Way  
Crewe  
Cheshire  
CW1 6GJ

BY EMAIL ONLY  
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Copy to: [clerk@mitcheldeancouncil.co.uk](mailto:clerk@mitcheldeancouncil.co.uk)

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Mr Chapman,

### SEA and HRA Screening of Mitcheldean's Neighbourhood Development Plan

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 21<sup>st</sup> February 2019 which was received by Natural England on the same day.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

#### Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening

We welcome the production of this SEA Screening report. Natural England notes and concurs with the screening outcome i.e. 'that the Mitcheldean Neighbourhood Development Plan will not result in significant environmental effects'.

Further guidance on deciding whether the proposals are likely to have significant environmental effects and the requirements for consulting Natural England on SEA are set out in the [National Planning Practice Guidance](#).

#### Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening

Natural England notes the screening process applied to this Neighbourhood plan. We agree with the conclusion of the report of no likely significant effect upon the named European designated sites:

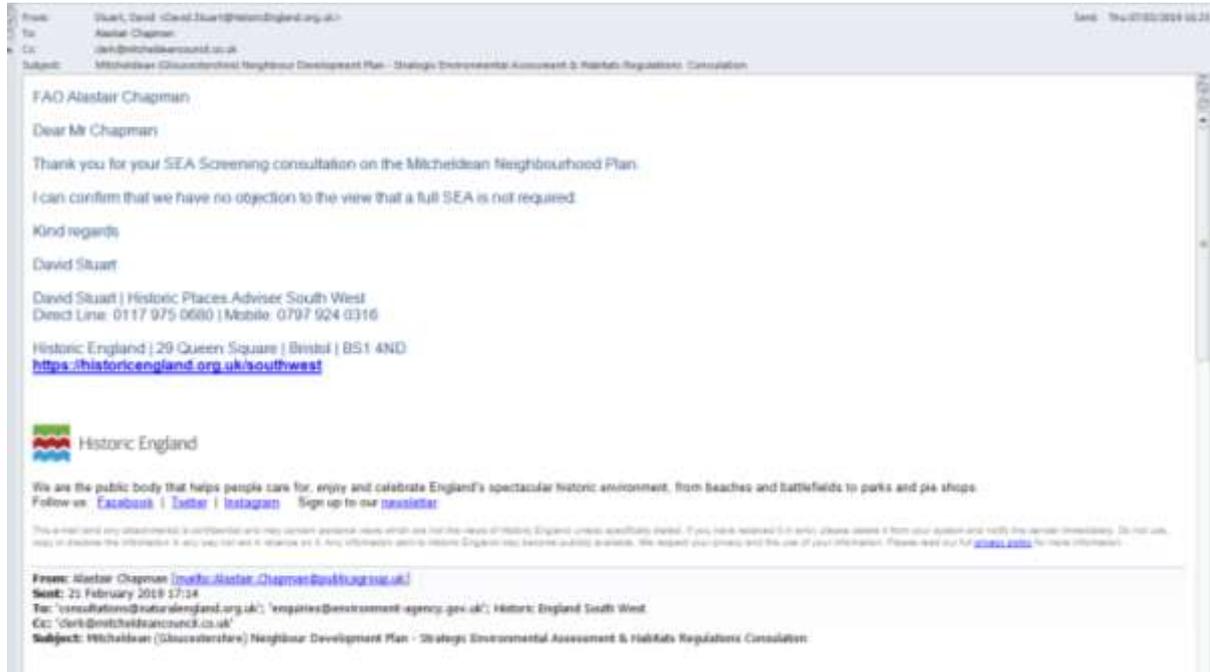
- Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat SAC (Adjoining / Within plan area W)
- Wye Valley Woodlands SAC (Nearest location 8km W)
- River Wye SAC (Nearest location 1.5km W)
- Severn Estuary SAC/SPA Ramsar (Nearest location 10km S)
- Walmore Common SPA Ramsar (Nearest location 5km SE)

We would be happy to comment further should the need arise but if in the meantime you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us.

For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to [consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk).

Yours sincerely

Victoria Kirkham  
Consultations Team





Mr Alastair Chapman  
Forest Of Dean District Council  
Planning Policy  
Council Offices High Street  
Coleford  
Gloucestershire  
GL16 8HG

Our ref: SV/2010/104029/SE-03/SC1-  
L01

Your ref: 118040

Date: 14 March 2019

Dear Mr Chapman

**Mitcheldean (Gloucestershire) Neighbour Development Plan - Strategic  
Environmental Assessment & Habitats Regulations Consultation**

Thank you for referring the above to, please see our comments below:

**Strategic Environmental Assessment:**

The European Union directive 200142/EC requires a SEA to be undertaken for certain types of plans and programmes that would have 'significant' environmental effect(s). Furthermore paragraph: 046 in the Flood Risk and Coastal Change section of the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) (Reference ID: 11-046-20150209) states "a strategic environmental assessment may be required, for example, where:

- a neighbourhood plan allocates sites for development
- the neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan
- the neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan".

To assist your Council's determination of the SEA Screening opinion, we advise that based on the Screening Report submitted, and in consideration of the matters within our remit, we concur that the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) is unlikely to have significant environmental impacts and therefore conclude that a "Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required".

**Habitats Regulation Assessment:**

Article 6(3) of the European Habitats Directive (1992) requires that any plan (or project), which is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site (also known as a "Natura 2000" site), but would be likely to have a significant effect on such a site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to an 'appropriate assessment' of its implications for the European site in view of the site's conservation objectives.

Environment Agency  
Newtown Industrial Estate (Riversmeet House) Northway Lane, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, GL20 8JG.  
Customer services line: 03708 508 508  
[www.gov.uk/environment-agency](http://www.gov.uk/environment-agency)  
Cont'd..

To assist your Council's determination of the HRA Screening opinion, we advise that based on the Screening Report submitted, and in consideration of the matters within our remit, we concur the NDP is considered unlikely to have significant effects on the European designated sites.

It is noted that: "The NDP will form part of the Development Plan for the District. The NDP would be an influencing document in planning decisions and transport strategies. It is considered 'supportive & interpretive' rather than 'instructive'."

The NDP also states that:

"the identification of land for additional housing is proposed."

However, there is no increase likelihood that the allocations within the NDP will have significant impacts on the environment or any protected areas or species.

We would only make substantive further comments on the plan if you were seeking to allocate sites in flood zone 3 and 2 (the latter being used as the 1% climate change extent perhaps).

I trust that the above is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

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End

2