



Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership
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John Comont
Conservation Manager (Beds and Northants)
Wildlife Trust, Beds, Cambs and Northants
The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire
Priory Country Park
Barkers Lane
Bedford
Bedfordshire
MK41 9DJ

7th October 2016

Dear John

ENDORSEMENT OF THE BEDFORDSHIRE GREENSAND RIDGE AS A NATURE IMPROVEMENT AREA

I am writing to express the support of the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership (NEP) for the establishment of the Greensand Ridge Nature Improvement Area, as defined under Defra criteria.

Nature Improvement Areas aim to deliver a step change in nature conservation, where a local partnership has a shared vision for the natural environment and works to deliver it at a landscape scale.

A series of national Nature Improvement Area pilot projects was launched by Defra in 2012 with three years of funding which ended in 2015. The Greensand Ridge NIA is different in that it is locally-identified.

The Greensand Ridge is a narrow, elongated ridge running in a north-east/south-west orientation across Bedfordshire, and also including small areas within Cambridgeshire and Buckinghamshire. It is the marked contrast of this island of 'Greensand' rising above the encircling claylands which makes the area both attractive and distinctive within the wider regional setting. The light soils have created a distinctive pattern of land uses and habitats, with a relatively high proportion of woodland and parkland habitats, mixed with smaller areas of pasture and heath. The character of the Ridge and the quality and extent of habitats have been eroded over time by changes in agricultural practice and the impact of people.

The Greensand Ridge was locally-identified as a potential NIA by a partnership including the Greensand Trust, RSPB and Wildlife Trust BCN in 2012 using the specific criteria published by Defra in that year. The area within Central

Bedfordshire was officially recognised as an NIA by Central Bedfordshire Council in October 2012. The Cambridgeshire section was recognised by the Natural Cambridgeshire (LNP) Board in October 2015. The partnership will plan and deliver significant improvements for wildlife and people through the sustainable use of natural resources, restoring and creating wildlife habitats, connecting local sites and joining up local action. The partnership will be able to demonstrate measurable improvements – the “step-change” - and commits to sharing information about its achievements.

The NEP recognises the importance of working together on a landscape-scale across administrative boundaries to produce the best results for the environment and for our communities and economy which depend on it. We recognise that NIAs are landscape-scale initiatives and similarly aim to ensure that land is used sustainably to achieve multiple benefits for people, wildlife and the local economy.

Having discussed in detail how the NIA meets the Defra criteria at the NEP's Delivery Group meeting in February 2016, I am pleased to confirm that the NEP welcomes the initiative and its vision, is fully supportive of the aims of the partnership, and endorses the recognition of the Greensand Ridge as an NIA.

Your work has our full support and we wish you every success.

Yours sincerely,



Sir Henry Aubrey-Fletcher
Chair – Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership

Cc Jon Balaam, The Greensand Trust; David Hoccom, RSPB