

Note of Susan Deakin, Liz Lake Associates, on behalf of the Council dated 21.5.2021 In response to Inspector's Query re Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pastures Habitat of Principal Importance

I understand that prior to adjournment of the Inquiry on 21.5.2021, the Inspector queried the situation re the Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pasture habitat, Habitat of Principal Importance (HPI) at Sandleford, as provided by the Appellant in Appendix F22; NVC Grassland Survey (CD 22.32).

The inspector quite correctly quotes from the Summary of this report (pg 7 para 3.) *'the marshy grasslands have affinities with the Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pastures Habitat of Principal Importance...'* and *'Although Purple Moor-grass is absent from Sandleford...'*

I agree that this could be construed as misleading but the remainder of the Summary on Pg. 7 does provide further explanation and I will attempt to clarify further.

The 'Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pasture' HPI is a particular and distinctive type of species-rich fen meadow / lowland grassland and is classified under the NVC system of vegetation classification as M23. This particular, specialised type of marshy grassland is, as stated by the appellant *'considered to be of high botanical nature conservation value...the small areas at Sandleford are significantly richer than the surrounding soft rush pastures'*.

M23 communities can contain a variety of grasses, rushes and broad-leaved species and generally (but not always) include particular species of rushes, particularly the sharp-flowered rush and purple moor-grass, amongst other species including marsh bedstraw.

The two areas of Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pasture habitat (M23) identified at Sandleford have been classified as M23 by the Appellants, due to the locally dominant sharp-flowered rush and marsh bedstraw (typical components of M23) and, whilst not containing the purple moor-grass itself, this is not necessary in order for the vegetation community to be classified as Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pasture habitat (M23). This may seem obtuse but is the case and is agreed between the Appellants and the Council.

As recognised by the Appellants, these areas of M23 occurring in the wet valley habitats at Sandleford are of County Importance and are rare in Berkshire (16% of the total Berkshire resource). Although the current extent of M23 at Sandleford is just below the threshold to merit consideration for selection as a SSSI under site selection criteria (0.445ha as opposed to the necessary 0.5ha), as set out in ID44, BBOWT have indicated that this important habitat does merit consideration as a Local Wildlife Site and this will be considered at the next review.