

Views About Management



A statement of English Nature's views about the management of Castor Flood Meadows 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

Neutral hay meadows, neutral pasture and wet grassland which occur at this site require active management if they are to retain their conservation interest. In order to maintain a species-rich sward, each year's growth of vegetation must be removed, otherwise the sward becomes progressively dominated by tall and vigorous grasses. These, together with an associated build up of dead plant matter, suppress less vigorous species and reduce the botanical diversity of the site.

In neutral hay meadows, the above objective is traditionally achieved by closing the fields to stock from spring to midsummer and cutting the resultant growth as hay, usually in early July. The precise timing of the cut depends on local factors, including past management and current weather conditions, but should be after a good proportion of the characteristic plants have set seed and after ground-nesting birds have fledged their young. The aftermath is then grazed in late summer/autumn. Aftermath grazing is important for maintaining a species-rich sward, both through controlling competitive grasses and through hoof-prints providing suitable sites for seedlings to establish. However, heavy poaching must be avoided.

On pasture land this management is achieved by grazing. The precise timing and intensity of grazing will vary both between and within sites, according to local

conditions and requirements (such as type or availability of stock, or the needs of particular vegetation types, individual plants or animals of conservation concern) but should aim to keep a relatively open sward without causing excessive poaching. Light trampling can be of benefit by breaking down leaf litter and providing areas for seed germination.

Traditionally, management of wet grassland is achieved by grazing. Cattle are often the preferred stock, being relatively tolerant of wet conditions and able to control tall grasses and rank vegetation. Cattle also tend to produce a rather uneven, structurally diverse sward. However, ponies, or even hill sheep, can be used if necessary. Grazing usually takes place at times between late spring and early autumn, but the precise timing and intensity will depend on local conditions and requirements, such as the need to avoid trampling ground-nesting birds. Heavy poaching should be avoided but light trampling can be beneficial in breaking down leaf litter and providing areas for seed germination.

Surrounding, well-managed hedgerows can provide important additional wildlife habitat.

The application of pesticides including herbicides or fertilizers would be damaging to the sward.

For damper meadows, sympathetic maintenance of surface drainage including ditches and drains is necessary to prevent adverse changes in the plant species composition of the sward. Deepening of surface drainage would be damaging.