

**Resolution CM/ResDip(2008)1  
on the revised regulations for the European Diploma for Protected Areas**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 20 February 2008  
at the 1018th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)<sup>1</sup>*

**Appendix 5: Model plan for annual reports**

**Annual report for the year ....**

Annual reports should describe the changes that have taken place since the previous year in dynamic terms of management and function and not be limited to basic data. Any new text or map introducing a change in the situation of the area should be attached to the annual report.

State: **United Kingdom**

Name of the area: **Minsmere**

**2020**, the first year since the renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas:

**Central authority concerned:**

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**Authority responsible for its management:**

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<sup>1</sup> As amended by Resolution CM/ResDip(2014)2 on 2 July 2014 at the 1204th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies.  
Internet : <http://www.coe.int/cm>

1. **Conditions:** List here all conditions which were attached to the award or the renewal of the European Diploma. Explain either how the conditions have been totally complied with or detail the progress in complying with the conditions. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

1. **With regard to the project of third reactor at the Sizewell nuclear power plant (project Sizewell C), carry out a proper Strategic Environment Assessment and an Environment Impact Assessment according to international standards. The results of the assessments should ensure that the construction of the new reactor will not be at the detriment of the Minsmere Reserve.** EDF Energy submitted their planning application for this project in June 2020. RSPB and Suffolk Wildlife Trust submitted concerns to the Planning Inspectorate that the environmental assessment may not be adequate following the pre-application information we had received. Despite this, the application was accepted for Examination. RSPB have registered as an interested party for the Examination Process and have submitted our relevant representation outlining our concerns. Significant concerns were raised by a number of stakeholders, including the County Council and constituency Member of Parliament. EDF have now proposed that changes to the application may be submitted ahead of the Examination and have launched a four-week consultation during Nov/Dec 2020. Currently, the six-month Examination is anticipated to start in March/April 2021, with a decision from the Secretary of State in 2022. RSPB continue to work with partners and the developer to seek to resolve the issues, but we believe that on current evidence the proposal could be to the detriment of Minsmere Reserve and should not proceed.

2. **Recommendations:** List here all recommendations which were attached to the award or the renewal of the European Diploma. Explain either how the recommendations have been totally complied with or detail the progress in complying with the recommendations. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

1. **control, wherever possible, the invasion of bracken with mechanical means, as opposed to the use of herbicides; in cases of restoration of big areas, the use of chemical products should be limited to the minimum possible extent and a careful record of this practice should be kept in order to assess and cope with possible undesirable side effects; specific scientific research on this issue should be carried out;** No chemical control of bracken was carried out this year. This was planned, but the use of Asulox, other than through aerial spraying, was only permitted late in the season and it proved too late for effective treatment. No mechanical control was undertaken. Treatment in previous years has brought bracken under control but continued management will be required.

2. **pursue efforts to mitigate the effect of the rise in the sea level; explore the possibility of restoring the lost habitats in other parts of the reserve; envisage compensatory measures; carefully monitor indicative plant and fauna species and duly register and scientifically characterise the changes observed;** The Minsmere Coastal and Climate Change Adaptation Plan progressed. This project is to develop a strategic plan for managing coastal and climate change at RSPB Minsmere. It will incorporate planned adaptation of habitats and species, as well as visitor infrastructure. Two productive workshops were run with attendees from The Environment Agency, Natural England, Local Government, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, National Trust, the Internal Drainage Board and local landowners to seek their views on our developing Vision for Minsmere. We continue to liaise with the EA re maintenance of the major water control infrastructure.

3. **continue the land purchase policy; in the absence of opportunities to acquire new plots, establish long-term agreements with the landowners of selected areas to improve their contribution to biodiversity conservation and/or restoration;** There were no appropriate land purchase opportunities this year. Landowner advice on neighbouring land has continued for priority species: turtle dove (*Streptopelia turtur*), stone curlew (*Burhinus oedicnemus*).

4. **maintain the surveillance of alien species of flora, especially controlling and managing the pirri-pirri bur (*Acaena novae-zelandiae*) and pursue the control of the American mink (*Mustela vison*).** Due to the Covid-19 lockdown, no spraying to control pirri-pirri bur was undertaken this Spring. A contractor was engaged to boom spray compartments 69, 51 and 60 in September 2020. These were compartments with significant infestation and where mechanical spraying from a tractor was most practicable. Staff undertook control by manual weeding in public areas of the reserve. Mink rafts were deployed on the Scrape along with trail cameras - no signs of Mink presence were observed. Control for both these non-native invasive species will continue.

**3. Site Management:** List here any changes to the European Diploma holding site management, in relation to both terrestrial and aquatic environments (as appropriate), and in relation to staff and finances, since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

The Minsmere red deer control project continued. During the year covered by this report 20 animals were shot on the wetland fringes. Impact assessment has shown that the significant culling in the heathland/woodland areas has been beneficial. Based on further impact assessment, we do not intend to cull any red deer from the reserve in winter 2020-21.

Further work tree felling on the Heathland Restoration Project was undertaken. 219 tonnes of Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) and silver birch (*Betula pendula*) were removed from heath areas by contractors and reserve staff. Open patches have been created within the heather for nesting nightjars *Caprimulgus europaeus*. Unfortunately systematic nightjar monitoring could not be carried out this year because of Covid..

The reedbed restoration project was completed in the previous year. Work on the Scrape included weeding islands, control of mare's tail with salt water and the usual post breeding season vegetation control by mechanical means and grazing. Water level control on the Scrape was interrupted by Covid: combined with a dry summer this resulted in low water levels, which probably caused increased predation of nesting birds.

Monitoring of turtle dove *Streptopelia turtur* territories was not delivered due to Covid. The final year of the national project to test potential turtle dove seed mixtures, in which a series of Spring-sown plots were established to complement last year's Autumn plots, was also delayed by Covid and will be delivered in 2021. In addition, supplementary feeding on the reserve was also prevented by the Covid lockdown. Likewise, no monitoring of nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* territories was possible, though work continued to create more scrub habitat through coppice management for this species.

Sixteen stone-curlew *Burhinus oedichnemus* plots were maintained. Covid prevent the erection of electrified netting or wires around stone curlews nesting plots prior to the birds return in March and for the first few weeks of nesting. This resulted in early nests being predated by ground predators. On the return of staff, any pairs nesting were fenced, which necessitated limited disturbance whilst the fences were erected. Ten chicks were fledged from nests (14 breeding pairs) on the reserve.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* productivity on the Scrape remains poor with avian predation the main influencing factor. Accommodating a successful gull and tern colony and a successful avocet colony in the same small area appears to be increasingly difficult. Only four avocet chicks (from 72 nests) fledged. Minsmere recorded 70 Sandwich tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis* adults on nests but all nests were abandoned suddenly, possibly as a result of heavy predation and bad weather. Further thought is being given to a wider strategy approach that ensures that provision for breeding avocets, gulls and terns is accommodated across the wider coast and Minsmere supports the development of a sustainable breeding population throughout the area.

There remains a need to develop a programme of appropriate annual re-investment in the visitor infrastructure to ensure that the quality of the offer for visitors is maintained and annual engagement and income targets are met. This has been a difficult year for the visitor side of the 'business', with the reserve effectively closed for several months and unable to operate the full range of visitor activities since mid-March.

**4. Boundaries:** Give details of any changes to the boundaries of the European Diploma holding site since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe. If there are any changes, please attach an appropriate map to this report. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

No additional land purchases or boundary changes this year.

**5. Other information:** List here any other information about the European Diploma holding site which you consider should be provided to the Council of Europe.

Visitor numbers for the period April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020 were 93,936, a 9.5% decrease on the previous year. The recording period was effectively 2.2% shorter than the previous one, due to site closure on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, but this result is disappointing.

Extensive consultations with EDF Energy continued regarding the plans to develop the Sizewell C nuclear reactor to the south of the reserve. We have worked closely with EDF to understand the specific environmental implications of the Sizewell C proposal. We remain disappointed at the significant gaps in the information provided and we expected to receive far greater detail in the planning submission made public in June 2020 than was included. EDF are about to launch a further public consultation, based on subsequent, significant changes to the submitted application. Concerns remain: the impact of the development on the Minsmere coastline; a number of potential impacts on local wildlife especially the impact of noise on the features of European protected sites in the area and the impact on the special qualities of Minsmere beyond wildlife alone, such as peace and tranquillity, and how this might impact on both visitor numbers and the benefits the reserve brings to the community. The risk includes vital income streams to underpin our conservation work and ecosystem services such as health and well-being benefits.

Acknowledgement of the European Diploma award was included in the Reserve Leaflet which is given to all visitors to the site.

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The following sections of the form should only be filled in if your area is in the year before a renewal of its European Diploma for Protected Areas, i.e. year 4 after the award of the European Diploma or year 9 after its renewal.

**6. Natural heritage (general abiotic description: geomorphology, geology and hydrogeology, habitats, flora, fauna, landscape) – State of conservation**

- 6.1. Environment: changes or deterioration in the environment, of natural or anthropic origin, accidental or permanent, actual or anticipated
- 6.2. Flora and vegetation: changes in the plant population and in the vegetational cover; presumed causes
- 6.3. Fauna: changes in the sedentary or migratory populations; congregating, egg-laying and breeding grounds

**7. Cultural heritage and socio-economic context**

- 7.1. Cultural heritage
  - 7.1.1. Changes concerning cultural heritage
- 7.2. Socio-economic context
  - 7.2.1. Changes concerning the socio-economic context

**8. Education and scientific interest**

- 8.1. Visitors – Information policy
  - 8.1.1. Arrangements for receiving and informing the public (building, booklets, maps, cards, etc.)
  - 8.1.2. Frequentation by visitors and behavior (number, distribution in time and space)
  - 8.1.3. Special visits (distinguished persons, groups, etc.)
- 8.2. Scientific research
  - 8.2.1. Current or completed research (observation, experimentation, etc.; identification or inventory of the species listed in the appendices to the Bern Convention, etc.)
  - 8.2.2. Scientific publications

**9. Site description (vulnerability, protection status, ownership, documentation)**

- 9.1. Changes in legislation or regulations
- 9.2. Changes in ownership title (conversion to public property, rentals, etc.)
- 9.3. Extension or transfer, new uses (for example, conversion into total reserve)

**10. Site management (management plans, budget and personnel)**

- 10.1. Improvements made
  - 10.1.1. Ecological action affecting the flora and biotopes; controls of fauna
  - 10.1.2. Protection against the elements (fire, water regime)
  - 10.1.3. Approaches and thoroughfares (paths, roads, car parks, signposting, fencing, etc.)
  - 10.1.4. Field equipment (hides and study facilities)
  - 10.1.5. Waste management
  - 10.1.6. Use of renewable energy systems
- 10.2. Management
  - 10.2.1. Administrative department: changes made
  - 10.2.2. Wardens' department: changes made
  - 10.2.3. Internal policing measures
  - 10.2.4. Infringement of regulations and damage; legal action

**11. Influence of the award of the European Diploma for Protected Areas**