

Appendix 3a Response to FoSML Report

The response from the ecologist is attached.

The other principal points arising are set out as bullet points with a response underneath:

- **Comments on their public survey and justifying our lack of public consultation.**

An extensive programme of public and stakeholder consultation took place during 2016 to develop the adopted masterplan in 2017. The summary page from that consultation process, which indicates that of all questionnaire responses, the two most supported proposals were:

1.1 SML is important for nature& wildlife

1.4 More of SML should be managed to encourage wildlife & nature

Whilst the Council did not undertake specific consultation on the temporary barriers, these were discussed and consulted upon with the members of the SMLWP, the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and are fully aligned with the nearly 200-responses the council received from members of the wider public.

- **Cost of the measures and why they are proportionate**

The cost of the measures for the year ahead are set out in the report as they were in 2021. The cost in 2021 was just over £2000 which is a small cost for an experiment. WDC has committed itself to positive action as regards the climate change emergency. As part of this, SML is an important 'test case' for both the Council and nationally in the discussion about how we modify behaviour to better co-exist with the natural world around us. It is a positive feature of the masterplan that SML is better known and much more used now than in its past; but increasing visitor numbers can have a negative impact on the ecology and biodiversity of the site. The areas have been roped off in the past and this has been shown to be ineffective in reducing the decline of once common bird species at SML. Should the trial prove to be effective, more permanent fencing can be considered as part of a wide-ranging review of SML management and maintenance planning. Equally should the trial not work, considerably more expenditure on installing permanent fencing at the outset has been saved. The educational value of this trial should not be underestimated – it is a real example of the loss of biodiversity on the doorstep and when the public understand this, the vast majority would support the measures.

- **Why we choose green plastic netting.**

The areas for protecting the breeding birds have been roped off in previous years but the ropes have been unsuccessful in preventing disturbance, in particular, from dogs running off leads. Consequently, an alternative was sought and the members of the SMLWP discussed and agreed a more robust barrier was required. The green plastic is easy to install and take down and is an ideal material for the trial period.

- **Approach to signage and communication**

More permanent and attractive signage, similar to the recently installed example at the model flying site is proposed but this would only be appropriate if the trial becomes a permanent feature. In the meantime, more temporary notices can be included alongside the green mesh barriers to explain their purpose.