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WATER MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP

Meeting Type:	DoO Governance Group Meeting
Date:	7th July 2025
Venue:	MS Teams
Meeting Chair:	
Attendees:	SZC: Steve Mannings (SMan), Nick Stayt (NS) – (Observer), Jen Mills (JM) – (Observer), Joe Shipperbottom (JS) – (Observer) ESC: Bethany Rance (BR), James Meyer (JM) – (Observer), SCC: Jason Skilton (JSk) EA: Ayden Hassan (AH), Jackie James (JJ) – (Observer) NE: Sean Mahoney (SM), Nikolas Bertholdt (NB) – (Observer) East Suffolk Drainage Board: Alastair Bloomfield (AB) Sizewell B: Mark Halpin (MH), Tim McHardy (TM) – (Observer) WLMA: Judith Stout (JS)
Apologies:	
Meeting Record produced by:	Caitlin Murphy (SZC)
Next Meeting Date:	16th October 2025

Summary / Key Discussion

Meeting Notes:

Actions raised during the previous meeting:

Date Raised	Ref.	Description	Lead	Date Due
07/10/2024	1	SMan to share note on accessibility of water monitoring locations	SZC	07/04/2025
07/04/2025	2	Group to agree ToR by the end of April	Working Group	01/05/2025
07/04/2025	3	SZC to incorporate annotated map at end of interpretive report to illustrate site activities occurring throughout the year in relation to monitoring points	SZC	07/07/2025
07/04/2025	4	Group to provide feedback on interpretive report within 5 days	Working Group	12/04/2025

Action 1: covered later in meeting

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Action 2: the ToR are being finalised and will be sent to the Environmental Review Group for approval this week, with the goal of completing this process by mid-July.

Action 3: Ongoing action. Retrospective action to include in future interpretative reporting. Limited to site activities considered to have the potential to affect groundwater levels and water quality within the SSSI such as construction of the cut off wall, dewatering activities, environmental barrier sheet pile construction and Sizewell drain diversion

Action 4: closed.

Terms of Reference

- This will not be a standing agenda item, but updates can be shared during the agenda creation process if desired.

Monthly Reporting

Key themes across quarter

- Rainfall has been lower than average for three consecutive months (March - 9%, April - 39% and May - 43% of long-term averages) which is reflected in fewer triggers being passed at P8 and P14.
- However, upper trigger passes at P2 and P12 for April and May indicate that Sizewell Marshes are still experiencing high water levels, despite the below-average rainfall. This is likely due to insufficient ditch maintenance, resulting in reduced flow through the marshes.
- Ionic composition analysis confirms that water chemistry is consistent with baseline quality.
- The variability in baseline results highlights the complexity and dynamism of the natural hydrological system, as evidenced by current monitoring results.
- The conclusion is that construction activities during the quarter have not adversely affected water levels or water quality.

Monitoring Locations

- NB provided a summary of Natural England's position following review of the data provided. NB concluded that there appears to be an impedance of outflow from the site in the lower reaches, leading to pooling. This trend has been observed over the year. It would be unwise to take urgent, reactive measures to lower water levels during this dry period, as such actions could have unintended consequences.
- NB emphasised that the trigger is set at the 30th percentile, and the observed variations remain within the natural range, so there is no significant concern.
- Additionally, NB noted that levels at P8 and P14 are somewhat low, which is not unexpected given the dry spring conditions.

Action - NS to distribute the Botanical Survey of Fen Meadow Communities on Sizewell Marshes SSSI with the group

Update on status of activities

- Latest available images of the Sizewell Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) triangle were shown and discussed, including the Sizewell drain diversion and the status of the works associated with the SSSI crossing

2024 Annual Report

- The key findings of the annual report were discussed. This included:

  - The annual report indicates that water levels remained high throughout 2024, attributed to above-average rainfall and the influence of long-term water level management practices at the sluice.
  - Elevated groundwater levels are still observed at P2, P4, and P12, which have been challenging to access this year and the preceding years for ditch maintenance.
  - Average levels in the Crag monitoring borehole within the marsh have shown an increase compared to the baseline average, aligning with offsite monitoring locations.
  - In conclusion, there were no construction activities in 2024 that would impact water levels. Therefore, these levels are considered representative of natural variation and the effects of broader catchment and ditch management activities.
  - Water Quality monitoring results were consistent with the long term baseline
  - The annual report compiles data that continues to reflect previous observations. While there are changes in how the marsh drains across different areas, significant variations in water quality are not being detected by monitoring, except near the marshes, which is not surprising due to backflow from the sluice.
  - There is no evident relationship between the central peat and groundwater in the crag.
- The report will be released as a final document, with this forum serving as a platform for collective discussion.

Action - NS to distribute Sizewell Marshes SSSI Water Monitoring Annual Report 2024

Action – WMWG members to review 2024 Annual Report and provides points for discussion within the next WMWG meeting (as required)

Walkover – June 2025

Summary of findings

- In assessing new locations for consistent data collection, it has been noted that high water levels are creating access issues, a concern that has persisted for several years.
- During a site visit in June to the SSSI, efforts were made to explore alternative access methods and evaluate the current status and protection measures. A condition assessment was conducted, focusing on installations and identifying any deficiencies or potential efficiencies.
- SJ reported that P8 was resurveyed and re-levelled, while P9 requires redrilling.
- Access issues persist for P1, P4, and P7. Currently, P4 and P7 are unlikely to be accessed safely from the SSSI.
- The plan is to relocate P7 in line with the drainage run once installed and made into a surface monitoring location.
- P1 is accessible but may be lost; it needs to be moved outside the red line boundary. The plan is to combine it into a new P1 location.
- P4 remains inaccessible, and SM indicated that there is currently no clear solution. The proposal is to abandon it in favour of the new P1 and P7 locations. In the future, if the Sizewell drain is diverted and conditions stabilise, there may be an opportunity to revisit the installation of a piezometer in that area.

Vote - The group agreed in principle the approach for P1, P4, and P7, including the transition of P7 to a surface water location upon the diversion of the drain, the identification of a new location for P1, and the abandonment of P4 until further notice. This will be reviewed in a year (i.e. in 2026) once the Sizewell drain has been implemented. SZC will develop a proposal detailing how this will be executed in conjunction with the design of the diversion.

Action – SZC to develop a proposal detailing how approach for P1, P4, and P7 will be executed in conjunction with the design of the diversion.

- The group agreed in principle the proposed approach for P7 and P1, which will involve piezometry at either location based on the outlined preferences.

- SM stated that SZC planned to take samples of drainage water from FM1 to FM5, considering that water quality within the SSSI is more complex than previously understood. Challenges have arisen; the field designated for sampling is no longer Fen Meadow due to persistently high groundwater levels; the area is flat with no obvious depressions, making it difficult to find suitable sampling locations; and much of the area is underwater, complicating discrete sampling efforts. This has resulted in significant delays in sample collection, raising questions about the merit of the data obtained.
- SM went on the state that consideration has been given to relocating the sampling onto the adjacent western field which supports fen meadow, however there are no depressions from which samples could be taken and the field also lies outside the area within which potential effects from SZC were predicted to occur. It was therefore agreed that no immediate action would be taken to relocate the sample points.
- JJ inquired about the duration of water monitoring, suggesting that historical data would be valuable for understanding water chemistry when the Fen Meadow was intact.

Vote - The group unanimously agreed to pause sampling of FM1 to FM5 immediately until an alternative sampling strategy is developed and agreed upon.

AoB

- JJ mentioned that P12 has been used in consents for the SSSI Crossing as a trigger point. If it is modified or if trigger levels change, the permit will need to be adjusted accordingly. SM noted that the monitoring is short term and the modifications would be after this requirement finishes to avoid modifications to permits.

Action – During the next meeting the group to determine if WMWG meetings should be held quarterly or biannually.

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Actions agreed in meeting:

Date Raised	Ref.	Description	Lead	Date Due
07/07/2025	1	NS to distribute the Botanical Survey of Fen Meadow Communities on Sizewell Marshes SSSI to the group	SZC	Next meeting
07/07/2025	2	NS to distribute the Sizewell Marshes SSSI Water Monitoring Annual Report 2024	SZC	25/07/2025
07/07/2025	3	SZC to develop a proposal detailing how approach for P1, P4, and P7 will be executed in conjunction with the design of the diversion.	SZC	Next meeting
07/07/2025	4	The group to determine if WMWG meetings should be held quarterly or biannually	WMWG	Next meeting