

Mitigating Recreational Disturbance in the North West England uplands through mapping

Introduction

Cheshire to Lancashire (C2L) Area Team of Natural England places importance of partnership building especially with local authorities, landowners, eNGOs and those who promote outdoor recreation to come up with novel solutions for pervasive problems around recreational disturbance. Local Planning Authorities (LPA) need support with their Local Plans examining Functionally Linked Land (FLL) maps and Recreation Disturbance (RD) data.

The current level of "Goose and Swan" data provided on Webmap does not provide the detail to enable LPAs to make informed decisions. Natural England has previously commissioned a report ([Identification of Functionally Linked Land supporting Special Protection Areas \(SPAs\) waterbirds in the North West of England - NECR361 \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](https://naturalengland.org.uk/publications/identification-of-functionally-linked-land-supporting-special-protection-areas-spas-waterbirds-in-the-north-west-of-england-NECR361)) to help identify possible FLL for coastal Special Protection Areas (SPAs) waterbirds in the northwest, this report includes maps and GIS Data to provide detail on specific areas of land supporting significant bird populations and information on the bird species recorded within that land parcel.

We would like to replicate this evidence base and overall approach for the South Pennines SPA, Bowland Fells SPA (but not the West Pennine Moors Sites of Special Scientific Interest - SSSI) to enable consistency in consultation responses, and to provide additional evidence for LPA Local Plans in affected areas.

At present, the condition of the habitat and species features within the South Pennine Moors SSSI are classed as being in unfavourable – recovering condition, with less than 14% assessed as being in favourable condition. Similarly the Bowland Fells is largely classed as unfavourable – recovering condition with just over 5% assessed as being in favourable condition.

Natural England is working to improve the condition of the habitat and species features towards favourable condition in accordance with the 25 Year Environment Plan targets. There are several causes of unfavourable condition which can be linked directly through habitat management, or indirectly from external pressures on the site such as recreational disturbance or poor air quality. This contract will focus on the recreational disturbance pressure on the designated habitat and species features of the site.

We require GIS mapping layers / polygons for: WebMap/ MAGIC /Local GIS and public facing walking apps.

In addition, Natural England would like to influence key national stakeholders e.g. British Orienteering, Ramblers Association, Local Authorities and third sector health and wellbeing programmes as to how they recommend routes that do not impact nature sensitivity. The newly created mapping polygons will be used on public facing walking mobile apps to identify "nature sensitive" areas so that event organizers e.g. fell runs, organized rambles know not to plan there or individual members of the public know not to walk or let their dogs off there.

(Feasibility of walking apps is part of a separate contract and for these purposes of this contract, there is just a need to provide "compatible" mapping layers).

a. Requirement

1.. Scope what "nature sensitivity" looks like through desktop study. The desk top study will need to collate existing data and information e.g. ecological surveys which will then need to be analysed to determine important supporting habitats supporting SPA/SSSI bird species. Natural England will facilitate in providing existing evidence.

We provide this evidence to Planning Authorities and people who live, work and enjoy these areas. Highlighting a protected site like a SPA or SSSI is not specific enough.

Examples of "nature sensitivity" could additionally include (not intended to be exhaustive):

- Mapping to identify access points.
- "Wader hotspots" with the British Trust for Ornithology.
- "Ground nesting birds hotspots" and recommendations that dogs are kept on leads during the nesting season.
- Golden plover foraging.
- Zero trampling of newly reintroduced sphagnum mosses / bog plants which Natural England can help identify with schemes such as Climate Peatland Grant Scheme.

2.. An audit of knowledge and mapping gaps in these areas especially through talking to all relevant stakeholders. Natural England will convene this meeting.

- RD in an upland habitat – European designated SAC and Special Protection Area (SPA) South Pennine Moors in Oldham (only)
- RD in an upland – European designated SPA and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Bowland Fells

- This could include restoration works in progress or in the future linked to open source data around land cover www.ceh.ac.uk/data/ukceh-land-cover-maps

Creation of a draft report to receive feedback from stakeholders. Stakeholders to include relevant statutory bodies, local authorities, eNGOs, Forest of Bowland AONB, land owners, farmers, local and amateur wildlife groups and active citizen science individuals.

3.. Create nature sensitivity mapping layers which can be uploaded onto WebMap/ MAGIC /Local GIS and public facing walking apps:

- RD in an upland habitat – European designated SAC and Special Protection Area (SPA) South Pennine Moors in Oldham
- RD in an upland – European designated SPA and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Bowland Fells

4.. Evaluate the success of the mapping polygons alongside a chosen council which can inform their Impact Risk Zone.

b. Delivery Timescales

Insert key milestone dates for e.g. delivery, installation, project meetings, survey completion, draft reports, final reports etc.

1 And 2 Meet by mid November. Scoping of Nature Sensitivity and Audit of knowledge gaps. Draft report.	15 th January 2022 40% Release first payment.
Creation of mapping GIS layers Final report after feedback from stakeholders (organized by Natural England.)	End Feb 30% Release second payment
Trial with a chosen local authority / end of contract	15 th March 30% Release final payment

c. Site visits

The expectation will be to meet the C2L project team in person at the beginning and to meet with the chosen local authority at the end.

d. Basis of contract award

The contract will be awarded to the supplier who provides the lowest priced quote that in the opinion of the project officer meets the requirements of the specification. This is true even if only one supplier is invited. An indicative amount of days expected on the project is 50.

e. Project Officer details

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