



Homes &  
Communities  
Agency

18<sup>th</sup> July 2013

Re: Asset Management Panshanger

Thank you for your letter dated 1<sup>st</sup> July 2013 regarding the management Asset reference WG22003075.

The Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) will undertake one final grass cut later in the year, approximately the end of September once all species have set seed to enable us to leave the area tidy for the winter. The grass cut undertaken earlier this year towards the middle of May was as a result of contractor error. Our contractors have acknowledged their error and are aware for future years that this is not applicable. The HCA and our landscape consultants are fully aware of the Wildlife and Countryside Act and as a result do prescribe management practice to avoid cutting areas during nesting season where ground nesting birds are present if it's feasible to do so. This grass cut to which you refer was not instructed by the HCA and as such no preliminary surveys had been undertaken. All contractors undertaking works on behalf of the HCA are fully aware that if encountered, ground nests should be given a suitable buffer and not destroyed.

The intermediary part of the site is within the Stewardship Scheme. As such, the local farmer has agreed with Natural England the procedures to undertake to both manage the land for agricultural purpose and to promote good environmental management which includes minimal management intervention other than collecting an annual hay cut and allowing permissive access. Part of the site is a protected farm tenancy since 1931 with a local farmer, the more immediate site asset close to the houses is in a farm business tenancy for five years ending in 2014 which the farmer holds for the nominal purpose of taking grass off it.

**PROTECT - COMMERCIAL**

Homes and Communities Agency  
Eastbrook, Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge, CB2 8DR

[homesandcommunities.co.uk](http://homesandcommunities.co.uk)

Whilst we are in agreement that leaving all cutting until late summer is preferable for species diversity, this is not ideal agricultural practice. A hay cut to maximise energy content is governed by the condition of the grass sward which effects the digestibility and energy content of the grass cut. This is determined by the timing of grasses annual cycle and to maximise energy content should be undertaken before the seed heads form and as such is often undertaken in mid-late July. However this can vary dependant on the condition of grass sward and forthcoming whether conditions, with the best conditions being a long, hot, dry spell. This may mean that it may be most suitable to undertake as early as late June or in to August if weather dictates, as was the case in 2012.

I trust that this response is helpful.

Yours faithfully,



Michelle Osbourn  
Area Manager – Herts and Bucks