

Policy paper: The Isles of Scilly: protecting the quality of groundwater

Before 2010, the Isles of Scilly were exempt from UK environmental legislation. However, Environmental Permitting Regulations (EPR) have been extended to the islands, so now the Environment Agency is responsible for monitoring and protecting the quality of groundwater on the Isles of Scilly.

The majority of drinking water on the islands comes from groundwater.

It is crucial these sources of groundwater are safeguarded and that the water is of high quality both for environmental reasons and to support safe abstraction for consumption.

The EPR regulations may mean that in future an environmental permit is needed where sewage effluent is discharged to ground soakaways on the islands. This is to ensure that the treatment and discharge of sewage effluent is well managed and does not pose risks to the quality of groundwater.

The reports published by the Environment Agency detail a groundwater quality survey and the delineation of Source Protection Zones.

Press release: Protection extended for mid Cornwall's wildlife-rich landscape

Rare butterflies and birds will benefit from a much larger area of protected land in mid Cornwall from today, says Government wildlife adviser Natural England.

The new Mid Cornwall Moors site of special scientific interest (SSSI) merges the six original SSSIs which previously dotted the landscape either side of the A30 and east of Indian Queens, extending their boundaries and protecting around 50% more of the countryside. The SSSI includes several closely located patches of land, connecting important habitats and helping wildlife to withstand pressures from climate change in the future, creating a stronger refuge and network for rare plants and animals.

The countryside across the Mid Cornwall Moors is a rich and varied mix of heathland, woodland, and wildflower meadows; a vital sanctuary for wildlife, as well as an important asset for local people, visitors, and businesses. Fens and mires in the headwaters of the Fal and Par catchments also help to provide clean water and have the potential to reduce flood risk to homes and properties located further downstream.

Natural England has joined forces with landowners, the Cornwall Wildlife Trust and Butterfly Conservation, building on the successes of the Mid Cornwall Moors LIFE project to create the perfect conditions for the rare marsh fritillary butterfly, which should see its fortune improve as a result. The wet woodlands throughout the area are important for the diminutive willow tit, which has virtually disappeared from large parts of the UK and declined by an estimated 81% since the mid-1990s. The new areas added to the SSSI include important breeding sites for both of these special species.

The former A30 at Goss Moor was downgraded to recreational use for cyclists, horseriders and walkers in 2008. Natural England has been working with Highways England, the Eden Project and Butterfly Conservation to create new habitat areas for butterflies and other wildlife on land alongside the new A30 corridor, several of which have now also been included within the new SSSI boundary. With help from the Eden Project, swathes of devil's-bit scabious flowers – the main food plant for the marsh fritillary butterfly – have been grown and planted alongside the A30.

Speaking at an event at the Eden Project today, Natural England's Chief Executive James Cross said:

The Mid Cornwall Moors are incredibly important areas for wildlife as well as people, and balancing the needs of both are critical to their conservation. Today's notification builds on the success of the LIFE project, providing protection for the much-improved breeding habitats for marsh fritillary butterflies along the A30 corridor – making it a valuable asset, not just for businesses and visitors – but also for wildlife. Mid Cornwall Moors is now one of our top wildlife sites and we are able to give it the protection it deserves.

Seán O'Hea, Mid Cornwall Reserves Manager, Cornwall Wildlife Trust said:

The Mid Cornwall Moors are special because of all of the patches of good quality wildlife habitat scattered across the landscape. This designation is very well thought out because it looks beyond the previous SSSI boundaries to consider what the wildlife really needs to thrive. It extends the protection given by SSSI status to many more important pieces of land, creating a wider network of protected sites.

Philip Hambly, Chairman of Cornwall Butterfly Conservation said:

The marsh fritillary is threatened, not only in the UK but across Europe. It is therefore essential that this rare butterfly is managed carefully and on a landscape scale so colonies remain connected. Mid Cornwall Moors protection as an SSSI will target conservation to help this butterfly's survival across this very

important area. Cornwall Butterfly Conservation's volunteers have already worked in partnership with Natural England carrying out surveys and conservation work and very much look forward to continuing this together.

Dr Caroline Bulman, Head of Species Ecology at Butterfly Conservation, said:

Like many specialist butterflies, the threatened marsh fritillary can only survive when colonies are able to move between areas of suitable wet grassland – which provide the host plant and conditions for them to thrive. We welcome the expansion and changes to the new designation of the Mid Cornwall Moors SSSI, as this will help to protect this and other important species at a landscape-scale and help to reverse the decline, for such rapidly declining species.

The previous SSSIs now included within the Mid Cornwall Moors SSSI include Goss and Tregoss Moors, Red Moor, Retire Common, Breney Common, Tregonetha and Belowda Downs and Belowda Beacon. The area protected as a SSSI has increased by over two square miles and now covers areas totalling six and a half square miles across the wider Mid Cornwall Moors landscape.

The Mid Cornwall Moors SSSI comes into immediate effect from today, 23 February. Landowners, occupiers and interested parties have 4 months in which to make representations or objections to Natural England, who will then decide whether or not to confirm the notification.

Guidance: The non-domestic Private Rented Property minimum standard – landlord guidance

Updated: Exemptions register pilot registration.

The Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property)(England and Wales) Regulations 2015 mean that, from April 2018, private non-domestic (and domestic) landlords must ensure that properties they rent in England and Wales reach at least an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of E before granting a tenancy to new or existing tenants. These requirements will apply to all private rented non-domestic properties – including properties where there has been no change in the tenancy arrangements – from April 2023.

This guidance document is aimed at non-domestic landlords, Local Weights and

Measures enforcement authorities and others with an interest in the non-domestic private rental sector, such as letting agents and other property management agencies. The document provides guidance and advice on:

- Scope of the regulations: the steps a landlord should take to determine whether their property is covered by the regulations, and the steps they should take to ensure their property complies with the minimum level of energy efficiency;
- Relevant improvements: how a landlord can identify appropriate energy efficiency improvements for their property;
- Cost effectiveness: how a landlord can calculate whether particular improvements would be cost effective to install;
- Exemptions and exclusions: the exemptions framework and the steps a landlord should take to register a valid exemption;
- Enforcement: the enforcement framework and the options open to enforcement authorities when policing compliance with the minimum standards, including information on fines and other penalty options;
- The appeals framework: landlord appeals will be heard by the First-tier Tribunal, part of the court system administered by Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service; the guidance discusses the steps a landlord will need to take to lodge an appeal, and how that process will be run.

Where a landlord believes that an F or G EPC rated property they let qualifies for an exemption from the minimum energy efficiency standard, an exemption must be registered on the PRS Exemptions Register.

The Exemptions Register is currently being piloted and will be available on gov.uk by 1 October 2017. However landlords who wish to register an exemption for a non-domestic property as part of the pilot should e-mail the BEIS minimum standards team PRSregisteraccess@beis.gov.uk.

Any valid exemptions registered as part of the pilot will remain valid and will not need to be re-submitted at a later date.

Separate guidance to domestic private landlords on complying with their obligations under the minimum standard regulations will be published in due course.

National Statistics: Northern Ireland environmental statistics report 2017

This report is intended to be the first reference point for a range of environmental indicators and will provide, where available, annual updates on the indicators contained within it. It is of both public and academic interest and provides a valuable resource across government in providing links to government strategies.

Research and analysis: ACRE advice: application for a trial of GM Salmonella Typhi (16/R48/01)

This document is the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment (ACRE's) advice to government in considering a request from Oxford Vaccine Group (16/R48/01). The application is for a deliberate release of genetically modified Salmonella Typhi for research and development purposes.

ACRE is satisfied that the trial will not have an adverse effect on human health or the environment.