



Complaint Resolution Team
Customer Engagement Team
Natural England
County Hall, Spetchley Road
Worcester
WR5 2NP

Date: 11 August 2023

1. Made serious errors in the documentation, archiving and communication of the management agreements in the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), especially relating to the domestic curtilage.

This is a complex case with considerable history spanning multiple decades and varying NE staff. It is both unfortunate and disappointing that the documentary record for this site is not clear and leaves room for doubt about the current position with respect to the operations that are consented.

There have been failures in our historic documentation archiving in relation to this SSSI, which is regrettable. We are aware that these failures can have an adverse effect on our ability to provide information to interested parties such as yourself and I apologise for that. It may also have implications for management of the site and therefore the natural environment.

As you can imagine, we strive to avoid this in all cases.

NE's archiving and documentation has changed drastically since this site was first designated. More stringent procedures, including electronic, rather than paper recording, are now followed to ensure this does not occur in the future.

In order to ensure that we are acting fairly and to consider the options available to us for ensuring the site is appropriately managed, we sought legal advice in 2014 on the two differing Site Management Statement (SMS) versions which exist for this site. NE consider that both SMS documents (NE's and the landowners) must for practical purposes be treated as providing consent for the activities described in them.

It is NE's view that there would be no reasonable prospect of taking successful enforcement action in respect of operations carried out in accordance with the SMS in the possession of the landowner. It is for that reason that our letter to the landowner of May 2014 accepted that it would work with that SMS going forward. As stated in that letter, if it's not possible to agree appropriate management, NE will have to consider the options available to it.

Previously we have let you know that we have spoken with our legal team on at least three occasions to consider the various issues raised. Their view remains as set out above and as reflected in the 2014 letter.