

A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down

TR010025

Deadline 9

8.58 – Stone curlew breeding plot specification

APFP Regulation 5(2)(q)

Planning Act 2008

The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010

September 2019



Infrastructure Planning

Planning Act 2008

The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure)

Rules 2010

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Stone curlew breeding plot specification

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Technical Note

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document provides a specification for the four stone curlew breeding plots proposed to be provided and managed for the purposes of Requirement 12 of the DCO.
- 1.2 One of the stone curlew breeding plots (referred to in this document and Requirement 12 as "the replacement stone curlew breeding plot") is required to be in place prior to the loss of an existing stone curlew breeding plot at Parsonage Down which is shown on the Plan attached to this document and marked 'Existing Stone Curlew Plot To Be Lost' (referred to in this document and Requirement 12 as "the existing stone curlew breeding plot").
- 1.3 A further three stone curlew breeding plots (referred to in this document and Requirement 12 as "the additional stone curlew breeding plots") are required to be in place post-opening of the Scheme.
- 1.4 References in this document to "the stone curlew breeding plots" refer to the replacement stone curlew breeding plot and the additional stone curlew breeding plots.
- 1.5 This document has been agreed with Natural England and RSPB.

2 Breeding plot location

Zone for the selection of the replacement stone curlew breeding plot

- 2.1 The replacement stone curlew breeding plot shall be located in the designated Parsonage Down National Nature Reserve.

Zone for the selection of the additional stone curlew breeding plots

- 2.2 Each of the additional stone curlew breeding plots shall be located
 - Within 5 km of the boundary of the designated Salisbury Plain Special Protection Area.

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Location of the stone curlew breeding plots

- 2.3 The stone curlew breeding plots shall be provided in accordance with the following criteria:
- Minimum 75 m from trees and hedges;
 - Minimum 100 m from overhead lines;
 - Minimum human disturbance: >100 m from any regularly used farm road/track and >200 m from public roads and >200 m away from public footpaths;
 - Open position, with clear lines of sight, not in a valley bottom;
 - Moderate to gentle slopes, less than 15°; and
 - More than 200 m from an existing stone curlew breeding plot.

3 Fallow breeding plot specification

- 3.1 Where a stone curlew breeding plot is to be provided as a fallow plot, it must meet the following criteria.

Size of breeding plots

- 3.2 Minimum area of 2 ha, which shall include an associated grassland verge of 5 m width retained around the edge of the plot.
- 3.3 The minimum length of any side of the plot shall be 70 m.

Breeding plot specification and annual management

- 3.4 Annual management is required to ensure sparsely vegetated conditions are maintained, which are required for breeding by stone curlew. Management will be substantially in accordance with best practice guidance for stone curlew by RSPB or any updated best practice guidance¹.
- 3.5 Cultivation of the whole plot to a rough tilth shall be carried out by 15th March each year.
- 3.6 During May each year one half of each of the breeding plots shall be sprayed using a non-selective herbicide (unless such a herbicide is no longer available, in which case management may be undertaken through cultivation methods as approved by Highways England in consultation with RSPB). Care should be taken during spraying to avoid risk to stone-curlew nests/chicks from tractor wheels.
- 3.7 The fallow in each plot shall be retained until at least 30th September each year.
- 3.8 The grass verge provided as part of the breeding plots shall be managed to ensure that there is sufficient growth (between 20-40cm) by May each year that can reasonably be considered to provide cover for stone curlew chicks, and to protect

¹ Ash, D, and Sheldrake, P (undated) The Stone-Curlew – A guide to its conservation. Salisbury Plain LIFE project. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.showFile&rep=file&file=Stone_curlewfactsheet.pdf

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important arable plants on the plot from spray drift without allowing development of scrub². It shall be managed by mowing or grazing after 30th September and before 15th March each year.

- 3.9 Fencing is not required for fallow breeding plots, but if stock fencing is required to enable grazing of adjacent land it shall be temporary electric fencing which does not provide vantage points for predatory birds by including bird deterrent spikes or similar measures.

4 Scraped breeding plot

- 4.1 It is anticipated that the replacement stone curlew breeding plot and one of the additional stone curlew breeding plots will be provided as scraped plots (however, should it not be practicable to provide a scraped plot for these purposes, a fallow plot could be provided instead).

- 4.2 For the remaining two additional stone curlew breeding plots, should it not be practicable to provide a fallow plot location (as described above) then it would be suitable to provide a scraped breeding plot.

- 4.3 Where a stone curlew breeding plot is to be provided as a scraped plot, it must meet the following criteria.

Size of breeding plots

- 4.4 The scraped breeding plots shall consist of at least 1 ha breeding plot scrape and an associated grassland verge of width at least 10 m.

- 4.5 The minimum length of any side of the plot shall be 70 m.

Breeding plot specification and annual management

- 4.6 The scraped breeding plots shall be provided such that the topsoil is removed to expose bare chalk.

- 4.7 Fencing shall be provided around the whole plot (including the associated grassland verge) which is consistent with FG7 Standard: anti-predator fencing applicable to the Countryside Stewardship scheme (as may be updated from time to time). This will include chain-link or wire mesh fencing to exclude badgers, off-set electric wires to deter mammalian predators and fence-posts with deterrents against perching predatory birds.

- 4.8 The breeding plot shall be inspected on an annual basis to determine the management measures required to be implemented to ensure the sparsely vegetated conditions required for breeding by stone curlew.

- 4.9 Except for repairs to maintain the effectiveness of fencing, any management works identified as being required shall take place outside of the breeding season for stone curlew (March – September inclusive).

- 4.10 The grass verge provided as part of the breeding plot shall be managed to ensure that there is sufficient growth (between 20-40cm) by May each year to provide reasonable cover for stone curlew chicks, without allowing development of scrub. It shall be managed by mowing or grazing after 30th September and before 15th March

² RSPB (undated). Information Note: Managing nest plots for stone curlews (Version 1 - Wessex). Available at: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/documents/conservation-projects/guidance-on-plot-management-in-wessex.pdf>

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each year.

- 4.11 Should vegetation exceed 30% cover of the plot (excluding the grass verge), further management measures shall be implemented to ensure suitable conditions for breeding stone curlew are in place prior to the next breeding season (by 15th March). Measures used may include mowing, grazing, use of herbicide and periodic scarification or cultivation of the surface of the scraped area.

5 Duration of breeding plot

- 5.1 An agreement will be made to ensure the replacement stone curlew breeding plot is provided prior to the commencement of works to remove the existing stone curlew breeding plot and maintained for a minimum period of 15 years from the date it is put in place, subject to paragraph 5.3.
- 5.2 Agreements will be made to ensure that the additional stone curlew breeding plots are in place and maintained for a minimum period of 10 years from 15th March following the date one year after the opening of the new A303 tunnel for public use, subject to paragraph 5.3. The latest any breeding plot will be established will be one year after opening of the Scheme.
- 5.3 Alternative stone curlew breeding plots ("alternative plot") can be provided in substitution for those provided for the purposes of Requirement 12 of the DCO after they have been in place for a period of five years, but only if:
- (a) any alternative plot meets (and is maintained substantially in accordance with) the specification contained in this document (including in relation to duration³); and
 - (b) that alternative plot is provided in advance of the closure of the stone curlew breeding plot which is being substituted.

³ For the avoidance of doubt, any alternative plot is only required to be in place up to the date the applicable period in paragraph 5.1 or 5.2 ends (so the required duration simply continues from the original stone curlew breeding plot and does not restart).

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Existing Stone Curlew Plot To Be Lost

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