

Views About Management

A statement of English Nature's views about the management of Honister Crag Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

This statement represents English Nature's views about the management of the SSSI for nature conservation. This statement sets out, in principle, our views on how the site's special conservation interest can be conserved and enhanced. English Nature has a duty to notify the owners and occupiers of the SSSI of its views about the management of the land.

Not all of the management principles will be equally appropriate to all parts of the SSSI. Also, there may be other management activities, additional to our current views, which can be beneficial to the conservation and enhancement of the features of interest.

The management views set out below do not constitute consent for any operation. English Nature's written consent is still required before carrying out any operation likely to damage the features of special interest (see your SSSI notification papers for a list of these operations). English Nature welcomes consultation with owners, occupiers and users of the SSSI to ensure that the management of this site conserves and enhances the features of interest, and to ensure that all necessary prior consents are obtained.

Management Principles

Scree and ledges

The thin soils and physical structure of rocky habitats, such as scree and ledges, can support rare plant and animal communities not found elsewhere. Many plants use scree and ledges as a shelter from extremes of climate, from competition with more dominant plants found in the surrounding landscape and as a refuge from grazing. Scree and ledge habitats can be particularly important for plants intolerant of heavy grazing that are restricted to rock exposures because of high grazing pressure on surrounding montane and moorland habitats. Indeed, some stands of high altitude woodland and scrub are now restricted to ledge habitat, as are some tall-herb communities because of high grazing pressure on surrounding land. A number of birds of conservation importance, such as peregrine falcon, also use rock ledges as safe nesting sites.

The key management principle on scree and ledge habitats is the control of grazing stock. Low levels of grazing can be beneficial in certain circumstances - light grazing can prevent invasive scrub from shading out the less vigorous plants. Where scree is grazed in this way, calculation of the appropriate stocking density for managing the conservation interest of the surrounding habitat should be based on the area of the overall grazing habitat available excluding the area of scree. Where species or

communities of conservation interest are restricted to areas of rock and scree by heavy grazing, it may be necessary to consider reducing stock levels on the surrounding land to allow grazing intolerant species to spread from their scree refuges. Alternatively, fencing-off some areas to control stock may be necessary if it is not possible to reduce stock numbers. Heavy grazing can also disturb screes, reducing their suitability for a variety of insects that shelter beneath loose stones.

Species that are associated with scree and crags may require protection from damage and disturbance caused by walkers and rock climbers. Scree is highly unstable and the fragile plant communities that develop within it are easily damaged by frequent trampling. Wherever possible, new footpaths should be routed around scree rather than through it. The routes used by climbers and the time of year they use them may require careful management where cliff-nesting birds are known to be present.

Herbicides that are used to control bracken can harm several plant species associated with scree and ledge habitats, for example, ferns, and great care must be taken where herbicides are used. Weed wiping is the safest method of application and strict buffer zones must be observed. The application of fertilisers, including slurry and farmyard manure, would be damaging and should be avoided. Disturbing and removing stone from ledges and scree can also be very damaging to the species they support and should be avoided.

Inland outcrops and stream sections

The ideal management for natural inland geological sites is the maintenance of rock exposure free of vegetation and, in some cases, the build-up of rock debris. Management usually involves periodic clearance of vegetation and rock debris. Vegetation growth is a problem on many sites, because erosion rates are usually too low to naturally maintain fresh exposure of the geological features.

It may not be always practical or entirely necessary to maintain full exposure of the geological features on a site. Site management will often involve defining specific areas that need to be kept clear of vegetation and rock debris.

Collecting of geological specimens may be acceptable if undertaken in a responsible manner. However, there are some sites where the geological interest is very finite in nature and over-collecting can result in damage or destruction of the interest. Collecting of specimens requires very careful management to ensure that the geological resource is conserved.

The main threats to conservation of inland geological sites are developments that obscure the rock exposures. Tree planting can also conceal rock exposures.