



nature's voice

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By email

19 October 2012

Dear Maddy and Rob

The proposed notification of an extension to the Chattenden woods SSSI

I am in receipt of a copy of your letter of 12 October to Brian McCutcheon at Medway Council regarding the proposal to extend the Chattenden Woods SSSI, together with the attached minutes of the Natural England Executive Board Meetings held on 1st, 2nd and 10th October 2012.

Clarification of the Executive Board Minutes

I am concerned that the minutes of the Executive Board meeting (and possibly therefore, the impression given to the Executive Board at that meeting) present an exaggeration of the RSPB's role in providing information about the 1999 BTO National Nightingale Survey.

I would like to clarify the provision of information by the RSPB, on which much of the discussion turns in those minutes. I have reviewed the correspondence between Mark Eaton, Principle Conservation Scientist of the RSPB and Pete Brotherton and Allan Drewitt between 2nd and 9th October 2012. I am not aware of any further correspondence between Natural England staff and RSPB "officials" on this matter.

Paragraph 3.8 describes "*advice received from the RSPB*". Having looked at the correspondence between our organisations, it seems to me that Mark Eaton is very clear in his emails that he is passing on the detail of discussions with the BTO about the 1999 survey population estimate, in the context of efforts to agree with Natural England the appropriate national population estimate for the APEP and SUKB papers. Mark also makes clear that he is passing on the view expressed by the BTO, that the 1999 estimate of 6,700 singing males is appropriate for the APEP and the SUKB papers, and asks whether your officers are able to agree that this seems a sensible course of action. To describe this discussion as RSPB "*advice*" is extremely misleading and the RSPB would like to make very clear that it would not seek to give such advice, where the BTO have greater knowledge of their own survey.

Reconsidering the notification of an extension to the Chattenden Woods SSSI

Paragraph 3.12 of these minutes indicate that if the Executive Board were to see either (i) clarification of the RSPB comments on the 1999 GB data or (ii) a reliable national estimate figure from the (as yet

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unpublished) 2012 survey, it would feel able to reconsider the notification of the proposed extension to the Chattenden Woods SSSI.

It is unfortunate that the RSPB and the BTO were not approached prior to the Executive Board's decision, with a request for this clarification. However, in order to assist the Executive Board, the RSPB has asked the BTO if it is content to produce a note clarifying the uncertainties surrounding the 1999 BTO National Nightingale Survey and also to give an indication of when it hopes to be in a position to produce a national estimate from the 2012 BTO National Nightingale Survey. We will of course keep you informed of progress.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gwyn Williams". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Gwyn Williams
Head of Reserves and Protected Areas
The RSPB

CC Rob Cameron (NE)