

Natural England Ecological Report of Evidence and Advice to the Environment Agency for Ant Broad and Marshes SSSI Part 3 (June 13)

Aims of the report

The Environment Agency (EA) are undertaking an appropriate assessment on two licences AN/034/0009/008 and AN/034/0009/009 on Ant Broad and Marshes SSSI part of the Broadland SPA/Ramsar and The Broad SAC.

The EA have asked (e-mails of 10th April and at meeting of 18th April and 15th May) Natural England a number of questions to help in the development of their appropriate assessment.

This report collates

- Responses to questions which were not covered in report 2
- Responses to additional questions from the 15th May not covered in report 2
- Information from a recent visit by NE to Unit 11 on May 16 2013.
- Information from Mr Harris

Section A: Responses to questions which were not covered in report 2

Additional information in answer to Questions Relating to the Location of Assessment Cells

1. Could Natural England confirm that the map of the SAC features agreed during the RoC and included in the SOP (Fig. 3.16b) represents our best understanding of the occurrence and spatial extent of the SAC features, and can they be used as a basis for locating Assessment Cells?

1.1 Natural England is unable to locate the report Giller, K.E. (1978). A vegetation description of the Catfield and Irstead Fens, Norfolk. Unpublished report, Nature Conservancy Council, Norwich.

1.2 We are therefore unable to undertake a comparison of locations and extent of key SAC features identified by Giller Parmenter 1991-4 and 1995 and Rick Southwood as part of the ELP 2007-9 surveys to inform final decisions about their occurrence and spatial extent. Therefore we recommend that the EA use the map provided in our first advice note sent on the 17th May 2013.

2. Could Natural England confirm that we are using the most appropriate Assessment Cells for our assessment? Should we include additional Assessment Cells?

2.1 Paragraph 3.4 in our first evidence and advice document stated that "Natural England (therefore) advises that the EA may wish to vary assessment cell size to accommodate the variable size of communities."

2.2 A technical meeting between Natural England, the EA and AMEC was held on the 13th June where this issue was considered. The EA has proposed to provide a technical note to demonstrate that the 200m² grid size is appropriate when the site is such a complex one that all key SAC vegetation communities will occur at a scale much smaller than 200m². Following the production of the technical note Natural England will have further discussions with the EA to agree the most appropriate cell size for the assessment.

2.3 In terms of additional assessment cells, it was agreed at the meeting that an assessment cell should be added based on the location of the Fen Orchid. AMEC will produce a map showing monitoring locations, model grid, assessment cells G and H, ecology (including location of Fen Orchid) and the proposed third assessment cell. Natural England will then comment on the map and confirm the most appropriate cells for the assessment.

Questions relating to the RoC Stage 4 Methodology –

3) Are Natural England still in agreement that the Decision Table, or ‘Risk Matrix’ which forms part of the RoC Stage 4 methodology can be used to inform the acceptable level of abstraction within the vicinity of a GWDTE?

3.1 Natural England are awaiting a more detailed explanation from the EA of the meanings of the Risk Matrix criteria and to see further explanation on weighting before responding to this question.

SECTION B Responses to additional questions from the 15th May

1) The Water Level Management Plans (WLMP) in the vicinity of Catfield would be useful. Chris Bieby has sent us the Catfield WLMP however this seems to cover an area nearer the Upper Thurne Broads & Marshes. Are there other WLMPs closer to Catfield fen?

1.1 There are three WLMPs for the Ant Broads & Marshes SSSI and an ochre study at Sutton. We have provided this information separately.

SECTION C Information from a recent visit by NE to Unit 11 on May 16 2013

1.1 Three fen compartments were visited on 16 May 2013: North Marsh, Middle Marsh and Mill Dyke Marsh. Natural England provided an initial assessment in report number 2, we have since received a report from Bryan Wheeler (which has also been sent directly to the EA).

1.2 Whilst we had hoped to provide comments on Bryan’s report in this third advice note, the hydrological issues Bryan refers to need to be considered by Anna Wetherell and she has been unable to complete this. We will provide comments by the 19th July.

SECTION D: Information from Mr Harris

1. Natural England has permission from Mr and Mrs Harris to provide a report they have had commissioned “Ecological and Stratigraphic Review, Catfield Fen” to EA

We have attached the report and our detailed comments in Annex 1

This report and our evaluation of the information does not lead us to a change in our current advice to date which is that

- changes in Sphagnum extent may be explained by a number of different causes working alone and in combination

- there is potential for hydrological linkage between the Crag and the fen

2. We will be undertaking a review of a number of documents which formed the basis of a compendium of ecological and eco-hydrological evidence agreed between Mr and Mrs harris and Natural England (2011). We will report the findings of this review in our report on July 19th.

Annex 1:Parmenter report and NE comments:



NE comments Jo
Parmenter repor...



Parmenter
Catfield fen stratig.