

Thames Basin Heaths

Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Project

Tariff Guidance

1. **Background**

- 1.1 The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA) covers over 8,400 hectares of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within Berkshire, Hampshire and Surrey. A 5km boundary extended around the SPA involves significant parts of eleven local authorities, with four further authorities containing only very small areas. The SPA is designated for breeding populations of Dartford warbler, nightjar and woodlark, which are protected species under the EC Wild Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds).
- 1.2 SPAs are protected in UK law by the Habitats Regulations (2010)¹. Under the Habitats Regulations, development proposals must not give rise to adverse effects on the integrity of the SPA, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, and if they are likely to, measures must be secured to remove this impact, otherwise the Competent Authority is obliged to refuse permission (subject to the exception tests set out in Regulation 62).
- 1.3 Housing delivery will lead to a significant rise in population within the boroughs and districts around the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. Investigations of the visitor patterns of current residents around the SPA have shown that it is likely that this new population will also use the SPA for recreation. Both local evidence and that from other areas has demonstrated the damaging effects of human disturbance (and people with their dogs) on the three heathland bird species. Without appropriate and proportionate avoidance and mitigation measures, this will damage the populations of these birds breeding within the SPA, and would be contrary to the Habitats Regulations.
- 1.4 Due to the large number of local authorities involved and the cumulative nature of the impacts (a result of many individual housing applications), a co-ordinated approach to the mitigation has been necessary. The Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board (JSPB) has been set up to provide the vehicle for joint working between local authorities and other organisations responsible for protection of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. The JSPB includes Member representation for each affected Local Authority together with a number of stakeholders.

2 **Thames Basin Heaths SPA mitigation and avoidance measures**

- 2.1 In February 2009 the JSP Board endorsed a strategic Delivery Framework. This recommends a combination of two avoidance and mitigation measures to protect the Thames Basin Heaths from the impacts of new residential development:
 - The provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANG)
 - Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) measures

¹ The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations, 2010

- 2.2 Research undertaken to assess the impact of visitors on the SPA² showed clearly that individual visitors use a number of the component sites. Delivery of the access management and monitoring measures requires strategic joint working by all the affected Local Authorities and other SPA landowners and managers, in order to avoid displacing visitors from one part of the SPA to another.
- 2.3 The Review of the evidence for Natural England's initial delivery plan³ considered that a coordinated SPA-wide ranger service was required to ensure that improvements at one site did not adversely impact others. The Review also emphasised the importance of establishing effective monitoring of both visitors and the SPA bird species in order to understand the effectiveness of mitigation. The Delivery Framework reflects the established research by requiring that mitigation be provided by both SANGs and strategic access management and monitoring together.

3 Strategic avoidance measures

- 3.1 In June 2009 the JSPB agreed an Outline Business Plan⁴ which identified the resources required to provide an effective SAMM project, together with the overall cost of providing strategic mitigation. As with SANGs, the work would be funded by contributions from all new additional residential dwellings within 5km of the SPA⁵. SANGs are funded by tariffs collected individually by each local authority and the JSPB endorsed the principle of a separate single tariff to fund SAMM measures in perpetuity. This would be collected centrally and used strategically across the SPA.
- 3.2 The Outline Business Plan included a team of wardens and detailed monitoring of both visitors and the SPA birds. The tariff provided for both annual revenue expenditure and the creation of an investment fund for the long term.
- 3.3 The Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Board has been established by the JSPB in order to provide an overview of the SAMM project. The SAMM Board consists of local authority members and Natural England, advised by key land managers responsible for SPA sites including the MoD and Forestry Commission.

4 Tariff

- 4.1 The tariff was set at £630 per dwelling and it was agreed that Local Authorities should seek to endorse this tariff and implement mechanisms to collect it by October 2009. The tariff would be collected by an Administrative Body (Hampshire County Council) and the delivery managed by Natural England. The sum provides for £190 towards annual expenditure and £440 to the long term investment fund.

² Visitor Access Patterns on the Thames Basin Heaths, Liley, D, Jackson, D. & Underhill-Day, J. (2005). English Nature.

³ Review of Evidence Underpinning the English Nature Thames Basin Heaths Delivery Plan. Report to the Department for Communities and Local Government. RPS 2006.

⁴ Outline Business Plan for the Thames Basin Heaths Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Project, Joint Strategic Access Board 18th June 2009.

⁵ Residential developments of over 50 houses between 5 - 7km from the edge of the SPA should be assessed on a case by case basis and may also be required to provide appropriate mitigation.

4.2 The tariff was established with reference to the anticipated increase in population and a detailed analysis of the resources which would be needed to address the increased number of visitors to each part of the SPA. An estimate of the number of houses (2,824 per year over 17 years) was taken from the South East Plan⁶ and the cost of access measures and monitoring calculated in consultation with a wide range of organisations delivering similar services. Table 1 provides a summary:

Table 1: Calculation of £630 per dwelling

	Annual Cost	
Staff and wardening service	£390,000	See Appendix 3 for details of expenditure
Monitoring inc capital costs	£55,500	
Contingency	£43,900	
Administrative body fees	£20,000	
Natural England management fee	£10,000	
VAT contingency*	£17,160	
Total cost	£536,560	
Revenue funding per house	£190	Est. 2,824 houses/yr yielding £536,560
Capital investment per house	£440	See Appendix 2
Total average tariff per house	£630	
Notes		
The approach to rounding reflects the original calculations conducted by a number of individuals. This has been replicated to maintain consistency with previously published and agreed documents. The level of variation in the figures is not significant.		
* VAT on all monitoring and capital costs; plus part of wardening costs.		

4.3 Following discussions with the local authorities a legal opinion was jointly sought to establish whether the proposed tariff was compliant with Circular 05/2005⁷. An opinion was received from David Elvin (Landmark Chambers) which concluded that the tariff did meet the requirements of the Circular except in regards to being a flat rate tariff. The opinion considered that a flat rate tariff would not be proportional and would fetter the local authorities' discretion.

4.4 The opinion also stated that a tariff which included the number of bedrooms and/or distance would be proportionate and acceptable. The current Thames Basin Heaths

⁶ The South East Plan - Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East of England (May 2009)

⁷ ODPM Circular 05/2005 *Planning Obligations*.

SANG and SAMM tariffs take account of distance through the current distance zoning scheme.

- 4.5 In response, Natural England and the local authorities agreed a proportional tariff based on the number of bedrooms. A tariff developed using these guidelines is considered to meet all the requirements of current policy guidance and, in conjunction with SANGs, will be able to provide effective mitigation to address the impact of additional housing on the SPA.
- 4.6 The legal opinion states that the tariff can be established by reference to the overall sum needed to deliver the required mitigation. The overall sum required was established by the SAMM Outline Business Plan and has been agreed by the local authorities and Natural England. The best available figures are used throughout for calculating the tariff and local authorities are expected to use local data wherever appropriate.

5 Calculation of contribution

- 5.1 The proportional tariff is calculated using a simple equation based on occupancy and a per capita Standard Cost. The standard cost is derived from the overall sum required and the number of new residents. In order ensure that the scheme is fit for purpose, the TBH SAMM tariff includes an enabling adjustment, which provides confidence that the overall income will be sufficient to ensure that the SPA is not adversely affected.

$$\text{Tariff} = (\text{Occupancy} \times \text{Standard Cost}) + \text{Enabling Adjustment}$$

- 5.2 Table 2 provides an estimate of the per capita contribution required to provide the overall sum. The enabling adjustment is obtained by including data on the predicted mix of house size.

Table 2: Overall costs

Number of dwellings	2,824	Forecast delivery within 5km of SPA
Original revenue	£536,560	Annual sum required for mitigation
Original investment	£1,242,560	Invested into long term fund
Original total	£1,779,120	Investment + revenue, total required annually
Original tariff	£630	$£1,779,120 \div 2,824 = £630$ per dwelling
Occupancy	2.4	Agreed figure used in the Delivery Framework
Total no. Residents	6,778	$2,824 \times 2.4$ (No. dwellings x Occupancy)
Standard Cost	£263	$1,779,120 \div 6778$ (Total sum ÷ No. residents)

- 5.3 Table 3 shows an example of a proportional tariff scale for the TBH SAMM project. The scale uses average figures for occupancy and housing sizes obtained from a number of the relevant local authorities. Appendix 2 details the calculations and provides background data.

Table 3: Example SAMM tariff

No. of bedrooms	Recommended tariff
1	£399
2	£526
3	£711
4	£807
5	£1,052

5.4 Where possible local authorities should use local data for occupancy and distribution of house sizes. The information should be recent and reflect experience of market delivery rather than housing need.

6 Collection of the tariff

6.1 The SAMM tariff is collected by local authorities, normally upon commencement of the development. Within the TBH area, Hampshire County Council will act as the Administrative Body and provide banking services. The service will be delivered by Natural England and any other body which may be employed by Natural England. A legal contract agreed between the local authorities, Hampshire County Council and Natural England defines the roles and responsibilities of each of the partners and establishes a structure for the funds to be managed.

6.2 Information on planning applications and commencements will be provided by planning departments to ensure that there is proper control of the finances. Hampshire County Council will provide an independent annual audit of both investment and annual budgets. The SAMM Board will meet regularly to agree the budget and priorities, and formally report to the JSPB.

7 Review of the tariff

7.1 Detailed records will be kept of all SAMM expenditure and resource allocation so that local authorities will be able to monitor expenditure within their local areas. Combined with detailed monitoring of visitors and the SPA bird species, this will provide clear information on the effectiveness of the SAMM project and SANGs.

7.2 The SAMM tariff will be reviewed regularly and initially within the first two years of adoption. The first review will take account of the uncertainties introduced by the change in the tariff system, delay in implementation and current economic climate.

8 Implementation of tariff

8.1 The methodology described here provides a mechanism for calculating a tariff which is considered to meet the requirements of national policy and reliably provide the requisite level of mitigation.

8.2 It is not obligatory to use this tariff methodology when providing strategic mitigation. In agreement with Natural England, local authorities are entitled to use a different methodology or undertake Appropriate Assessments of individual developments which are able to provide a suitable alternative SPA-wide avoidance strategy.

Appendix 2 – Details of TBH SAMM tariff calculation

9 Calculation of tariff

9.1 Details of how information about occupancy and house sizes are used to generate a proportional scale of tariffs providing the required total sum are shown in the following sections.

$$\text{Tariff} = (\text{Occupancy} \times \text{Standard Cost}) + \text{Enabling Adjustment}$$

$$\text{Tariff} = (\text{Occupancy} \times \text{£263}) + 8\%$$

10 Occupancy

10.1 Occupancy figures have been obtained from a number of sources and used to calculate example estimated average figures.

Table 4: Occupancy figures

Dwelling	Waverley ¹	Hart ²	Elmbridge ³	Woking ⁴	Wokingham ⁵
1 bedroom	1.31	1.3	1.2	1.4	1.29
2 bedroom	1.76	2.42	1.8	1.9	1.68
3 bedroom	2.51		2.5	2.5	2.17
4 bedroom	2.86	3.5	2.8	2.9	2.9
5 bedroom +	3.73		3.6		3.48

[1] Surrey wide data.
 [2] Figures correspond with North East Hampshire Transport Strategy.
 [3] Survey work by Surrey County Council and accepted in 1998 by the Local Plan Inquiry Inspector.
 [4] Census 2001.
 [5] Wokingham BC 2003.

Occupancy figures used in tariff calculations		
Dwelling	Occupancy	Tariff (Occupancy x £263)
1 bedroom	1.40	£369
2 bedroom	1.85	£487
3 bedroom	2.50	£658
4 bedroom	2.85	£747
5+ bedroom	3.70	£974

Average occupancy figures have been selected on a precautionary basis.

11 Housing stock

11.1 The size of future housing stock has been obtained from a number of sources and used to provide example average figures for future delivery

Table 5a: Housing Stock

No. of bedrooms	Guildford	Waverley	Woking	Hart	Rushmoor	Surrey Heath	Average
1	12%	18%	19%	10%	10%	10%	13.1%
2	41%	42%	28%	30%	50%	40%	38.6%
3	29%	19%	39%	35%	20%	40%	30.4%
4+	17%	21%	14%	25%	20%	10%	17.9%

Guildford, Waverley and Woking; West Surrey Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2009
Hart, Rushmoor and Surrey Heath; NW Surrey and NE Hampshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2008

Table 5b: Housing Stock: Average % used in SAMM tariff

Number of bedrooms	Overall
1	13%
2	39%
3	30%
4	12%
5+	6%

10. Enabling Adjustment

10.1. The Enabling Adjustment is required to ensure that the proportional tariff provides an average approximating £630 regardless of the mix of housing and local occupancy figures. Using the average figures, the required adjustment is 8%, calculated using a simple spreadsheet model.

Table 6: Tariff including Enabling Adjustment at 8%

No. bedrooms	Occupancy	Tariff	% dwellings	No dwellings	Income generated
1	1.40	£399	13%	367	£146,433
2	1.85	£526	39%	1101	£579,126
3	2.50	£711	30%	847	£602,217
4	2.84	£807	12%	339	£273,573
5+	3.70	£1,052	6%	170	£178,840
Overall				2824	£1,780,189
Average tariff : £1,780,189 ÷ 2824 = £630					

Appendix 3: Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Project

11 Overall costs

- 11.1 The Strategic Access Management and Monitoring project will secure the employment of a Project Co-ordinator and one Warden initially, and then later (as funds allow) an Education Officer and further warden staff. These staff will work with existing rangers and wardens to provide consistent messages to SPA visitors and promote use of the SANGs.
- 11.2 The project also includes a monitoring strategy which will measure both visitor use (of the SPA and the SANGs) and populations of the three SPA birds to ensure that the avoidance and mitigation measures are functioning effectively to avoid any adverse impact of development on the bird populations.
- 11.3 The SAMM project will provide a presence on all sites comprising the SPA but will focus resources according to clear priorities. The priority sites will be those where it is possible to have the greatest influence on visitor behaviour and appreciation of the SPA.
- 11.4 The tables below provide further information on the roles and costs of the staff. In the early years of the project the income will increase slowly and the project will develop in stages. Establishing baseline visitor information and monitoring changes in visitor patterns will be a priority, together with continuing the long term monitoring of the SPA birds. Staff will be employed flexibly with a gradual increase in numbers.

Table 7: SAMM project annual costs

Item	Cost*	Notes
Natural England	£80,000	Staff costs
Wardening	£310,000	4 full time and 10 seasonal wardens
Monitoring	£49,000	See monitoring strategy proposal
Subtotal	£439,000	
Contingency @ 10%	£43,900	
Natural England costs	£10,000	
Hampshire CC finance	£20,000	Costs associated with Treasurer function
Establishment costs	£6,500	Capital costs over 16 years
VAT contingency	£17,160	
Overall	£536,560	

*Revised costs derived from Outline Business Plan and Monitoring Strategy.

Table 8: Capital Fund

Based on the following assumptions the Capital Fund would be continuing to grow whilst covering the full estimated annual costs.											
Income											
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Tariff will initially average £190 and £440 per dwelling. • The Tariff will be reviewed as a priority to ensure that housing and cost assumptions are as accurate as possible. • A 10% increase in tariff takes place in 2011/12. • The tariff subsequently increases every 5th year by 15%. • Interest rates based on interest yield market projections are: <table style="margin-left: 40px; border: none;"> <tr><td>2010/11</td><td>0%,</td></tr> <tr><td>2011/12</td><td>1%,</td></tr> <tr><td>2012/13</td><td>2%</td></tr> <tr><td>2013/14</td><td>3%</td></tr> <tr><td>2014/15 onwards</td><td>4%</td></tr> </table> • The Administrative Body will pay a rate of interest of Base Rate -0.5% where the Base Rate is above 0.5%. Where the Base Rate is 0.5% or below then no interest will be paid. • Once the fund has reached an appropriate size (to be directed by the JSPB) then an independent adviser will be engaged to manage the long term fund. It will be important to maximise the return on investment in accordance with the JSPB investment and risk appetite. The increase in return and the costs associated with engaging an independent adviser have been excluded at this time. • Interest rates applied in the calculation are: 2010-11=0, 2011-12=0.5%, 2012-13=1.5%, 2013-14=2.5%, 2014-26=3.5%, 2026 Onwards 4%. 		2010/11	0%,	2011/12	1%,	2012/13	2%	2013/14	3%	2014/15 onwards	4%
2010/11	0%,										
2011/12	1%,										
2012/13	2%										
2013/14	3%										
2014/15 onwards	4%										
Costs											
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cost estimates used have been revised estimates of activity provided by Natural England to reflect the revisions to the build forecasts. Based on likely public and industry sector knowledge costs have not been inflated until they reach the full cost level at year 10 in 2018-19. • Inflation applied from 2018 onwards is set at the Bank of England target level of 2%. 											

Table 9: Predicted costs of actual delivery of wardening service

	Cost	Note
Full time staff		
Salary inc additional costs	£30,800	Annual
Equipment, transport, accommodation	£10,824	
Total	£41,624	
Total cost - 4 staff	£166,496	
Seasonal staff		
Salary inc additional costs	£11,178	For period March - September (25 weeks)
Equipment, transport, accommodation	£2,959	
Total	£14,137	
Total cost – 10 staff	£141,370	
Overall wardening cost	£307,866	

Table 10: Detailed monitoring costs

Capital item/initial costs	Cost
Installation of 80 pressure mat counters	£55,000
Initial visitor numbers and questionnaire surveys with analysis across the SPA/SANGS	£40,000
Contingency 10%	£9,500
Total Capital Costs	£104,500
Annual cost over 16 years (rounded down to nearest 100)	£6,500
Annual costs	
Full Visitor Survey on the SPA after 5 years (collected per annum)	£10,000
Annual maintenance of pressure counters	£3,000
Fire recording, collation and storage	£2,000
Site capacities initial survey and analysis	£13,000
Collation and storage of records (planning, visitors, birds surveys, incidents, SANGs etc)	£12,000
SPA bird surveys	£5,000
Car park counts analysis	£2,000
Household postal survey on open space usage	£2,000
Total annual costs	£49,000

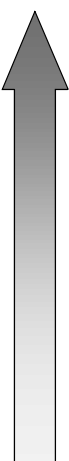
12. Staff roles and project priorities

12.1. The mitigation provided by the SAMM project is entirely additional and complementary to existing resources which are already working on the SPA. The SPA Rangers will be focussed on managing visitors and access together with monitoring visitors and access. The following tables provide an indication of the roles of the staff and priorities.

Table 11: Roles of SAMM project staff

Project coordinator	
i.	Overall coordination of TBH project.
ii.	Management of budget.
iii.	Line management of staff.
iv.	Coordination and analysis of survey information.
v.	Production of reports and liaison with local authorities.
Education and Communication Officer	
i.	Coordinating interpretation and educational materials.
ii.	Providing information and educational resources to local authorities and partners.
iii.	Volunteer co-ordination for bird surveys, car park counts and evaluating potential for using volunteers and/or wardening service for visitor questionnaires in the future.
Wardens	
i.	Raising awareness amongst visitors of the importance and sensitivity of the SPA.
ii.	Encouraging visitors to behave responsibly on the SPA.
iii.	With existing land managers, assessing visitor infrastructure and focussing on the practical experience of visitors to identify on the ground improvements.
iv.	Promoting alternative recreational areas, including SANGS.

Table 12: Budget priorities

Priority	Monitoring	Staffing	Other
	SPA wide visitor survey	Project coordination	SPA identity
	Regular visitor counts		Volunteer involvement
	Annual bird monitoring		
	Pressure pads	Full time wardens	Educational material
	Postal surveys	Seasonal wardens Education & communication officer	Interpretation