



TBH Local Planning Authorities

BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear all,

This letter summarises Natural England's position regarding the revision of the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) tariff and the Thames Basin Heath SPA (TBH). This follows on from the recent TBH Joint Strategic Planning Board (JSPB) meeting which was held virtually on the 19th November 2020.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

At the afore mentioned JSPB meeting it was agreed by your elected Councillors that the tariff amount applied to new dwellings built within the 5km SPA buffer zone and used to fund the SAMM project should increase from £630 to £796.95. It was also agreed that Local Authorities implement appropriate mechanisms to collect the increased tariff from the start of the next financial year.

The rationale behind this tariff uplift are as follows. When the SAMM Legal Agreement had been signed by the eleven partner authorities in 2011, the tariff that developers were to be charged was set at £630 per dwelling and the tariff would be kept under review increasing by 10% in 2011/12 and then by 15% every following five years to ensure that sufficient income was raised to cover the costs of the SAMM project in perpetuity. Analysis of the SAMM project's budget shows that approximately 80% of the £527,000 received during 2020/21 was spent on staff costs. It was noted that if income did not rise to match expenditure then, based on current costs, the warden budget would by 2023 need to be reduced by one seasonal warden and a further seasonal warden would be lost every two years after that. Leaving the SAMM project at risk of being unable to deliver the objectives set out for it in 2011.

Natural England is committed to working with the Thames Basin Heaths Local Planning Authorities to secure positive outcomes for the SPA. Please take this as formal notification as requested by the JSPB, that Natural England expect the new tariff to commence collection from 1st April 2021.

If you wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Shelton
Senior Advisor
Project Managing the Thames Basin Heaths
Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Project
Natural England