

The Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework 2012-2014 SPD Consultation

Meyrick Estate Management Ltd

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JACKSON  **PLANNING**

Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework SPD Consultation

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I. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared in response to the consultation on the Supplementary Planning Document in support of the Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework by Meyrick Estate Management Ltd (MEM).
- 1.2 MEM manages 22,500 acres of land in Hampshire, Dorset and Anglesey. This land includes commercial farmland, large tracts of land of recognised environmental importance (see Annex 1) and 2,300 acres of woodland.
- 1.3 The land holdings encompass significant urban fringe areas within Christchurch and urban sites within Bournemouth with significant potential for new housing.
- 1.4 MEM have worked closely with Natural England to understand heathland mitigation potential within its clients land holdings and more widely within the region. MEM have used the empirical research produced by Footprint Ecology to underpin a 'bespoke strategy' for heathland mitigation to serve the proposed urban extension at North Christchurch.
- 1.5 MEM will collaborate with partners/associates to become the provider of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) when the Christchurch Urban Extension is developed.
- 1.6 MEM's clients have other significant landholdings that could provide SANG and are actively exploring the acquisition of additional land with SANG potential.

2. Meyrick Group environmental management expertise & capacity

Capacity

- 2.1 Mr George W. Meyrick, the co-chair of MEM, is by profession an environmental lawyer and has worked since 2000 in environmental markets.
- 2.2 The Meyrick Group has its own in-house environmental management capacity in the form of the Bodorgan Environmental Management Limited – soon to be rebadged West Hampshire Environmental Management for activities in Hampshire and Dorset. Most activity to date has taken place in Anglesey.
- 2.3 The Anglesey land/Bodorgan Estate has its own Principal Bio-Diversity Officer, Mr Daniel Crimp. The Hampshire and Dorset Land/Hinton Estate is currently looking to recruit its own Principal Bio-Diversity Officer.
- 2.4 MEM's clients give environmental land management a high priority. They employ 5 full time staff whose primary purpose is environmental land management.
- 2.5 To supplement in-house management, MEM uses external specialists – see Annex I for further detail.
- 2.6 To conclude, collectively, MEM's team of land agents, farm managers, bio-diversity officers and contractors deliver practical land management solutions to maintain or enhance the environmental condition of designated areas across a broad spectrum of habitat types.

Environmental Land Management Experience

- 2.7 Across the two land-holdings in England and Wales MEM deal with most environmental designations – see Annex I.

Agri-Environmental and Forestry Schemes (England)

- 2.8 Over the last five years MEM's clients have entered into HLS, ELS and EWGS agreements covering large tracts of land – see Annex I.

Access Land

- 2.9 MEM are an active member of the Anglesey Local Access Forum and, through entering into large-scale permissive access agreements, have allowed the Anglesey Coastal Footpath to apply for National Trail status.

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Commercial focus

- 2.1 The Meyrick Group is active in environmental markets with an initial focus on renewable energy development and investment – see for example the work of New Forest Energy Limited in the fields of biomass and solar pv.
- 2.2 The Meyrick Group is exploring the potential to build a business in emerging bio-diversity/greenspace markets.

3. Operation of the Interim Planning Framework

Basis of mitigation

- 3.1 A test set out in section 61 of the Habitats Regulations 2010 dictates the legal position in relation to impact on the protected Heath: if a plan or project is permitted which is likely to undermine the integrity of one part of the Dorset Heathlands, the integrity of the heathlands as a whole must suffer some impact; and that mitigation measures would be necessary to enable this proposal to meet the requirements of the Habitats Regulations.
- 3.2 In order for residential development to proceed, it must be established confidently, beyond reasonable scientific doubt, that the proposal will not have a significant adverse effect on the integrity of the designated European sites, either in its own right or in combination with other plans or projects having regard to the mitigation measures proposed.
- 3.3 The IPF and its successor SPD act to deal with the mitigation collectively for those small scale projects that cannot deliver mitigation in isolation.
- 3.4 The recent decision by the Secretary of State in relation to development by the Talbot Village Trust considered the view of the Inspector Wendy Burden who emphasised the role of Natural England in the IPF process.

11.23 it is important to note that the IPF contains provisions at para. 6b on administration and audit, under which an Executive Group representing each local authority, the Home Builders' Federation, NE and RSPB considers schemes recommended by the Heathland Interim Planning Framework Officer Group (HIPFOG) to mitigate the impact of additional urban pressures. The mitigation proposed at Appendix A to the IPF may be varied through the ongoing process, "... but crucially Natural England will need to be satisfied that the necessary overall level of mitigation is achieved" (para. 6c). Thus it lies in NE's hands to ensure that contributions which are collected are channelled into appropriate projects to achieve the necessary overall mitigation across the Dorset Heathland sites.

- 3.5 MEM are concerned that, although Natural England are represented on the Executive, it is not clear that they have demonstrated that the necessary overall level of mitigation across the Dorset Heaths has, or will, be achieved.
- 3.6 The Inspector went on to note that compliance with the terms of the IPF does not in itself guarantee compliance with the requirements of the Directive and Habitat Regulations. Indeed, there is a danger that the IPF has/will become an easy 'heath tax' that developers can pay and walk away from. It is essential that the rigour of its application for mitigation of the harm that development may cause is tested thoroughly.
- 3.7 The consequences of the inability to demonstrate effective mitigation are severe: new residential development without SANG cannot lawfully proceed.

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- 3.8 This is reflected in Natural England's position at the Talbot Village Trust Inquiry, which was itself endorsed by the Secretary of State:

Given the precautionary nature of the legal control, the key element of any solution is a means whereby any increase in the number of visits to the site by people or pets is eliminated. The only identified means of achieving this is through the provision of a SANG which would attract away from the relevant site sufficient numbers of visitors to avoid any net increase arising from a development. Such provision can be made either on a particular or on a collective basis, and the purpose of the IPF, and similar schemes, is to enable collective provision. That is collective both in the sense of involving concerted action by a group of planning authorities on a common basis, and also in that it enables developments without individual bespoke provision to take advantage of collective avoidance measures.

- 3.9 MEM have developed the SANG concept with Natural England using experience from the Thames Basin Heath and research by Footprint Ecology applied to Dorset as a detailed strategy for mitigation of the potential impacts on the Dorset Heaths by the development of the North Christchurch Urban Extension. This strategy was built on a review of the legislative basis of SANG and the role of SANG in mitigation - see Annex 2.

Effectiveness of Mitigation: Footprint Ecology research

- 3.10 The Interim Planning Framework (IPF) has been in place since 2007 and has operated as an interim strategy for Heathland protection since that time. The operation of the framework for the last five years has given time to assess and consider whether the framework adequately mitigates the harm from additional urban pressures on the internationally important heathland as a result of additional development.
- 3.11 The IPF was introduced as an experimental solution to the problem of heathland mitigation to allow residential development to continue in the affected authorities. Research by Footprint Ecology¹ has confirmed that, although monitoring shows that projects to improve the attractiveness to visitors of underused greenspace sites has increased their use, it has not yet been possible to present conclusive results which demonstrate that the increased use has had a commensurate reduction in heathland visits. In addition, Footprint Ecology have recommended that mitigation and management measures should be dealt with locally on a heath by heath basis.
- 3.12 As the research work by Footprint Ecology forms the key evidence behind the operation of Heathland framework it is important that this type of research work

¹ *Analysis and Presentation of IPF monitoring and projects to inform the Heathland DPD*, Footprint Ecology, 2 June 2011

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continues, based on good monitoring information. It is essential that a definitive link between the projects and a diversion of heathland trips is made. If this cannot be demonstrated, the whole framework approach is brought into question.

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)

- 3.13 The primacy of SANG as heathland mitigation has been recognised by the recent Talbot Village Trust test case (refer to 3.7-3.8 above). This should form part of the SPD advice. The SANG projects that are to be brought forward as part of large (50+ dwellings) development proposals should be included in the SPD project list as they form a key part of the overall package of mitigation.
- 3.14 The draft SPD does include a brief paragraph on SANG, but little detail is given of the necessary qualities of SANG to act as an alternative to heathland visits.
- 3.15 The Footprint Ecology research recommends that the quality of SANGs is an important factor and they state that SANGs will only be effective if they are able to offer real alternative to the attractive, extensive and open feel of many heaths. The research confirms that, to make effective diversion to heathland trips, the quality of SANG is more important than quantity.
- 3.16 Natural England has supported the introduction of a new policy within CBC and EDDC's joint Core Strategy (policy ME3) to specify the qualitative nature of the SANG. This approach should be reflected in the SPD.
- 3.17 Given the central role that SANGs will play as part of the mitigation package, it is very important that large sites do secure genuine provision, rather than making tariff payments to the framework. This is reinforced by the fact that, to date, payment of the tariff does not appear to result in much genuine extra provision of greenspace, and is largely used for administration and other supporting costs – see section 5.19 below.
- 3.18 Given that SANG provision for large sites is a unique opportunity in the mitigation strategy, it is essential that there is no temptation for the developer to use tariff payments as an easier option. That way lies legal challenge in the Courts and a consequent threat to the whole framework.

4. Converting IPF to SPD: the pre-conditions to soundness

- 4.1 The consultation which seeks to convert the IPF to SPD has invited comments on a range of issues which are examined below in turn.
- 4.2 The conversion to SPD is welcome by MEM. However, in moving from a document that has little weight in the planning process to one that should have more weight, it is important to ensure the document is more robust and credible, and should follow the 'soundness' tests that apply to Development Plan documents as good practice. This is particularly important, as the Heathland SPD will run in advance of adopted DPD policies in each constituent authority.
- 4.3 To give the SPD more weight in the planning process, MEM recommend that the document should include a summary of the consultation undertaken and the consultation responses and how these have been addressed in confirming the SPD.
- 4.4 MEM believes that, as an SPD, the document should be more comprehensive than its predecessor, and in this regard it must include more information in relation to SANGs as they are an important part of the package of heathland mitigation measures and it should consider in more detail delivery of Heathland mitigation projects, which in the current draft is not well explained - see paragraph 5.1-5.7 below.
- 4.5 MEM recommends that the SPD includes more details on the nature of SANGs. The SPD should contain the draft ME3 policy as presented in Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy Pre submission Draft. This would allow the policy in the constituent Core Strategies to be more succinct, and allow the detail to be included in the SPD, which is the more appropriate vehicle for this level of prescription.
- 4.6 The transitional arrangements when the SPD will no longer apply and CIL will be implemented by each authority needs to be addressed. Given that the SPD cannot operate post April 2014 the arrangements for transition should be made clear now, including cut off dates and payment arrangements. This is particularly important as the resolution of legal agreements through s106 agreements can be protracted.

5. Mitigation Projects

- 5.1 The list of mitigation projects lacks overall strategy and direction as currently presented. The list is merely a list and, as an outside observer, MEM believes this appears as a disparate set of projects with limited co-ordination or direction. The projects are not set in context and do not have any assessment of the role they play jointly.
- 5.2 The projects appear as a random set of projects that seem to have primarily arisen from the Countryside departments of the constituent authorities. The Stony Lane BMX project is a good example of this. The completed pro-forma application for IPF funds makes it clear that it was a Council aspiration since 2005, which predates the IPF programme. It appears that the justification based on heathland mitigation has retrofitted an existing project to meet the Council's leisure aspirations. The project is not the product of evidenced research showing how it will genuinely divert heathland trips.
- 5.3 There is no reference to the Dorset Green Infrastructure Strategy, or to the spatial aspirations of the constituent Councils or the more strategic findings of the work by Footprint Ecology that found that the major diverter of heathland trips in the area were the coast and the New Forest.
- 5.4 The lack of proper context or relationship to the evidence base about diversion of heathland trips is a serious omission. This will become increasingly important for the successor DPD, which will be subject to independent examination.
- 5.5 The Executive recognise that the IPF/SPD is a strategic solution to the delivery of housing around the Dorset Heathlands. They believe tests in CIL Regulation 122 can be met. The monies raised are pooled and can be spent anywhere across the partnership area. The Executive do manage projects so that each local authority is not disadvantaged and so that wherever possible there is also a more local link to development. However, MEM believe it is essential that mitigation projects represent a good spread among the authorities, and geographic spread of projects is critical to match capacity to divert trips with new trips that are generated by development. It is simply not appropriate to argue this is a global solution for the area and not consider local impacts. This an important factor in agreeing funds for new projects.
- 5.6 The mitigation projects to date have focused on prevention and the improvement of existing green spaces facilities rather new provision of additional space or SANG. True new capacity needs to be generated by the provision of genuine SANG as alternatives to heathland trips. MEM believe the focus of new projects should be on genuine new SANG capacity and less on peripheral projects. The new SANG sites to be funded through the framework must meet the SANG criteria that Natural England are proposing for SANG to be delivered directly by development projects. This should be

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tested against draft Policy ME3 as part of the review process for SANG projects coming forward from the SPD.

- 5.7 The Footprint Ecology work and recent appeal decision in relation to the proposed development at Talbot Heath would suggest that mitigation projects to deal with domestic cats should feature as part of the overall package. Most of the effort appears to be aimed at dog walkers, whereas owners do not control cats and the damage to heathland ecology is potentially greater.

Projects List for 2012-2014

- 5.8 The projects included on the mitigation list for the remaining period of the framework to 2014 are a serious concern to MEM. The project list is not evidenced by research or underpinned by any overall physical strategy; neither is allied to the Dorset Green Infrastructure Strategy. The list is a random list put forward by the constituent local authorities. The projects are based on a broad assessment against criteria rather than any detailed assessment; they have no cohesion or geographic balance. The projects identified do not quantify in detail how they fit within the wider strategy or what extent of diversion of heathland trips they will achieve. There is no financial assessment on value for money of each proposal.
- 5.9 Whilst it is understood that projects may be subject to change, MEM believe a more rigorous assessment of each project is required before it has any status conferred by inclusion in the SPD.
- 5.10 In addition the list of projects should be drawn from a wider base. It should be possible to have a 'call for projects' in the way that local authorities have a call for development sites. This more inclusive approach would have a better fit with the aspirations of the Localism Act, whose regulations are now in force. This will be particularly relevant to the production of the DPD.
- 5.11 Each project should be based on sound evidence of how it will divert trips from the protected heathland before it is included in the project list. There should be much more rigorous assessment than at present that the projects will actually achieve the overall level of mitigation necessary. There appears to be no relationship between money spent and the capacity of the project to divert trips. There is no assessment of value for money. The cost per displaced trip should be assessed. This criticism is based on a review of the staff costs in relation to work at Chewton Bunny, which appear to make up most of the cost of the project. It has to be questioned whether private contractors could deliver this more cost effectively?
- 5.12 All listed projects should fit within the overall strategy for mitigation, which is based on research by Footprint Ecology and should also fit within the Dorset Green Infrastructure Strategy. The SPD will confer some status on the projects included in the list, it is essential that they are properly assessed based on evidence rather than included as pet projects of the local authority.

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- 5.13 MEM has serious concerns over some of the projects listed for inclusion in the SPD for the period 2012-2014 and the omission of the Chewton Common Project.

Chewton Common

- 5.14 This project has been omitted from the project list as it is claimed the land is not available. This is not the current situation; the evidence is out of date. The owner wishes to bring forward a project and secure funds for implementation by 2014.

Project 6 - Mundeford Wood Access Improvements

- 5.15 MEM support in principle the above project as it fits well with the Dorset Green Infrastructure Strategy and the Footprint Ecology work that identifies trips to the coast as good diversifiers of heathland trips. MEM wish to bring to the Executive's attention the potential for a Gypsy and Traveller site to be located adjacent to this SPD project location and question whether the two are compatible. The recent Dorset wide consultation on new gypsy and traveller sites identified this location as potential for 15 new pitches. Although improvements to the wood are desirable how will they bring about diversion of heathland trips if urban development pressures, albeit in a transitory fashion, are immediately adjacent to woodland site?

Project 18 Hicks Farm

- 5.16 MEM object to the Hicks Farm project. The creation of an environmental educational centre cannot in itself divert heathland trips. It is not at all clear how this fits with the empirical research that shows the majority of heathland trips are made by local, regular dog walkers. These frequent users will not use education centres. It is inappropriate to use SPD funds to house the BBC countryside team. In addition, this is such a significant proportion of overall funds it is not appropriate, as it does not maximise heathland diversion for the monies required. It also tends to reinforce the emerging pattern of projects where more is spent in the west of the affected area rather than the east. This does not seem proportionate to area of heath and the knowledge of user patterns from the research. If the mitigation is not geographically spread, there is a danger that heathland trips will not be diverted away from some of the heaths and the mitigation package will therefore fail in part and therefore threaten the whole.

Project 19 Stour Acres Barn

- 5.17 MEM object to the Stour Acres Barn for the reasons set out in the paragraph above.

Project Review

- 5.18 MEM believes that there should be a financial audit of projects to date to assess value for money. An independent appraisal might consider if the same results could be achieved at less cost. Staff time and administration are a very large proportion of costs. Although it is acknowledged these are necessary, it is not clear that they are giving value for money as they do not directly divert heathland trips.

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5.19 An assessment of spend to date shows just how little additional physical capacity has been created to date. The total is shown as just 15.17 ha. An average of just 3 hectares per year. Below is a summary table showing overall spend based on the position as of November 2011 based on the data provided by Nigel Jacobs, the lead officer.

November 2011	Total spent on completed projects	Total committed schemes yet to be completed	Total
Administration, Monitoring, wardening and management	£1,384,134.00	£298,457.00	£1,682,591.00
Physical Works*	£789,447.00*	£1,157,437.40*	£1,946,884.40*
Total	£2,173,581.00	£1,455,894.40	£3,629,475.40

* Includes staff and administration costs for each project, so actual sum is smaller than this

5.20 This is not a true comparison of supporting costs and physical works costs as we know from the detailed data on Chewton Bunny and Stony Lane BMX projects that staff costs and administration costs are included in what we have described as 'physical works' below. Once administration costs have been deducted from each of the physical projects it is likely that in total more is spent on support of the scheme than on creating real additional physical capacity.

5.21 The other main concern is the lack of actual additional greenspace provision when compared to the standards for SANG for new developments. In the absence of a Heathlands DPD policy the best alternative policy we can look to for advice is ME3 of the Christchurch and East Dorset Pre-submission Draft Core Strategy, which sets the standard for SANG for residential development over 50 dwellings. The required standard is 8 to 16 hectares of SANG per 1000 population. Knowing that only 15.17 hectares of SANG have been achieved from an overall fund of £3.6 million, it is assumed that this falls well below the policy ME3 standard.

5.22 What is certain is that additional alternative greenspace is not being achieved at the rate that is required from larger (50+dwellings) schemes. This would suggest either that the SANG standard in policy ME3 is too high, or genuine additional provision through the IPF is inadequate to mitigate harm. This further reinforces the problems with Project 18 and 19 outlined above, in that they do not offer good value for money in generating true additional capacity for diversion of heathland trips and they are highly

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questionable as part of a wider strategy that reflects the green infrastructure strategy and the evidence base on the effectiveness of IPF projects.

6. Governance

- 6.1 The governance of the Heathland Mitigation framework should be made clear in the SPD. The system is not transparent and appears to lack external scrutiny. MEM believes that participation in the Executive could be broadened to include experienced land managers from the private sector.
- 6.2 MEM firmly believes that project delivery might be more effectively delivered through the private sector, and would urge that a project audit be carried out to ascertain if projects might be delivered better by the private sector or in partnership.
- 6.3 The SPD does not include any information about how the projects are delivered. It is not clear from the consultation draft how delivery of mitigation projects actually comes about. The mechanism engaged by the constituent authorities in procuring the projects should be set out in detail.
- 6.4 The SPD states that Local Authority Countryside Teams are able to put forward projects for delivery by the UHP. However, MEM understands projects are not the exclusive role of the constituent local authorities or the Urban Heaths Partnership, this needs to be corrected in the SPD.
- 6.5 In order to potentially increase the delivery of projects within the framework and comply with the Regulations put in place by the Localism Act, the SPD should clarify the procedure for project and fund approval. This may help release additional matching funding through New Homes Bonus, lottery applications and other grant monies to support the project delivery. This could also open up project delivery to more cost effective delivery mechanisms including neighbourhood groups, Wildlife Trusts or the private sector.
- 6.6 MEM recommends that the pro-forma for project application funds and the criteria for assessing projects is included within the SPD. Where project applications are rejected there needs to be an appeal mechanism so the applicant can challenge the decision of the Executive.
- 6.7 The reliance on each Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) to disseminate the payments and projects is not appropriate. Not all LPAs produce an AMR as required. In addition, given that the project is seen as an area-wide solution it is not appropriate to report it piecemeal. A comprehensive monitoring, audit and reporting of the heathlands mitigation package as a whole must be produced.

7. Other Comments

Delivery Mechanisms

- 7.1 The SPD sets out method for payment and standard agreements for a tariff based system. It does not, however, set out the mechanism for SANG procurement, which is a legitimate alternative to the tariff payment.
- 7.2 The SPD should invite other suitable bodies to assist with the delivery of SANG and projects under the framework. If the project can be procured and managed to the satisfaction of the Executive Group it is immaterial as to who delivers the project. This may allow individuals or companies to procure heathland mitigation projects more cost effectively.

Land purchase costs

- 7.3 The setting of the tariff needs to consider land purchase costs. This may have implications for the tariff rate; the overall budget for the appropriate mitigation may need to be revised upwards, unless this can be off-set by more cost effective delivery.
- 7.4 The acquisition of land in order to bring forward projects is a legitimate; indeed some of the projects already completed have involved the purchase of land to secure the capacity and diversion from the protected heaths.
- 7.5 It is important, therefore, when identifying projects that are on private land acquisition costs are included in the overall project budget. Realistic budget assumptions must be made based on formal valuations.
- 7.6 Evidence from a project bid at Chewton Gateway has included a nominal amount for securing a long lease, which is not realistic and will not achieve the project's delivery. Formal valuation advice should be sought to underpin approaches to landowners when including land for projects within the SPD list.

Benefits in Kind

- 7.7 The CIL regulations allow for the reduction of CIL payments in exchange for benefits in kind. It would seem appropriate that the heathland framework to offer the opportunity for payment in kind if it can deliver mitigation appropriate to the scale of development. This may not always be of SANG quality because of scale issues, but in combination with other projects could provide an important strand of a heathland diversion project. There may also be occasions when part payment/ part physical provision is appropriate. It is important to confirm that when appropriate physical provision is secured tariff payments are set aside.

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Return of IPF/SPD payments

- 7.8 The draft SPD confirms that, in line with normal procedures for the collection of s106 payments, if the contribution has not been spent within 5 years of the commencement of development the money will be returned. This is not an appropriate solution for payments made through the Framework. If payments are returned the Executive have defaulted on their commitment to mitigate against the potential harm of the development and cannot therefore claim that damage to the Dorset Heathlands SPA has been avoided. This would not satisfy the requirements of the habitats regulations. If the constituent local authorities are unable to deliver the projects they should look to bodies that can provide this service. It is imperative that once secured the framework funds are spent within the five years. Sufficient lead-in times must be secured for full implementation of projects within the timescales.
- 7.9 It is understood that no tariff payments have been returned as the fund is well managed but this should not be included as a possible option for the reasons set out above.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 The research by Footprint Ecology into the effectiveness of the IPF has confirmed that although monitoring shows that projects implemented under the IPF has increased their use, it has not yet been possible to present conclusive results, which demonstrate that the increased use from the projects has had a commensurate reduction in heathland visits.
- 8.2 MEM has very serious reservations about the practical project delivery achieved through the IPF, especially the limited additional greenspace capacity that has been generated by the scheme. In addition the rigour and the governance of the Heathland Framework is a concern. MEM wish to see a thorough project and governance review before the IPF is confirmed as SPD.
- 8.3 In essence the Dorset Heath planning framework remains experimental, and open to challenge. In this regard MEM believe the SPD needs to be a much more robust framework for delivery of Heathland mitigation. It is hoped that the objections and the recommendations in this report are considered carefully in finalising the SPD.

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ANNEX I: 'ENVIRONMENTAL' LAND HOLDINGS

Environmental designations

RAMSAR – wetlands/water meadows of the River Avon valley

SAC – on duneland in Anglesey

SPA - for the wetland birds found on the River Avon

SSSIs:

- nine separate sites covering more than 674 acres in the New Forest; from the acid heathlands of Burton and Poors Common to water meadows on the Avon
- five sites in Anglesey covering more than 6,000 acres of sand dunes and wetland

SINC - on land at Somerford, Cranemoor & Shears Brook

National Park – much of the Hinton and Bisterne Estate is within the New Forest National Park

AONB – much of the Bodorgan Estate is within the Anglesey AONB

Green Belt – much of the Hinton Admiral Estate is in the South East Dorset Green Belt

Agri-Environment Schemes

HLS – 5 contracts cover nearly all the SSSI sites owned by our clients in the New Forest. In several cases these followed older WES agreements as part of long standing management arrangements

ELS – the commercial farms operated by our clients at Hinton and Bisterne have entered ELS for more than 3,100 acres including one whole farm scheme for 2,134 acres. Farm tenants have been encouraged to enter similar ELS contracts.

Tir Gofal – large parts of the Bodorgan Estate have been entered into the Tir Gofal scheme administered by the Welsh Assembly Government.

Forestry Schemes

EWGS – for the last 20 years 3,000 acres have been managed with the support of FC contracts. Long Term Management Plans for the next 20 years have been presented this year to the FC for the next generation of EWGS. These woods include PAWS, SINCS and SSSIs within these forested areas. A key element of this approach in the last 10 years has been the de-forestation of circa 700 acres of acid heathland.

Use of external environmental consultants

- Bird surveys carried out in the Avon Valley by Hants Wildlife Trust and in Anglesey by Catherine Bickmore Associates and the BTO
- Reptiles – regular surveys by Dorset Herpetological Society
- Drafting and delivery of HLS contracts and annual management – Jane Nordstrom as consultant ecologist (England) and Catherine Bickmore Associates (Wales) Our staff are encouraged to participate in local groups such as:
- Deputy land agent member of the Local Deer Initiative in the New Forest
- The Anglesey Estate manager sits on the Joint Advisory Committee for the AONB
- Our clients support with practical work the Red Squirrel's re-introduction to the Bodorgan Estate in Anglesey.