

0012-39



Kent Team
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Mr J Paine
Coldharbour
Old Romney
ROMNEY MARSH
Kent TN29 9ST

File TN01-2-LAG

4 August 1997

Dear Mr Paine

**Development of Lydd Airport
Dungeness SSSI, SPA and SAC**

Thank you for coming in to meet me to discuss the runway development, and for informing me that your consultant dealing with the renewal of planning permission for the runway will be Mr Howard Courtley.

Since my last letter, of 28 January 1997, we have received new guidance as to how to approach the review of planning permissions which affect SPAs and SACs, and I passed these to you at our meeting. I would be grateful if you could make these available to Mr Courtley, and ask him to allow sufficient time to complete this work.

To summarise what I explained to you this morning it is important that the planning permission is reviewed to ensure that implications of the development to features that have been identified as being of international significance are reconsidered and the effects made clear. English Nature will expect this work to be done properly, and measures set in hand to ensure that the development does not affect the international importance of the site. We would expect Shepway District Council to revoke planning permission if damage is likely to occur, unless the project is of overriding public interest.

The issues which are of concern are as follows:

1. We are worried about the width of the safety strip adjacent to the runway, and the implications for the ponds and shingle ridges. We would want to be assured that these will not be affected if the development goes ahead, and expect this to be part of a condition of the development
2. At the public inquiry in 1988 the Nature Conservancy Council submitted evidence regarding the effects of air pollutants on lichens, which are an important component of the shingle vegetation, and therefore the SAC interest. We want the issue of air pollution from aircraft to be re-addressed, and the likely impacts on lichens predicted.

As far as the impacts of disturbance on birds are concerned we have discussed this issue with the RSPB. We are not aware of any further evidence regarding the impact of aircraft on birds, and we will therefore probably not object on these grounds.

You will recall that your predecessor objected to the designation of the SPA. This is the one objection that has not yet been resolved at Dungeness, and it is holding up the designation of the SPA. Given that there are no objections on bird grounds to the development, I would like to ask whether your company still wish to object to the designation of the SPA. A rapid response on this issue would be helpful, as the Department of the Environment are keen to proceed with the designation of this site.

Yours sincerely,

Brian Banks
Brian Banks
Conservation Officer





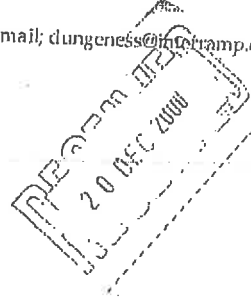
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13 December 2000

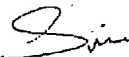
Dear Robin

I attach the information I promised to supply you with at our talk the other day. I have tried to keep as free of jargon as I can but we all speak in specialised languages and no doubt some has crept in. Please feel free to contact me if you require any further details or clarification.

Thank you for your time last month - I felt that was a useful and open discussion.

We will submit our full planning application to Shepway District Council probably early in the New Year.

Yours sincerely


Simon Bastin
Dungeness area Manager



The RSPB works with bird and habitat conservation organisations in a global partnership called BirdLife International.
Patron Her Majesty the Queen President John Peckham Chairman of Council John Lawton Chief Executive Barbara Young RSPB registered charity no 202076

Saving the birds ~ Saving the future

Background bird use information regarding proposal to create ca 26 hectares of wet reedbed at Dungeness RSPB Reserve

1.0 Executive Summary

- The RSPB is proposing management work to create a 26ha reedbed on its reserve at Dungeness.
- The 26ha area in question has been managed for waterfowl (ducks, geese and swans) by the RSPB as part of its reserve since 1993.
- As a result of turning this area into a reedbed the larger numbers of common birds using the area will be replaced by a smaller number of rare reedbed birds.
- This paper looks at the current use of the area in question by birds and the changes in the bird populations that will occur as a result of the proposed plan. This is placed in the context of the surrounding reserve area and in the wider context of Romney Marsh.

2.0 Introduction

The RSPB is proposing to create a 26ha reedbed on its reserve at Dungeness which provide habitat for a number of rare bird species. The land in question is currently made up of two open, largely unvegetated gravel pits and surrounding open rough grassland which are used by large numbers of birds of low conservation priority. The plan will create in place of this, one large area of reedbed with small hidden areas of open water.

The aim of this paper is to examine past and current bird use of the area in question to support the RSPB view that

- the creation of a reedbed will lead to fewer birds using the specific area and probably less birds using the reserve as a whole
- that the bird use of this area is small in the context of the wider area
- that the birds using the reedbed are less of a potential threat to aircraft

3.0 The habitats

3.1 Gravel pits and grassland

This open area is currently attractive to swans, lapwings and especially to geese and wigeon because of this mix of grassland and open water. The area of open water is large and visibility is good making the birds feel secure. The grassland areas around the open water have been managed for waterfowl since the RSPB acquired this land in 1993. In autumn the arable areas nearby not owned by the RSPB left as stubble increase the attraction of this area for wildfowl. The species using this area currently are widespread and common and are not a conservation priority. All these species can be found in large numbers across Romney Marsh.

3.2 Reedbed

Reedbed is a scarce habitat in the UK and supports a small range of bird species most of which live their entire lives in the reedbed. Many of these species are rare in the UK and several are already present on the RSPB reserve at Dungeness. The species in question are the bittern, marsh harrier, bearded tit, Cetti's warbler and garganey.

The birds using this area will change as a result of this proposed habitat manipulation from moderately large numbers of wildfowl (ducks, geese and swans), to much smaller numbers of these more specialist rare reedbed birds using the area throughout the year.

4.0 Bird data

All birds using the RSPB reserve are counted twice each month using standard methods. The reserve is subdivided into compartments. The counts are stored on a database. In addition, background information on birds using the wider area is collected. All bird counts used below result from this process. Counts from the last five years have been used (1995/96 to 1999/00).

4.1 Current bird use of the area

Table 1; Peak Monthly Count of birds using the proposed reedbed area (note that not all these peak counts will occur in the same month. The bottom "Total" figure is the highest count in any month of the year and may include one or more of the counts above it)

	95/96	96/97	97/98	98/99	99/00
Mute swan	25	12	11	6	10
Goose species	340	339	334	370	390
Wigeon	2550	5000	2562	1300	695
Other duck species	85	21	52	71	59
Lapwings	750	600	3500	350	500
Total including above	3724	5082	4187	2077	872

The above species will be affected by the change in this habitat in the following ways

4.1.1 Mute swans

A maximum of 25 mute swans use this area. Swans will breed in the reedbed especially in the early years whilst there are areas of open water available and will continue to do so as the reedbed grows and closes up. Numbers will remain at about the same level or lower.

4.1.2 Geese species

The peak numbers of geese (greylag and Canada) occur in late summer when they are moulting and are more or less flightless. Because of this they require open areas of water with good visibility for security, next to grassland which they can walk out onto to feed. The current habitat is ideal. Their numbers will decline sharply as a result of reedbed creation. No other areas on the reserve are suitable for them at this time of year and we anticipate a decline in numbers across the reserve as a result of this work.

4.1.3 Wigeon

As can be seen from the table this area has become less important to wigeon in recent years. This is a result of more habitat being created for them elsewhere on the RSPB reserve and elsewhere on Romney Marsh by other landowners. Again, this is a species of grassland and open water and peak numbers occur between December and January. Numbers will fall in this specific area and more than likely across the reserve as a result of this work - some will relocate elsewhere on the reserve and others to other sites across Romney Marsh.

4.1.4 Other duck species

Excluding wigeon small numbers of ducks use this area. This is likely to remain more or less unchanged as a result of the plan.

4.1.5 Lapwing

This species does not use reedbeds at all and numbers will drop to almost zero in this specific area as a result of conversion to reedbed.

4.2 Conclusion

The use of the area by the species mentioned above will drop sharply especially for the geese and lapwings.

4.3 The wider area and other species

All the above mentioned bird species are monitored on the reserve and across the whole of Romney Marsh. The number of all species using the proposed reedbed area in relation to the rest of the reserve and to Romney Marsh as a whole is examined below.

4.3.1 Mute Swans

The number of mute swans using the proposed reedbed area is small (max 25). The maximum counted on the reserve in 1999/2000 was 123 and between 300 and 400 are present on Romney Marsh during the winter. The creation of the reedbed will not affect the numbers or movements of this species.

4.3.2 Geese

The numbers on Romney Marsh especially around Scotney Pit on the Kent/East Sussex border now approach or indeed exceed 1000. The numbers of geese using the reserve (max 390) are remarkably constant (see table 1 above) because they are the locally present breeding population which moult on the reserve in late summer (see 4.1.2 above). Changing this area to a reedbed will reduce numbers of geese on the reserve and maybe on Romney Marsh. However the creation of new gravel pits will provide habitat elsewhere for these species - This is a trend that is occurring nationally.

4.3.3 Wigeon

In hard winters in ca 10,000 wigeons now use Romney Marsh flying between gravel pits and agricultural areas. Both the total numbers and the proportion of these birds using the reserve will fall as new gravel pits and nature reserves are created elsewhere on Romney Marsh.

4.3.4 Other ducks

Ducks use the reserve in two ways. Small numbers (200 pairs) breed in spring and summer and much larger numbers (several thousand) use the reserve in winter. The objective of the reserve is to increase the amount and suitability of habitat available for breeding whilst maintaining the habitat available for wintering. Many thousands of ducks are present on Romney Marsh between September and April using a wide variety of areas. Only a tiny proportion (max 85 see table 1 above) will be affected in any way by the changes proposed and this number is likely to remain unchanged.

4.3.4 Lapwings

Large numbers of lapwings use Romney Marsh - mainly the agricultural areas. Over 45,000 lapwings were present on the Marsh in November 1999. The number using the reserve and this area in particular is small (max 3500) and likely to decrease further as a result of the reedbed.

4.3.5 Other birds

Gulls

Large numbers of gulls (tens of thousands) use Romney Marsh and its coastline. In winter these mostly use the agricultural land and gravel pits. There will be no changes to the numbers and movements of these gulls as a result of this proposal. Few use the area at present. Few will use it in future.

Starlings

Starlings use reedbeds to roost in. Roosts of up to 100,000 birds have been recorded in the past using the already existing reedbed on the reserve although numbers in most years do not exceed 40,000. These large roosts occur between September and October - much smaller numbers are present the remainder of the year. Starling numbers are controlled by the availability of food in grassland during the breeding season rather than the availability of roosting sites - a bigger reedbed does not mean more starlings! It is likely that this roost can sometimes be virtually the whole population using Romney Marsh and it is unlikely that it will increase further as a result of any management work.

All these species move around the area between gravel pits and agricultural areas and, in the case of the gulls, the coast. These movements change diurnally and seasonally. It is highly unlikely that any significant change in either of these movements for any of these species will take place as a result of changes to the relatively small area affected by this project. Far greater changes result for example from largescale everyday activities on the Marsh such as the creation or ploughing in of a large stubble field.

4.4 Reedbed birds

The aim of turning this area into a reedbed is to attract rare reedbed species to nest in the area. Reedbeds are a specialist wet studies habitat and it is easy to predict which birds and roughly how many will use a given area.

It is hoped that this reedbed will support one or two pairs of both bittern and marsh harrier, several pairs of garganey (a duck) Cetti's warblers and tens of pairs of water rails and bearded tits. Other small birds (reed warblers, sedge warblers, reed buntings) will use the reedbed. Few of these species venture outside of the reedbed area. All keep very much in among or just above the reeds - many are only occasionally seen. Marsh harriers range more widely but hunt by flying no more than a few tens of feet in the air.

All the above species will continue to be monitored by standard methods.

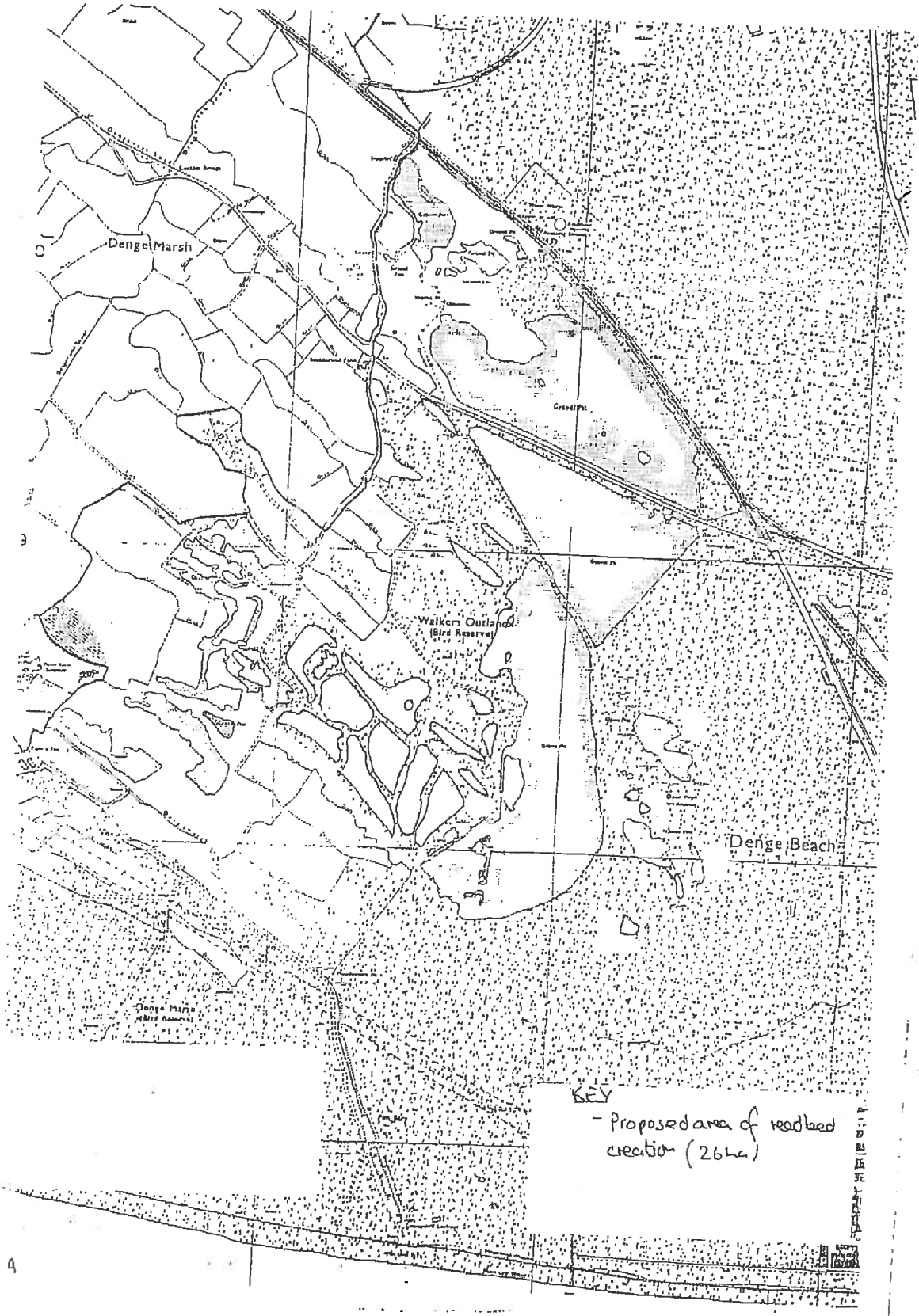
4.5 Conclusions

The numbers and type of birds currently using this area will change as a result of the implementation of this plan.

Broadly speaking the numbers of large waterfowl will decline and be replaced by a smaller number of species which tend to stay hidden in the reedbed.

- Mute swans will remain constant or decrease
- Geese species will fall sharply in numbers
- Wigeon numbers will fall
- Other ducks will remain unchanged
- Lapwings will decline
- The negligible numbers of gulls will remain unchanged as will the number of starlings.
- The displaced lapwings, geese and wigeon will move elsewhere and the number of geese will fall locally as a result of the reedbed creation.
- Numbers of swans and other duck species will remain unchanged locally.
- The number of reedbed inhabiting birds will increase.

Simon Busuttill December 2000.



Denge Marsh

Walker's Outland
(Bird Reserve)

Denge Beach

Denge Marsh
(Bird Reserve)

KEY

- Proposed area of reedbed creation (26ha)

1:50,000
1985

