

101485307

Revision 01

ECOLOGY WORKING GROUP

NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

Meeting:	27 th February 2025, 13:30-15:30
Location:	MS Teams
Chair:	James Meyer
Attendees:	SZC: Steve Mannings (SMan), Alan Lewis (AL), Nick Stayt (NS) – (Observer) ESC: James Meyer (JM) SCC: Andrew Murray-Wood (AMW) Natural England: Parick Robinson (PR) , Sean Mahoney (SM) – (Observer) Environment Agency: Chris Strachan (CS) RSPB: Adam Rowlands (AR) SWT: Ben McFarland (BMcF)
Apologies:	

Meeting Notes:

Welcome and Actions from Previous Meeting

- NS provided an overview of the agenda
- NS provided an overview of the actions from the previous meeting, including:
 - Sizewell C to provide email to ESC on Sizewell Marshes SSSI Landtake – closed.
 - Sizewell C to clarify the term ‘retained safeguarded SSSI’ – closed.
 - RSPB, SZC, ARC colleagues and BM to agree on the approach for natterjack toads – closed. NS confirmed engagement on the Natterjack Toad proposals at Retsoms Field
 - Sizewell C to share the winter lighting plan once available – closed. NS provided an overview of the winter lighting strategy . No observations or comments were raised by members of the Ecology Working Group (EWG).
- Further to actions noted in the October 2024 Mitigation and Monitoring Plan EWG subgroup, SMan provided and overview of piling works to be undertaken in proximity to Fiscal policy associated with the rail route.

2024 Survey results

- AL presented a summary of the Non-breeding waterbird survey results. Noting:
 - Levels of gadwall and shoveler on the Minsmere South Levels was higher than recent average.
 - Levels of gadwall and shoveler on the Sizewell Marshes SSSI continue on existing trends with low number recorded. It was noted that this is a baseline trend and not related to construction works at Sizewell C but more likely linked to habitat transition that has been recorded.
- AL presented a summary of the breeding waterbird survey results. Noting:
 - As with non-breeding birds, high levels recorded on the Minsmere South Levels.
 - Low levels on the Sizewell Marshes SSSI but again consistent with previous survey evidence.

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- Booming bittern was also noted. AR noted that this was consistent with the RSPB findings from 2024.
- AL presented a summary of the breeding bird surveys at the Marsh Harrier Compensatory Site. Noting foraging marsh harrier were recorded on all visits and results indicate that it is providing suitable habitat for marsh harrier prey species
- AL presented a summary of the breeding marsh harrier survey results, noting:
 - Substantial increase in activity from previous years of survey within the compensatory site with lower levels on the Minsmere South Levels, most likely linked to the quality/quantity of optimum foraging habitat so close to the breeding site. EWG acknowledged that this is positive and encouraging to see the recorded level of usage but that ongoing monitoring is critical to determine whether the activity patterns being observed continue to follow this trend or not. A key point raised by AR was that if birds can find prey closer to the nest they are unlikely to want to travel further.
 - Discussion was held on the limited movements between the Sizewell Marshes SSSI and Minsmere South levels and AL noted that in the 2025 survey window an emphasis will be placed on identification of the individual marsh harriers nesting on the Sizewell Marshes SSSI to further understand their interaction with birds from the Minsmere South Levels.
- NS presented a summary of the reptile translocation works undertaken in 2024. The total of 711 were relocated with the majority released at Wild Studio (85%) and Great Mount Walk (3%). Of the captured reptiles 14 were adder, 23 were grass snake, 84 were slow worm and the remainder common lizard. The remaining carrying capacity at the reptile receptor sites is approximately 92% (another 16,426 reptiles).
- NS presented a summary of bat surveys undertaken in 2024, covering:
 - Roost loss associated with tree felling and provision of roost compensation in accordance with the licence
 - It was noted that compensatory roost resources are being occupied by bats (low numbers)
 - It was also noted that 38% of tree veteranisation features had been identified to have developed into potential roost features. Of these, three were occupied. It was noted by AMW and BMcF if the methodology could be shared for wider learning and which features have been most successful.
 - Lighting and noise monitoring are continuing in accordance with the licence. There have been notifications to NE where thresholds have been exceeded, however these have been noted to be vegetation management in proximity to the fixed noise monitoring locations.
 - Bat activity across the site was higher than in 2023 but similar to levels recorded in 2022. It was noted that activity across the site appears to be changing at certain locations, with some areas decreasing but most increasing. BMcF noted the measure of success is population growth rather than general activity recorded in particular individual locations.
 - Bat assemblage recorded across the site were in accordance with previous survey results.
- NS provided an overview of the National Vegetation Classification and plot monitoring Surveys undertaken of the Sizewell Marshes SSSI, noting:

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- Some areas of the SSSI have transitioned from Fen Meadow habitats but large areas of site remain fen meadow.
- BMcF queried if the water quality work has shown that there has been any change in nutrition composition of surface water? **Action – SZC to review this against existing monitoring data.**

Management of Shingle Strip – Method Statement

- SMan presented an overview of the updated method that was shared in advance of the meeting, replacing the existing approach set out in the Construction Method Statement.
- AR noted the importance of ensuring all relevant parties are aware of these proposed changes.
- SMan noted that the Code of Construction Practice (CoCP) (Requirement 2) is to be re-discharged to include a statement to allow minor amendments to the CoCP to be held in a register held by the Planning Group. These would need to be discussed in the relevant forums and would be for this group to ensure alignment across all workstreams prior to making a change.
- It was agreed by the group the updated approach was suitable. A vote was held and a unanimous decision was made to approve the updated method.
- **Decision – Approval of updated method statement for further approvals**

Mitigation Works Planned in 2025

- AL provided an overview of the mitigation works planned at the Main Development Site (MDS) and Off-Site Infrastructure (OSI) sites including:
 - Installation of the acoustic fence and bund.
 - Continuation of bat box installation and tree veteranisation works.
 - Remainder of tree felling at the MDS and relevant OSI sites.
 - Badger sett closures at the MDS and relevant OSI sites.
 - Translocation of plant species (man /bee orchid) to Wild Aldhurst.
 - Translocation and local displacement of water vole associated with the Two Village Bypass River Alde Crossing.
- AMW asked if the biological records could be shared with the records centre. **Action – Sizewell C to provide biological records.**

Further Clarification to Terrestrial Ecological Monitoring and Mitigation Plan (TEMMP)

- NS identified that as noted in revision 2 (Jan 2025) Sizewell C will be looking to update the methods associated with Bat Statics
- NS clarified Breeding Waterbird surveys are not proposed beyond 2025 based on survey evidence (1 pair of gadwall, this is consistent with previous survey data). This was acknowledged by BMcF in suggesting that zero values are important for ecological monitoring but its clear the decline of breeding waterbird species on the Sizewell Marshes

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SSSI is not related to Sizewell C. It was agreed to discontinue breeding bird water monitoring from 2026 and this would be amended in a minor revision of the TEMMP to be recorded by the EWG.

- NS noted there are two methods to be shared for comment and approval (fish and terrestrial invertebrates)
- NS noted that updated are being made to method statements that support the licences to keep the DCO and licencing requirements separate.

Land Management Activities

- NS provided an overview of the land management activities proposed across the EDF Sizewell Estate (where related to Sizewell C) in 2025.

AOB

- NS raised the Fen Meadow and Wet Woodland workshop held on the 14th February and presented the comments received in response to the material shared.
- NS and SMan noted the updates that were made in response and raised the Fen Meadow Quantum in the Deed of obligation. It was identified that this is based on the fen meadow loss at the time the Order was made. Updated evidence collected in 2024 updated the quantum of fen meadow loss (a reduction). It was noted it was not proposed to vary the Deed to reflect this at this time, however should it be varied in the future, SZC would be looking to update this value at that time. This position was accepted by the members of the EWG.
- SMan queried if there were any other comments on the proposal
- No further comments were raised on the strategy.

Actions raised during the meeting:

Date Raised	Ref.	Description	Lead	Date Due
February 2025	Feb25-1	Sizewell C to review existing water quality monitoring data to see if there has been any changes in nutrient composition of surface water which has resulted in the habitat changes noted within the Sizewell Marshes SSSI Plot monitoring.	SZC	Next meeting
February 2025	Feb25-2	Sizewell C to provide biological records to SBIS	SZC	Ongoing

Author: Nick Stayt (SZC)