

THAMES BASIN HEATHS
JOINT STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Date: 20th July 2017

Subject: SAMP Project update

Report of: Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMP) Project

Recommendations:

- To NOTE the contents of the report on SAMP project activity

Purpose of the Report:

To provide the JSPB with an update on SAMP project activity since the last meeting in March 2017.

Summary

This paper sets out for Members the SAMP project's activities and achievements since the last meeting in March 2017.

1. SAMP project staffing and recruitment

Seasonal Wardens

- 1.1 The project successfully completed the recruitment of the seasonal wardens during March 2017. Unfortunately one of the seasonal wardens has left the project due to securing a full-time permanent position, but the project has successfully re-recruited and the new seasonal warden (Bob Crompton) joined the team on the 1st July.

Project Manager

- 1.2 The new Project Manager, Ann Conquest, joined on the 22nd May, and following a month long handover period is now fully managing the project. The new Project Manager's contact details are:

Ann.e.conquest@naturalengland.org.uk

07747 040 059

- 1.3 The previous Project Manager, Simon Thompson, continues to be employed by Natural England and therefore remains available to assist Ann as required.

2. Wardening and Delivery

- 2.1 The project currently provides a warden service on the SPA seven days a week from 07.30 to 19:00 (daylight hours permitting).

SPA Wardening

2.2 The warden output for the project for 2017 is set out below. The following tables set out the number of hours of warden activity delivered on the SPA during the period January - June 2017.

January	Total hours wardened	196.85
	Number of interactions	175
	Number already spoken to	59
	Leaflets handed out	45
	Number of Dogs	170
	Number of Dog Walkers (5+)	5
	Average spoken to	33.71%

February	Total hours wardened	293
	Number of interactions	194
	Number already spoken to	43
	Leaflets handed out	76
	Number of Dogs	193
	Number of Dog Walkers (5+)	2
	Average spoken to	22.16%

March	Total hours wardened	760.5
	Number of interactions	1029
	Number already spoken to	340
	Leaflets handed out	730
	Number of Dogs	1087
	Number of Dog Walkers (5+)	35
	Average spoken to	33.04%

April	Total hours wardened	734.2
	Number of interactions	1617
	Number already spoken to	615
	Leaflets handed out	964
	Number of Dogs	1675
	Number of Dog Walkers (5+)	38
	Average spoken to	38.03%

May	Total hours wardened	710.525
	Number of interactions	1624
	Number already spoken to	605
	Leaflets handed out	1243
	Number of Dogs	1733
	Number of Dog Walkers (5+)	49
	Average spoken to	37.25%

June	Total hours wardened	742.5
	Number of interactions	1317
	Number already spoken to	571
	Leaflets handed out	943
	Number of Dogs	1400
	Number of Dog Walkers (5+)	45
	Average spoken to	43.36%

2.3 The tables above show the total of hours wardened, the number of interactions undertaken during those hours, the number of people already spoken to, the number of leaflets handed out, the number of dogs with the people/groups spoken to, and the number of dog walkers with five or more dogs. The number of people already spoken to, and the percentage of total interactions which were with people already spoken to provides an indication of how many site users have been made aware of site sensitivities through previous interactions with the Warden team.

- 2.4 The number of dog walkers with five or more dogs is included as individuals with large numbers of dogs are likely to be commercial dog walkers, which are considered to be a growing problem on the Special Protection Area (SPA).
- 2.5 The level of interactions is expected to be lower during the winter than in the spring and summer due to the sites being quieter, and there being fewer sensitivities on the SPA during this period. The number of leaflets handed out is also lower than in the spring and summer, as the majority of our literature relates to the ground nesting bird sensitivities on the SPA, which is less relevant outside the bird breeding season. It should also be noted that during January the warden team were still spending a significant amount of their time undertaking SANGs surveys (42% of warden time).
- 2.6 The number of hours wardened increases from January to February as less time is spent on SANGs surveys, and then rises significantly in March as the seasonal wardens join the team, and the sensitive period commences. From March the number of hours wardened is reasonably consistent (between 710 and 760 hours per month).
- 2.7 The number of interactions increases significantly from March to the April – June period, this illustrates that the sites get busier as the season progresses. However some caution should be taken in comparing March to the subsequent months as the wardens will have been spending a considerable amount of time working in pairs during March, due to mentoring new seasonal wardens, and will therefore not have interacted with as many people per hour wardened.
- 2.8 The number of people already spoken to provides the project with an indication of the level of saturation that has been achieved. This year to date the average percentage of people on the SPA who have been previously made aware of the project, and its key messages, is over a third (34.6%) of the people spoken to by wardens.
- 2.9 The tables also show the number of dogs walked by the people spoken to by wardens: It can be seen that this is over 1 dog per interaction at 1.06 (although an interaction may be a group rather than an individual). The number of dog walkers with five or more dogs provides a suggested level of commercial dog walkers interacted with, although some will be individuals who just own a large number of dogs. The highest number in any single month was May when 49 dog walkers with 5 or more dogs were spoken to.
- 2.10 To summarise, during 2017 (until the end of June) the project has delivered 3,438 hours of wardening on the SPA; handed out 4,001 pieces of literature, and spoken to 5,956 people or groups, who had 6,258 dogs.

SANGs Visitor Surveys

- 2.11 The project is in the process of commissioning the analysis of the SANGs visitor surveys undertaken during the autumn and winter of 2016/17. It was intended that this report would be commissioned in May 2017, however due to the recruitment of the new Project Manager and the hand-over period, this was delayed until June when Invitation to Tender documents were issued. The deadline for responses to the Invitation to Tender is 21 July 2017.

- 2.12 The methodology for the SANGs surveys was discussed at the previous meeting, but to summarise each site received 18 hours of survey time between the hours of 08:00 – 16:00, with 6 hours being at the weekend and 12 hours during the week. The following 16 sites were surveyed:

Farnham Park	Chantry Wood
Southwood Woodland	Riverside Country Park
Rowhill Nature Reserve	Crookham Park
Heather Farm	Englemere Pond
Lilly Hill Park	Brooklands Community Park
Rooks Nest Wood	St Anne's Hill
Homewood Park	Brookwood Country Park
Allen's Field	White Rose Lane

- 2.13 The report of the findings of the SANGs visitor surveys will be presented to the next JSPB Board meeting.

3. Access to SPA land

- 3.1 The project is still accessing Ministry of Defence land on an accompanied basis. However Colonel Ludlow, who has now returned to work following a period of ill health, is organising a meeting with Ministry of Defence national colleagues in an effort to progress full access to the project to the publically accessible parts of the Ministry of Defence estate.
- 3.2 The Project Manager has met with the Deputy Ranger of the Windsor Estate in order to try and progress the SAMM project's access to Crown Estate land. The meeting did not lead to any progress in the short term, but an agreement was reached that the Crown Estate would consider SAMM wardening as part of a wider package of conservation measures being put together by Natural England. However, in terms of timeline this is unlikely to lead to access to Crown land before 2019.

4 Communications, Promotion and Events

- 4.1 The Thames Basin Heaths Partnership website can be accessed at www.tbhpartnership.org.uk and continues to receive positive feedback.
- 4.2 The 'Greenspace on your doorstep' booklet is being handed out by the wardens on-site and at the pit-stop events in SPA car parks. The A5 booklet contains details of all the SANGs listed on the website along with a pull-out map. The booklet is also now available from most local authority offices/visitor centres and from the Ministry of Defence Range Marshalls. The booklets proved so popular that the first print run of 5000 copies was exhausted within three weeks.
- 4.3 In March the project launched 'Heathland Hounds' which is a dog owner focused initiative which is intended to provide another mechanism for promoting positive behavior specifically on the SPA but also more generally in the area. Heathland Hounds has a social media presence through facebook, with people invited to join the Heathland Hounds group via promotion by the Wardens and through temporary signs placed on SPA site notice boards.

- 4.4 Dedicated Heathland Hounds guided dog walks on SANGs are taking place regularly to promote the sites to new users.
- 4.5 During the 2017 bird breeding season the project has built on the experience gained in 2016 when we trialed a small number of guided walks on the SPA. This year the project is planning an enhanced programme of guided walks on the SPA and on SANGs. Four guided walks have already been undertaken, with regular walks planned across the summer.
- 4.6 The project will be using 'Love Parks Week', organised by Keep Britain Tidy (14th – 23rd July), to promote SANGs by taking photographs of the sites and promoting them through our social media with the #LoveParks.
- 4.7 In addition to the activities and initiatives listed above the project is undertaking the usual programme of event attendance and SPA car park pit-stops as undertaken in 2015 and 2016. This year the project is looking to undertake more pit-stops than in previous years, and have purchased a second gazebo and set of notice boards to enable us to run two pit-stops simultaneously. It should be noted that attendance of some events during May and June had to be cancelled due to particularly strict purdah rules imposed during the general election.

5 School Based Education

- 5.1 The Communication and Education Officer, with support from one of the Wardens, led two schools visits for primary schools in the Crowthorne area, to the SPA heathland. Groups of 25 children from Pine Ridge and Lorraine Primary Schools were taken out to the heathland to learn about the rare and sensitive habitats and the species they support. These visits were jointly organised by the SAMM Project and Heathland Conservation Society.
- 5.2 The Communication and Education Officer also delivered a similar session with children from Heather side Junior school, working closely with Hampshire County Council.

6. SPA Monitoring

Automatic people counter installation

- 6.1 The installation of people counters on Ministry of Defence land was completed during March 2017, and the full number of sensors are now deployed across the SPA.
- 6.3 At the last meeting it was proposed that the SAMM project would issue an Invitation to Tender for the analysis of the people counter data during May 2017. However, as with the SANGs surveys, this was delayed due to the recruitment of the new Project Manager. The Invitation to Tender for this work was issued in late June with a deadline for responses of the 21st July. It is anticipated that the report will be available to present to the next Board meeting.

Car Park Counts

- 6.4 The Project continues to undertake monthly car park transects across the SPA area, and the project is now in the second year of undertaking this work.

- 6.5 The first 12 months of car park transect data collection was completed in December 2016, and Footprint Ecology were subsequently commissioned to undertake an analysis. This report will be presented in a separate paper to this meeting.