

SPA Mitigation Strategy

Overview

This work has utilised work in two of the objective strands – Planning & Development and Access & Recreation. The evidence base has informed a planning document to mitigate against significant effects on the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA (the SPA) caused by an increase in visitors from new development.



Summary

The visitor access study was commissioned, through objective 2 of the NIA, to provide information and analysis of visitor activity across the SPA. It provided a strategic overview of visitor intensity across the SPA and recommendations on how to manage access and minimise disturbance to the SPA features. This was published in 2014.

Around 2014 the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) was nearing some critical stages in its preparation. Like all plans and strategies a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) was required. Early stages of this required further data on access to the SPA. The access study was able to provide this level of detail.

Following the work on the HRA and Natural England's (NE) comments on the Pre-Submission JCS, wording was added into the JCS that meant that development near to the SPA would need to mitigate its significant in-combination effects. An agreement was reached between NE and the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit (NNJPU) that a mitigation strategy would be developed to assist with the implementation with reference to this in the JCS. This meant that NE was satisfied that the JCS was sound in relation to this matter.

The visitor access study raw data were scrutinised to understand visitor patterns; it was determined that new residential development within a 3km buffer zone around the SPA would cause an in-combination impact on the SPA through increased visitor numbers.

Further dialogue with partners was undertaken to understand what measures would be required to mitigate this impact, and through this a per-dwelling charge was evidenced.



To enable mitigation measures to be embedded into the planning framework a draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was consulted on by East Northamptonshire Council and the Borough Council of Wellingborough, the work and drafting being coordinated by the NNJPU. Following the consultation and responses received a final document was produced that has been adopted by both councils. The SPD is being implemented and a £269.44 mitigation charge is being collected for each new dwelling in the buffer zone.

A programme of works will be established and the mitigation measures implemented.

Wins

- Joint Core Strategy and SPD adopted using this evidence base with robust policies in place for the SPA.
- The overarching study meant that in the region of £40k was saved from NNJPU's limited budget.
- The NNJPU involvement in the NIA Steering Group meant that there was a wide understanding of the work taking place and being able to utilise this in different ways across North Northamptonshire.
- Range of partners working together.
- Opportunities taken to collaborate on a range of work to feed into a range of outputs.

Key message

Partnership working and dialogue can mean that unexpected gains can be sought through long term involvement, understanding and discussion.