

Date: 16 September 2010
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ENGLAND

Mr R Farhall
Clerk
Rye Town council
Town Hall
Rye
TN31 7LA

International House
Dover Place
Ashford
Kent
TN23 1HU

T 0300 060 4796

Dear Mr Farhall,

European Birds Directive: Natura 2000**Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Sites)****Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay: proposed amendments to Special Protection Area (SPA)**

I am writing to inform you as a stakeholder with an interest in the Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or Hastings Cliff to Pett Beach SSSI that the UK Government is considering amendments to the existing Dungeness to Pett Level SPA (as classified on 2 August 1999) and the designation of a new Ramsar site. This is because the area hosts species or habitats of European and international importance. The definition of SPA and Ramsar sites is provided overleaf. This letter marks the start of formal consultation on behalf of the Government with owners, occupiers and other relevant bodies regarding the proposed new and amended designations.

Specifically, it is proposed to:

- designate a new Ramsar site because of the area's international importance for wetland habitats and species;
- change the name of the "Dungeness to Pett Level SPA" to "Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SPA" to more accurately reflect the extent of the designation;
- add additional qualifying bird species and assemblages to the SPA citation;
- extend the existing SPA to include additional areas of European importance for birds;
- delete small areas from the SPA that are not of European importance for birds.

Please find enclosed citations that list the features of European and international importance occurring in the SPA (including proposed extensions) and proposed Ramsar site, and maps which show the area of the proposed new and amended designations. Please note that your constituents who own or occupy land within the Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay and/or Hastings Cliff to Pett Beach SSSIs have received a more comprehensive set of seven maps. Please also note that not all the SSSI land is necessarily included in both, or in some circumstances, either proposed site. We would be grateful if you could circulate this communication to all parish councillors within your parish.

The SPA designation is proposed under the European Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC) which requires Member States to conserve the habitats of certain species of birds and to designate the most suitable areas. The designation forms part of a network of European sites of wildlife importance known as Natura 2000. Measures to protect and manage such sites are set out in the European Habitats Directive (92/43/EC) and are transposed into national law by means of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. These, together with the Government's Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (PPS9), set out the requirements for local planning authorities and statutory undertakers.

The Ramsar Convention (Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat) was signed in 1971 and ratified by the UK Government in 1976. The Convention requires signatory states to protect wetlands of international importance, including those that are important for waterfowl. The Government's obligations under the Convention are primarily met by means of the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). In a statement issued in November 2000, the Government also require that as a matter of policy, Ramsar sites should be afforded the same protection and management as Natura 2000 sites.

The Birds Directive does not permit social or economic considerations to influence the choice of sites or their boundaries. The UK as a member state must identify the sites and boundaries based only on the presence of qualifying species specified in the Directive.

Whilst the purpose of the above designations is to conserve biodiversity, it is acknowledged that there is a need to take account of economic, social, cultural and regional issues in the context of the general objective of sustainable development. In many cases, the special interest of sites may have resulted from human activities and may require the maintenance, or indeed the encouragement of these in the future. These issues will be of importance to the future management of the site and may need to be the subject of further discussions with Natural England.

Whilst all decision-making regarding the identification and consideration of the designation must be made on the basis of scientific ecological evidence, it is important that the social, economic and environmental impacts of this designation are understood. To this end an initial impact assessment has been produced by Natural England in accordance with Government guidance. Impact assessments are used to understand any consequences of a proposal.

The purpose of this consultation is to seek the view of all interested parties on:

- the scientific case for the proposed amendments to the SPA and the designation of the new Ramsar site; and
- the assessment of the likely social, economic and environmental impacts of the new and amended designations.

The initial impact assessment and all other relevant documents including maps at a more detailed scale are available to view on our website at:

http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/south_east/ourwork/dungenessconsultation

You are invited to provide your views on the proposed amendments to the Dungeness to Pett Level SPA and the proposed designation of the Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay Ramsar site and also on the initial impact assessment. You can submit your comments in writing by email or by letter using the following Freepost address:

Freepost RSBT-CHAB-JJAY
Dungeness Consultation
Natural England
International House
9th Floor
Dover Place
Ashford
Kent TN23 1HU

Comments on the initial impact assessment can also be submitted on line using the form provided in the above mentioned link. The deadline for responses for both the scientific case for the designation and the initial impact assessment is 13 December 2010.

After the consultation, Natural England will report to Defra on stakeholder views submitted through the formal consultation. In January 2010 Natural England plan to submit the following documents to Defra for Cabinet Committee consideration:

- a) The final recommendations on the proposed amendments to the SPA and designation of a Ramsar site;
- b) A revised impact assessment;
- c) A report on the consultation with stakeholders and interested parties.

If you have any queries please contact Sinéad McDonnell or Claudie Sculley in the Natural England designation team.

Yours sincerely,



Claudie Sculley

Dungeness consultation team
Direct Dial: 0300 060 4796
Email: dungenessconsultation@naturalengland.org.uk
Webpage: http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/south_east/ourwork/dungenessconsultation

Encl.: 8 documents

Citation for Special Protection Area (SPA)
Citation for Ramsar
Potential Special Protection Area (1 overview map)
Proposed area for deletion from land previously classified as SPA (1 Map)
Proposed Ramsar Site (1 overview map)
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
Natura 2000: European wildlife sites
Copy of letter sent to owners/occupiers of land within the Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay and/or Hastings Cliff to Pett Beach SSSIs