

Birrell, Alasdair

From: John Davis [jdavis@butterfly-conservation.org]
Sent: 11 December 2012 17:49
To: Goodfield, Hannah
Cc: Mason, Richard; Mandy_Gluth@hotmail.com
Subject: Catfield Renewals Update
Attachments: Catfield Fen RLR map 7.4.10.pdf; Appendix_1b.pdf; Appendix_1a.pdf

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Dear Ms Goodfield

Your e-mail of 29th November (below) was forwarded to me by Richard Mason (RSPB), who has been briefing me on this matter and its progress.

Butterfly Conservation has owned the western half of Catfield Fen (boundary attached) since 1992. During that time it has been in active management to maintain the fen communities, control the development of scrub and woodland, and to enable the commercial harvesting of reed and sedge under contract. At present the reserve is being managed under an ESA agreement and we are hoping for transition into a HLS agreement under which there will be an increase in the levels of scrub and tree removal.

Our reserve is part of the Internal System and therefore affected by the matters under investigation by EA & NE. The concerns over drying of the fen have already resulted in a precautionary stance by NE in relation to the management of water levels on our reserve, which for many years has been achieved by operation of our sluice at GR TG366 213 . This is normally done to enable harvesting of reed or sedge or other management work when water levels in the internal system (in recent years) exceeded 55cm and external water levels permitted lowering. As already recorded because of the lower quality of the water in the external system it has not been practice to adjust levels the other way around.

Richard Mason has already provided data and other relevant information on the water levels, water chemistry and vegetation characteristics of our reserve which he has been assisting us to manage over the last 2 years (approx). I can at this stage only offer some further graphs presenting the water level readings taken by our voluntary warden Dr K Bacon over the period 2002-09 (as read off the Agency gauge-boards at that sluice) which I imagine you may have already received in another form. As Richard Mason points out even from the limited botanical monitoring data he has obtained it is possible to notice vegetation changes indicative of drying, though the influences of active management also need to be taken into consideration. We have long running records on the management work undertaken on our reserve which might be of use in any analysis but would need some time to collate.

It appears to me that the decisions to be made in respect of these renewals have potential to significantly impact on our ability to manage the reserve. Lower water levels in the fen affect the character of the vegetation we wish to maintain and by encouraging the development of scrub increases the work we need to do. Conversely the need to safeguard higher water levels also affects the consents that we require from Natural England for sluice operation to continue managing the reserve's vegetation, as they cannot be confident that recovery from a 'healthy' ground water supply and rainfall can be relied on.

Ideally we would wish to see a clearer understanding of the vegetation dynamics of the fen and in particular the internal system – which despite having the facility to retain higher water levels than the external system are apparently showing

the affects of fen drying more. Difference in levels of the fen surface may well account for this. We would also wish to see a better understanding of the groundwater and surface water systems such that the inevitable demands for water use in the locality can be managed with more confidence and there be some certainty for our plans to manage our reserve.

Please do let me know if you would like any further information and could I ask that you include me when circulating updates on this matter and in particular formal consultations on decisions.

Yours sincerely

John Davis

Head of Reserves

Direct line: 01929 406027 Mobile 0791 8073651

Original Message-----

From: Goodfield, Hannah

Sent: Thu 11/29/2012 2:24 PM

Subject: Catfield Renewals Update

Dear all,

We have just updated our webpage to include further documents (attached for your information) and to inform you of the progress we are making in determining the 2 renewal applications at Catfield, Norfolk.

This can be found by clicking on the following link;

<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/library/consultations/143536.aspx>

Included on the webpage is a document listing the available sources of information we have to make our decision and giving you an opportunity to provide any further information relating to the conservation of the site that may help us. If you have any further information could you please contact me by 11 December 2012.

If you have any queries regarding the website or the applications please do not hesitate to contact me on the details shown below;

Kind regards,

Hannah

Butterfly Conservation

Manor Yard

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Wareham

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