

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO** Conservation Advisory Group 28<sup>th</sup> May 2003  
Leader & Conservation Portfolio Holder  
**AUTHOR/S:** Ecology Officer

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### DESIGNATION OF EVERS DEN AND WIMPOLE WOODS SSSI AND CANDIDATE SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION – MEMBER’S UPDATE

#### Purpose

1. To update Members about a proposal by English Nature to designate Eversden and Wimpole Woods as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and seek authority to support the designation as a candidate *Special Area of Conservation* (SAC) for the barbestelle bat.

#### Background

2. A report was presented to the Conservation Advisory Group on the 25<sup>th</sup> March 2003 where details were provided on the special interest of the woods for the barbestelle bat, and the implications of the cSAC designation.
3. Eversden and Wimpole Woods is being renotified and extended by English Nature as a SSSI under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The barbestelle bat is a species listed upon the ‘Habitats Directive’ (Council Directive 92/43/EEC). The Habitats Regulations provide a means by which Special Areas of Conservation can be designated to protect those sites identified as of special importance for listed species.
4. The Eversden and Wimpole Woods have public access by means of public footpaths. Members were concerned at the possible restrictions upon public access that the proposed designations might have.
5. Wimpole Woods are owned by the National Trust. Footpaths that are not public rights of way should therefore be considered as permissive paths. Eversden Woods are in private ownership.
6. English Nature is responsible for identifying sites that qualify for SAC designation and for undertaking the necessary consultation.

#### Considerations

7. A supplementary paper is appended to this report. The supplementary paper details the response from English Nature to a number of questions that Members sought further information upon.
8. A formal response may be made to English Nature on the revised SSSI designation up to the 11<sup>th</sup> June 2003.

#### Options

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I) That members authorise confirmation of support for the proposed designation of the Special Area of Conservation in the response to English Nature's consultation letter, on the understanding that there will be no restrictions to existing rights of access or public enjoyment of the woods.

II) That members object to the designation stating the reasons for this option.

### **Financial Implications**

10 None

### **Legal Implications**

11 (a) *Land management*

Where land is currently managed to sustain the site's special features of wildlife interest, the Habitat Regulations are likely to have little effect upon the management.

(b) *Planning Permission*

New planning applications for developments or land use change that might affect a candidate SAC are subject to statutory consultation under the Habitat Regulations. The Planning Authority should consult English Nature if they are uncertain about the possible effects of a development proposal, and are specifically required to have regard to their advice.

The Planning Department will decide whether a plan or project, alone or in combination with others, is likely to have a significant effect on a site. If so, it will undertake an 'appropriate assessment' of the plan's implications with respect to the site's 'conservation objectives', and will have to consult English Nature.

(c) *Safeguard measures*

English Nature will not consent any operation that may damage special features of a candidate SAC.

### **Staffing Implications**

12. The Ecology Officer will have to pay particular attention to applications for development within an eleven kilometre radius of the designation site (the distance that the bats have been recorded flying of an evening to feed). Such applications may be subject to an Appropriate Assessment.

### **Sustainability Implications**

13. The designation of a SAC will make a contribution towards the network of European-wide Natura 2000 sites. One of the primary objectives of this network is to sustain the present level of biodiversity on a Europe-wide basis.

### **Consultations**

14. English Nature is undertaking the consultation process as it is the lead body.

### **Conclusions/Summary**

18 i) The majority of paths within the Wimpole Wood are permissive paths, therefore their management is at the discretion of the National Trust. Eversden Woods is

accessed by public rights of way. The closure or alteration of public footpaths would be subject to the scrutiny by the County Council's Definitive Map Officer via the normal manner. However, the proposed designation will not effect the existing public access.

ii) "Views About Management" is provided by English Nature and is appended as Appendix 2.

iii) A formal management plan will be produced by the National Trust and English Nature on designation of the SAC and is expected to concentrate on woodland management techniques for individual trees identified as important habitats.

iv) The present management regime is unlikely to be significantly changed by the proposed designations.

v) As far as normal use of the woods is concerned, English Nature do not envisage there being any conflict between people and bats.

### **Recommendation**

- 19 It is recommended that the Conservation Advisory Group resolve to advise the Conservation Portfolio Holder to accept options I above and:
- (a) Authorise the Conservation Manager to respond on behalf of SCDC to confirm support for the proposed designation of the Special Area of Conservation on behalf of SCDC in response to English Nature's consultation letter, on the understanding that there will be no restrictions to existing rights of access or public enjoyment of the woods.
  - (b) Instruct the Ecology Officer to draft appropriate planning guidance for use by Members and staff.

**Background Papers:** the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: "*Designation of Eversden and Wimpole Woods SSSI and Candidate Special Area of Conservation*", Rob Mungovan, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2003  
"*Special Areas of Conservation – What they mean to you*", English Nature, 2002  
"*Special Areas of Conservation – Questions and answers*", English Nature, 2002  
"*Eversden and Wimpole Woods SSSI – supporting information, a supplement to the notification package*", English Nature, February 2003.  
"*Eversden and Wimpole Woods SSSI – notification under section 28C of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*" English Nature, February 2003.  
*Planning Policy Guidance note 9: Nature Conservation*, DoE, 1994

### **Papers appended to the report**

Designation of Eversden and Wimpole Woods SSSI and Candidate Special Area of Conservation – summary of questions put to English Nature.

Views About Management (paper copies only), English Nature.

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