

## Appendix 7: Wildlife Group Comments

Thank you for commissioning the ecology report and giving us the opportunity to respond. We found the report to be thorough and measured, giving a clear analysis of the ground nesting bird populations on St Mary's Lands, where they are impacted by site users, and sensible options for mitigating that impact.

We understand that WDC has a local biodiversity action plan for the district which naturally goes hand in hand with their Climate Emergency Plan. WDC is committed to improving wildlife and biodiversity over the previous plan and therefore needs to continue to support this in order to meet whatever local wild life designation targets they have set themselves. By proactively creating a biodiverse habitat on St Mary's Lands, WDC are encouraging species to settle and make use of the site for breeding (in particular the ground nesting birds). This places WDC under a statutory duty to protect and promote the species that make their home there, including red-listed skylarks and amber-listed meadow pipits. This obligation goes beyond merely providing the habitat and protecting its species, to actively encouraging those species to thrive with a view to reversing the declines of recent years.

Ultimately, wildlife thrives best where it is undisturbed, but we recognise St Mary's Lands is a much-valued community resource and, therefore, some compromise is necessary if all stakeholders are to continue to enjoy their preferred leisure activities on the site. We however do need to bear in mind that the ecology report has been written by the expert advisers retained to help us in our discussions, so the solution needs to be in line with their recommendations. We also have to consider the fact that St Mary's Lands has a LNR (Local Nature Reserve) status and that the most supported result from the St Mary's Land Community Consultation was for **the protection of wildlife**.

Ideally our preference is for Option 2 within the report, although our agreement to the suggested timings is subject to the flying zone being not directly over both the breeding areas of ground nesting birds and the reservoir. However, for the sake of pragmatism, **we are prepared to accept all recommendations of Option 1 by the Ecologists including the proposed flying times (with of course future monitoring of bird populations to determine if the increase in hours has any impact on the ground nesting birds). We would confirm that we oppose the hours as recommended by the working party on 02/03/2020 as they go against the ecologists suggestions (which are to limit disturbance during the breeding season).** If Option 1 were agreed, and as 'lone flyers' regularly cause issues by flouting the existing rules, we would ideally like the 'right to fly' to be restricted to a formally constituted group, (Warwick Model Flying Club) members only. We recognise that they could not be expected to police the site, but clear signage to this effect may go some way to preventing non-members from flying outside of the stated restrictions and zone.