

Nottinghamshire LWS Handbook

Guidelines for the selection of Local Wildlife Sites in Nottinghamshire

Part 1 – An overview of Local Wildlife Sites in Nottinghamshire



Produced by the Nottinghamshire Local Sites Panel

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GLOSSARY

English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) – a grant scheme run by the Forestry Commission that provided funding to landowners in England wanting to create new woodland and carry out sustainable woodland management, particularly where it protects and enhances the woodland’s environmental or social value. The scheme closed in 2014 and was superseded by Countryside Stewardship.

Countryside Stewardship (CS) – an agri-environment scheme run by Natural England that provides funding to farmers and other land managers in England to deliver effective environmental management on their land, introduced in 2015. CS was preceded by Environmental Stewardship, which included Entry Level Stewardship and Higher Level Stewardship.

Habitat Action Plan – a document sitting within the UK or Local Biodiversity Action Plan that sets out actions required to deliver the conservation of a particular habitat.

Habitat mosaic – an area or site consisting of multiple habitat types occurring in a scattered pattern.

Habitat network – a landscape containing patches of habitat, through which species can disperse and move between habitat patches.

Habitat of Principal Importance – habitats identified as being of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England, listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Local authority – a public organisation responsible for the delivery of public services in a particular administrative area.

Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) – a document providing a framework for work on nature conservation at a local level. In Nottinghamshire, the LBAP is known as ‘Action for Wildlife’, produced by the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group.

Local Plan – a document produced by the local planning authority that sets out the spatial planning strategy for its area, used to manage development and determine planning applications.

Local Site (LS) – a site of local importance for biodiversity or geodiversity conservation. Also known as Local Wildlife Sites or Local Geological Sites, and previously known in Nottinghamshire as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation.

Local Sites Panel – The Panel is a technical sub-group of the NEGDP made up of local experts. The primary purpose of the Local Sites Panel is to produce criteria for the selection of LWSs in Nottinghamshire (formerly known as the SINC Panel).

Local Wildlife Site (LWS) – a site of local importance for the conservation of biodiversity. LWSs receive no legal protection, but are given some degree of protection through the planning system. They are of substantive value for the conservation of biodiversity, and are home to rare and scarce species, or represent the best surviving examples of habitats that were once widespread. Previously known as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs).

LWS Criteria – criteria used to identify LWS.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - a national statement of planning policy in England, which includes policy on biodiversity (and geological conservation).

Non-statutory site – a site with no legal protection.

Nottinghamshire Biological and Geological Records Centre (NBGRC) – Nottinghamshire’s local records centre, which administers the LWS system in the county.

Nottinghamshire Ecological and Geological Data Partnership (NEGDP) – Nottinghamshire’s ‘Local Sites Partnership’, which supports the works of the NBGRC and oversees the work of the Local Sites Panel. Membership of the NEGDP includes all major users of ecological data in the county.

Single Data List 160 – The single data list is a catalogue of all the datasets that local government must submit to central government. Single Data List 160 (Local nature conservation/biodiversity) looks at the proportion of Local Wildlife Sites where positive conservation management is being achieved.

Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) – now superseded by the term Local Wildlife Site.

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) – nationally important and legally protected sites that represent the finest sites for wildlife and natural features in Britain, supporting characteristic, rare and endangered species and habitats.

Species Action Plan – a document sitting within the UK or Local Biodiversity Action Plan that sets out actions required to deliver the conservation of a particular species.

Species of Conservation Concern (SoCC) – a species that is rare, scarce, or in decline that has been identified as requiring conservation action.

Species of Principal Importance – species identified as being of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England, listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and rural Communities Act 2006.

Statutory organisation – an organisation that exists by law.

Statutory site – a site with legal protection.

Sustainability Appraisal – part of the development plan-making process, used to appraise the social, environmental and economic effects of a plan.

UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) – a document providing a framework for work on nature conservation at the national level; now superseded by the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework

AN OVERVIEW OF THE LWS SYSTEM IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

1. INTRODUCTION

This document describes the background to, and the process for, the identification of non-statutory, locally-designated nature conservation sites in Nottinghamshire (including Nottingham City). These have previously been known as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), but it is intended that they will now be referred to as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), a term used nationally for such sites.

The use of a Local Wildlife Site system is a recognised approach at a national level in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG, 2012) and in *Local Sites – Guidance on their Identification, Selection and Management* (Defra, 2006). Local Wildlife Sites are part of the Government’s overall strategy for biodiversity conservation, and are recognised as having a significant role to play in meeting national biodiversity targets. The importance of these sites was confirmed by the recent Lawton Review – *Making Space for Nature: A review of England’s Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network* (Lawton, 2010), which also made recommendations about improving the protection and management of these sites.

This document updates an original document produced by the Nottinghamshire Biological and Geological Records Centre in 2003¹ (and subsequently amended in following years), to reflect changes in planning policy and to provide a more user-friendly format by bringing all relevant information, including all the different criteria used for the selection of LWS, together in a single Handbook. It also clarifies some of the processes surrounding LWS identification and designation.

It should be noted that this Handbook does not cover Local Geological Sites (LGS), previously known as known as Geological SINCs or Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS). Work is currently underway to develop criteria for the selection of such sites, and to review those sites which have been identified as Geological SINCs in the past.

2. WHAT ARE LOCAL WILDLIFE SITES?

Local Wildlife Sites are a local, non-statutory designation that sits below, but complements, the national suite of statutorily designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). They are of substantive value for the conservation of biodiversity in the county of Nottinghamshire, and are home to rare and scarce species, or represent the best surviving examples of habitats that were once widespread and typical of the Nottinghamshire landscape. Collectively, these sites form an essential ecological network and act as wildlife corridors and stepping stones, allowing species to migrate and dispersal between sites. The continued existence

¹NBGRC (2003) SINC Selection in Nottinghamshire – a summary of current methods of identifying important wildlife and geology sites as agreed by the Nottinghamshire SINC Panel. Nottingham City Museum and Galleries Service, Nottingham.

of these sites is vital to safeguard wildlife from the pressures of development, intensive agriculture and climate change.

The LWS network is comprehensive (meaning that every site which qualifies as an LWS is designated as one), whereas SSSIs are representative of the best sites in an area, meaning that not all sites which meet the SSSI selection criteria have been, or will be, designated, and it is recognised that statutory designations leave out many sites that are of significant wildlife value. Because of this, a number of LWS would potentially qualify as SSSIs, meaning that LWS are best described of *sites that are of at least county-level importance for their flora and/or fauna*.

It should be noted that areas which are designated as SSSIs can also be (and normally are) designated as LWSs. In these cases the site boundaries between the two designations may differ (with the LWS often larger to include areas of habitat that are of county importance, but do not meet the SSSI selection guidelines), or there may be different (or additional) reasons for designation - for example, the designation of a faunal LWS may partially, or wholly, coincide with a botanical SSSI.

In many cases, LWSs also contribute to the quality of life of local communities, providing valuable areas of greenspace for exercise, education and the quiet enjoyment of the countryside, and contributing to health and well-being. They also have a role to play in providing essential natural services, including atmospheric, climatic and hydrological regulation, nutrient cycling, pest control and pollination; they can act as flood storage areas protecting our towns and villages; and they contribute to Nottinghamshire's special character.

3. HISTORY OF LOCAL WILDLIFE SITES IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

The Nottinghamshire Biological and Geological Records Centre (NBGRC), part of the Nottingham Museum Service, produced the first list of important wildlife sites for Nottingham City in 1984. This developed into a detailed county-wide review of wildlife sites or 'Alert Sites' in the 1991 Nottinghamshire Natural History Alert Site Schedule, which was used by most local authorities in the county and by statutory bodies and local groups to identify important wildlife sites so that these could be taken account of in the planning system.

From 1995 a new partnership of local authorities, Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, English Nature (now Natural England) and the Environment Agency jointly funded a review and re-survey of the 1991 Alert Schedule. At the same time, the method of assessment of Alert Sites was reviewed and their name was changed to 'Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation', a term used (or variations thereof) elsewhere in the country. As well as this, a 'SINC Panel', now known as a Local

Sites Panel (see section 5) was set up to bring the best local knowledge together to set the criteria for the selection of SINCs.

Originally, criteria for the selection of Alert Sites and SINCs focussed on designating sites that were of botanical/habitat value, but a number of criteria for particular faunal groups have been produced over the years. In 2011, the decision was taken to review the current suite of criteria to ensure that they were consistent in their approach, and to bring them together into a single publication. This work culminated in the production of this LWS Handbook in 2014, which also saw the term SINC replaced with LWS.

4. THE NEED FOR A LOCAL WILDLIFE SITES SYSTEM

The primary purpose of the Local Wildlife Site system is to allow the most important wildlife sites in the county (outside statutorily designated SSSIs) to be identified, so that informed decisions can be made about their protection and management, and about changes in land use that may affect such sites. More specifically, the LWS system is needed in the following areas:

4.1 Planning

Nationally, the National Planning Policy Framework² provides a national statement of planning policy in England, including policy on biodiversity (and geological conservation). Local Wildlife Sites are explicitly referenced:

Paragraph 113: *“Local planning authorities should set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape areas will be judged. Distinctions should be made between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites, so that protection is commensurate with their status and gives appropriate weight to their importance and the contribution that they make to wider ecological networks.”*

Paragraph 117: *“Planning policies should identify and map components of ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity...[etc.]”*

The NPPF also places emphasis on protecting, restoring and recreating priority habitats, and networks of these habitats. The protection of LWSs contributes significantly towards this aim. It should also be noted that the NPPF indicates that

²https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

the planning system should protect and enhance geological conservation interests (paragraph 109), and that planning policies should aim to prevent harm to geological interests (paragraph 117). The relevance of Local Wildlife Sites to the planning system is also highlighted in the Defra (2006) publication “Local Sites: Guidance on their Identification, Selection and Management”.

Therefore, LWS information is an important consideration during the preparation of Local Plans by Local Planning Authorities, and appropriate policies for their protection and enhancement should be contained within relevant development plan documents. Furthermore, LWS information can also be used during the preparation of Sustainability Appraisals, and for monitoring (e.g. losses to development).

4.2 Local government performance

Single Data List³ 160 – *Local nature conservation/biodiversity*, is part of a catalogue of datasets that local government must submit to central government, and looks at the proportion of LWSs where positive conservation management is being achieved, recognising that local authorities have an important role in delivering the UK’s international and EU targets to halt the loss of biodiversity. Single Data List 160 is intended to show the proportion of LWSs under positive management in relation to the total number of sites in the local authority area, and good performance is defined as a year on year increase in the indicator score. Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City report upon this indicator separately, but the Nottinghamshire Ecological and Geological Data Partnership (see section 5 below), acting as the Local Sites Partnership, has a key role in supplying data.

4.3 Statutory obligations

All local authorities have a legal duty to conserve biodiversity under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) - a so-called ‘biodiversity duty’:

Section 40(1): *‘every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.’*

In clarifying the duty:

Section 40(3): *‘conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat.’*

³<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/making-local-councils-more-transparent-and-accountable-to-local-people/supporting-pages/single-data-list>

The purpose of the duty is to raise the profile of biodiversity in England and Wales, and to stimulate a cultural change in all parts of the public sector with the intended result being that the consideration of biodiversity issues becomes second nature for public bodies when developing policies and making decisions. Implicit within the duty is access to ecological information, including that relating to local nature conservation designations.

4.4 Targeting land-owner advice

The identification of sites with significant nature conservation value allows for the prioritisation of advice, practical assistance and financial support for landowners and managers. Active management of LWSs is in most cases crucial for maintaining their nature conservation value and ensuring their long-term survival. Of particular relevance is the current Countryside Stewardship scheme administered by Natural England (superseding Environmental Stewardship and the Forestry Commission's English Woodland Grant Scheme).

5. ORGANISATION OF THE LOCAL WILDLIFE SITE SYSTEM

The LWS system is run by three groups/organisations, the Nottinghamshire Biological and Geological Records Centre (NBGRC), the Nottinghamshire Ecological and Geological Data Partnership (NEGDP), and the Local Sites Panel:

5.1 The NBGRC

The Nottinghamshire Biological and Geological Records Centre (NBGRC), based at Wollaton Hall and part of Nottingham City Council's Museum Service, undertakes all botanical survey work associated with LWS selection, and co-ordinates and interprets the collection of data under non-botanical criteria. The NBGRC is responsible for holding and updating all data associated with the LWS system, and for mapping sites using GIS software. They provide data about LWSs (and other ecological data) to local authorities and statutory agencies through the Nottinghamshire Ecological and Geological Data Partnership (see below), to members of the public, and to ecological consultancies (as part of their commercial activities).

5.2 The NEGDP

The Nottinghamshire Ecological and Geological Data Partnership (NEGDP) is Nottinghamshire's 'Local Sites Partnership', which has existed since August 2001 to support the collection and sharing of biological and geological information in the county. Members of the NEGDP support the work of the NBGRC financially through a Service Level Agreement, and oversee the work of the Local Sites Panel (see below), ratifying all criteria before they are formally adopted. Membership of

the NEGDP includes all major users of ecological data in the county, including all local authorities.

5.3 The Local Sites Panel

The Local Sites Panel, previously known as the SINC Panel, is a technical sub-group of the NEGDP made up of local experts. The primary purpose of the Local Sites Panel is to produce criteria for the selection of LWSs in Nottinghamshire. Once agreed, these LWS criteria are applied by the NBGRC who undertake to identify and notify LWSs (see Part 2 for further details of the site selection process). Membership of the Local Sites Panel consists of a range of organisations including local authorities, nature conservation NGOs, and the private sector. The specific tasks of the Local Sites Panel are;

- To produce draft criteria for the selection of LWSs, in relation to habitats, species groups and geology, for ratification by the NEGDP
- To ensure that existing LWS criteria are kept up-to-date, and to refresh existing criteria where necessary.
- To carry out or advise on the need for specific research related to the production of LWS criteria, and on other matters related to LWSs
- To actively progress the development of new LWS criteria
- To carry out consultations on LWS criteria
- To advocate the protection and favourable management of LWSs
- To seek to ensure that landowners are aware of LWSs within their ownership
- To advise the NEGDP on all other matters relating to LWSs

For further details, see the Local Sites Panel Terms of Reference in Appendix 1.

6. LOCAL WILDLIFE SITES AND THE LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

In line with the requirements of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which seeks to address biodiversity decline at the international level, the UK prepared a national Biodiversity Action Plan in 1994 (the UKBAP). The UKBAP provided a framework for the conservation of our most threatened habitats and species at the national level. Action plans were developed to aid the recovery of these habitats and species, and reporting rounds were undertaken to show how the UKBAP contributed to the UK's progress towards the significant reduction of biodiversity loss called for by the CBD.

The final list of UKBAP priority species and habitats was published in August 2007 following a 2-year review of the BAP process and priorities, as determined by expert working groups against a set of selection criteria based on international

importance, rapid decline and high risk. The list comprised 65 habitats and 1149 species identified as priorities for conservation action in the UK. Further information can be found at <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-5705>.

Since July 2012, the “UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework” has succeeded the UKBAP, and Section 41 (S41)⁴ of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) has taken a more prominent role; this requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species that are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England; by virtue of Section 50 of the Act, public bodies (including local authorities), must have regard to the conservation of these species and habitats when carrying out their normal functions. The S41 list is based on the UKBAP, listing 56 Habitats of Principal Importance (which includes all the habitats occurring in England that were identified by the UKBAP) and 943 Species of Principal Importance (which includes all the species occurring in England that were identified by the UKBAP, plus Hen Harrier). In accordance with Section 41(4) the Secretary of State will, in consultation with Natural England, keep this list under review and will publish a revised list if necessary.

In order to help implement the UKBAP, as well as deliver actions for biodiversity features of local importance, the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) process was developed across the country. In Nottinghamshire, the LBAP partnership, known as the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group (the ‘Notts BAG’), produced its LBAP in 1998, entitled ‘Action for Wildlife’⁵. Despite the demise of the UKBAP at a national level, the importance of the LBAP partnership is still recognised at a local level, and the LBAP continues to provide a framework for work on nature conservation in the county, identifying priorities (based on national UKBAP lists and on lists derived locally), setting targets for recovery, facilitating joint working for biodiversity conservation and managing a reporting process to monitor progress. As for the UKBAP, the LBAP contains targeted Habitat Action Plans (HAPs) for all habitats, Species Action Plans (SAPs) for a selection of species, and lists of all Species of Conservation Concern (SoCCs). These HAPS, SAPs and SoCCs are periodically updated, and all documents can be found on the Notts BAG website www.nottsbag.org.uk.

The LWS system is complementary to, and supportive of, the LBAP process. Most habitats within LWSs are LBAP habitats, and therefore the identification of LWSs contributes towards LBAP targets for the maintenance of habitats and allows changes in the extent of these habitats to be monitored. There is considerable overlap between those species listed in the LBAP as SoCC and those found in the LWS criteria. However, a number of species feature in the LWS criteria which are not SoCC, primarily due to the fact that important assemblages of species can include those that may not be rare or endangered in their own right, but which do

⁴<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/habsand-speciesimportance.aspx>

⁵<http://www.nottsbag.org.uk/projects.htm#bap>

contribute to the overall conservation value of a site when considered with the other species that are present.

7. DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SELECTION CRITERIA

Criteria for the selection of LWSs based on habitats and a range of species/species groups are contained in Part 2 of this Handbook. These criteria are intended to:

- Cover the full range and distribution of habitats of nature conservation importance found within Nottinghamshire
- Allow for the designation of sites that support species which are rare or threatened nationally, regionally, or locally, or are at the edges of their ranges
- Identify sites of substantive nature conservation value
- Be rigorous, robust and defensible
- Be developed and implemented following a transparent process including public consultation

7.1 Development and completeness of criteria

Criteria for LWSs selected on the grounds of the habitat(s) they support were first developed in 1997. Since that time, these have been refined and expanded to reflect better knowledge of our habitats, and the botanical species assemblages of which they are comprised. Criteria for the selection of LWSs based on the species that they support have also been developed, starting with dragonflies and damselflies (Odonata) and moths (Lepidoptera), and now expanded to include a range of other species groups.

The development of new LWS criteria, or the amendment of existing criteria, is undertaken by the Local Sites Panel. It is recognised that criteria for a number of species groups are currently missing, due to lack of local data and/or expertise. The Local Sites Panel will endeavour to develop criteria for these species groups when the data and expertise to do so is identified.

7.2 Criteria consultation process

Once new or substantively amended LWS criteria have been drafted they will be put out for consultation. Specifically:

- General consultation will occur through the NBGRC website
- Conservation organisations will be consulted through the LBAP partnership (Notts BAG)
- The largest local ecological consultancies will be directly consulted

- Local authority planners will be consulted through representation on the NEGDP

In addition, other organisations with an interest will be notified of consultations, to include the National Farmers Union (NFU), Country Land and Business Association (CLA), the Home Builders Federation (HBF) and the Mineral Products Association (MPA).

The period for consultation will be no less than 6 weeks, and the consultation process will be administered by the NBGRC.

Consultation will only occur where new criteria have been developed, or where substantive changes have been made to existing criteria. No consultation will take place where species-lists used for the selection of LWSs have been updated as a result of changes in their status (as recognised through the UKBAP, national red lists, or in relevant legislation). In any cases where it is unclear if consultation should occur, the decision to consult (or not) will be agreed between the Local Sites Panel and the NEGDP.

7.3 Application of criteria

Whilst third parties may suggest that a site qualifies as an LWS, as set out under paragraph 7.5 below, the application of criteria to specific sites is undertaken solely by the NBGRC.

Unless sufficient reliable up-to-date information is available, sites will require surveying before designation can take place. Surveys will be carried out at an appropriate time of year by suitably qualified and experienced ecologists/naturalists who are able to gather the information required to allow an assessment of the site's interest to be made.

Where information has been obtained from a third party, especially in direct response to a planning application affecting a site, in most cases no decision on the designation of the site will be made until the information has been verified by the NBGRC.

It should be noted that sites may qualify under more than one criterion, and whilst this information will be recorded, such sites have no higher status than those that qualify under only a single criterion, although the reasons for designation may influence other processes, such as Environmental Impact Assessment.

7.4 Setting site boundaries

LWS boundaries are generally chosen on the basis of clearly identifiable features on the ground. These normally mark the boundaries of traditional management

units, such as a hedgerow, fence line, woodland edge or the edge of a waterbody or watercourse. This approach means that particular parts of a site may not qualify as an LWS, if looked at in isolation (for example, an improved patch of grassland within an otherwise species-rich meadow). Sites may also include larger areas of land that on their own do not meet the relevant criteria thresholds (such as a block of coniferous woodland within an area of semi-natural woodland, or a stand of scrub within a grassland), but the inclusion of these is justified in the context of the overall interest of the site, and in order to maintain the integrity of a management unit. Where a number of units of land of the same habitat type occur adjacent to each other, and each individually qualify as an LWS (such as a series of grasslands) these can be mapped as a single site.

However, some sites do not show traditional management unit boundaries. These are usually post-industrial sites where traditional boundary features have been lost. In these cases, prominent topographical features such as ridges or banks, or man-made features such as tracks, can be used to define LWS boundaries. Linear sites, such as rivers and streams, canals or disused railways, whose interest is restricted to certain stretches, might also pose problems when identifying boundaries. In these cases, identifiable features such as bridges, or boundary features within adjacent parcels of land, can be used.

Private gardens within the curtilage of a domestic dwelling will never be designated as LWSs, or included within LWS boundaries. However, estates and parklands around halls can be designated as LWSs or included within LWS boundaries, where they are evidently not part of a 'garden'.

Guidelines for setting LWS boundaries for species are provided in the relevant criteria. However, the same general rules as outlined above are normally used, with modification where necessary.

7.5 Designation and de-designation process

The designation and de-designation process is administered by the NBGRC to ensure a complete record of evidence, and the consistent implementation of the LWS criteria. Details of the processes are provided in Appendices 1 and 2 of this document, and show where consultation takes place, and at what point a site becomes formally recognised as an LWS. In both instances, the process for the application of criteria set out in paragraph 7.3 above will apply.

Any individual or organisation can propose a site for designation as an LWS where they believe the site to be of a suitable level of interest under the relevant criterion. The NBGRC will review all data submitted as part of this process (undertaking their own surveys where necessary).

A site becomes formally designated as an LWS once the relevant data has been published by the NBGRC – that is, when the boundaries have been published online, and the data has been sent to the members of the NEGDP. Sites do not need to be published within a Local Plan or other planning document, as a) data on LWSs is updated every six months, so it is not possible for planning documents to be up-to-date, and b) LWS use is not restricted to use in the planning system.

In addition, ‘candidate’ LWSs will be identified where evidence suggests that a site may be of LWS quality, but surveys to verify this have not yet been undertaken (e.g. due to the time of year). In such instances, ‘candidate’ sites are not considered to be designated, but are nevertheless an important consideration.

It should be noted that the LWS Panel is not involved in the selection of individual sites; where a site meets the criteria, as applied by the NBGRC, it qualifies as an LWS. Only in exceptional cases will the LWS Panel become involved in the designation (or de-designation) of individual sites.

Sites may also be de-designated by the NBGRC, or proposed for de-designation by other parties, if their level of interest is believed to have dropped below the level necessary for the site to qualify as an LWS, *and* where this situation is considered to be irrevocable, i.e. it is believed that the former interest of the site for which it was designated cannot be restored.

Such cases may occur where the nature of the site has been permanently changed, for example as a result of built development; where agricultural improvement has taken place; or where lack of management and natural succession means that the site in question now supports a habitat type which is different to the one for which the site was designated (unless that habitat itself qualifies separately under different criteria). Where sites have been wilfully destroyed (for example, as a precursor to development), they will remain designated until it can be proven that there are no prospects of the site’s interest regenerating (for example from the seed bank).

In some cases, it may also be necessary to alter the boundaries of designated LWSs boundaries. Situations where this may occur include:

1. To correct mapping errors
2. To take account of built development that has resulted in the loss of part of the LWS
3. To allow the de-designation of part of a site for other reasons (such as due to changes in habitat type or damage as a result of land management practices).

In relation to the third point in particular, the partial de-designation of sites will be carefully considered. It is likely that an element of professional judgement will be required in such instances, but the following general rules will be applied:

- Where an LWS supports a number of discontinuous patches of semi-natural habitat within a wider management unit and which individually or in combination meet the relevant LWS selection criterion, the LWS boundary will be defined to take in a wider area to include these discontinuous patches and the areas separating them.
- All areas of semi-natural habitat supporting LWS qualifying species under the relevant criterion will continue to be included within the LWS designation.
- Sites will continue to be mapped to recognisable boundaries or topographical features.
- The overall coherence and integrity of the site will be retained.

7.6 Site survey programme and recording

All sites will be surveyed on a programme as prescribed by the relevant criteria. For habitats, this is normally at least once every five years, but may differ for faunal criteria (often longer due to problems with obtaining up-to-date survey information). Where a site cannot be surveyed within the specified survey programme (including as a result of permission to access a site not being granted), it will be assumed that the site still qualifies and will remain designated until it can be ascertained that it does not.

Records must be gathered by suitably experienced and competent individuals (which includes members of the public as well as professional ecologists and amateur naturalists), or from third party sources (e.g. ecological surveys carried out by consultancies), and where appropriate, should be accepted/verified by the relevant authority, such as the county recorder.

7.7 Liaison with site owners and occupiers

Liaison with owners and occupiers over access to sites and designation of LWSs is recognised as an important issue. In particular:

- All sites that are potential or existing LWSs are surveyed with landowners permission
- Landowners will be provided with feedback about the biodiversity value of their LWS where requested
- The owner or occupier will be made aware that their land is to be designated as an LWS, where this is the case
- Where possible, advice will be provided about the management needs of the LWS, and how such management can be implemented (including

sources of funding) – see Appendix 4 for further details of potential sources of advice and funding.

Unfortunately, until resources allow, a comprehensive identification of owners of all existing LWSs cannot be undertaken, and initial contact must be tackled on a site-by-site basis as they are (re-)surveyed. NBGRC will maintain records of all attempts to identify and contact land owners and of all contact undertaken with owners and occupiers.

Where access is denied following an approach to a landowner or occupier, those wishes will be respected. Similarly, in some cases it will not be possible to identify the landowner. Where an existing LWS cannot be surveyed within the specified survey programme (including as a result of permission to access a site not being granted), it will be assumed that the site still qualifies and will remain designated until it can be ascertained that it does not.

It is an aspiration of the Local Sites Panel that at some point in the future, all landowners will be notified of the presence of an LWS on their land, and that bespoke management advice designed to maintain and enhance the interest of the LWS will be provided.

7.8 Administration of the Local Wildlife Sites system

The LWS system is administered by the NBGRC. Specifically;

- A record will be kept of information relating to each LWS, including survey sheets, species lists, surveyor's notes, correspondence, site management and any other relevant information
- LWSs will be mapped in detail using OS Mastermap® on a GIS system to ensure that accurate spatial information on all sites is held (which is provided to NEGDP partners for planning purposes). The GIS data will include LWS site name, reference number, a brief description of the site interest, size, and date of designation, and will be provided to NEGDP partners at least once every six months, or more frequently if required.
- General locational information is made available to members of the public through the Nottinghamshire Insight Mapping website:
<http://info.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/insightmapping/#>

The NBGRC will respond to any enquires from members of the public or from non-commercial interests relating to LWSs. For commercial enquiries, a fee will be applied to cover the costs of administration.

8. DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SELECTION CRITERIA

Appendix 1 – LWS Panel Terms of Reference

Appendix 2 – LWS designation process

Appendix 3 – LWS de-designation and boundary alteration process

Appendix 4 – LWS management advice and funding sources

APPENDIX 1 – Local Wildlife Site Panel Terms of Reference

Purpose and operation

The purpose of the Local Wildlife Sites Panel (the ‘LWS Panel’) is to produce criteria for the selection of Local Wildlife Sites (LWS, previously known locally as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, or SINCs) in the geographic county of Nottinghamshire.

This work is undertaken on behalf of the Nottinghamshire Ecological and Geological Data Partnership (NEGDP), and the LWS Panel operates as a technical sub-group of the NEGDP. Once agreed, these LWS criteria are applied by the Nottinghamshire Biological and Geological Records Centre who undertake to identify and notify LWSs.

The specific tasks of the LWS Panel are;

- To produce draft criteria for the selection of LWSs, in relation to habitats, species groups and geology, for ratification by the NEGDP
- To ensure that existing LWS criteria are kept up-to-date, and to refresh existing criteria where necessary.
- To carry out or advise on the need for specific research related to the production of LWS criteria, and on other matters related to LWSs
- To actively progress the development of new LWS criteria
- To carry out consultations of LWS criteria
- To advocate the protection and favourable management LWSs
- To seek to ensure that landowners are aware of LWSs within their ownership
- To advise the NEGDP on all other matters relating to LWSs

Membership of the LWS Panel

Membership of the LWS Panel shall be drawn from the following organisations or areas (one member each);

- Botanical Society for the British Isles – Nottinghamshire recorder
- Ecological consultancy representative
- Environment Agency
- Local authority representative – planning
- Natural England
- Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group
- Nottinghamshire Biological and Geological Records Centre - ecologists (*ex officio*)
- Nottingham City Council Museum Service – zoologist
- Nottinghamshire County Council – ecologist
- Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust

- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Sherwood Forest Trust
- Sherwood Habitats Forum

In addition, any other individual with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience can be co-opted onto the Panel on a permanent or temporary basis, with the approval of the NEGDP.

Procedures

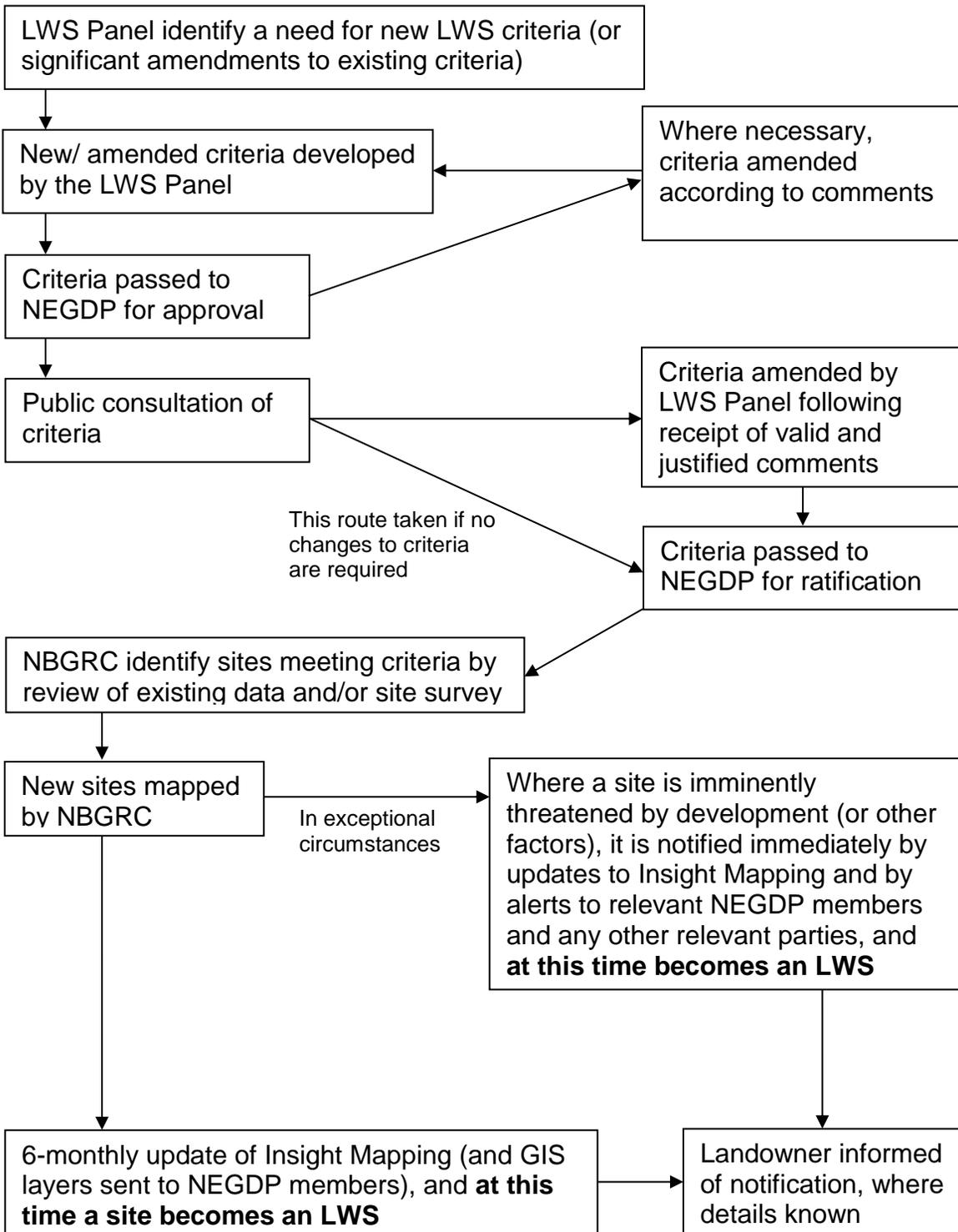
The following procedures shall be adhered to;

- All LWS Panel members will be covered by Nottingham City Council's Professional Indemnity insurance, as members are deemed to be acting for, on behalf of, and with the best interests of the Council in mind, with regards to the operation of the NBGRC.
- It is expected that all Panel members will act in the best interest of the LWS Panel and NEGDP, and adhere to the principles set out in the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Code of Professional Conduct.
- Upon the results of a majority vote at a quorate meeting of the LWS Panel (seven full, non-co-opted or *ex officio* members), the Panel has the right to remove any individual from the LWS Panel where that individual has not acted in the best interests of the LWS Panel, has brought the LWS Panel into disrepute, has been unreasonably absent from meetings, or for any other reason deemed appropriate by the LWS Panel.
- A central record of interests of all Panel members will be maintained, with interests reported by Panel members individually. This information will be included within the annual insurer return and will be essential for the declaration of potential conflicts of interest during discussions.
- Panel members will provide biographies to confirm and record their expertise, which will be reviewed and where necessary updated by Panel members and included within the annual insurer return.
- These Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually and updated where required, with changes ratified by the NEGDP.
- All appointments to the Panel must be ratified by the NEGDP.
- No fewer than two meetings of the Panel will be held per annum, although additional meetings can be called where the workload dictates. Meetings will be timed to fall approximately one month in advance of NEGDP meetings.
- All meetings will be minuted and copies of minutes circulated to each group member. One copy of each set of minutes will be filed on the "open shelf" in the NBGRC Registered Office, and a copy will also be available for download from the NBGRC website. Once approved, the minutes will be submitted to the NEGDP for approval, and will be included within the annual insurer return.

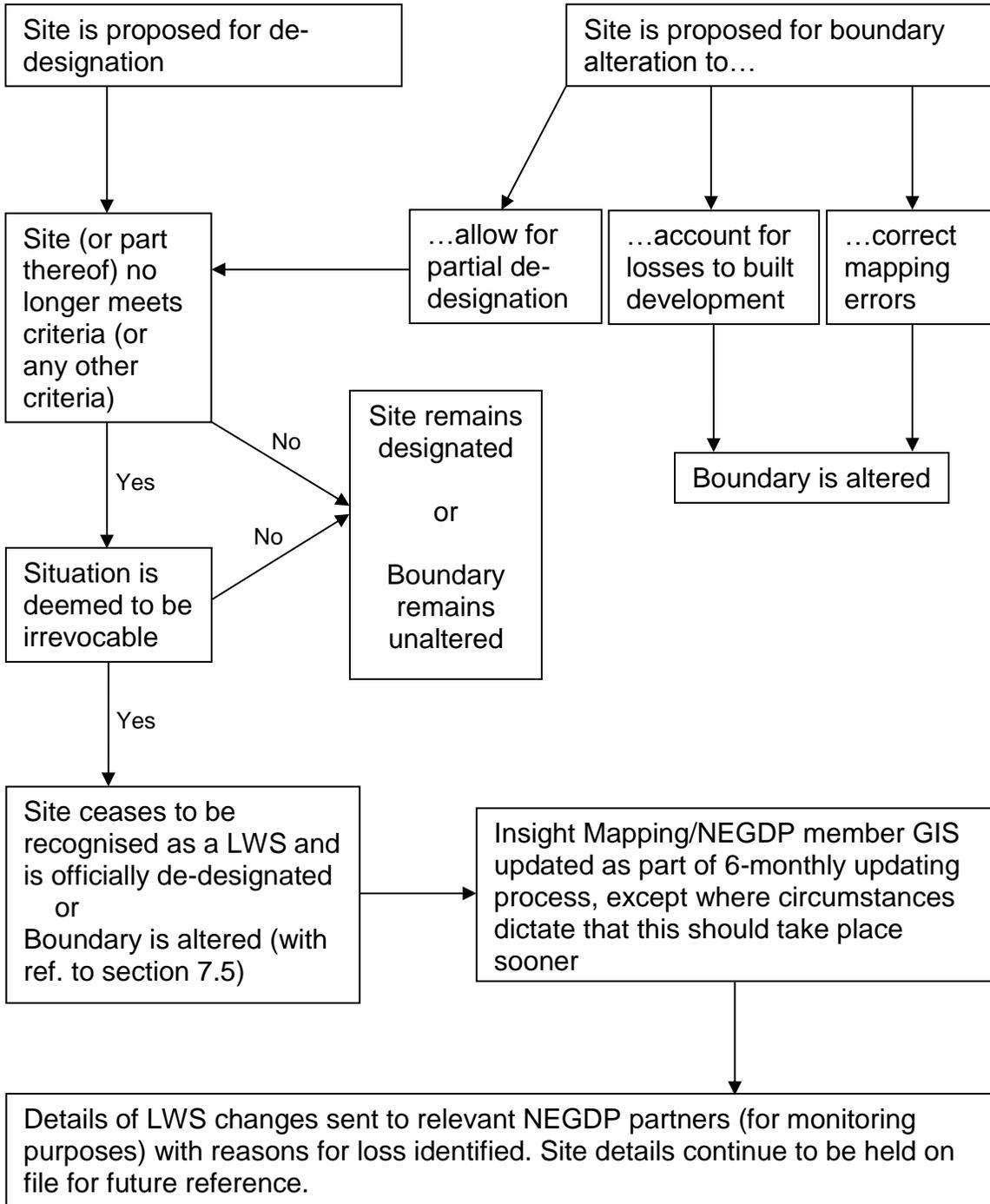
- A verbal report from the LWS Panel shall be given by its chair or vice-chair or other nominated person at NEGDP meetings.
- The chair and vice-chair of the LWS Panel shall be elected by the members of the LWS Panel, and shall sit for a period of no longer than two years, unless re-elected.
- Individual working groups may be set up by the LWS Panel in order to assist in carrying out the tasks afforded to it by the Terms of Reference for a defined purpose and a fixed period of time.
- Ecologists from NBGRC will be present at all LWS Panel meetings in an *ex officio* capacity to provide advice to the LWS Panel and to take minutes of the meetings.

Note: These Terms of Reference will be kept under review as part of the NEGDP Service Level Agreement process. They were originally ratified by the Nottinghamshire Ecological and Geological Data Partnership on 14 September 2010.

APPENDIX 2 - LWS designation process



APPENDIX 3 - LWS de-designation and boundary alteration process



Note: The notification and denotification processes were originally ratified by the Nottinghamshire Ecological and Geological Data Partnership on 14 September 2010.

APPENDIX 4 - LWS management advice and funding sources

Sources of management advice:

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust:

📍 The Old Ragged School, Brook Street, Nottingham NG1 1EA.

☎ 0115 958 8242

✉ info@nottswt.co.uk

🌐 www.nottinghamshirewildlife.org

Sherwood Forest Trust:

📍 Church Farm, Edwinstowe, Nottinghamshire NG21 9NJ

☎ 01623 821 490

✉ info@sherwoodforesttrust.org.uk

🌐 www.sherwoodforest.org.uk/

Lesley Sharpe – Farm Environment Adviser:

☎ 07707 220121

✉ lesley.sharpe@live.co.uk

Potential funding sources:

Countryside Stewardship

Countryside Stewardship (CS) provides financial incentives for land managers to look after their environment through activities such as:

- conserving and restoring wildlife habitats
- flood risk management
- woodland creation and management
- reducing widespread water pollution from agriculture
- keeping the character of the countryside
- preserving features important to the history of the rural landscape
- encouraging educational access

The scheme is:

- open to all eligible farmers, woodland owners, foresters and other land managers
- suitable for many types of land use (e.g. conventional and organic farmland, coastal areas, uplands and woodlands)
- competitive
- scored against local priority targets to maximise environmental benefit

There are 3 main elements to the scheme:

- Mid Tier
- Higher Tier
- Capital Grants

Further details can be found on the Gov.UK website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/countryside-stewardship-get-paid-for-environmental-land-management>