

Appendix D5 - Environment: Ashdown Forest

There is a long history of cooperation and partnership work on matters affecting the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC: recreational pressure and atmospheric pollution. Since at least 2008, affected local authorities and Natural England (a prescribed body) have been working together to address these matters and seek solutions. This partnership work has continued through the preparation of the District Plan from its early stages to Submission and beyond. Meetings are scheduled when needed.

The table below sets out the key outcomes of the partnership groups for Ashdown Forest from April 2018 to July 2024 (adoption of the District Plan 2014-2031 to Submission of the District Plan 2021-2039). Agendas and minutes/notes of these meetings have not been provided due to the key outputs from these meetings being set out in the table below and elsewhere, such as SoCGs and the HRA.

Cooperation Mechanism	Group/Prescribed body	Membership	Date of Meeting	Agenda - Key Issues Covered	Outcomes
Habitats Regulations Assessment (Ashdown Forest)	Ashdown Forest Working Group	Mid Sussex District Council, Wealden District Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Lewes District Council, Sevenoaks District Council, Tandridge District Council, South Downs National Park Authority, Crawley Borough Council, Eastbourne Borough Council, Brighton & Hove	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 June 2018 29 November 2018 13 February 2019 20 February 2020 2 July 2020 3 September 2021 6 October 2021 15 November 2021 3 December 2021 22 February 2022 26 October 2022 15 February 2023 	<p>Matters discussed include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HRA and Local Plan updates Natural England update Exploration for a SoCG Exploration of a Strategic Nitrogen Action Plan (SNAP) Air quality monitoring Air quality modelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement to commission air quality monitoring on Ashdown Forest (air quality monitoring is currently in progress) Agreement to commission a strategic transport model for Ashdown Forest (project commissioned and started)

		City Council, Natural England		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport modelling 	
Habitats Regulations Assessment (Ashdown Forest)	Discussion about consistency in the Habitats Regulations Assessment for local plans	Mid Sussex District Council, Wealden District Council, AECOM consultants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 November 2021 	Methodology for air quality modelling in HRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement on methodology for air quality modelling in HRA so that there is a consistent approach by both local authorities
Habitats Regulations Assessment (Ashdown Forest)	SAMM Partnership	Mid Sussex District Council, Wealden District Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Lewes District Council, Sevenoaks District Council, Tandridge District Council, Conservators of Ashdown Forest, Natural England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 April 2018 • 20 July 2018 • 29 November 2018 • 13 February 2019 • 1 June 2020 • 28 April 2021 • 10 December 2021 • 17 March 2022 • 23 September 2022 • 7 December 2022 • 17 May 2023 	Matters discussed include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HRA updates • Project updates • Bird monitoring updates • Finance updates • SANG updates • Visitor monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of Common Ground for recreational impact on Ashdown Forest (2018/2019) • Preparation and agreement of a SAMM tariff and guidance • SAMM Strategy legal agreement that sets out the governance structure and other arrangements (2020) • Memorandum of Understanding with Wealden District Council in relation to transfer of SAMM monies (2020) • SAMM Strategy MOU (2021) • Visitor monitoring at Ashdown Forest and SANG sites in 2021 • Recruitment of a SAMM Lead Warden for Ashdown Forest (2022) • Preparation of a SAMM Strategy (2023)
Explanation of how the cooperation has influenced plan making					
There is an agreed strategic solution to address recreational pressure at Ashdown Forest which is reflected in planning policy (Policy DPC6). This is the same policy in the Adopted District Plan and there has been no change in circumstance to require any change to this policy. Some minor clarification has been made to ensure consistency with the current application of the policy, best practice and other local authorities.					

The Joint SAMP Strategy is a strategic co-ordinated partnership approach to mitigation that aims to manage visitors on-site at Ashdown Forest. The SAMP Partnership for Ashdown Forest is actively working to deliver access management projects to address issues arising from visitor pressure and to undertake monitoring at both Ashdown Forest and the five operational SANG sites.

The Ashdown Forest Working Group is a group of local authorities working together to consider a strategic approach to considering air quality at Ashdown Forest in order to inform Habitats Regulations Assessments for Local Plans. The Ashdown Forest Working Group has commissioned joint air quality monitoring. The Ashdown Forest Working Group has also commissioned consultants to develop joint transport modelling for Ashdown Forest.