

Views About Management

A statement of English Nature's views about the management of Ranmore Common 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

Broadleaved semi-natural woodland

There are many different ways in which broadleaved woodland can be managed to conserve its value for wildlife. The following gives broad views on a range of regimes that may be appropriate on your site.

A diverse woodland structure, with open space, a dense understorey, and a more mature overstorey is important. A range of ages and species within and between stands is desirable. The retention of some dead and decaying wood, such as standing dead trees and fallen logs, are necessary as they provide important habitats for fungi and invertebrates. However, work may be needed to make safe dangerous trees in areas of high public access. Both temporary and permanent open spaces benefit groups of invertebrates such as butterflies. They may require cutting to keep them open, and should be of sufficient size to ensure that sunny conditions prevail for most of the day.

Felling, thinning or coppicing may be used to create or maintain variations in the structure of the wood, and non-native trees and shrubs can be removed at this time. To avoid disturbance to breeding birds the work is normally best done between the beginning of August and the end of February. Work should be avoided when the

ground is soft, to prevent disturbing the soil and ground flora. Normally successive felling, thinning or coppicing operations should be spread through the wood to promote diversity, but where there is open space adjacent plots should be worked to encourage the spread of species that are only weakly mobile. Natural regeneration from seed or stump regrowth is preferred to planting because it helps maintain the local patterns of species and the inherent genetic character of the site.

Deer management and protection from rabbits or livestock are often necessary. Whilst light or intermittent grazing may increase woodland diversity, heavy browsing can damage the ground flora and prevent successful regeneration. Invasive species, such as *Rhododendron* or Himalayan balsam, should be controlled.

At least some parts of a wood should be left unmanaged to benefit species that do best under low disturbance or in response to natural processes. Within these areas some trees will eventually die naturally and dead wood accumulate.

Scrub

Scrub habitats are low-growing communities where the main woody components are bushes or small trees, such as hawthorn, rowan and gorse. Scrub supports a wide variety of species and ecological communities. In particular, the transitional zone between scrub and other habitats can be important for wildlife, especially invertebrates and breeding birds.

Often, scrub is a transitional stage that will develop into woodland if unmanaged. Maintaining structural diversity and a mosaic of age classes within areas of scrub is important for maintaining the diversity of species the scrub is able to support. For example, hawthorn scrub supports the greatest variety of bird and insect species in the early and middle stages of growth.

Scrub can be managed using rotational cutting, which should aim to maintain a mosaic of patches at different stages of growth. Scrub can also be cut in small patches to create an intimate mixture of scrub and grass.

Grazing is another option for managing scrub and on some sites may be a useful additional management tool. By its nature, grazing can help to create a patchy mosaic of scrub and grassland and also to maintain a range of age classes. However, stock levels do need to be carefully controlled. If grazing pressure is too high the structure of the scrub vegetation may become impoverished. Also, the scrub may not be able to regenerate naturally, leading to a loss of cover over time.

All habitats

The habitats within this site are highly sensitive to inorganic fertilisers and pesticides, applications of which should be avoided both within the site itself and in adjacent surrounding areas. Herbicides may be useful in targeting certain invasive species, but should be used with extreme care. Access to this site, and any recreational activities within, may also need to be controlled.