

Date: 16 March 2022



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BY EMAIL ONLY

Somerset District and County planning authorities and Dorset Council.

Natural England update following release of additional information related to nutrient neutrality and the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar Site.

Dear Sir/Madam

A number of documents and updates have been released today - by both the Somerset planning authorities and by Natural England - which relate to the consideration of nutrient neutrality for development proposals that could affect the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar Site. I am writing to the planning authorities affected in Somerset and Dorset in order to make clear Natural England's advice on these updates as it applies to the Somerset Levels and Moors catchment. I would be grateful if this letter could be made available to applicants via your webpages relating to nutrients.

Release of Natural England's generic Nutrient Neutrality Methodology and catchment calculators, and planned updates to the Somerset Phosphates Budget Calculator.

Natural England's generic methodology and catchment calculators have been developed to support a consistent approach to assessing nutrient neutrality across affected catchments in England. We recommend that the Somerset planning authorities move to using these tools as part of their planned update to Somerset Phosphates Budget Calculator. The Somerset and Dorset authorities will be best placed to consider how a transition to new tools and guidance is managed and Natural England will align its advice accordingly.

Updated catchment map

Natural England welcomes the provision of an updated map, informed by local consultation with the Internal Drainage Board and Environment Agency, that identifies the areas of risk within the catchment that are hydrologically linked to the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar Site. Our national mapping system (MAGIC) will be updated to reflect the new boundaries. However, this will take several weeks and in the meantime we advise that decisions about whether planning applications are hydrologically connected to the Ramsar site are made using the new map that has been made available by the Somerset planning authorities.

Yours Sincerely,

Simon Stonehouse
Wessex Team