

REPORT FOR DECISION



Agenda
Item **7**

DECISION OF:	PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE
DATE:	20 DECEMBER 2016
SUBJECT:	ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGNATION UPDATE: SITES OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST (SSSIs); SITES OF BIOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE (SBI) 2015 REVIEW; REGIONALLY IMPORTANT GEOLOGICAL SITES (RIGS)
REPORT FROM:	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (LOCALITIES)
CONTACT OFFICER:	FRAN SMITH
TYPE OF DECISION:	COUNCIL OR EXECUTIVE (KEY DECISION OR NON KEY DECISION)
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/STATUS:	This paper is within the public domain
SUMMARY:	<p>This report provides an update on three environmental designations within the Borough, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) and Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS).</p> <p>In 2016, the West Pennine Moors (including Holcombe Moor, White Coppice Flush SSSI, Oak Field SSSI and Longworth Clough SSSI) was designated a SSSI.</p> <p>In the 2015 review, no new SBIs were added or deleted. Nine existing sites were reviewed, one, Daisyfield, gained 0.1ha of additional grassland habitat. Hawkshaw and Boardman's Farms gained 2.1ha for technical reasons (see Appendix 1) but lost 5.3ha of species rich grassland due to agricultural improvements, making an overall loss of 3.2ha. The remaining SBIs surveyed saw no grade or boundary changes.</p> <p>In May 2016, Bury's first RIGS site was designated at Gorses Quarry, Limefield.</p>
OPTIONS & RECOMMENDED OPTION	<p>It is recommended that Planning Control Committee:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • approves the changes to the SBI register; • approves the designation of Gorses Quarry as a RIGS site; and • notes the designation of the West Pennine Moors as a SSSI <p>so that they can be taken into consideration for planning purposes.</p>

IMPLICATIONS:	
Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:	Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework? Yes Policies EN6/1, EN6/2, EN6/5 of the Council's adopted Unitary Development Plan set out the Council's approach to managing development affecting existing and future SSSIs, SBIs and RIGS.
Statement by the S151 Officer: Financial Implications and Risk Considerations:	The costs of the AGMA Ecology Unit, which compiles and updates the SBI Register, are funded through existing budgets.
Statement by Executive Director of Resources (including Health and Safety Implications)	There are no wider resource implications.
Equality/Diversity implications:	There are no equality and diversity implications.
Considered by Monitoring Officer:	Yes Under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 the Council, in exercising its functions, must have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. It is therefore important that the Council approves and/or notes (as relevant) the updated register of SBIs and other land designations so that these can be taken into account when considering planning proposals which may affect the sites.
Wards Affected:	All
Scrutiny Interest:	N/A

TRACKING/PROCESS

DIRECTOR:

Chief Executive/ Strategic Leadership Team	Cabinet Member/Chair	Ward Members	Partners
Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet/Committee	Council	
	✓		

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the Borough's Unitary Development Plan includes policies EN6/1, EN6/2 and EN6/5 which seek to protect SSSIs, SBIs, and RIGS from harmful development. The wildlife value of sites is however not static; it may increase or decrease as vegetation changes, neighbouring land changes in character, or survey information improves. The UDP policies anticipate this by referring to both existing sites and those to be designated in the future.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

- 1.2 Natural England designates land as a SSSI when it considers its wildlife or geology to be of special interest. Natural England has identified the West Pennine Moors SSSI as particularly important for its mosaic of upland and moorland fringe habitats and the range of wildlife they support. Holcombe Moor is included in this new designation.

Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs)

- 1.3 The Greater Manchester Register of Sites of Biological Importance is maintained and updated on behalf of the ten Greater Manchester Districts by the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit. The entries relating to Bury are kept by the Head of Strategic Planning and Economic Development. The sites are classed as Grade 'A' (of regional or county importance) 'B' (of district importance) and 'C' (of importance within the *identified* geographical locality).
- 1.4 The Ecology Unit's Service Level Agreement requires it to re-survey each SBI at least every 10 years. It does this incrementally and produces an annual review of the sites it has surveyed in the previous year. The 2014 review was reported to committee on 15th December 2015. The 2015 changes are the subject of the current report.
- 1.5 The main change for 2015 was the removal of land from the Hawkshaw and Boardman's Farm SBI. This is understood to be a result of changes in land management practices leading to a reduction in biodiversity value.

Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS)

- 1.6 The Greater Manchester Regionally Important Geological Sites Group reviews and assesses geologically important sites across Greater Manchester and makes recommendations as to which sites should be designated as RIGS. A RIGS designation is one way of recognising and protecting important earth science and landscape features. The new designation relates to rock exposures at Gorses Quarry at Limefield.
- 1.7 It is worth noting that the Borough also has a geological SSSI, an exposure on the river cliff of the Irwell at Ash Clough near the boundary with Bolton.

2.0 ISSUES

- 2.1 Para 117 of the National Planning Policy Framework says that 'To minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity, planning policies should....identify and map....locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity' and aim to prevent harm to geological conservation interests.
- 2.2 Para 118 says that 'when determining planning applications,.....if significant harm from a development (*to biodiversity*) cannot be avoided..., adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused. In addition, para 118 states that proposed development on

land within or outside a SSSI likely to have an adverse effect on a SSSI, should not normally be permitted.

- 2.3 Unlike Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Sites of Biological Importance (SBI) and Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS) do not have statutory protection. However, the designation of 'regional and local sites' (i.e. SBIs and RIGs) is promoted (in the NPPF and elsewhere) as a planning tool for conserving and enhancing biodiversity and geology. Designation allows identified sites to be protected from harmful development that requires planning permission.
- 2.4 The designation of SBIs, SSSIs and RIGS is an objective and methodical process of evaluating sites against set criteria. Bury Council has chosen to use these designations as a way of protecting the Borough's wildlife and geology by incorporating them into the planning process.
- 2.5 A location plan of the current SBIs is attached to this report, The SSSI at Holcombe Moor and RIGS site at Gorses Quarry are identified on this plan. In addition, a list of changes to the SBI register and a list of current SBIs are also attached.

3.0 CONCLUSION

The designation of the West Pennine Moor SSSI, the 2015 update of the Greater Manchester Register of Sites of Biological Importance and the RIGS site at Gorses Quarry describes the current state of the most valuable sites of wildlife and geological interest in the Borough. It will assist the Council in making decisions, particularly on planning applications, in accordance with government guidance, adopted Council policy and good practice. Recognition of these designations is therefore recommended.

List of Background Papers:

Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (2008) 'Greater Manchester Sites of Biological Importance Selection Guidelines'

Map Extract SSSI – Holcombe Moor

Website:-

<http://www.tameside.gov.uk/ecologyunit/sbi>

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**Greater Manchester
Ecology Unit**

**APPENDIX 1: SBI REVIEW 2015
BURY – DISTRICT SYNOPSIS**

In the review period January – December 2015 the Ecology Unit visited 9 SBIs representing 18% of Bury's SBIs.

During the review period no new sites were added to or deleted from the Register.

Hawkshaw & Boardman's Farms gained 2.1ha for technical reasons (see below) but lost 5.3ha of species rich grassland due to agricultural improvements, making an overall loss of 3.2ha.

Daisyfield gained 0.1ha due to the inclusion of additional areas of grassland.

The following sites had no significant changes since their last review and no updated citations required so only a monitoring form was completed: **Ringley Woods (East); Reservoirs at Chapelfield; Barracks Lodge; Gorses Quarry; Swan Lodge; Marl Pits at Black Lane and Parr Brook.**

Technical gains and losses are often due to the increasing accuracy used to draw boundaries and measure areas. Techniques used include orthorectified aerial photographs, which can be overlaid on the GIS system with the OS map base. This enables boundaries to be drawn to the edges of habitats where a clearly definable ground feature (e.g. fences, walls, streams etc) is not appropriate to use. In addition site areas are automatically calculated by the GIS system and a new OS base was acquired in 2013.

APPENDIX 2: FACT SHEET

SITES OF BIOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE IN BURY
2015 REVIEW



DISTRICT FACT SHEET (All areas in hectares)

BURY

				Net Change 2014 – 2015	
	1984	2014	2015	No.	%
TOTAL NUMBER OF SBIS	27	50	50	-	-
TOTAL AREA OF SBIS	691.3	925.7	922.6	-3.1	-0.3
TOTAL NUMBER GRADE A	9	19	19	-	-
TOTAL AREA GRADE A	554.4	763.3	760.1	-3.2	-0.4
TOTAL NUMBER GRADE B	10	20	20	-	-
TOTAL AREA GRADE B	65.0	118.1	118.2	+0.1	+0.1
TOTAL NUMBER GRADE C	8	11	11	-	-
TOTAL AREA GRADE C	71.9	44.3	44.3	-	-
Grid Ref	Change in Grade of existing SBI		2014	2015	
-	-		-	-	
Grid Ref	New Sites		Grade	Area	
-	-		-	-	
Grid Ref	Site Deleted in Part or in Total	Grade	Area Lost	Present Total	
SD756163	Hawkshaw & Boardman's Farms	A	3.2	17.8	
Grid Ref	Partial Gains	Grade	Area Gained	Present Total	
SD791098	Daisyfield	B	0.1	5.6	
Grid Ref	Site visited with no change/change to description only				
SD785045	Ringley Woods (East)				
SD789062	Reservoirs at Chapelfield				
SD784103	Barracks Lodge				
SD811131	Gorses Quarry				
SD796085	Swan Lodge				
SD781084	Marl Pits at Black Lane				
SD815074	Parr Brook				

SITES OF BIOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE IN BURY 2015 REVIEW



Site Name	Grid ref	Grade
Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal (East)	SD764068 – SD793096	A
Bradley Fold	SD756086	C
Hawkshaw Brook	SD759146	A
Hawkshaw & Boardmans Farm	SD756163	A
Shore Top Reservoir	SD766063	B
Wetlands & Meadows near Coggra Fold	SD765085	A
Ponds off Cockey Moor Road	SD767104	B
Wood at Bottoms Hall	SD764140	B
Wetland around Spenleach Lane	SD766156	A
Redisher Woods & Holcombe Brook	SD767162	A
Holcombe Moor	SD770178	A
Ainsworth Lodge	SD770093	B
Starling Road Reservoir	SD773098	C
Cockey Moor Wood Pasture & Marsh	SD772109	B
Rhodes Farm Sewage Works	SD785039	A
Ringley Woods (East)	SD785045	A
Reservoirs at Chapelfield	SD789062	C
Wetland near Radcliffe	SD787078	C
Marl Pits at Black Lane	SD781084	A
Withins Reservoir	SD784087	B
Spenn Moor Ponds	SD783094	B
Elton Reservoir	SD788095	A
Barracks Lodge	SD784103	A
Cyrus Ainsworth's Nurseries & Parker's Lodges	SD782110	B
Grassland near Brandlesholme Old Hall Farm	SD785128	B
Kirklees Brook	SD782130	A
Broadhey Wood & Woodhey	SD788151	A
Dick Field Clough	SD785173	B
Carr Barn Wood	SD789176	C
Philips Park & North Wood	SD799038	A
Sailor's Brow & Spring Water Park	SD798067	C
Swan Lodge	SD796085	B
Elton Goyt	SD790086	B
Lower Hinds	SD794096	A
Daisyfield	SD791098	B
Flushes at Springside	SD791136	B
Gollinrod Wood	SD798153	A
Nuttall Farm Pasture	SD793160	B
Crow Lumb Wood	SD791161	C
Prestwich Clough	SD807034	A

SITES OF BIOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE IN BURY 2015 REVIEW
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Site Name	Grid ref	Grade
Townside Pond	SD805103	B
Parr Brook	SD815074	C
Hollins Vale	SD818085	B
Chesham Woods	SD815123	C
Gorses Quarry	SD811131	B
Baldingstone	SD812144	B
Heaton Park Reservoir (West)	SD825050	A
Hollins Plantation	SD820080	C
Pilsworth	SD830084	B
Smethurst & Elbut Woods (West)	SD837115	C

APPENDIX 3: SBI LOCATION MAP

Sites of Biological Importance in Bury: 2015 Review

