

**Bexhill Hastings Link Road**  
**Notes of a meeting held 12.6.06**  
**At County Hall**

**Subject – Wildlife mitigation/ compensation**

Present – Kristoffer Hewitt (EN), Grant Moffatt (EA), Alex Tait (ESCC), Philip Masters, Nigel Marshall, Mark Amis, Chris Frith, Virginia Pullan

The purpose of the meeting was to clarify the wildlife measures which the Statutory Environmental Bodies and Planning Authority would expect to see on the planning application for the Bexhill Hastings Link Road.

Points arising –

The SEBs and Alex Tait, as County Ecologist who would be advising the County Planning Authority, expressed the view that they would be looking for the replacement of habitats lost to the scheme, except for arable and improved grassland. Replacement should be on the ratio of at least replacing areas of two created for each one lost for each habitat. Consideration should also be given to impact upon other habitats indirectly affected by the proposals, such as by severance. In the case of the loss of ancient semi natural woodland, replacement should be on the basis of 10 for 1.

The replacement of more than one for one was justified on the basis that it was never possible to guarantee equivalent replacement on the basis of 1 for 1 because of the unpredictability of habitat creation. Also that there was a view that policy or guidance required, mitigation, compensation and enhancement where development was concerned. It was commented that much higher ratios had been required in some locations but that 2 for 1 was considered reasonable here.

Because of the high value of some habitats in the area it was considered that the replacement areas would need to be only those outside of the SSSI. However, it may be possible to create some enhancement of the valley floor, including SSSI by establishing a fund to pay for consultants to assist land owners in making submissions for agricultural grants, particularly within the SSSI. Other measures which may assist in this process were considered favourably in the discussion. Measures and land acquisition which assists in the easier management of water levels in the valley would be beneficial, so the idea of acquiring most or all of Actons Farm was looked upon as beneficial. Facilities to assist in better management of water levels in the valley were seen as beneficial.

Other issues were also briefly discussed;-

- Bats – pond and water areas were seen as features which would benefit bats in the area.
- Badgers – It was suggested that Don Wise be contacted and made aware of measures being considered in respect of badgers in the area. It was agreed that the Highway Authority would attempt to do this. Badger fencing would be required along the route and chestnut spine fence was suggested. Because of the high population of badgers in the former railway cutting on the Bexhill Connection, it was suggested that Julian Brown be consulted as a national expert on Badger matters. It was considered that no badger work should be carried out between November and July. Where sett closures are required, they should be by the end of September. New setts should be built in June / July.

- Great Crested Newts – Destructive searches can be carried out in the construction areas, where GCN exist and they can be relocated into existing or new ponds.
- Barn Owls – the issue attracting owls to road verges is a real one which needs to be considered and where possible scrub or long grass should be allowed to grow on verges as close to the road as possible to dissuade foraging close to the road. Existing bat boxes at Adams Farm would be removed but there is some debate about whether it would be appropriate to provide alternative box locations away from the road.
- Dormice – Some clearance of dormice will be necessary but should be done between August and September.
- Hedgerows – It was suggested that hedgerow removal would need to be submitted to and approved by the District Council - this would be pursued.
- Wet woodland – this was considered to be of value if incorporated on the valley sides but not in the valley floor, from a wildlife point of view.

END