

Views About Management



A statement of English Nature's views about the management of Hunstanton Cliffs 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

Coastal Cliffs and Foreshore

Coastal geological sites form a very important part of England's geological resource for two reasons. Firstly, in many areas the only natural rock exposures are on the coast. Secondly, coastal cliffs often provide much better exposure of geological features than comparable inland sites.

The key management principle for coastal geological sites is to maintain exposure of the geological interest by allowing natural processes to proceed freely. Inappropriate construction of coastal defences can completely conceal rock exposures and result in the effective loss of the geological interest. In addition, any development which prevents or slows natural erosion can have a damaging effect. Erosion is necessary to maintain fresh geological outcrops. Reducing the rate of erosion usually results in rock exposures becoming obscured by vegetation and rock debris.

Coastal processes are complex and no section of coastline exists in isolation. This means that coastal protection has indirect effects on other parts of the coast. Developments do not necessarily have to take place within the boundary of a site to cause damage. For example, cliff protection in one area may starve other beaches of

sediment, accelerating cliff retreat elsewhere. As processes within a site can be affected by developments beyond the site boundary, it is important to take a broad and integrated approach to coastal management. This can provide significant benefits to the conservation of coastal geological sites.

Active management of coastal geological sites is often only necessary when human activity has interfered with natural rates of erosion. Clearance of vegetation or rock debris may be necessary to re-expose geological features where they have become obscured.

Certain activities can cause direct damage to geological sites located on the foreshore and management should aim to avoid or, if necessary, minimise any harmful effects. Such activities include dredging, construction of pipes, heavy machinery crossing the geological features and, in some instances, the introduction of large quantities of beach feed material.

Active Process Sites

Geological sites where the natural processes that produced the important scientific features are still occurring are referred to as 'active process sites'. The primary management principle is to avoid interfering with these natural processes and the features they produce.

Any development or activity that restricts natural processes is likely to damage the interest features of the site. Direct damage can be caused by activities such as the construction of structures and defences, or the removal of material such as sand and gravel. In some instances, sites are likely to be damaged by tree planting which can restrict natural processes by stabilising the soil. Changes in drainage patterns can also damage active process sites.

In general, active management of these sites is often only necessary if human activities have affected the natural processes. For example, management may involve removal of man-made barriers which restrict the natural movement of geological features, clearance of rubbish or planted trees.

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. Where there is any doubt, a precautionary approach should be adopted before removing or allowing any material to be removed.