

Date: 01 April 2021
Our ref: 348579
Your ref: None



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BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Mr Casey,

**A417 Missing link
Draft Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening and Statement to Inform Appropriate
Assessment**

Thank you for your consultation on the most recent draft of the Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report and the Statement to Inform Appropriate Assessment for the A417 Missing link Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP).

Background

We were consulted on your draft HRA in April 2020, and at that stage confirmed that we were in agreement that the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites SAC and the Severn Estuary SAC/SPA/Ramsar site could be screened out from further assessment. Cotswold Beechwoods SAC was taken forward for further assessment with regard to air quality and potential impacts on recreational pressure. We also advised that recreational pressure was considered with regard to North Meadow and Clattinger Farm SAC.

We were reconsulted in January 2021. We advised that we agreed with the conclusion of no likely significant effects on North Meadow and Clattinger Farm SAC as a result of any increased recreational pressure.

With regard to the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC, we advised that whilst we agreed with the conclusions reached, further data should be included to demonstrate the conclusions with regard to air quality, and that the work undertaken on recreational pressure would be more appropriately presented as an Appropriate Assessment.

Cotswold Beechwoods SAC

Comments on the HRA Screening Report 08.03.21

We welcome the inclusion of more data on air quality, including the additional transect points described and the summary of change in Nitrogen deposition in Appendix E. Natural England agrees with the conclusion of no likely significant effects.

Comments on the draft Statement to Inform Appropriate Assessment 08.03.21

We welcome the re-packaging as a Statement to Inform Appropriate Assessment (SIAA). We agree with the conclusion reached in the SIAA that there will be no adverse effects on the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC due to changes to recreational pressure, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

Paragraph 4.4.4 refers to the 10km Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for recreational pressure on the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC, published on Magic. Natural England's IRZ's are buffers designed to trigger consultation. They do not necessarily mean that there is or is not a likely significant effect. In this case the IRZ predates the recreational pressure survey work undertaken for the Cotswold Beechwoods. For the sake of correctness it would be better to refer to the 15.4km Zone of Influence that has been derived from the survey work. The survey report is available via Stroud DC website – [REDACTED]

If you have any queries relating to the advice in this letter please contact me on 020 802 60955.

Yours sincerely

Hayley Fleming
Senior adviser, West Midlands Area Team