

Local Sites in the East Riding of Yorkshire

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Non Technical Summary

The purpose of this document is to formalise both the processes and procedures for the management of the East Riding of Yorkshire Local Sites system and the site selection guidelines. Therefore the document is in two parts with Part A dealing with the process and procedures for the management of the Local Sites system, and Part B contains the detailed guidelines for the Local Wildlife Sites (LWS).

In 2006 the Government Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) released new guidance for Local Sites which recommended the use of the generic term of 'Local Site' for all second tier non-statutory sites. The term Local Site applies to both LWS, previously known as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), and Local Geological Sites (LGS), also known as Regionally Important Geology/Geomorphology Sites (RIGS). The guidance established the principles and standards for the operation of Local Sites systems. The Defra guidance makes it clear that only sites of 'substantive' importance should be designated.

This document provides a framework for Local Sites but only provides detailed guidance on LWS. The LGS System is managed by the East Yorkshire RIGS Group and they take a lead on identifying locally important geological and geomorphological sites. The document is in two parts, dealing with the management of the Local Sites system and the technical site selection guidelines, respectively.

In the East Riding of Yorkshire the first system of non-statutory sites was developed in the early 1990s, under the former Humberside County Council and its associated District and Borough Councils. They were known as 'Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation' (SINC) and over 700 were identified.

The East Riding of Yorkshire Council in partnership with a range of organisations and local naturalists began the process of reviewing the selection criteria for SINC in 2001. This led to the production of draft site selection guidelines in 2003.

A comprehensive review of LWS in the East Riding commenced in 2007. This was led by East Riding of Yorkshire Council in partnership with key organisations and individuals who formed the LWS Panel. A programme to survey, reassess and designate the extant SINC sites was developed.

Part A sets out in detail the process by which Local sites are identified, surveyed and considered for designation and adoption. It explains the wider context for Local Sites, including their relationship to other sites and other environmental initiatives. It also clarifies their role within in the planning system, both spatial planning and development management.

Part B contains the detailed site selection guidelines. These reflect the extent, variation and quality of the nature conservation resource in the East Riding. For each habitat or species group there are a series of guidelines, which include a brief rationale for the guideline and

guidance on the application of each one. Characteristic species for each habitat are listed where appropriate.

The percentage of Local Sites in 'active conservation management' became the biodiversity national indicator (NI197) in the national performance framework for Local Authorities, which was introduced in April 2008. The national performance framework was scrapped in 2010 and replaced with the Single Data List, which includes the same Local Sites indicator, now numbered 160-00. These reporting mechanisms have raised the profile of Local Sites and focussed attention on their management.

The document also highlights the importance of liaison with the landowners of Local Sites, as most sites are in private ownership. The LWS partnership promotes the conservation of LWS including providing advice on conservation management to landowners.

Local Sites in the East Riding of Yorkshire

Part A

Management of the Local Sites System

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Part A – Management of the Local Sites System

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1. Local Sites in context

1.1 What are Local Sites?

- 1.1.1 The term Local Site includes Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) and Local Geological Sites (LGS). These are sites which have been identified as supporting features of ecological or geological interest which are important in a local context. A local context is defined as being within the geographic boundary of the East Riding of Yorkshire Council.
- 1.1.2 LWS are non-statutory sites, which means that they are not governed by any legislation which is specific to them, so they have no statutory protection in their own right. However, various pieces of environmental legislation may apply to activities and locations where Local Sites are situated or where the Local Site is habitat for protected species. In some cases the presence of a Local Site designation will be considered when administering the legislation.
- 1.1.3 LWS systems have been developed in many parts of the country since the 1980s. A variety of names have been used for these site systems across the country, with 'Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)', a commonly used term. This was the name applied to the first local sites system covering the East Riding of Yorkshire. Most commonly LWS systems are led by local authorities, but in some instances they can be led by joint services organisations, the local wildlife trust or a local environmental or ecological records centre. In many cases Local Sites systems are managed or supported by partnerships, which include voluntary and public sector bodies.
- 1.1.4 LGS, formerly known as Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) are usually administered by local groups separately from LWS Systems. Such local geological groups are usually run on a voluntary basis, as it is rare that local authorities employ a professional geologist.

1.2 LWS and other nature conservation designations

- 1.2.1 In the United Kingdom (UK) there are three tiers of nature conservation designation in operation: International, National and Local. Appendix A 'Local, National and International Designated Sites in the East Riding of Yorkshire' lists all the designated sites (except LWS) in the East Riding. These three tiers comprise the designations described below.
- 1.2.2 International sites include:
- Special Protection Areas (SPA) for birds;
 - Special Areas of Conservation (SAC); and
 - Ramsar sites for wetlands.
- 1.2.3 **SPAs** are designated under the European Union (EU) Birds Directive (2009/147/EC & 79/409/EEC). **SACs** are designated under the EU Directive for the 'Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora' (92/43/EEC), commonly referred to as the 'Habitats Directive' or 'Habitats Regulations'. Together these designations form the pan European '*Natura 2000*'

network. SPAs and SACs below Mean High Water are known as European Marine Sites (EMS). Both are statutory designations which have strong legal protection under the Habitats Directive. The Directive is enacted into UK law by the 'Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010'. There are five SACs and five SPAs, which are wholly or partly within the East Riding of Yorkshire, including two EMS.

1.2.4 The **Ramsar** designation applies to wetlands of international importance for birds. These sites have no statutory protection, but are also often designated as SSSIs and SPAs as well. There are two Ramsar sites, which are wholly or partly within the East Riding of Yorkshire.

1.2.5 National sites include:

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI); and
- National Nature Reserves (NNR).

1.2.6 **SSSIs** are designated for their important features of biological and/or geological interest. They also underpin some other statutory designations, such as SACs, SPAs and NNRS. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 increased the legal protection for SSSIs. Natural England has statutory powers in relation to the management of SSSIs and the consenting of projects affecting them. There are forty-seven SSSIs, which are wholly or partly within the East Riding of Yorkshire. Thirty-one of these are designated solely for biological features, ten are designated solely for geological features and six are designated for both biological and geological features of interest.

1.2.7 **NNRs** are site which are managed as nature reserves, usually with some degree of public access. They are sites of high nature conservation value which are normally also designated as SSSIs and often SACs and/or SPAs as well. There are three NNRS, which are wholly or partly within the East Riding of Yorkshire.

1.2.8 Local Sites include:

- Local Nature Reserves (LNR);
- Local Wildlife Sites (LWS); and
- Local Geological Sites (LGS).

1.2.9 **LNRs** are statutory sites declared under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. As well as having value for wildlife they must also have value for people, for either formal education or informal enjoyment of nature. They are usually managed by Local Authorities who normally have an interest in the land. However a few sites are owned and/or managed by other organisations. There are thirteen LNRs, which are wholly or partly within the East Riding of Yorkshire.

1.2.10 **LWS** form the largest part of the local tier of nature conservation designations. In the East Riding of Yorkshire, there is a general presumption against dual designation of LWS with the following national or international statutory designations: SSSI, SAC and SPA. However LWS may have dual or some overlapping designations with SSSIs that are designated solely for their geological interest, as the ecological features of the site will not be recognised in the statutory SSSI designation. LWS may however also be dual designated with

LNRs as this will help to identify particular ecological features of interest, which should help to inform the management of an LNR and those features that are promoted for educational interpretation and access where appropriate.

- 1.2.11 **LGS** are identified for their geological interest and were formerly known as Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological sites (RIGs). LGS are identified by a local geological group, rather than the LWS Panel.
- 1.2.12 LWS and LGS may overlap on a single Local Site and here careful consideration of the interaction between wildlife and geological features will be required.

1.3 Defra Guidance

- 1.3.1 In 2006 the UK Government Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) published '*Local Sites – Guidance on their identification, selection and management*' which remains the current Government guidance on Local Sites. This document sets out the key principles and practices for the operation of Local Sites systems. The review and development of the new LWS system in the East Riding of Yorkshire has been designed to comply with this guidance.
- 1.3.2 The guidance states that 'Local Sites networks provide a comprehensive rather than representative suite of sites'. This is important because it means that all sites that meet the threshold of ecological interest should be designated. This is in contrast to a representative system such as SSSIs, in which only some examples of sites that meet the threshold for interest are designated (usually the best examples of a given habitat type or species feature are designated). This means that some Local Sites may be of the same quality as SSSIs. The designation of Local Sites therefore complements SSSIs by designating all the sites of high quality, creating a more coherent ecological network.

1.4 National Reporting

- 1.4.1 In 2007 the Government introduced a suite of National Indicators which Local Authorities were required to report on. The National Indicator for Biodiversity (NI 197) was based on the percentage of Local Sites in active conservation management. Active management included management implemented in the last five years through either:
 - an appropriate option in a management scheme (e.g. agri-environment or woodland grant schemes);
 - an appropriate management plan being in place for the site;
 - management carried out through an appropriate Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP); or
 - conservation management advice has been provided to the site owner by a Local Sites partnership or other appropriate body and is being acted upon.
- 1.4.2 The whole suite of National Indicators was scrapped in 2010 and replaced with the Single Data List. The Single Data List includes a similar indicator for biodiversity (reference number 160-00) which is the 'Proportion of Local Sites where positive conservation management has been or is being implemented'.

This indicator is reported annually to Defra. The percentage of Local Sites in active management is also a local performance indicator for East Riding of Yorkshire Council, and also for the area through the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) performance framework. These indicators have been very successful in raising the profile of Local Sites and also acting as a driver for improving the management of Local Sites.

1.5 Local Sites within the wider landscape

1.5.1 Local Sites are part of a suite of designations that collectively form a network of habitats within wider landscapes. The Defra commissioned report *Making Space for Nature: A review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Networks* was published in 2010. The panel which produced the report was chaired by Professor Sir John Lawton CBE FRS and therefore the report is sometimes referred to simply as 'The Lawton Report'. The report focused on the question 'Do England's wildlife sites comprise a coherent and resilient ecological network?' It considered designated sites in three tiers:

- Tier 1 sites are those whose primary purpose is nature conservation and which have a high level of protection (e.g. SSSIs);
- Tier 2 sites are designated for their high biodiversity value but do not receive full protection (e.g. LWS);
- Tier 3 sites are landscape designations with wildlife conservation as part of their statutory purpose (National parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, AONBs).

1.5.2 The Lawton Report estimated that in England there were more than 42,000 LWS covering over 69,000 ha of wildlife habitat. The report concluded that the current ecological networks were not coherent and resilient enough and made a number of recommendations to address this. The key thrust of the recommendations with regard to England's protected sites network was that the number and size of sites needed to increase and that management and connectivity needed to be improved. The implementation of a robust Local Sites network in the East Riding contributes to the establishment of a sound baseline against which future enhancements might meet the recommendations of the Lawton Report for the area.

1.5.3 The National Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) was first published in 1994 and included a suite of priority habitats and species. This list of habitats and species was reviewed and expanded in 2007. The revised list of 56 priority habitats and 943 priority species in England was published under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 as the list of species and habitats of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity. The terms 'BAP habitat' and 'BAP species' are commonly used to refer to these lists. LWS in the East Riding of Yorkshire include a substantial proportion of many of the BAP habitats in the County and are therefore a key mechanism for the conservation of biodiversity.

1.5.4 The start of the 21st century has seen an increasing emphasis on concentrating biodiversity conservation initiatives in core landscape scale areas. This led to the development of 'strategic landscape target areas' in Yorkshire, together with the

identification of 'local biodiversity priority areas' in the East Riding. These Yorkshire and local landscape scale areas are included in the East Riding of Yorkshire Biodiversity Action Plan (ERYBAP) which was adopted by the Council and partners in 2010. These are areas where biodiversity conservation initiatives will be prioritised to improve the quality and connectivity of habitats. LWS often form the key sites in these areas, acting as key 'nodes' within wider habitat networks.

- 1.5.5 Semi-natural habitats typically occur in discrete patches which may be some distance from the next patch of similar habitat. In order to facilitate the movement of species and mitigate for the potential effects of climate change it is desirable to develop 'habitat networks'. These networks should aim to increase the size, quality and proximity of the habitat patches. LWS can play an important part in these networks by supporting important populations and linking other patches of habitat, including statutory sites. Care must be taken, however, to avoid the inclusion of areas and habitats of low ecological condition.
- 1.5.6 The concept of 'Green Infrastructure' (GI) has also developed in recent years. GI includes semi-natural habitats, but is much wider than just biodiversity, being concerned with multi-functional benefits such as recreation, flood alleviation and archaeological value. GI therefore often provides a range of what are now referred to as 'ecosystem services'. The benefits that the natural environment provides help sustain or enhance human populations. LWS are an important component of GI and may provide other GI functions and ecosystem services in addition to their ecological value. For example the chalk grasslands of the Wolds attract walkers and tourists to the area who in turn bring significant economic investment to local communities through nature based tourism. Green Tourism is developing in the East Riding as awareness and appreciation of its natural environment grows. The Hull and East Riding Local Nature Partnership (LNP) is working to promote these benefits we get from nature through joint working with wider sectors and partnerships.

1.6 Implications for LWS designation

- 1.6.1 As a non-statutory designation, LWS status does not place any additional legal restrictions on the management of land that has been designated. Other environmental regulations may still apply and the implementation of some of these may have regard to the impacts upon an LWS. The designation does not place any duty on an owner to undertake, or not undertake any specific forms or management. Neither does it preclude normal lawful commercial activities, such as farming, forestry and other rural enterprises. The ecological value identified by an LWS designation may help applications for funding from various sources, including management schemes such as agri-environment or woodland grant schemes.

1.7 LWS and the planning system

- 1.7.1 The planning system is a key mechanism for protecting Local Sites from harm as a result of development. The planning system includes Local Plans and the

determination of planning applications. The Local Plans provide policies against which planning applications are determined (unless material considerations indicate otherwise). These processes are guided by national planning policies, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Within the East Riding of Yorkshire Council, a Local Plan is being prepared by the Forward Planning team. Planning applications are determined by the Planning and Development Management service.

1.7.2 The East Riding Local Plan (ERLP) is the developing spatial planning document for the East Riding of Yorkshire. Prior to the formation of the East Riding of Yorkshire Council in 1996, the four district Councils each commenced preparation of a Local Plan to inform development. These are being replaced by the ERLP, which will comprise a:

- Strategy Document;
- Allocations Document;
- Bridlington Area Action Plan (AAP);
- Joint Hull and East Riding Minerals Document;
- Joint Hull and East Riding Waste Document; and
- Other Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) as appropriate.

Both the Strategy and Allocations Documents are due to be published autumn 2013 and submitted to the Secretary of State in spring 2014. This document forms part of the evidence base for the ERLP. The Strategy Document includes Policy ENV4: Enhancing Biodiversity and Geodiversity. Part B states “*Where development which would harm a Local site (or habitats or species supported by Local Sites), whether directly or indirectly, cannot be avoided, measures to secure appropriate mitigation, compensation and enhancement must be agreed.*”

1.7.3 The NPPF¹ sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It constitutes guidance for local authorities in drawing up Local Plans and is a material consideration in determining planning applications. It sets out some policy criteria in relation to biodiversity (paragraphs 117 and 118). For instance, it states that, to minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity, planning policies should identify and map components of local ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them and areas identified by local partnerships for habitat restoration or creation. The LWS identified in the East Riding of Yorkshire are a key component of ecological networks within the county as they represent (together with statutory sites) the important patches of habitats. Paragraph 153 of the NPPF refers to the role of SPD. It states that SPD ‘should be used where they can help applicants make successful applications or aid infrastructure delivery, and should not be used to add unnecessarily to the financial burdens on development’. Biodiversity would be a suitable area for the preparation of SPD.

1.7.4 In determining planning applications the presence of an LWS is a ‘material consideration’. This does not preclude all forms of development from taking

¹ National Planning Policy Framework. Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012.

place, but the impacts upon the LWS will be considered together with other material considerations. The NPPF states that if significant harm cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused. Potential impacts may be mitigated through careful design and layout of the scheme, and / or the timing of certain operations. Some schemes may also have the potential to enhance an LWS through new management actions or the creation of new habitats which may buffer or enhance an existing LWS. In cases where having considered mitigation measures, significant residual harm is unavoidable, the proposal should justify the need for the development and the reasons why it cannot reasonably be sited in a location which would avoid adverse impacts upon an LWS. In cases where adverse impacts cannot be avoided compensatory measures should be provided which should at least replace the extent and quality of the features lost. If the above measures cannot be addressed satisfactorily then the application should be refused, as stated in the NPPF.

- 1.7.5 In determining a planning application East Riding of Yorkshire Council may require from the applicant, such information as is deemed necessary to assess material considerations, including impacts upon biodiversity. The information in an LWS citation will be useful in cases where an LWS is within or adjacent to an application. The LWS survey is usually based on habitat data alone and does not normally include survey data for protected species. The local planning authority may however require additional ecological survey work, for example for protected species and also impact assessments in addition to the ecological survey information contained in an LWS citation.
- 1.7.6 Candidate Sites are Local Sites that were identified in the register of the former Humberside County Council, or have been identified through other surveys or data (See Section 4 – ‘Candidate Site Selection and Survey’ for more detail). The Candidate Site status reflects the fact that they have not yet been subject to survey and review. These sites will be treated as extant Local Sites until such a time as they can be surveyed and assessed against the site selection guidelines. Sites proposed as new Candidate Sites will have no status in the planning system unless the LWS Panel has assigned Candidate Site status to them following the process set out in section 4.1 and 4.2. The LWS Panel will endeavour to review Candidate Sites, as opportunities and resources permit. Following resurvey and review they will either be confirmed as an LWS or deleted.
- 1.7.7 In cases where a development proposal may affect a Candidate Site, which has not yet been surveyed and assessed against the new site selection guidelines (for whatever reason), surveys of potential features of interest will be required to be undertaken by the developer and submitted to the local authority. The survey data are necessary in order to inform the determination of the planning application. In such cases the applicant should request from the local planning authority a scoping opinion regarding the type and specification of ecological surveys required. This scoping opinion will take into account any relevant information concerning the Candidate Site and will not request survey data without reasonable justification. This will normally include a botanical survey to assess the habitats against the site selection guidelines. Other surveys for particular species groups may be required where the habitats present, or local records suggest, that there is a reasonable likelihood that the site(s) may support a

species feature (single species or an assemblage of species) which would qualify under a species site selection guideline. Ecological surveys will only be requested where there is evidence to suggest that there is a reasonable likelihood that the site supports features of interest of LWS quality or other ecological features of material consideration in terms of the planning system.

2. The history of Local Sites in the East Riding of Yorkshire

2.1 Changing structures of local government

- 2.1.1 The original administrative county of East Riding of Yorkshire was abolished on 1st April 1974 when the County of Humberside came into being. This included land on both the north and south sides of the Humber Estuary. It did not however include all of the historic County of the East Riding of Yorkshire. In the north of the old East Riding, some parts of the Yorkshire Wolds, the Vale of Pickering and the coastal town of Filey became part of North Yorkshire. In the west of the old County land between the rivers Derwent and Ouse also became part of North Yorkshire.
- 2.1.2 The old (pre 1974) boundary of the East Riding of Yorkshire is still used for biological recording by the Yorkshire Naturalist's Union (YNU) and the National Biodiversity Network (NBN). This is because like other biological recording organisations in Britain, the YNU and NBN base their recording geography on the Watsonian Vice-counties, which were first published in 1853. In 2003 the NBN finalised and digitised the vice county boundaries at 1:10,000 scale, based on a 1947 mapped version. There are five vice counties in the historic county of Yorkshire, of which 'South-East Yorkshire' is Vice-County 61 (VC61), which covers the majority of the East Riding. However a small part of one other Vice-County area, namely VC63 South-west Yorkshire, falls within the administrative boundary of East Riding of Yorkshire.
- 2.1.3 The County of Humberside was based on the two tier model of local government with nine District or Borough Councils within the boundary of the County Council. Three of these District or Borough Councils were wholly within the modern County of the East Riding of Yorkshire and one was partly within the modern boundary. The three District or Borough Councils which were wholly within the modern county were North Wolds (renamed 'East Yorkshire' in 1981) Borough, Beverley (renamed 'East Yorkshire Borough of Beverley' in 1981) and Holderness District. Boothferry Borough Council was partly within the modern County.
- 2.1.4 Humberside County Council and the nine District Councils were abolished and replaced with four new Unitary (single tier) authorities on 1 April 1996. One of the new unitary authorities was the East Riding of Yorkshire Council, which is the current local authority and covers an area of 2,407.68 square kilometres. The other three unitary authorities formed from the old Humberside County Council are Hull City Council on the north bank and North Lincolnshire Council and North-east Lincolnshire Council on the south bank.

2.2 The origin of local site systems in previous local authorities

- 2.2.1 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) were developed under the auspices of Humberside County Council and published in "*Sites of Nature Conservation and Geological Importance in Humberside*" in 1991². These sites had

² Sites of Nature Conservation and Geological Importance in Humberside. Humberside County Council, 1991.

varying degrees of recognition within the relevant District and Borough Council Local Plans. The sites were mostly proposed by local naturalists and organisations with some nature conservation function. A number of the sites that were proposed were sites that had been considered for designation as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), but had not been selected, as other sites had been chosen as the representative example of a particular habitat or species selection. They were selected on the basis of a qualitative assessment as local, objective selection guidelines were not available at the time. There were approximately 740 local sites designated by ecological features.

2.3 Summary of the review of Local Wildlife Sites

- 2.3.1 The initial work to review and update the SINC system was undertaken during 2001-2003. This included a desktop review of existing SINC sites undertaken by the North and East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre (NEYEDC). A set of draft site selection guidelines were developed by consultants Baker, Shepherd, Gillespie in 2001 and revised in 2003³.
- 2.3.2 In 2006 Defra published '*Local Sites – Guidance on their identification, selection and management*'⁴ which established for the first time, a recognised common standard for local sites systems. Along with the planning requirements and the development of the East Riding Local Development Framework (LDF) (now known as the East Riding Local Plan), this provided the impetus to review and update the SINC system in order to make it compliant with the Defra guidance and fit for purpose for the East Riding area.
- 2.3.3 The review process began in 2007 and at the start it was agreed that the new system would use the new term of Local Site for local geological and wildlife sites and that this would be divided using the terms 'Local Wildlife Site' (LWS) and 'Local Geological Site' (LGS), as recommended in the Defra guidance. An LWS Partnership was formed and the inaugural meeting of the new East Riding of Yorkshire LWS Panel took place on 31 January 2008.
- 2.3.4 The technical side of the review process was led by NEYEDC. A programme to survey existing SINC sites across the East Riding was developed, which was scheduled to take five years.
- 2.3.5 NEYEDC began the process of establishing from aerial photography interpretation (API) which former SINC sites were still extant. API cannot confirm the value of habitats, but was very useful in identifying if the habitats originally identified were still present and worthy of a more detailed ground survey to determine their value.
- 2.3.6 Having identified the extant sites NEYEDC then began the process of obtaining landowner permission for each site to be surveyed. Engagement and liaison with landowners was undertaken jointly with the Local Authority to ensure that site owners were aware and re-assured that the process was being undertaken for a

³ Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in the East Riding of Yorkshire, Unpublished report, 2003

⁴ Local Sites - Guidance on their Identification, Selection and Management.. Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
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specific function. Once landowner permission had been secured botanical surveys were undertaken by professional ecological consultants managed by NEYEDC and funded by East Riding of Yorkshire Council.

- 2.3.7 The data from the surveys were managed by NEYEDC and citations, species lists and habitat maps produced for each site. The sites were then assessed against the habitat guidelines and considered by the LWS Panel. For more detail on this process see Section 5 - Data Management and Section 6 – Assessment of Sites.

2.4 Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites and Local Geological Sites

- 2.4.1 Non-statutory geological sites were originally known as ‘Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites’ (RIGS). This was the name used when the sites in the East Riding were first identified by the East Yorkshire RIGS Group. Defra now advocates the use of the term ‘Local Geological Sites’ (LGS) and a common term of ‘Local Sites’ to encompass both LWS and LGS (Defra, 2006). The RIGS Handbook⁵ forms national guidance on RIGS but is still relevant to LGS. The term RIGS is still widely used, but in the East Riding of Yorkshire RIGS and LGS are synonymous, whereas in some areas RIGS are considered as a higher level of regional site between LGS and the higher national designation of geological SSSI.

- 2.4.2 The East Yorkshire RIGS Group produced the most recent list of sites (using the term Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites) in March 2011. The identification and selection of LGS/RIGS sites in the East Riding of Yorkshire is managed by this group who use their own criteria, which are based on the national criteria, for the selection of sites based on the important geological features they contain for:

- the educational value they may provide;
- the research potential they have;
- their importance as geological landscapes; or
- their importance in the history of the science of geology.

- 2.4.3 The East Yorkshire RIGS Group have submitted their list of selected LGS to the Council for inclusion and recognition within the area’s spatial planning document. This list forms Appendix B to this document. Former SINC sites which were identified solely for geological features will be deleted as SINC sites and referred to the East Yorkshire RIGS Group for consideration as LGS.

3. The Local Wildlife Sites Partnership

3.1 History of the partnership

- 3.1.1 In autumn 2001 a contract was awarded to the NEYEDC to undertake a preliminary assessment of the status of SINC sites in the East Riding. This study

⁵ RIGS Handbook. Royal Society for Nature Conservation, 2006

(East Yorkshire SINC Report)⁶ was based on aerial photography interpretation (API) and sought to establish whether the original habitats were still present. It also sought to identify the extent and nature of any habitat losses e.g. changes to other habitats through ecological succession and losses to other land uses, such as built development or arable agriculture. Ground-truthing was used to verify the accuracy of the API with 38 sites (5% of the total) being checked. About half of the sites had suffered some loss of habitat, mostly due to ecological succession to other habitats and conversion to arable.

- 3.1.2 In autumn 2001 East Riding of Yorkshire Council, in partnership with a range of local naturalists and consultants, undertook a review of the selection criteria for SINC. This work led to the formation of a SINC panel. This included the East Riding of Yorkshire Council, English Nature (now Natural England), the Environment Agency and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. The SINC panel also commissioned NEYEDC to undertake a pilot project to test the draft guidelines on a sample of sites in the East Riding.
- 3.1.3 The current LWS Panel was formed in 2007 to develop a new LWS system for the East Riding of Yorkshire. This built on work undertaken at the beginning of the decade by the former SINC panel. The panel sits within a larger local sites partnership which includes the Sustainable Natural Environment Task Group (SNETG) and the East Riding of Yorkshire Biodiversity Partnership (ERYBP). SNETG is part of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and covers a range of environmental themes, including biodiversity. It acts as a steering group for the ERYBP and the LWS Panel, effectively linking these two groups together and integrating their work. This is especially important when it comes to the work of encouraging active conservation management for LWS. The Local Sites Partnership will also link into the emerging Hull and East Riding LNP and through this there may be opportunities to work jointly with Hull on Local Sites. Links are maintained with the East Yorkshire RIGS Group who are an important part of the wider local sites partnership.

3.2 Membership of the Panel

- 3.2.1 The Panel is open to individuals and organisations with a practical interest in conserving wildlife in the East Riding of Yorkshire. The Panel comprises permanent members and may also include other individuals or organisation with relevant expertise on an ad-hoc basis as required. When considering sites for designation, the ecologist(s) who surveyed the site(s) will normally attend the Panel meeting. Membership of the group may be reviewed by the Panel at any time.
- 3.2.2 The following organisations and individuals are permanent members of the LWS Panel:
- ERYC (represented by the Sustainable Development Team and the Nature Conservation and Hedgerows Officer from Planning and Development Management);
 - NEYEDC;

⁶ East Yorkshire SINC Report.. NEYEDC Unpublished report, 2002

- Ecological surveyors*;
- Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT);
- Natural England (NE);
- Hull and East Yorkshire Woodland Initiative (HEYwoods);
- Botanical Society for the British Isles (BSBI) (local botanical recorder);
- Environment Agency (EA); and
- Forestry Commission (FC).

*The representation of ecological surveyors varies between panel meetings, depending on the issues and sites being considered. The lead ecological surveyor is considered a permanent member of the Panel.

- 3.2.3 Specialist representation will be sought to attend panel meetings on an as and when required basis depending on the nature of the sites being considered. For example naturalists with a particular expertise in key species groups or habitats will be invited to help in the consideration of sites when they have a particular value for some species or ecological features.

3.3 The role of the Partnership

- 3.3.1 The role of the Partnership, and specifically the Panel within this, is primarily a technical role, providing ecological expertise to ensure the sound management of the LWS system. The Partnership and Panel do not engage in consultation or campaigning on policy or planning issues. The LWS Panel is governed by Terms of Reference, which are set out in Appendix C.

3.4 The role of East Riding of Yorkshire Council as lead partner

- 3.4.1 East Riding of Yorkshire Council is the lead partner for the LWS system. The Council has initiated and funded the review of the original SINC site register and the development of the new LWS system. The Council provides the secretariat for the Partnership and the Panel and chairs and minutes meetings. This includes organising meetings and keeping the relevant documentation up to date (Panel agendas, minutes and supporting documents) relating to the administration of the Partnership. The Council supports the Partnership through officer time, but does not however have any core budget specifically allocated to the LWS system.

3.5 Local Geological Sites panel

- 3.5.1 LGS are administered by the East Yorkshire RIGS Group. This group administers the LGS (still referred to in the East Riding as RIGS) independently of the LWS Panel.

4. Candidate site selection and survey

4.1 Candidate Sites

4.1.1 The term ‘Candidate Sites’ or ‘Candidate LWS’ is used to refer to sites which have not yet been formally assessed against the LWS site selection guidelines in Part B of this document. This includes sites which were previously identified as SINCs, and new sites which have been identified as having features which have a reasonable likelihood of meeting the LWS site selection guidelines. Proposed new Candidate Sites may come from a variety of sources (these are described below in Section 4.2). The LWS Panel will only assign Candidate Site status in cases where there is evidence to suggest that the site has substantive biodiversity value and has a reasonable likelihood of meeting the site selection guidelines.

4.1.2 Non-statutory sites that were included on the SINC register of the former Humberside County Council, or that were on the SINC register of one of the district or borough councils within Humberside, are usually automatically considered as Candidate LWS. However, there are a number of exceptions to this when sites are not considered as Candidate LWS, these are as follows:

- sites for which API shows that the site interest has been lost completely due to a change in land-use;
- sites where reliable information indicates that no features of potential LWS quality exist on the site;
- sites that are already designated as a biological SSSI;
- sites which were added to the SINC register for geological reasons, these will be passed to the East Yorkshire RIGS Group for consideration as LGS; and
- sites that may have been previously selected for reasons that are no longer consistent with the current LWS guidelines e.g. they have been selected on the grounds of a species assemblage which is not covered by the guidelines, such as rare arable weeds.

4.2 Selection of Candidate Sites

4.2.1 Proposals for new Candidate Sites must include sufficient information to complete the ‘East Riding of Yorkshire New Candidate LWS form 2012’ (Appendix D). The information required includes the site size and location, as well as a description of the site including habitats present and species of interest. Any supporting evidence such as maps, photographs, previous records, surveys or management measures should also be submitted as part of the evidence base. The form will then be considered by the LWS Panel, who will decide whether or not the site should be assigned Candidate Site status. The decision of the Panel is final, and sites will not be reconsidered except in cases where significant new evidence suggests that the site would meet the site selection guidelines. Following acceptance as a Candidate Site, the Partnership will then normally endeavour to secure a formal survey by an appropriate expert to assess the features of interest against the LWS Guidelines. In certain cases where specialist surveys have been undertaken by recognised experts, the Panel may choose to recommend designation of the site as an LWS if the evidence is sufficiently compelling and robust. In such a circumstance the Panel would wish to see

consistency of the survey techniques used with the methods used for the LWS process led surveys, or nationally recognised survey methods.

- 4.2.2 The Broad Habitat survey of the East Riding of Yorkshire is consistent with the scale of a 'Phase 1' survey. It uses the Integrated Habitat System (IHS) classification⁷ which identifies habitats to a broad type. It has been undertaken by NEYEDC in conjunction with the review of LWS. This survey has utilised API to classify habitats to broad type. A sample set of sites classified by API have been ground-truthed by undertaking more detailed botanical surveys of habitats on the ground. This has ensured that the classifications based on API are accurate. As part of this process ecological data have been collected that can be used to identify additional Candidate LWS to those already available following the Humberside SINC processes.
- 4.2.3 Candidate Sites may also be identified through other surveys. Various sites across the county, some of which are, and some of which are not, designated as LWS will be surveyed from time to time as part of various other ecological surveys. These surveys may be initiated and managed by a range of conservation organisations and/or projects. This may include habitat inventories, as well as species based surveys, e.g. birds, butterflies, amphibians etc. Some habitat based surveys e.g. ponds, may also include some species elements e.g. plants, amphibians, invertebrates. These surveys will follow a methodology designed for the purpose of the survey. These methodologies will usually provide an indication of whether the site is of LWS quality, but the data collection may not be consistent with the methodologies required for assessment under the LWS site selection guidelines. The data from such surveys can be used to complete the Candidate Site form, which will then be assessed by the LWS Panel. The Panel may choose to assign Candidate Site status, or the Panel may choose to recommend the site as an LWS if the evidence is sufficiently compelling and robust, and demonstrates that the site clearly meets at least one of the site selection guidelines.
- 4.2.4 Candidate Sites may also be proposed by organisations or individuals with a particular knowledge of a site. They must provide the evidence required to complete the Candidate Site form in order to enable consideration of the status of the site by the LWS Panel. The species data component of this must be attributed to ecological recorders who have demonstrated an appropriate degree of competence in the relevant taxonomic group(s). If the submission of a site for consideration for Candidate Site status is made by an individual or a group that has a vested or specific interest in that site then the following additional factors will be considered by the Panel:
- what is the nature of any vested interest in the site; is this because the group own or manage the site in question, and if so for what purpose do they manage the site (nature conservation, open green space, site owned for development purposes, etc);
 - if the site has been submitted as a result of local planning or development activity (proposed or ongoing) then particular attention should be made regarding the likelihood of the stated ecological interest being present at that location; and

- if the site proposed is managed or owned by the proposer then any survey work to support the future decision regarding LWS status must be verified by an independent ecologist.

4.3 Landowner liaison

- 4.3.1 Reasonable effort will be made to identify the owners of Candidate LWS. The landowners are then sent a landowner information pack which includes a form requesting access permission to undertake the survey. If the landowner signs and returns this form with a positive response, granting access, the site will be scheduled for survey. The landowner will normally then be contacted before the survey is undertaken to inform them of the proposed date and time of the survey visit. Landowners may accompany the surveyor on the survey visit if requested. The approach to landowner liaison for Candidate Sites will be consistent with the principles being taken for landowners liaison which are covered in Section 8 of this document and Section 6 sets out how landowner permissions and liaison fits in with the administration and data management for the survey process.

4.4 Sites without landowner permission

- 4.4.1 Candidate Sites will not normally be surveyed without the permission of the landowner. There may be certain exceptions to this, for example sites where it has not been possible to identify a landowner and/or the site is publicly accessible, e.g. in the case of road verges along the public highway. Sites will not be surveyed without landowner permission if they are only accessible by public rights of way. This is because the right of way does not give access to the whole site. The statutory right of access to open access land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act will not normally be used to survey sites without landowner permission.

4.5 Site Survey summary

- 4.5.1 The standard approach is to firstly survey the site for consideration under the habitat guidelines. The survey of a Candidate Site is usually undertaken in a single visit, which needs to be at an appropriate time of year for the habitats or species present on the site. The site survey comprises a walk-over survey to record a comprehensive catalogue of vascular plants evident during the survey. The habitat types are recorded and mapped in accordance with the Integrated IHS methodology⁷. Any significant ecological features may be target noted, identifying discrete localities which are particularly species-rich or notable for negative factors such as the presence of non-native invasive species. If the habitats show an affinity towards a particular National Vegetation Classification (NVC) type, this will be noted by the surveyor. The survey methodology does not however include the 'Phase II' sample quadrat methodology used to define NVC type more precisely. The surveys aim to record vascular plants for assessment against the habitat guidelines. The surveys do not aim to record fauna, but may include incidental records of fauna, were these may indicate a feature of substantive value and/or contribute to an assessment of the value of the site. For further details of survey methodologies see Appendix E - NEYEDC Site Survey Guidelines, Appendix F - Site Mapping Guidelines and Appendix G - East Yorkshire LWS Survey Sheet.
- 4.5.2. Surveys for consideration under the Species Guidelines should follow recognised methodologies which are appropriate for the particular group of species and the relevant site selection species guideline. Records must be supplied to NEYEDC and the identification be accepted by relevant county recorders or national experts for scarce or difficult to identify species. Only records of naturally occurring locally native species will be assessed against the guidelines. The status of species in this regard will be determined by the Panel in consultation with local records where appropriate. The data collected should be sufficiently comprehensive to establish whether the site supports a regular breeding population of a species, or whether a species is only of casual occurrence on a site. Candidate site forms for sites proposed on species grounds should include information of the level of recording undertaken on the site and who has recorded, or verified the key species.
- 4.5.3 Sites which may be considered under the Community Value Guidelines must score within certain thresholds (20% and 40%) of the thresholds for a habitat or species guideline. Survey and assessment of these elements of the guidelines are as for the respective habitat or species guideline. The assessment of the community value factors will be undertaken by the Panel, who may consider evidence from various sources relevant to the factor under consideration. Candidate Site forms for sites proposed under the Community Value Guidelines must provide evidence for both the ecological and social factors and demonstrate how the combination of these could meet the guidelines.

⁷ Integrated Habitat System.. Somerset Environmental Records Centre, 2007

5. Assessment of Candidate Sites

5.1 Assessment of Candidate sites

- 5.1.1 The assessment of Candidate Sites is undertaken solely by the LWS Panel. The Panel will be provided with species lists, guideline scores, surveyors' reports, maps and aerial photographs by NEYEDC to inform their consideration of the sites.
- 5.1.2 Candidate Sites will be assessed against the Site Selection Guidelines which form part 2 of this document. There is a presumption to assess sites against the Habitats Guidelines first, and then the Species Guidelines. Sites must be assessed against these guidelines before they can be considered against the Community Value Guidelines. This reflects the prioritisation of the site selection guidelines and also the need for the sites to reach a certain threshold under the Habitat or Species guidelines in order to be considered under the Community Value Guidelines (see Part B Section 5. Community Value Guidelines).
- 5.1.3 The Site Selection Guidelines build on some of the principles of the Ratcliffe criteria⁸. These were developed as a means of assessing the value of sites for nature conservation based on the following factors: size, diversity, naturalness, rarity, fragility, typicalness, recorded history, position in an ecological/geographical unit, potential value and intrinsic appeal. The Panel may have regard to these criteria when considering Candidate Sites, particularly in cases where site(s) are close to the threshold for selection under a guideline, or the guidelines are difficult to apply due to the nature of a particular site. The exception to the use of the Ratcliffe criteria is 'potential value', which will not be used as a basis for designating LWS.
- 5.1.4 Ideally the interest of a site should be well distributed throughout a site. This is however sometimes not the case, for example species-rich swards within grasslands may be confined to small localised patches. This may reflect variations in localised conditions, or may also indicate a decline in the condition of the site. Patches of interest may sit within a larger area that is managed as a single unit and in such cases it may be impossible to restrict the designated area to a small patch or patches. There will therefore be a presumption for the designation of complete management units. If the condition of a site is perceived to be declining, but that decline is reversible with appropriate management it should be designated if it meets the guideline thresholds. Designation as an LWS should focus attention on a site, and can be used to encourage sympathetic management of a site. If however the decline in condition is considered to be not reversible, or it has declined to the point where the original value has been lost i.e. the characteristic suite of species is significantly below the guideline threshold, then the site should not be designated.
- 5.1.5 The affinity a site shows to a particular NVC community may be considered by the Panel. This is the basis for some Habitat Guidelines and also an expression of the 'typicalness' Ratcliffe criteria. The degree of affinity to a particular NVC community will be a qualitative judgement by the Panel, based on the available

⁸ A Nature Conservation Review. Ratcliffe, D.A, Cambridge University Press (1977)

data, the judgement of the surveyor and the context of the NVC community within the East Riding of Yorkshire. The presence of one or more notable (regionally rare or noteworthy) NVC communities will significantly inform the site evaluation process. It will not normally be based on a quantitative analysis of quadrat data, as this does not form part of the survey methodology, however where this is available it will be considered in making a decision on the site alongside the standard site information.

- 5.1.6 The assessment of sites should, whenever possible, be based on surveys specifically undertaken for the LWS assessment process. This is important to ensure a consistent standard of survey, both in terms of methodology, survey effort and surveyor expertise. Assessments will not be based on extensive additional records for a site. However some additional records may be considered to support the assessment and decision making process as contextual information, especially if they relate to species which are particularly scarce, unlikely to have been recorded during the original survey, or otherwise significantly affect the assessment. The validity of any additional data used should be carefully considered by the Panel before it is used and recorded appropriately when making a recommendation on LWS status.
- 5.1.7 The boundaries of an LWS should be matched to Ordnance Survey (OS) Mastermap polygons, or a clearly defined geographic feature or management unit(s). The boundaries of a Candidate Site may be modified by the Panel as part of the assessment process to comply with this requirement. They may also be modified to include or exclude areas which do, or do not, meet the site selection guidelines. Areas of habitat that do not meet the guidelines may be included within the site boundary if they sit adjacent to the qualifying feature, but this will be restricted to areas of habitat that support the conservation and management of the main LWS feature(s). For example, an area of rough grassland that does not score under the grassland guidelines may be designated if it sits around a pond, which meets the standing water guidelines and is particularly species rich, as it may act as a buffer for the interception of nutrient run-off, maintain an appropriate hydrological gradient and/or provide associated terrestrial habitat for particular species (e.g. amphibians that may or may not also mean the site meets the relevant species guidelines). There are a number of instances where such 'buffering' may be considered as essential to maintain the designation features of the recommended LWS.
- 5.1.8 The Panel have three options when considering a Candidate Site. They may either:
- Designate the site as an LWS, where it meets at least one of the site selection guidelines;
 - Delete the site, were it fails to meet any of the site selection guidelines; or
 - Defer a site, if they feel further information is required in order to make a decision on designation.
- 5.1.8 The following types of sites will **not** be considered for designation as an LWS:
- Biological SSSIs (But geological SSSIs may be designated, see Section 1.2.10);
 - Buildings (whether in use or derelict);
 - Domestic gardens;

- Land in cultivation (arable, horticulture)*;
- Active working areas of quarries (but former workings within active quarries may be designated); or
- Estuarine or marine areas below mean low water.

* Note that any conversion from permanent grassland to arable must comply with the Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) (England) (No2) Regulations 2006 Act.

5.2 Recording and documentation

5.2.1 The decisions of the Panel with regard to each Candidate Site considered are recorded in the minutes of the meeting. These identify the reasons for designation, including the guideline, or guidelines under which a site was designated. The minutes may also include a summary of the discussion that took place, especially in relation to the selection of an appropriate boundary for the site and the qualifying features. If a site is at, or near, the threshold, then it is likely that a greater amount of discussion takes place, and therefore the minutes will reflect this. The minutes also include a summary table of which sites have been designated, deleted or deferred. The minutes are available to the general public on request.

5.2.2 All designated sites are supported by the following documentation: a citation including a species list, a boundary map and a map of habitats recorded on the site. The citation includes key factual information including the site name, grid reference, site code, size and guideline(s) under which it was designated. It also includes a description which will summarise the key habitats and species on the site, as well as any other features of interest. It may also refer to management practices evident at the time of the survey (e.g. grazing), whether the condition of the site appears to be stable or changing, with specific threats highlighted where appropriate (e.g. the presence of non-native invasive species) and any other relevant issues.

5.3 Links to the Post-Panel Process

5.3.1 Following a panel meeting, the recommendations with regard to designations and boundaries are then processed by NEYEDC. The relevant databases and GIS layers are updated to reflect the new status of the site(s) (see Section 6 – Data management for more detail). Draft citations are prepared by NEYEDC which are then reviewed by the Council and a final version agreed between the two organisations. The final citation and maps are then provided by NEYEDC to the Council. This documentation is then used to disseminate the sites to landowners (see Section 8 – Dissemination to Landowner). The Council will then consider the recommendations of the Panel and formalise the designated or deleted status of individual sites (see Section 7 – Adoption of sites).

6. Data Management

6.1 North and East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre

6.1.1 NEYEDC is the Local Record Centre (LRC) for the area encompassed by the unitary authorities of the East Riding of Yorkshire, York and Kingston-upon-Hull and of North Yorkshire County Council and its constituent district and borough councils. In addition, the Centre also covers the Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors National Parks. NEYEDC is an operating function of the Yorkshire and Humber Ecological Data Trust, a registered charity. Since the inception of the East Riding LWS Survey, NEYEDC has played a central role in the administration of the survey and in the management of the data produced by it, working in partnership with the Council. For any given survey season, the role of NEYEDC can be divided into four stages as follows: -

- Pre-survey administration and data management;
- Surveyor support, additional research and landowner liaison;
- Pre-LWS Panel analysis and data management; and
- Post LWS Panel quality assurance and on-going data management.

6.2 Data Management Systems

6.2.1 All four stages of activity are underpinned by a suite of proprietary and bespoke data management systems. Site and habitat boundaries and additional target note data are captured in a Geographical Information System (GIS) software product. Species data and additional environmental contextual data are initially captured in the Recorder 6© database. NEYEDC have developed an additional spatial database called Second Site (S2). Second Site holds data with respect to the LWS process, dealing with issues like site designation, site ownership, site management boundary versioning, site citations and site descriptions, which are not possible using the previously described products. Second Site can import data from the other two data sources, and export data to on-line site citation and data-search tools. Though Second Site was specifically developed for the East Riding of Yorkshire LWS survey it is rapidly being taken up by LRCs across the country for LWS data management and demonstrates the best practice approaches being developed and employed on the East Riding LWS System.

6.2.2 In addition to these core data management systems, NEYEDC use the Record Cleaner software, developed by NBN to coordinate species data verification and validation and a bespoke spreadsheet, to record the completion of each step of the data management process. NEYEDC has developed bespoke software to screen site species lists against the indicator lists published in the ERY LWS Guidelines (see Part B of this document) and to compile reports for use by the LWS Panel.

6.3 Survey Phases

6.3.1 For logistical purposes, the survey was divided into 5 arbitrary campaigns or phases, with each phase being made up of a number of 10km squares. The number of 10km squares allocated to each phase was adjusted according to the number of Candidate Sites they contained, such that each could be completed in a single field season. The sequence in which the survey phases were undertaken was influenced by the needs of the developing Local Plan, and the need to resolve the designation status of LWS in close proximity to key conurbations within the East Riding. In practice, pragmatic issues like funding availability, securing the necessary landowner permissions and surveyor availability resulted in some over-lapping of the survey phases.

6.4 Pre-survey Administration and Data Management

6.4.1 The pre-survey data management stage normally takes place between early October and late February. Figure 1 below shows the detailed process that takes in the pre-survey data management process from Candidate Site identification through to allocation of a site to a surveyor for survey and the stages that occur between these. This stage of the process is important as it contains the initial liaison and contact with the site landowner and also sets the remit and scope for the survey that will be undertaken. The process of Candidate Site selection is covered in Section 4 – Candidate Site Selection and Survey.

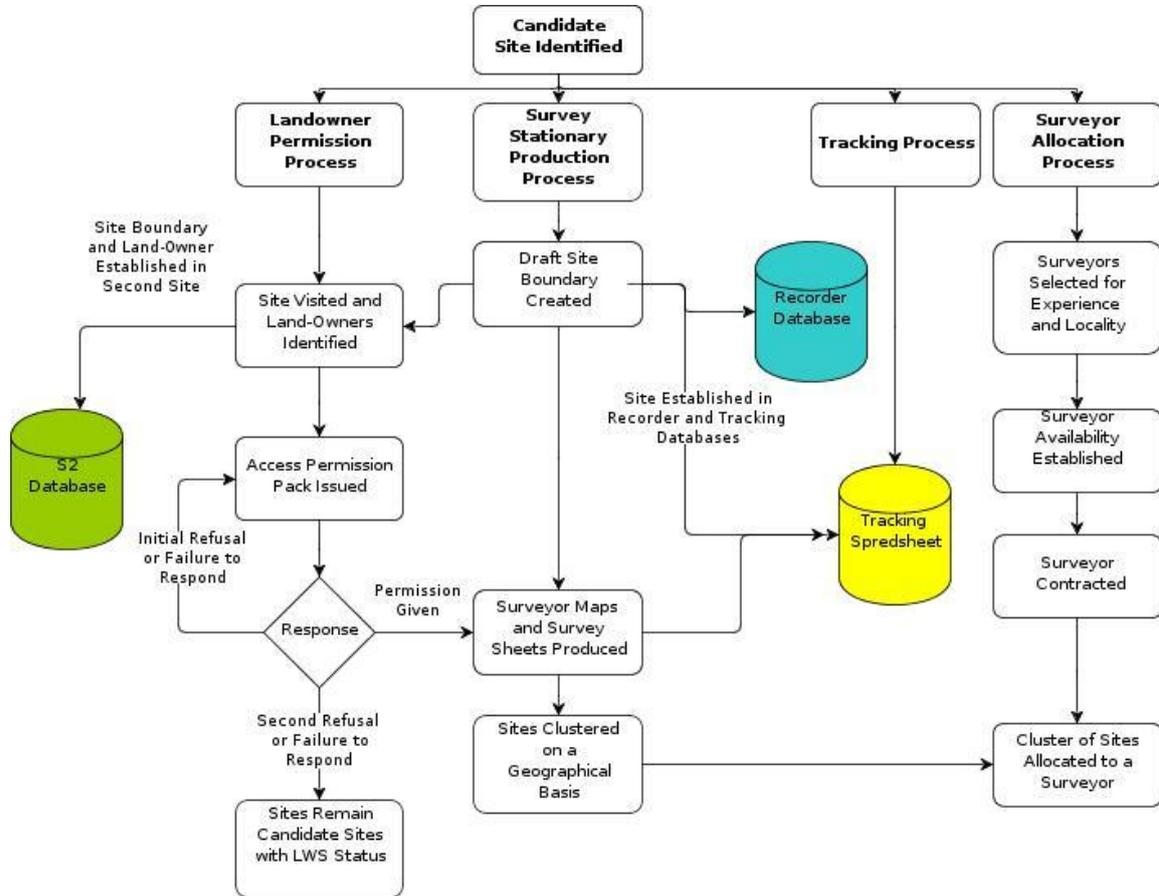
6.4.2 For each Candidate Site identified, a draft site boundary is created in the GIS. Production of this boundary triggers the site access permission process. Sites are visited by NEYEDC staff to establish ownership and a landowner information pack, with access permission form, issued. A positive landowner response results in landowner details being entered into the Second Site database, and to the production of surveyor site maps and survey sheets. A negative response or a failure to respond on the part of a landowner, results in the issue of a second landowner information pack and access permission form. A second refusal or failure to respond results in the site being removed from the survey programme pending further landowner liaison. Sites that are removed from the survey in this way remain candidate sites and are considered to have LWS status until a survey is undertaken, the results of which can be considered by the LWS Panel (see Section 1.7 LWS and the Planning System).

6.4.3 The surveyor recruitment process occurs concurrently with the site access permission process. For each Phase of the survey, surveyors are identified that have both professional credibility and existing expertise, or at least familiarity with the areas being investigated in the current Phase of the survey. The availability of each surveyor is established and the surveyor placed under contract to NEYEDC.

6.4.4 In late February or early March, the sites available for survey are clustered for logistic efficiency and each cluster allocated to a surveyor. The surveyor uses their professional expertise to plan a survey programme with each site being visited at the appropriate stage of the field season. Surveyors contact landowners

directly prior to visiting sites, where this has been specified as a condition of access.

Figure 1.1: Pre-survey data management processes.



6.5 Surveyor Support, Landowner Liaison and Additional Research

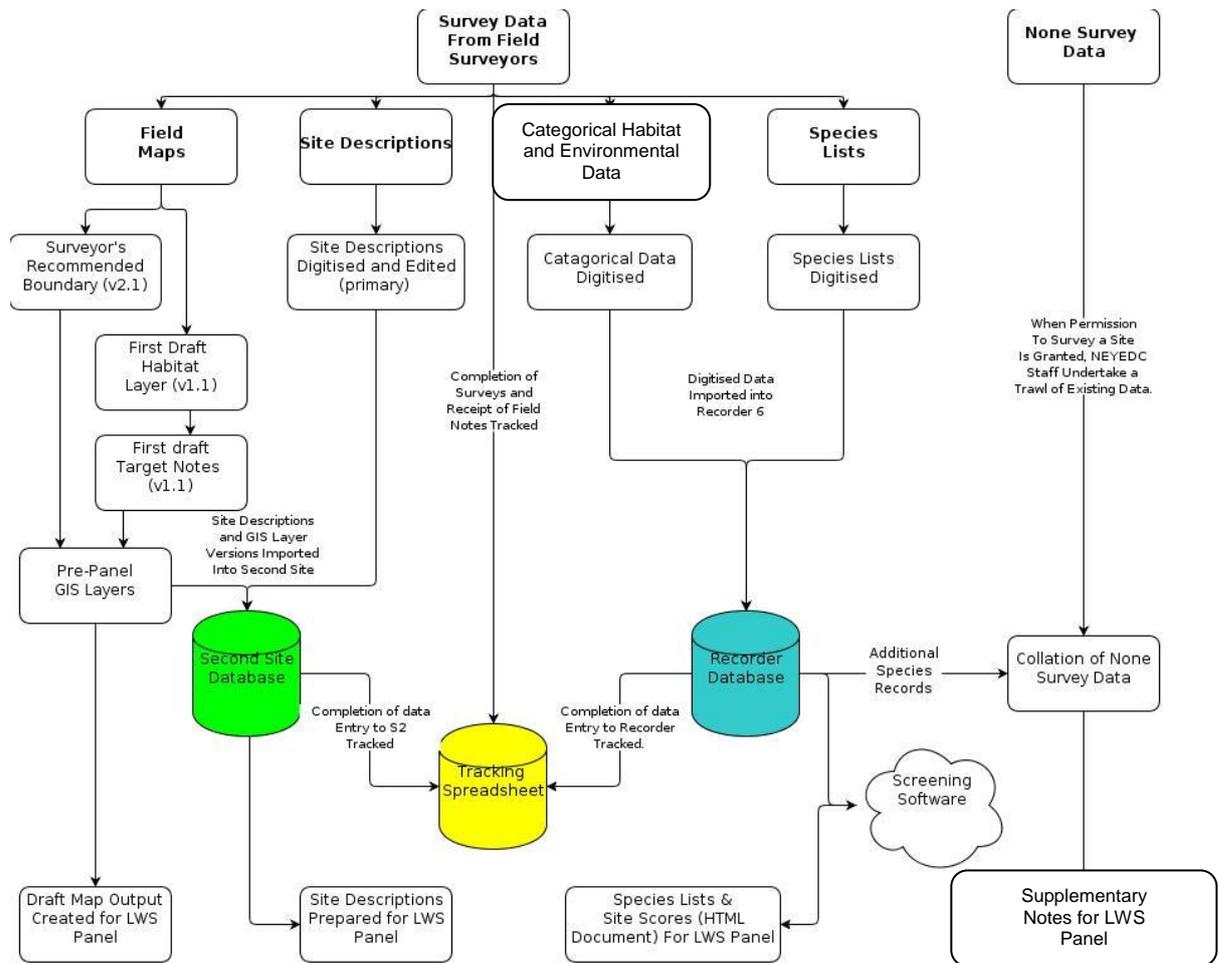
- 6.5.1 During the survey season, NEYEDC offers administrative support to surveyors, providing additional survey sheets, base and contextual mapping on request and liaising with landowners or their representatives where necessary.
- 6.5.2 The site access permission process continues throughout the field season, and if new permissions are obtained with sufficient time for a meaningful survey to take place, the site or sites are allocated to a surveyor.
- 6.5.3 NEYEDC uses the field season to process New Candidate Site forms (see Appendix D for the form and Section 4 – Candidate Site Selection and Survey for details of the process) from LWS Panel members, Biodiversity Partnership members or landowners and the general public. Where these are deemed by the LWS Panel to warrant consideration as a new LWS, and where capacity exists, they are assigned to a surveyor.

- 6.5.4 During the field season, NEYEDC carries out additional desk-based research on the sites under consideration. This typically involves reference to existing habitat data, in particular the Ancient Woodland Inventory and contacting local natural historians and other community experts to collate data and information on a given site(s). Such information may be presented alongside survey information at the relevant LWS Panel meeting when the site is considered against the LWS Guidelines.

6.6 Pre-LWS Panel Analysis and Data Management

- 6.6.1 The pre-LWS Panel analysis and data management stage normally begins in November after the field season, and continues until a given site is put before the LWS Panel for consideration against the Guidelines. Figure 2 below shows the detailed process that takes in the pre-panel analysis and data management process from the processing of raw survey data from the field surveys through to the development of documents for consideration by the Panel. This stage provides crucial quality checking and results in fit for purpose data and information that can be considered by the LWS Panel with confidence.

Figure 1.2: Pre-LWS Panel Analysis and Data Management.



6.6.2 The field data are separated into four components; field maps, site descriptions, categoryical habitat and environmental data and species lists. Field maps are used to generate surveyor’s recommended boundaries and draft habitat and target note layers in the GIS. Site descriptions undergo primary verification and editing. Both Site descriptions and GIS layer versions are added to Second Site. Draft map output and site description text are produced to support decision making at LWS Panel meetings.

6.6.3 Both species lists and categoryical habitat and environmental data are added to the Recorder 6 database. Data are processed with bespoke analysis tools, which screen the species against the indicator lists published in the LWS Guidelines. This produces a number of documents, including species summaries, species lists and site scores, which can then be used by the LWS Panel. Species data which are lodged in the NEYEDC Recorder 6 database from sources other than the LWS Survey are collated with other none survey data collected during stage 2, as described above, and compiled as supplementary evidence for the consideration of the LWS Panel.

6.6.4 When the ‘Pre-LWS Panel Analysis and Data Management’ stage is complete a number of outputs are then ready for presentation to and consideration by the

LWS Panel. The process of LWS Panel consideration is considered in Section 5 – Assessment of Candidate Sites of this document, including the role that NEYEDC plays in this.

6.7 Post LWS Panel Quality Assurance and On-going Data Management

- 6.7.1 This final stage of the data management process is carried out as soon as practicable after the designation status of a site is resolved by the LWS Panel. Figure 3 below shows the detailed process that takes in the Post LWS Panel quality assurance and on-going data management stage. This covers recommendations made by the LWS Panel through to the production of outputs that can be used for dissemination to landowners, formal designation or deletion of the site by the Council. Site data are stored for use and future consideration (e.g. monitoring, re-survey as appropriate).
- 6.7.2 Immediately following LWS Panel meetings, specific outcomes for a given site, where fully resolved, are recorded in the Tracking database. On rare occasions, sites are returned to stage 3 by the Panel for re-survey. As soon as possible after the LWS Panel meeting at which the designation status is finalised, site boundaries, along with habitat and target note layers are edited to give final versions, whilst site descriptions are re-edited and designation criteria added. These data are used to provide maps to support the formal site designation process by the Council’s Cabinet, and to produce maps and site descriptions for dissemination to landowners.
- 6.7.3 The Second Site and Recorder databases will be employed on an on-going basis to provide data products for use by the Council (and partners where appropriate), for example customised GIS layers in the appropriate format for use by officers of the Council and other partners. These databases will also be used to support secure on-line access to LWS maps and citations and to ensure that East Riding LWS data is included in commercial and statutory data searches that support decision making activities (e.g. in support of the consideration of planning application, see Section 1.7 LWS and the Planning System for links to the planning system).

7. Adoption of Local Sites

7.1 The East Riding of Yorkshire Council Corporate process

- 7.1.1 LWS are recommended for designation and / or deletion from the register of sites by the LWS Panel, but formal adoption of these sites for Planning purposes is by East Riding of Yorkshire Council through its corporate process. The decision by the Council to adopt or delete sites is made by the Council's Cabinet, based on the recommendations of a report produced by the Sustainable Development Team (part of the Economic Development Service), and then ratified by the full Council.
- 7.1.2 The first tranche of LWS was adopted by the Council's Cabinet at a meeting on 16 March 2010, which full Council then ratified at their meeting on 16 April 2010. The report also gained approval for the LWS system and the principles for the operation of the LWS system from The Cabinet. This document refines those principles, clarifying the detail of how the process operates.
- 7.1.3 On an ongoing basis, reports will be taken to The Cabinet that will contain a list of the relevant designated and deleted LWS recommended by the LWS Panel. The reports will also include boundary maps of all designated sites and basic information about each site.
- 7.1.4 All designated sites will be disseminated to landowners prior to being submitted to The Cabinet for adoption. The covering letter in the dissemination pack will offer the landowners an opportunity to comment on the reasons for designation within 21 days. Comments from landowners that are relevant to the reasons for designation will be included in the report to The Cabinet. However, other more general comments, such as opposition to the principles of designation or contextual information, will not be included but will be considered in communicating with the landowner in question. If these relate to management of the site, then this will be addressed through the ongoing work of the Local Sites Partnership to get sites in active conservation management wherever possible.
- 7.1.5 In rare cases where boundaries of already adopted LWS are deemed by the Panel to require modification, these will also be reported to The Cabinet. In such cases the recommended changes will be disseminated to landowners prior to consideration by The Cabinet.
- 7.1.6 The Candidate Sites that the LWS Panel have recommended for deletion are also reported to The Cabinet to formalise their deletion. Landowners of such sites will be informed wherever possible prior to The Cabinet meeting.
- 7.1.7 Sites may be reported to The Cabinet (for designation, amendment or deletion) at any time (dependent on the schedule of Cabinet meeting dates) and therefore the list of designated sites will be periodically updated as necessary. This process may continue for the duration that this document remains valid.

7.2 Recognition in the Planning System

- 7.2.1 LWS which are listed on the ‘Register of Local Wildlife Sites in the East Riding’ will be afforded material consideration within the planning system, both spatial and development management. The register will be updated periodically as new sites are added, deleted or boundaries amended. Material consideration within the planning system will be based on the most recent update of the register.

7.3 Recognition of Local Geological Sites

- 7.3.1 LGS will be recognised in the planning system through a similar process to that used for LWS.

7.4 The register of Local Sites in the East Riding of Yorkshire

- 7.4.1 The official register of Local Sites in the East Riding of Yorkshire will be maintained by the Sustainable Development Team (part of the Economic Development Service) within East Riding of Yorkshire Council.
- 7.4.2 The register will contain both LWS and LGS. It will be updated periodically as the status of individual sites is revised. Revisions to LWS are managed by the LWS Panel and will be reported to the Council for adoption.
- 7.4.3 Information on any revisions to the status of LGS will be reported to the Council by the East Yorkshire RIGS Group. The sites will be included in the register and recognised by the Council following approval by The Cabinet.
- 7.4.4 Candidate LWS will be included on the register, but their candidate status will be clearly identified to differentiate them from sites which have been adopted.
- 7.4.5 The register of Local Sites will be used by the Council for planning purposes. This will include development plans and the LWS will be designated on the Local Plan Policies Map. This will inform the determination of planning applications. This approach is consistent with Government guidance, currently the NPPF.

8. Landowner liaison

8.1 Pre-survey liaison

- 8.1.1 The majority of LWS in the East Riding of Yorkshire are in private ownership. Therefore the LWS system is based on an approach of fostering positive relationships with landowners. Liaison with landowners will take place at key stages in the survey and designation process and all survey information will be disseminated to landowners before it is made available to any third party outside of the LWS Partnership.

- 8.1.2 Before a Candidate Site is surveyed there is a landowner liaison process, which is described in Section 4 ‘Candidate Site Selection and Survey’ and Section 6 ‘Data Management’.

8.2 Post survey liaison

- 8.2.1 A dissemination pack will be sent to all known landowners of sites that have been recommended for deletion or designation as an LWS. This will include roadside verges and hedgerows where the landowner can be identified. The pack will include a site citation including a species list, a boundary map, a habitat map, as well as a covering letter, a Frequently Asked Questions sheet and a feedback form.

- 8.2.2 In the case of designated sites (except roadside verges and hedgerows), the dissemination pack will be sent to the landowner prior to the site being submitted to the Council’s Cabinet for adoption. In the case of deleted sites the aim will be to send the dissemination pack out prior to the Cabinet meeting, however designated sites dissemination will be prioritised and the dissemination of deleted sites will be dependent on available resources. This is due to the prioritisation of designated sites in the dissemination process.

- 8.2.3 The reason for disseminating LWS to landowners prior to adoption by The Cabinet is to give landowners an opportunity to comment on the reasons for designation, namely whether the site still supports the qualifying features stated in the citation. The opportunity to comment is limited to 21 days from the date of the covering letter. The Defra Local Sites Guidance (paragraph 35) states that landowner consultation should *“be confined to factors relating directly to the application of the site selection criteria”*. Relevant comments will be considered by Council officers and/or the LWS Panel and included in the report to The Cabinet. If comments from landowners are not relevant to the way that the site selection criteria and guidelines have been applied then they will be dealt with through the normal liaison process between the Council and the landowner in question, especially if they are in relation to the ongoing management of the site(s) in question.

8.3 Advice to landowners on site management

- 8.3.1 The feedback form (Appendix H) asks the landowner what sources of advice, if any, they currently receive e.g. agronomist, statutory body etc. It also asks for preferences for sources of advice in the future. There are several options, including the potential for one to one meetings with an advisor to discuss the management of the site and the potential support that is available for enhanced conservation management.

- 8.3.2 The Local Sites Partnership will endeavour to provide advice free of charge to landowners who request advice in relation to the appropriate conservation management of an LWS. The capacity of the various partners of the Partnership to deliver this will vary between partners and with time depending on priorities and resources. Various biodiversity projects and landscape scale initiatives may provide opportunity(s) to direct staff resources to advisory roles in particular

areas. In other circumstances the Partnership will endeavour to find the most appropriate sources of advice for a particular LWS. The advice provided to landowners should be consistent with any recommendations from the Panel. The Panel may be able to collate information which will help inform management options. Management options should maintain or enhance the features for which an LWS has been designated.

8.4 Advice to landowners on potential sources of funding

- 8.4.1 There may be opportunities to fund the conservation management of LWS through various sources. The key funding streams of relevance at present are through agri-environment schemes such as the Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) and Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) schemes and also the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS). The agri-environment schemes are currently administered by Natural England and the EWGS is administered by the Forestry Commission. Other sources of project funding, such as the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Landfill Tax Credits, may be available for specific project work in some cases. The LWS Partnership will monitor developments in funding opportunities and pursue opportunities as appropriate, linking in with the East Riding of Yorkshire Biodiversity Partnership and any appropriate Landscape Partnership(s) for the area in question.

9. Monitoring LWS

9.1 Monitoring and Re-survey LWS

- 9.1.1 It is important that some form of monitoring of LWS takes place in the long term. This is to ensure that the designations remain relevant in the long term. All monitoring programmes require some level of resources to support their delivery, whether professional surveys, staff time or volunteers. Some LWS systems operate a rolling programme of full re-survey. This approach does however require significant resources in terms of professional surveyor time and consequent financial resources. This does not appear to be a realistic option for the monitoring of LWS in the East Riding for the foreseeable future, given the challenging economic climate. Despite this it is recognised that some kind of monitoring process needs to be implemented to ensure that LWS still hold substantive nature conservation value. Therefore a system of site integrity monitoring will be developed as the main monitoring programme. The more detailed site condition monitoring will be undertaken as and when resources permit.
- 9.1.2 The site integrity monitoring programme for the LWS system in the East Riding of Yorkshire will primarily seek to identify any significant changes in ecological value. These may be caused by natural ecological processes, or they may be the result of direct human actions, such as management of the site or damaging land uses. These factors may combine, for example natural ecological succession on a site may be affected by changes to management, such as grazing or mowing regimes. Depending on the habitat concerned this could lead to an improvement or a deterioration of the feature(s) for which the site was designated. Changes to water tables and the effects of climate change may also cause long-term changes to the ecology of a site. The effects of some management actions, such as clear felling or thinning in woodlands and clearance of scrub, are likely to have a significant effect, which again may be positive or negative. Other issues, such as changes in levels of recreational or anti-social uses, may also be important.
- 9.1.3 Monitoring should identify if significant changes have taken place on an LWS since the original survey. Significant changes include management changes, such as the introduction, or removal of grazing, changes in vegetation structure, changes in hydrology and the spread of invasive non-native species. It should be noted that monitoring is only aiming to identify significant changes. All habitats and populations of species are subject to natural fluctuations. It is not the aim of the monitoring regime to record these natural fluctuations. To undertake such a programme would require regular annual monitoring using a comparable quantitative method, which is beyond the scope of the current monitoring programme.
- 9.1.4 Site integrity monitoring to identify significant change should prioritise those habitats which are most susceptible to change. Broadly speaking these are grasslands and wetlands, with woodlands being a climax habitat and therefore least susceptible to change. Monitoring may be undertaken by various members of the LWS Partnership, and will be dependent on available resources. Monitoring visits do not aim to replicate the original survey and do not require a

complete survey. Monitoring visits should however note key species which may be positive or negative indicators. Therefore monitoring visits may be undertaken by a variety of staff and volunteers who have a suitable level of expertise to be able to make qualitative judgements about habitat quality and condition trends. All LWS should receive at least one monitoring visit at least every ten years. A standard monitoring pro-forma will be developed for volunteers or partners undertaking monitoring visits with accompanying guidance.

- 9.1.5 If site integrity monitoring identifies a significant change in an LWS this should be reported to the LWS Panel. The Panel will then consider if a resurvey of the site is required and how resources may be secured to enable a full resurvey using the original or an appropriate recognised methodology based on the site's feature(s) of interest. If the change is of such significance that it has led to the complete loss of the site's features of designation, through land-use change or severe and wholesale site management changes, then this will be discussed at the Panel. In cases that involve possible breaches of environmental or planning regulations these will be reported to the relevant statutory body for investigation.
- 9.1.6 The East Riding of Yorkshire LWS System will seek to use other appropriate monitoring or survey regimes to fulfil the monitoring of sites on the register of LWS. This may include the monitoring of other designated sites where they abut or overlap with the LWS in question. Another potential opportunity to integrate monitoring approaches is for revisions to habitat inventories, broad level habitat surveys (e.g. through API), collation of ecological survey information submitted to the Council in support of planning applications and development proposals, the monitoring of nature conservation projects and agri-environment schemes or landscape partnership monitoring regimes. A particular opportunity relates to pilot and innovation projects led by Defra, its arms length bodies or other partner organisations (Section 9.2 below summarises one such pilot project which is of particular relevance).

9.2 Natural England's structured habitat surveillance pilot

- 9.2.1 The Government has published 'Biodiversity 2020' a national strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services. The intention is that 90% of priority habitats will be in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition by 2020. Natural England currently monitors the condition of habitats on SSSIs and land under HLS. Some of the latter may include areas that are designated as LWS. Natural England estimates that land covered by SSSI or HLS monitoring covers nearly 70% of semi-natural habitats, excluding woodland. It is likely that much of the remaining area, especially BAP habitat, is located on land designated as LWS.
- 9.2.2 Two local habitat surveillance pilot projects have been commissioned by Natural England, which will monitor the condition of habitats. One of these pilots is within Yorkshire and the Humber and is being managed by NEYEDC. The pilots will involve identifying and surveying a sample of priority habitats across the region. The surveys will identify the habitats present and make an assessment

of their condition. Attempts will also be made to engage with fauna recorders to develop monitoring programmes for various species groups.

- 9.2.3 Following a review of the success of the habitat surveillance pilots it is intended to establish an on-going programme of monitoring, through partners, focussing on areas of habitat outside of monitoring by statutory agencies, until a national network of habitat monitoring is established.
- 9.2.4 The Yorkshire and Humber habitat surveillance pilot will include some LWS within the East Riding. This will make an important contribution to monitoring LWS in the East Riding, but it represents a sample of LWS, not the complete register of sites. It therefore complements, rather than replaces, the broader LWS monitoring programme managed by the LWS Partnership. Steps must be taken to ensure however that both regimes are complementary, but given the geographic coverage of the Yorkshire and Humber pilot the East Riding is in a good position to ensure this occurs.