



Natural England's Wildfowling Guidance

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www.naturalengland.org.uk

The Past



- Wildfowling has been undertaken on a large number of the sites for many years.
- In the past it was not been necessary for the wildfowling clubs to gain a consent from Natural England (or its predecessor) for their activities but this changed in 1981 under the Wildlife & Countryside Act.
- The consenting process became more stringent under the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 with Natural England (or its predecessor) being able to impose conditions on a consent or refuse it all together.



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Natural England's Role in relation to consenting wildfowling



- Natural England has to ensure for SSSIs that the activity being undertaken does not damage the interest features of the site before providing a consent.
- For European sites, as the competent authority in England, Natural England can allow issue a consent for wildfowling where a conclusion of **no** adverse effect on the integrity of the site has been reached



Sustainable Wildfowling



So Natural England has to make the consenting decisions within these constraints whilst recognising that the sustainable harvesting of quarry wildfowl through controlled wildfowling is a legitimate use of a wildlife resource.



Stage 1 – Necessary for Management



Is the plan or project directly connected with or necessary to site management for nature conservation?



Stage 1 – Likely Significant Effect



If it is not then a screening must take place of the plan/project as to its Likely Significant Effect on the interest features of the site, alone or in-combination with other projects/plans.

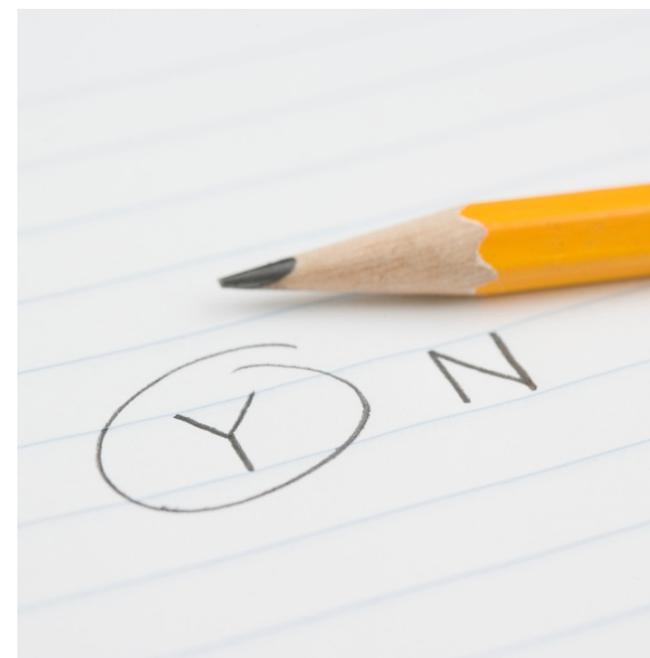


Stage 2 - The Appropriate Assessment



An Appropriate Assessment should;

- assess the adverse impacts on the features of the European site,
- take full account of the site's conservation objectives,
- be based on the potential impacts determined at the stage 1.
- determine whether or not there will be an adverse effect on the site's integrity
- Assessments will vary considerably from case to case.



Stage 3 – Integrity Test



Can it be ascertained that the proposal will not adversely effect the integrity of the site?



Stage 3 – Site integrity?



A judgement needs to be made as to the site's ongoing ability to support and sustain its designated habitat and special features.



Example of qualifying features



Humber Estuary Special Protection Area

Qualifying Features:

- A021 *Botaurus stellaris*; Great bittern (Non-breeding)
- A021 *Botaurus stellaris*; Great bittern (Breeding)
- A048 *Tadorna tadorna*; Common shelduck (Non-breeding)
- A081 *Circus aeruginosus*; Eurasian marsh harrier (Breeding)
- A082 *Circus cyaneus*; Hen harrier (Non-breeding)
- A132 *Recurvirostra avosetta*; Pied avocet (Non-breeding)
- A132 *Recurvirostra avosetta*; Pied avocet (Breeding)
- A140 *Pluvialis apricaria*; European golden plover (Non-breeding)
- A143 *Calidris canutus*; Red knot (Non-breeding)
- A149 *Calidris alpina alpina*; Dunlin (Non-breeding)
- A151 *Philomachus pugnax*; Ruff (Non-breeding)
- A156 *Limosa limosa islandica*; Black-tailed godwit (Non-breeding)
- A157 *Limosa lapponica*; Bar-tailed godwit (Non-breeding)
- A162 *Tringa totanus*; Common redshank (Non-breeding)
- A195 *Sterna albifrons*; Little tern (Breeding)
- Waterbird assemblage

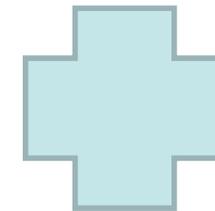


Wildfowling Guidance



The Wildfowling Guidance was put together in consultation with;

- Representatives from British Association for Conservation & Shooting
- National NE Bird Specialists
- Local NE staff with experience of particular sites
- National NE Regulation Specialists



Purpose of the Guidance



For the process to be;

- Consistent
- Evidenced based
- Transparent
- Robust
- Proportionate
- Fair



What does it do?



Sets out the essential information;

- area over which the activity is proposed to be carried out (including a map);
- number of years consent is sought for;
- maximum number of visits per season (a visit is determined to be one person with one gun at one time of day ie dawn or dusk or one tidal flight unless specifically stated)
- Historic bag returns on European sites, if available

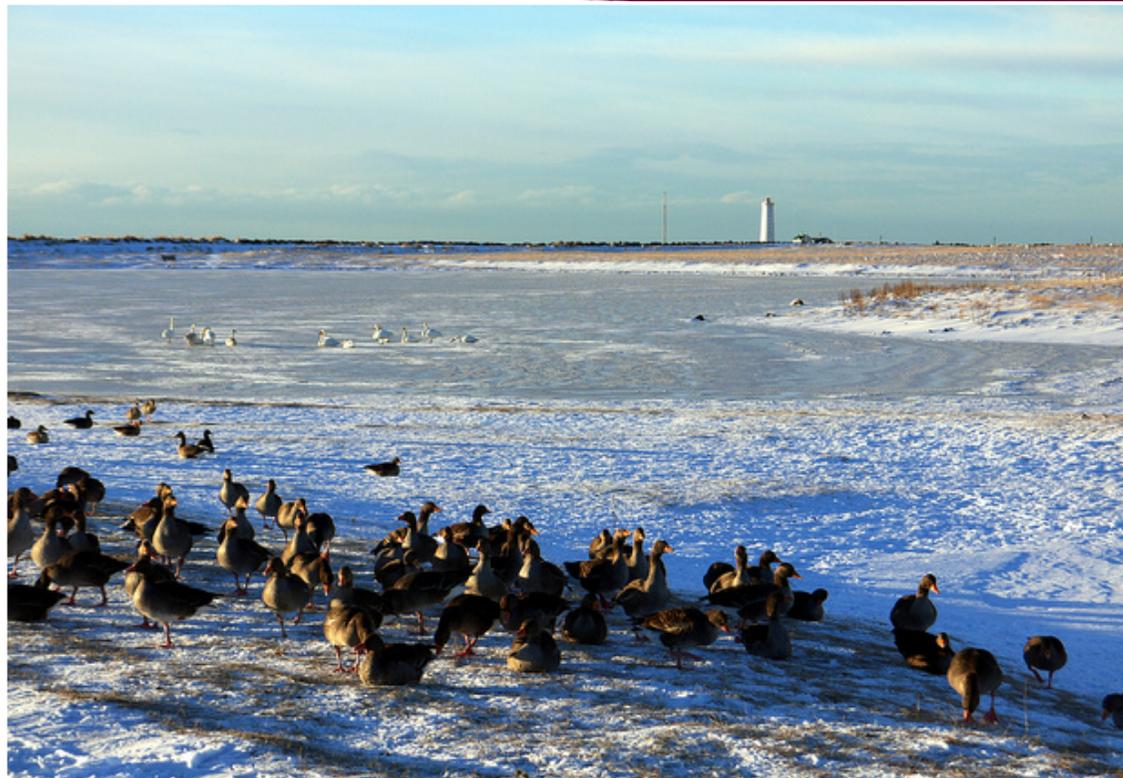


And desirable information



- type of wildfowling – ie shoulder gun or punt gun (this information will be essential where the proposal concerns a new area which has not previously been shot);
- intended quarry
- Historic bag returns on SSSIs, if available
- any restrictions on the number of simultaneous visits and/or the number of days that wildfowling may take place (e.g. it is illegal on Sundays in some counties);
- Details of additional activities such as vegetation management, supplementary feeding, vehicular access
- presence and location of any no shooting zones or refuges managed for minimal disturbance, in **some instances this information may be deemed essential.**

Also information useful to know;



Changes to habitat extent and quality within a given sector/site that might influence bird abundance/distribution.



Presence of high tide roost sites and proximity to wildfowling activity



Whether there are any morphological, habitat or man-made features within the sector that might act as natural barriers or have a sheltering effect between the wildfowling and the areas most likely to be frequented by SPA bird populations.



Access routes to the areas where wildfowling is most likely to be undertaken (recognising that some wildfowlers wish to keep specific locations confidential) and whether on foot and/or motorised access, including boats.

This is all information that the wildfowling clubs are likely to know. Many of the members will have been shooting on a particular site for long periods and are likely to have good identification skills so it is important Natural England makes use of the historical knowledge.



Precautionary Principle



- In all our decisions relating to wildfowling on an European site the precautionary principle applies which means that unless we are certain in relation to the adverse effect on the site, within reason, we should not provide the consent.
- This means the more information we can gather from the wildfowling clubs the less precautionary we need to be.



Working together



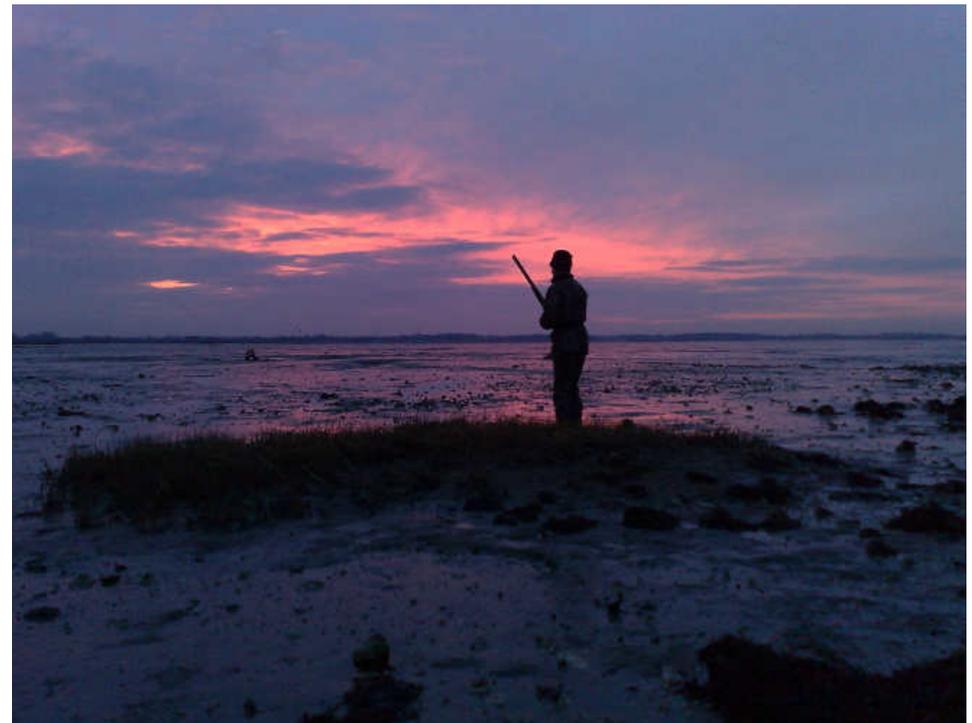
Natural England needs to work closely with wildfowling clubs to ensure that they are clear as to how the additional information has assisted our decision making process and hopefully, resulted in a fairer and more consistent outcome.



Training



A series of training courses on the guidance were run with BASC for NE advisors. They also provided advisors with an introduction to wildfowling, what a typical day wildfowling was like and the rules which govern wildfowling. In addition a number of advisors have been out wildfowling with their local clubs.



Changes in legislation supported by BASC

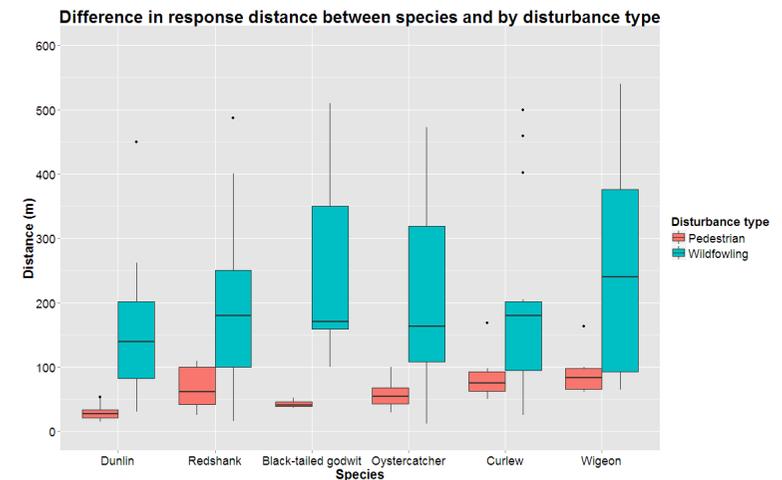


- In England the lead shot regulations ban the use of lead shot over all foreshore, over specified SSSIs, and for the shooting of all ducks and geese, coot and moorhen, wherever they occur.
- The shooting of wildfowl and waders is normally suspended after 14 consecutive days of freezing weather. The criteria for triggering the severe weather procedures are based on the air and grass temperatures collected daily by 25 coastal weather stations around Britain.

Improving evidence base



- BASC is part-funding a PhD on the impacts of human disturbance on wintering birds.
- Natural England have been invited to input into the research to assist with ensuring the evidence produced is as useful as possible in terms of the consenting procedure.



Wetland Bird Survey Data



- Much of the analysis undertaken through the consenting process is based on Wetland Bird Survey Data (WeBs) which monitors non-breeding waterbirds in the UK.
- Encouraging wildfowling clubs to get involved in the WeBs surveys if they are not already.
- Training set up for NE advisors on WeBs data and how best to use it.
- Working with British Trust for Ornithology to find out whether additional information can be gathered within the survey in particular roost sites

The future



- It is hoped that a simplified guide to the consenting process can be produced so that all members of a wildfowling club can be aware of the process and the regulations that govern activities on designated sites.
- Continue to work closely with wildfowling clubs and BASC to make the consenting process as straight forward and transparent as possible.
- To offer pre-submission advice to wildfowling clubs prior to them submitting a notice proposal.



Thank you for listening
Any Questions?

