

## Views About Management



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### **A statement of English Nature's views about the management of Stallode Wash, Lakenheath 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**

### **Floodplain grazing marsh**

Flat land around sluggish rivers has historically been used for grazing and is referred to as grazing marsh. Although very wet in winter, these marshes are drier in the summer except for the water that remains in the network of ditches and low-lying areas that are a common feature of these marshes. Winter flooding can improve summer grass productivity. Traditional methods of management have produced a mixture of flower-rich meadows, ditches and scrub that support a rich variety of flowering plants, invertebrates, birds and amphibians.

Grazing marshes require active management if they are to retain their conservation interest. In order to maintain a species-rich sward, vegetation must be removed to prevent the sward from becoming progressively dominated by tussocky and vigorous grasses which, together with an associated build up of dead plant matter, suppress less vigorous species and reduce the botanical diversity of the site. However, vegetation removal must not be so great as to reduce the patches of dense vegetation used by rare and scarce invertebrates. Grazing is important for maintaining the vegetation, both through controlling competitive grasses and sedges and through hoof-prints providing

suitable sites for seedlings to establish. Heavy poaching must be avoided, however. Trees and scrub are of particular importance for invertebrates and birds but should be in small, scattered groups.

The application of pesticides including herbicides or fertilizers would be damaging but periodic dressings of well-rotted farmyard manure may be acceptable if the sward does not receive regular input of nutrients from flooding, but lime should be used with caution. The meadow should not be re-seeded.

Regular and careful maintenance of surface drainage including ditches and drains may be necessary. The cleaning out of ditches from time to time is also of benefit to the plant, invertebrate and amphibian species the ditches support and ideally, ditch management should be undertaken on a rotation to create a range of different management stages ranging from open water to denser vegetation growth. Management should allow winter flooding to occur. Deepening of surface drainage should be avoided.

The condition of the meadow is subject to the quality of the water it receives. Management should ensure the protection of appropriate water quality, which is important for maintaining the characteristic species composition and diversity associated with the grazing marsh. The maintenance of appropriate water quality is usually dependent on land-use in the wider catchment. Where water is excessively rich in fertilisers such as nitrogen and phosphorus, enrichment will alter the plants found in the meadow and the ditches, usually for the worse, by encouraging tall rank grasses and nettles. The presence of toxins such as weed killers, pesticides or oil will also be damaging to the sward.