

7th April 2011

Our ref:

Your ref:



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Dear Patrick

South Gloucestershire Core Strategy: Habitats Regulations Assessment

Thank you for consulting Natural England on the above document.

We consider the revised Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) provides a detailed and systematic assessment of Core Strategy policies, as set out in the Pre-Submission document, in terms of their likely effect on European Sites both within and near to the district. Furthermore we are satisfied that the impacts of the Plan, proposed mitigation, likely temporary and/or residual effects on site integrity and conclusions of their significance are clearly described and reasonable.

Core Strategy Submission Document

We are, therefore, pleased to note that the recommendations set out in the HRA have been positively reflected in the proposed changes to Core Strategy policy wording. In particular we welcome the amendments to the Severnside policy, previously of greatest concern to Natural England in terms of possible impacts on European Sites within the Plan area. We are satisfied that this policy now more effectively communicates the importance of the Severn Estuary and its protection in law, and provides a positive planning framework for the mitigation and management measures necessary for its ongoing protection. More generally, we welcome the revised natural environment and green infrastructure policies, which we recognise are intended to be cross cutting, and should further support the protection and enhancement of European Sites, including the Severn Estuary, as well as other environmental assets within the district.

On this basis I am pleased to confirm that Natural England considers the Habitats Regulations Assessment "fit for purpose" and that we concur with its conclusions that implementation of the South Gloucestershire Core Strategy is not likely to result in a significant effect on the integrity of European Sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

I hope this letter is clear and helpful, and look forward to working with the Council in the future to ensure South Gloucestershire's natural environment is conserved, enhanced and managed for the benefit of present and future generations.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Grundy
Lead Adviser
Sustainable Land Use