



# **Bedfordshire Cambridgeshire Northamptonshire**

**CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH**

**COUNTY WILDLIFE SITES SYSTEM**

**Revised management & operational procedures**

**February 2014**

This document replaces sections 2, 3, 4 and 6 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough County Wildlife Sites Handbook (2008).

## **Section 2 – Management of the County Wildlife Site System**

### **CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH’S CWS PANEL**

The County Wildlife Site (CWS) Panel is affiliated to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Partnership and is contributing to many of the actions contained within the Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

The CWS Panel operates under its own aims and objectives. The CWS Panel maintains an overview of the CWS system, meeting once or twice annually to network, share information, plan and monitor CWS activities, review the CWS selection criteria and assess proposed additions, deletions or amendments to the network of CWS. Membership of the CWS Panel remains open to anyone who expresses an interest. All members share ownership of the CWS system (including this document), and have a responsibility to contribute to and play an active role in helping to administer the CWS system to help meet objectives.

The Wildlife Trust takes the strategic lead with respect to the management of the County Wildlife Sites system in conjunction with Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre (CPERC) are responsible for disseminating information and making data available on CWS accessible to all those who need to use it.

CWS Panel membership:

- Cambridge City Council
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre
- Cambridgeshire County Council
- East Cambridgeshire District Council
- Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
- Fenland District Council
- Geological experts
- Huntingdonshire District Council
- Natural England
- Natural history experts
- NFU / CLBA & landowner representatives
- Peterborough City Council
- South Cambridgeshire District Council
- The Environment Agency
- The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire

The success of the CWS system depends on the support of the organisations above and the involvement of land owners and managers who can have an influence on the protection and enhancement of sites.

## **CWS PANEL AIM**

**To conserve and enhance the important habitats, natural features and populations of notable species that are of national, regional or county importance outside of statutory designated sites in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.**

## **CWS PANEL OBJECTIVES**

- Promote and develop the CWS system as a mechanism for maintaining and enhancing the wildlife resource in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- Agree the basis for site selection, the CWS selection criteria, reviewing and amending them as necessary.
- Co-ordinate site selection and the identification of candidate sites.
- Co-ordinate the survey, re-survey and condition monitoring of CWS.
- Establish and develop a process for monitoring the condition of CWS.
- Maintain a register of CWS in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and work with CPERC to ensure the effective and efficient dissemination of information on CWS.
- Promote and support the provision of advice to CWS owners to ensure the appropriate management of the CWS so that they are in a favourable condition / positive management and contribute to wider habitat networks and connectivity.
- Promote the role and importance of CWS at a strategic level (for example in delivering Biodiversity 2020 priorities, delivering green infrastructure, land use planning and the targeting of agri-environmental schemes).
- Ensure the protection of CWS through policies within local development frameworks and their inclusion on proposals maps.
- Develop the CWS system as a comprehensive mechanism for recording and monitoring biodiversity habitat priorities in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- Identify and promote funding opportunities for CWS work and management.
- Promote access to and educational use of CWS where appropriate and supported by landowners. Raise awareness of CWS (e.g. general public, landowners, decision makers) and the need for management.
- Review the operation of the CWS system at suitable intervals to ensure that in principle it follows national guidelines whilst accounting for local experience and circumstances.

## **CWS PANEL MEMBERS AND THEIR ROLES**

The resources available define the extent and success of the CWS system. The CWS Panel actively seeks funding to undertake survey, monitoring and other work associated with the objectives described in this document. All members are involved in raising awareness of the importance of CWS. The CWS Panel also undertakes the vital work of reviewing the CWS selection criteria and assessing sites against the selection criteria.

The role of members is to represent their organisation in respect of the organisation's functions related to nature conservation and ecology. It is anticipated that the Wildlife Trust, Cambridgeshire County Council or Peterborough City Council where sites are within the unitary authority will form the permanent members of the CWS Panel, with district local authority representatives and Natural England staff attending as and when it is relevant. As a minimum, 3 members of the CWS Panel must be present to approve any new CWS, de-select a site or change a site boundary, one of which must be the Wildlife Trust and one a relevant local authority.

### **Wildlife Trust**

Manages the CWS system and maintains a database of landowner contacts. The Trust co-ordinates and undertakes site survey work and provides management advice to land owners and managers.

### **Cambridgeshire County Council (Environment Policy and Projects Service)**

Has a leadership role relating to the operation of the system through the CWS Panel. Encourages a collaborative approach and liaison between members.

### **Peterborough City Council (Natural and Historic Environment)**

Peterborough already has a CWS system up and running in partnership with the Wildlife Trust. Under a service level agreement a number of CWS are re-surveyed each year. The Council encourages a partnership approach and liaison between partners and has a leadership role relating to the operation of the system.

### **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre**

Collates and stores CWS information in conjunction with the Wildlife Trust and co-ordinates the exchange of information ensuring it is available to all who need to use it. CPERC also produce an annual update to the CWS Register and GIS layer.

### **District and City Councils - Cambridge City Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council, Fenland District Council, Huntingdonshire District Council South Cambridgeshire District Council**

Have a responsibility to ensure that they use up to date information in their decision making processes particularly for development control and forward planning. They also have powers to promote the social, environmental and economic well-being of their administrative area and have a range of statutory roles and responsibilities relating to land use planning, biodiversity, waste, education, transport, land reclamation, pollution and land drainage (these duties also apply to Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council).

### **Natural England**

Provides support and input to the CWS system through its role as the statutory nature conservation organisation for England.

### **The Environment Agency**

Has a particular role in the protection of rivers and wetlands, but also a wider conservation role as a regulator and consultee in the planning process, aiming to protect and enhance the environment.

### **Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group**

Assist the people who manage the countryside with environmental management expertise and are a dedicated provider of environmental and conservation advice and consultancy to farmers and landowners.

**Natural history or geological experts** will be asked to attend relevant CWS Panel meetings where their expertise will improve the quality of decision making or where CWS Panel members collectively do not have the relevant knowledge or experience to make a decision.

The **National Farmers Union** and **Country Land and Business Association** have valuable links with the private landowning community who represent the majority of CWS owners. Should a landowner have an objection to any proposal for selection, de-selection or amendment of a CWS, they would be invited to attend the Panel meeting at which an appeal would be heard.

## **SECTION 3 - Operation of the CWS system in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough**

### **PURPOSE OF THE CWS SYSTEM**

The purpose of the CWS system is to identify, protect and enhance the most important places for wildlife outside land with legal protection. The 'system' is a simple way of describing the processes involved in the selection and assessment of sites, the informing and advising of land owners and managers about management, and the protection and monitoring of sites. In broad terms CWS are selected by assessing their wildlife importance in a county context. Site selection is based on available information. Programmes of survey are resource dependent however a proportion of sites are surveyed each year. The survey data are assessed against carefully constructed selection criteria. Those meeting the thresholds contained within the selection criteria are put forward for selection. Throughout this section please make reference to the table on page 16 (operational stages in the CWS system).

An integrated and effective CWS system can contribute greatly to the delivery of biodiversity priorities and targets, however for the effective operation of the CWS system as described in this document adequate resourcing is essential. The CWS system is designed to be flexible, and is considered to be 'live' and evolving. As information becomes available newly discovered sites that meet the selection guidelines can be added and existing ones amended. Exceptionally sites may also be removed.

The CWS system provides the framework for

- The selection of CWS
- Notifying landowners
- The compilation and updating of a CWS Register
- The dissemination of information on CWS
- Liaison with land owners and managers
- Site survey
- CWS condition monitoring
- Site safeguard and management
- Raising awareness of the importance of CWS

### **CWS SELECTION CRITERIA**

The current selection criteria were developed during the 1990's and are reviewed regularly. They were last updated in April 2013 (Cambridgeshire & Peterborough CWS Selection Criteria version 6.1). The application of selection criteria in a standardised, objective manner promotes confidence that a CWS meets a minimum standard. The selection criteria take into account available information on habitats and species as well as historical information where relevant.

The thresholds contained within the selection criteria are sensitive to local conditions

and are a matter of judgement based on a number of factors including an understanding of ecological processes, the distribution, abundance and trends in the local wildlife resource. The selection criteria therefore have been developed to define what qualifies as '*substantive nature conservation*' value in a local context.

The habitat thresholds are linked to the National Vegetation Classification (NVC) and the UK BAP habitat priorities. Thresholds are based on the numbers of species that are particularly indicative of naturalness, a lack of improvement and or longevity of that habitat type. The presence of red data book species, nationally rare, nationally scarce, locally rare, or BAP priority species may also be considered.

The aim is to select all sites that meet the thresholds within the selection criteria. This enables sites to be evaluated against a structured framework and demonstrate why some are selected and others are not. The selection criteria will be reviewed in full by the CWS Panel every 5 years, though more frequent reviews may occur if relevant information becomes available, for example information related to a particular species group.

The selection criteria were developed using widely accepted habitat attributes, adapted from those used in the assessment of the national series of SSSIs (Ratcliffe, 1977), Nature Conservancy Council (1989), The Wildlife Trusts (1997) and other publications. The degree of significance of the attributes varies between different habitat types, and when used in evaluation of sites of county significance, will generally have lower thresholds than those applying to SSSIs.

The attributes taken into account in identifying CWSs are described in general terms below.

Additional elements that may also be considered are recorded history and connectivity within the wider landscape.

<b>Naturalness</b>	Assessment of the closeness of a habitat to its form unmodified by human influence. As elsewhere in Britain, all terrestrial habitats have been modified to varying extents. In many cases, therefore, this characteristic seeks to relate a site to its state under traditional management.
<b>Diversity</b>	Most sites will show diversity in vegetation communities and in complement of species. Many will be species-rich in county terms.
<b>Size</b>	The importance and value of a site generally increases with its size. It is generally accepted that each habitat has a size below which its nature conservation value may not be sustainable.
<b>Rarity</b>	The decline and thus increasing rarity of semi-natural habitats is a basic presumption of the CWS designation. The presence of rare or scarce species may warrant CWS status.
<b>Typicalness</b>	This is important when including intrinsically species-poor habitats in Cambridgeshire, which need to be included in the CWS system as characteristic and important habitats of the County.
<b>Fragility</b>	All sites are sensitive to environmental change. Some sites may be particularly susceptible, and as a consequence may be particularly rare and therefore important, but also difficult to safeguard.

<b>Potential Value</b>	Some sites with remnants of former habitats will often show a substantial increase in their nature conservation interest through positive management. Similarly sites with a predictable course of natural succession can show an increase in their nature conservation interest through non-intervention.
<b>Intrinsic Appeal</b>	Some sites may have considerable and widely perceived intrinsic appeal such as encouraging people's contact with nature. Others may be important for informal recreation or education.

## CWS SELECTION

A site will be selected as a County Wildlife Site based on up to date survey information with other factors also being considered such as current management and land use. The CWS Panel carries out the selection process by collating a list of sites to survey including new sites, existing sites and any proposed for de-selection, however anyone can ask for a site to be considered. A professional approach is taken to the consideration of CWS and the CWS Panel will ensure that it has the technical knowledge to make informed decisions. The CWS Panel will make decisions on robust information and will seek further advice from particular specialists or experts as necessary.

If the site meets the thresholds within the selection criteria the site is put forward for selection as a CWS. The justification for its selection is noted. Amendments to the boundaries of existing CWS or reasons for selection can also be considered.

It should be noted that inevitably there will be sites of CWS quality that have been missed to date. Some may have been overlooked or undervalued in previous survey projects and deserve consideration as new CWS. Others may require detailed surveys of particular specialist fauna or flora groups, while for others new data may become available. Positive management subsequent to previous survey may also have brought a site up to the thresholds contained within the selection guidelines. Examples of these types of sites could include:

- Borderline CWS
- Sites where access for survey was refused, but whose owners may have recently changed
- Sites recommended by others
- De-notified SSSIs
- Former mineral workings
- Habitat creation areas (e.g. landscape scale environmental projects, new areas associated with development)
- Mitigation areas associated with development

### ***The survey process***

*Habitats* - Habitat survey for CWS is based upon an extended 'Phase 1' type survey with site and habitat descriptions, a habitat map and species list. Phase 2 survey data may also be collected and used on some occasions.

Surveyors will record details of structures and features on the site, current or desirable management, potential threats to the site, and any contact made with the

landowner or manager during survey.

*Species* - Where a CWS is designated due to the presence of a species or species assemblage of conservation value then re-survey effort will focus on this CWS feature. The habitat assessment methodology described above can be useful in conjunction with this targeted survey work. However, in order to establish presence or absence and likely population of the species of interest a specific species survey will be required. CWS designated for their species interest can for example include invertebrates and amphibians.

Ideally a complete list of up-to-date information on all species of flora and fauna present on any given site would be available. However, it takes time and resource to accumulate and maintain species information at a useful level, and such work is inevitably an ongoing process. The main sources of information on species are county recorders and amateur naturalists. A further source of species information comes from strategic surveys carried out by organisations such as the Environment Agency and increasingly through the work of organisations undertaking biodiversity conservation initiatives.

Permission for access to survey an existing or potential new CWS will be sought through writing or telephoning the landowner where ownership information is available; otherwise approaches will be made on the day of proposed survey. This might be the first contact a landowner has with the CWS system and provides the foundation for later liaison.

When requesting access, the landowner will be provided with a clear and unambiguous explanation of the purpose of the survey. The landowner should be fully informed of who is to undertake the survey on whose behalf, and why. It is important that the landowner feels involved and informed throughout the process.

If no permission is forthcoming, either through inability to contact the landowner or through refusal, then surveyors will not trespass on land in order to acquire data. If access permission is refused, then the landowner's wishes will be respected.

CWS surveyors should carry identification when conducting surveys. Once a survey has been completed, the landowner will be informed of the findings and offered management advice as appropriate.

### ***Re-survey of existing sites***

Existing CWS may be re-surveyed for the following reasons:

- As part of a monitoring or re-survey programme;
- To provide further information required by the Local Authority for use in planning casework;
- To provide extra information on a site which may be available at a different time of year from the time of the original survey. This might be for a variety of reasons such as in connection with a planning application or for deciding on appropriate and sensitive site management;
- To survey for particular species not covered by a previous survey.

Survey reports on sites should include:

- who conducted the survey and or collected the data used in the assessment and when it was collected;

- as many taxa as possible and be clear about data that is not available and any limitations;
- a map showing habitats occurring on site;
- a justification for the site to be selected as a CWS;
- the reasons for any proposed boundary or boundary change, and a map at an appropriate scale that clearly identifies the boundaries of the CWS;
- an assessment detailing if the site either qualifies or continues to qualify as a CWS and recommendations for site management to either bring it into a favourable condition or to maintain and enhance the features of the CWS;
- If the site has been significantly damaged or destroyed a report outlining what has happened and the opportunities for recovery of the site should be written.

In exceptional circumstances certain records (particularly of sensitive species) collected as part of a survey for a CWS may not be widely released. However to ensure decisions are taken on the best available data sensitive records will be made available to the CWS Panel when assessing whether a site is of CWS standard.

Where permission for access is unobtainable for an existing CWS, the site will remain a CWS on the basis of previous data.

This process overlaps with the selection process described below. A number of existing and new sites may be surveyed each year depending on the resources available. As a result of these surveys some CWS may be added, some may be deleted and others may have their boundaries amended.

#### ***Stages in the CWS survey & selection process (see table on page 16)***

- 1 CWS Panel members identify which sites to survey (new and existing);
- 2 Landowners are contacted to request permission to undertake surveys;
- 3 Competent surveyors undertake the surveys at appropriate times of the year;
- 4 A copy of the survey report is sent to the landowner with an explanation of any proposed changes in site status, boundaries or reasons for selection. An explanation of the CWS operational procedures and right of challenge will also be provided;
- 5 Survey reports are summarised and submitted to the CWS Panel for consideration;
- 6 The CWS Panel evaluates each site against the selection criteria, hears any appeals from landowners, and approves or rejects proposals.
- 7 Landowners are notified of agreed changes and if necessary reasons for decisions.
- 8 CWS Register and GIS layer updated to complete formal ratification.

#### ***Notifying landowners***

Ensuring that CWS owners and managers are informed of the wildlife value of their land and the significance of the CWS status is an ongoing, but important aspect of the process because sites can change ownership frequently and information is not always passed onto the new owner. The objective is to provide information and an

offer of further liaison, advice and assistance if requested. Relationship building with owners and managers helps to safeguard and improve the wildlife resource of County Wildlife Sites and should help to reduce the number of objections to CWS status potentially being received.

### ***Benefits of CWS***

The recognition of a CWS has helped landowners to apply for funding through agri-environment schemes and other grant schemes, and this is likely to continue for the foreseeable future as many CWS in agricultural ownership contain priority habitats and species. Surveyors and advisers should point out to site owners that while sympathetic management of CWSs for wildlife is voluntary it is to be encouraged to contribute towards national and local efforts to conserve biodiversity.

### ***Concerns of landowners***

The primary concerns of landowners about CWSs include concern over development restrictions, constraints on agricultural practice and fear of public access implications.

However, conferring CWS status does not in itself place significantly additional restrictions on landowners use of their land, as the CWS system is voluntary and has no statutory basis.

With respect to planning, local authority commitments to biodiversity mean that consideration of planning applications takes into account biodiversity issues including the presence of a formally selected CWS or areas not formally selected but still of CWS quality. It should be noted that there will be sites reaching CWS status that have yet to be selected, and this information will be a material consideration in determining a planning application. The absence of CWS recognition would not significantly diminish the protection provided to important habitats and species.

### ***Objections to CWS status***

Representations against selection of or amendments to a CWS can be made in writing to or in person at a meeting of the CWS Panel. The main reasons stated for objection must relate to the ecological status of the site with reference made to the CWS selection criteria, however other relevant factors may also be taken into account.

### ***Removal of CWS status***

A site, or part thereof will remain a CWS until data are collected that prove otherwise. A site cannot have its status removed or be removed from the register for political reasons or as a result of wilful and deliberate destruction or neglect. The general principle is to avoid the de-selection of sites.

Sites will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Any site being considered for de-selection would be subject to survey. The CWS Panel will consider and evaluate this information against the selection criteria before making their recommendations. The CWS Panel may de-select a site if the nature conservation interest has deteriorated to such an extent that it no longer qualifies as a CWS and it is not feasible to restore it through appropriate management. The potential for restoring the site's features of interest will be an important factor in the decision.

### ***The Ratification process***

Ratification is the formal procedure for the selection of a new CWS, amendments to existing CWS or the potential removal of a CWS. It is required to prevent a site being included or excluded from the CWS Register without the knowledge and agreement of Partners or landowners. This helps ensure accountability and demonstrates integrity.

It is acknowledged that effective protection of the site however may only occur when the site has found its way onto the relevant land use planning systems, the CWS Register is updated and the landowner receives confirmation about the site's status. It is essential therefore that information be given to those who need to know in reasonable timescales and those who receive it know the importance of keeping their records up to date.

<p><b>1. Landowner consultation</b></p>	<p>Following completion of site surveys or an assessment of survey information provided by a third party, the Wildlife Trust will send a standard letter informing a landowner of the outcome of the survey work with a thank you for allowing the survey to be carried out. For reference it should also include a copy of the survey outlining the habitat and species interest of the site and a map. The landowner must be informed of any protected species recorded in the survey and the implications of this in any proposed management works. Information on the CWS system should also be sent along with details of management and grant advice available from various organisations.</p> <p>Should any changes be proposed in site status, boundaries or reasons for selection, the letter will specifically highlight these changes and invite the landowner to make representations about the proposed changes within a period of 28 days. They will also be informed of their right of appeal to the CWS Panel and the grounds on which objections can be made.</p>
<p><b>2. CWS Panel recommendations</b></p>	<p>The Panel will consider each case based on the technical information presented to it and any written or in person representations by landowners.</p> <p>The Panel will then make a decision to recommend whether a site should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be accepted as a new CWS, at which point it is considered a 'proposed CWS', pending completion and circulation of the updated CWS Register.</li> <li>• Be rejected as a CWS</li> <li>• Remain a CWS with its existing boundaries or with an amended boundary</li> <li>• Remain a CWS but with amended reasons for selection</li> <li>• Be removed from the CWS Register</li> </ul> <p>All decisions will be recorded in the minutes of the Panel.</p>

	<p>If it is not possible to make a decision it may be deferred with a suggestion for further survey work or further liaison with the landowner to promote sympathetic land management that could bring the site into a favourable condition to reach CWS status.</p> <p>At least 3 members of the Panel must be present to make a recommendation, which should include representatives from The Wildlife Trust, Cambridgeshire County Council or Peterborough City Council where sites are within the unitary authority and one other. Decisions will be made by consensus.</p> <p>Rejected sites could be re-considered at a later date if they subsequently reach a favourable condition for example through positive management.</p>
<b>3. Notification of decisions to landowner</b>	<p>Following the Panel meeting, landowners will be sent a formal letter confirming the decision of the Panel. This should include the new citation and site map, if relevant. It may also explain why any representations were dismissed or accepted.</p>
<b>4. Formal ratification</b>	<p>Formal ratification of decisions made by the CWS Panel occurs once the annually updated CWS register is published and made available to partners. At this point proposed CWS receive full CWS status.</p>

### ***The CWS Register***

The CWS Register comprises a list of sites with County Wildlife Site status (including a note on the reason why the site was selected) accompanied by a digital mapping layer. The list of the current approved CWS is prepared and maintained by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre in conjunction with the Wildlife Trust and CWS Panel. Production of the CWS Register is the final stage in the ratification process. It will be updated annually to show which sites have been added, deleted or had their boundaries amended. Updates will be distributed at least annually to listed recipients of the CWS Register.

### **Other non-statutory sites**

In addition to CWS there are also a number of other types of non-statutory sites in the County, which are worth mentioning here for completeness.

#### City Wildlife Sites

Within the urban district of Cambridge City a complementary sites system has been developed. The County Wildlife Sites (CWS) system is still used, but an additional system of City Wildlife Sites has been developed, along similar lines and with a similar process, in order to take account of urban greenspaces. The City Wildlife Site system also has a set of selection criteria (City Wildlife Sites Selection Criteria, version 2.2, 2005) though the biological thresholds are set at a lower level than for CWS. The CWS Panel will also consider proposed changes to City Wildlife Sites in accordance with the same procedures used for selection of CWS.

### Protected Road Verges (PRVs)

Some roadside verges are of special botanical significance, and some are even the last havens for particular plants. Verges also provide continuity of habitat across intensively managed land and can form important sanctuaries for wildlife.

Cambridgeshire County Council and the Wildlife Trust co-ordinate efforts to identify and protect verges of special wildlife value in the County. A few of these verges have been selected as CWS, while the rest have been selected as Protected Road Verges (PRVs). In conjunction with colleagues in the County Council work is ongoing to ensure that these verges receive appropriate conservation management.

Road verges of nature conservation value in Peterborough are designated as CWS and are covered as part of ongoing work on CWS.

### Geological sites

It would be desirable to establish a system of Local Geological Sites across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to operate alongside the CWS system. Within Peterborough a system of Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites (RIGGs) was identified, and a local Geosites group has formed to formalise the criteria used to select these sites and to get them formally selected as Local Geological Sites. Within Cambridgeshire, work has recently commenced on establishing a Geosites group and identifying criteria for the selection of Local Geological Sites. Further work is required to formally launch these systems, though it is hoped that a system will start to operate in Peterborough from 2015.

## **SECTION 4 – County Wildlife Site Data**

### **CWS DATA**

The CWS system generates a wide range of data such as those listed below that need to be stored:

- site records
- habitat surveys
- species records
- site ownership records
- liaison and contact records

The Wildlife Trust holds site records, habitat surveys, site ownership records, liaison and contact records in various paper and electronic formats in accordance with the Data Protection Act. The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre (CPERC) hold a copy of the site information including information on species and habitats to disseminate to others on behalf of the CWS Partnership.

Once ratified each CWS has what is termed a citation sheet written for it, which contains a site description, information on the habitats contained within it, and the reason for selection. Sites are also added to the CWS Register which comprises a list of sites including basic site information: site name, location, and current reason for selection. A separate list showing the management condition of each CWS is maintained in order to provide data for the national indicator on local biodiversity, which local authorities are required to report on annually.

### ***Ownership of data***

The CWS Partnership and the funding bodies as appropriate to the data in question own the data collected as part of the CWS system. As much of this information is commissioned by, and provided to local authorities and public bodies, much of it is technically in the public domain.

However, site owners have a say in whether a survey is undertaken. Site owners may request that the species and habitat information is not shared with third parties without prior written permission. Surveyors and advisors will seek to persuade landowners of the benefits of environmental information being in the public domain and available to benefit nature conservation and education and inform policy and land use planning decisions, however the wishes of landowners will always be respected. CPERC have a robust system in place to flag up where species and habitat data must not be released to third parties. The Wildlife Trust will ensure that CPERC are aware of any survey data that must be treated in this manner. In exceptional circumstances and where a landowner insists, the Wildlife Trust will not transfer species and habitat data to CPERC.

### ***Distribution and use of data***

Data on CWS is mainly used by the following parties:

- Site owners
- Conservation and advisory organisations

- Planning authorities
- Statutory organisations
- Environmental consultancies and organisations with an interest in environmental information

As the manager of the information on behalf of the partnership the Wildlife Trust is responsible for ensuring that CPERC is provided with the most up to date information on CWS for it to be disseminated to those who need to use it. They also act as a central point of contact for enquiries relating to the CWS system, except for formal enquiries from organisations and individuals about the location, boundaries and wildlife interest of sites which should be directed to CPERC. Key organisations such as planning authorities, statutory and advisory organisations are automatically provided with a copy of the CWS Register annually. Local authorities also receive an annual update summarising the management condition of each CWS, while Defra receive summary figures showing the overall proportion of CWS in positive management for each Local Authority area.

### ***Confidentiality and data protection***

The systems used to store and handle CWS data have been assessed against the relevant data protection legislation and are, to the best of the partnerships knowledge, fully compliant.

All data collected as part of surveying current and potential CWSs is covered by the provisions of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. This means all species and habitat data will be considered available for release to third parties (including consultants and developers) unless it is in the public interest not to do so. If future release of the data would lead to a landowner not granting permission to survey, it may be considered that it is in the public interest not to release the data, though as the policy is in favour of the release of survey data, this will be the exception.

In exceptional circumstances certain records (particularly of sensitive species) collected as part of a survey for a CWS may not be released. Information on protected species and advice on relevant legal implications is given to the owners and managers of sites where appropriate. CPERC, the Wildlife Trust and the landowner will consider the release of sensitive species information on a case by case basis.

Data that has historically been in the public domain and details of the boundaries and reason for CWS selection will remain available for release.

However, land ownership details that are covered by the Data Protection Act are not divulged without prior permission.

### ***Charging for information***

An administration charge may be made to meet the costs of searching for, collating and preparing data on request. For further information on charging for the cost of providing information and the Terms and Conditions under which data is supplied please contact CPERC Tel (01954) 713570 [www.cperc.org.uk](http://www.cperc.org.uk)

**OPERATIONAL STAGES IN THE CWS SYSTEM**

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CWS Survey and Assessment</b>												
CWS Panel collates list of sites to survey (existing sites, new sites, sites proposed for de-selection)												
Landowners identified and contacted for permission to survey												
Site surveys undertaken by competent surveyors at appropriate times of year												
Survey information is compiled, assessed and sent to landowners												
Formal consultation period with landowners												
<b>CWS selection process</b>												
CWS Panel meets to consider proposed changes and representations from landowners												
Landowners notified of final decision of CWS Panel and if necessary reasons for decisions												
<b>CWS Ratification</b>												
CWS Register and GIS layer updated and distributed												