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**Participation information sheet for the WetlandLIFE focus group research activity**

**Wetland LIFE, TAKING THE BITE OUT OF WETLANDS: Managing mosquitoes and the socio-ecological value of wetlands for wellbeing**

You are being invited to take part in a research study on behalf of your member organisation. It is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish. Please ask Dr Mary Gearey, the University of Brighton’s lead researcher, if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Your organisation can withdraw from the research at any time and any recorded information will not be used. Although this sheet will have been sent to you ahead of the focus group activity a copy will also be available during the research activity for you to review again and take away with you.

**What is the purpose of the study/project?**

Wetlands play a vital role in supporting diverse ecosystems. Expanding and rehabilitating wetland spaces are also argued to mitigate a range of climate change impacts. These include floodwater storage and release; carbon sequestration, improved air and water quality and protection of biodiversity ‘corridors’. Alongside these positive attributes are the inevitable consequences of ecosystem expansion such as growing ‘nuisance’ populations of insects and plant life. This project focuses on mosquitoes as the objectification of these potential negativities. The overarching aim of the project is to improve wetland management by delivering national ecological guidance for managing insect populations, particularly mosquitoes, for healthy wetland environments, and to encourage the recreational use of wetlands to support the health and wellbeing of local human populations. To do this twelve English wetlands have been selected to participate in an ecological survey of mosquito species on each site. We have also selected three case study sites, in Bedfordshire, Somerset and the Humber valley, to interrogate human use, value and perception of local wetlands. The focus group you are part of today is part of the ‘human use and value’ focus of the project. Your insights will help us understand the key issues regarding human health and wellbeing within local wetlands. The research is conducted by the University of Brighton, with myself, Dr Mary Gearey, as the lead researcher. The University of Brighton is one of six partner organisations on the WetlandLIFE project. These other partners are the Public Health England, Forest Research and the Universities of Cranfield, Bristol and Greenwich along with three commissioned project artists. Colleagues from the University of Brighton will assist me in facilitating this 90 minute long meeting, along with one or two other project partners.

**Why have I been invited to participate?**

Your organisation has been invited to participate because your organisation’s recreational, professional, professional or spiritual activities make use, or could make use, of the wetlands listed above. Your expertise is greatly valued and will be of great benefit to the WetlandLIFE project. Examples of other focus group attendees include anglers, birdwatchers, walkers, foragers, etymologists, bat experts, botanists, outdoor educationalists (such as scout or guiding clubs) or fitness groups and artists who draw inspiration from nature. We seek the expertise of representatives from these organisations who both make use of wetlands and those who choose not to, to critique the benefits and ‘nuisances’ that are specific to these types of landscape.

**Do I have to take part?**

No. It is up to your organisation to decide whether or not to take part. If you do, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form on your organisation’s behalf. Your organisation is still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

**What is expected from participants?**

The WetlandLIFE project runs between January 2018 and July 2019. The University of Brighton’s ‘human use and value’ fieldwork research is being conducted between February 2018 and March 2019. There are three phases to the study; a case study site focus group; one to one participant interviews and a ‘wetland year diary’. This information sheet relates only to the focus group activity.

The focus group activity involves between 6 to 12 participants. These participants will be the representatives of organisations who use, or could make use of, NAMED wetlands. The focus group will meet for around sixty to ninety minutes at a central location to broadly discuss issues, concerns and items of interest regarding these spaces and their organisation’s perception and use of them. Discussions will be audio recorded and participants will be invited to use and draw maps to show how, and when, they use the selected sites and to indicate the location of key issues or concerns within those sites. Photographs will be taken for use on the WetlandLIFE website and to share with project partners at project progress meetings.

**Will I be paid for taking part?**

Due to financial constraints no expenses or payments can or will be made to participants.

**What are the potential disadvantages or risks of taking part?**

There are no possible disadvantages or risks that can be anticipated from you taking part in this research.

**What are the potential benefits of taking part?**

You will be contributing to a body of research work which values the importance of wetlands for human health and wellbeing.

**Will my taking part in the study/project be kept confidential?**

Your confidentiality and anonymity will be safeguarded in the following ways. When you agree to take part in the study you are nominated a reference number; your name never appears on any written transcripts, or on the audio recording itself. The researcher will never refer to you by name, or allude to your identity during the course of the research, or within research publications. Your organisation will be provided with a reference number and referred to in project meetings and research publications via their profile not by name, e.g. ‘watersports club’, ‘wildlife conservation group’. Project data is shared between WetlandLIFE partner organisations, with the lead partner, the University of Greenwich, responsible for communal data protocol in adherence with current data protection legislation. All data recordings, transcripts and other material captured by the University of Brighton are housed within a locked drawer within a locked room and as such are not available in a publicly accessible location. All data housed electronically are password protected. Only a nominated University of Brighton colleague will be able to access your files in the event that I am unavailable. Your information will be kept private in discussions about the project. Data will be archived for possible use by future University of Brighton researchers. All data will be destroyed after 10 years.

**What will happen if I don’t want to carry on with the study?**

Your organization is free to leave at any time and all data will be destroyed/removed from the project.

**What will happen to the results of the project?**

The results of the study will be used to compile a report for NERC that will detail how wetland site users and local community members perceive, use and value their local wetland spaces. The information you provide us with will help the WetlandLIFE team suggest recommendations for wetland site management to encourage public engagement with English wetland sites. If you do not wish your organisation to be named within these report recommendations you can notify Dr Gearey at any time

**Who is organising and funding the research?**

WetlandLIFE ([www.Wetlandlife.org](http://www.Wetlandlife.org)) sits within the network of Valuing Nature programmes funded by the AHRC, ESRC and NERC. The University of Brighton is one of a consortia of partners which include the Natural Resources Institute and the Universities of Cranfield, Bristol and Greenwich.

**What if there is a problem?**

The University of Brighton takes complaints seriously and any complaint made to the University will follow due process. In the first instance if there are any concerns please make them in writing, either to Dr Gearey or to Dr Gearey’s senior colleagues on the project Professor Ravenscroft and Professor Church (see below). Should further action be necessary please contact the Head of the School of Environment and Technology (SET), Dr Kirsty Smallbone, via the SET School Office:

Dr Mary Gearey,

Research Fellow, School of Environment and Technology, Cockcroft Building, University of Brighton, Lewes Road, Brighton, Bn2 4GJ, UK.

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Professor Neil Ravenscroft,

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Professor Andrew Church

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Mr Sam Vince,

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**Who has reviewed the study?**

The study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Brighton’s School of Environment and Technology relevant Research Ethics Committee.