

Views About Management



A statement of English Nature's views about the management of Wye and Crundale Downs 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 and yew woodland

There are many different ways in which broadleaved and yew 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 understory, and a more mature overstory is important. A range of ages and species within and between stands is desirable. Some dead and decaying wood, such as fallen logs, can provide 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.

In broadleaved woodland, 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.

For the most part, yew woodland can 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. However, felling or thinning may sometimes be carried out, for example to create or maintain variations in the structure of the wood, or to remove non-native trees and shrubs.

Deer management and protection from rabbits or livestock are often necessary, even though Yew is poisonous to some large herbivores, particularly cattle and horses. Whilst light or intermittent grazing may increase woodland diversity, heavy browsing can damage the ground flora and prevent successful regeneration. Species, such as sycamore, should be controlled.

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.

Lowland wet woodland

Wet woodland includes a range of different woodland types but usually is dominated by ash, alder and willow species. It often supports important invertebrate species and assemblages.

Areas usually benefit from minimum intervention and are often best left undisturbed to limit damage to their fragile soils. This allows the development of old stands where individual trees reach maturity and die naturally to create gaps in the canopy, leading to a diverse woodland structure. However, works to remove dangerous trees in areas of public access may be necessary.

Flush and spring fen

Groundwater sometimes breaks out on the surface, either as gentle seepages, which give rise to flushes, or through greater flows that are evident as springs. The plants and animals that occur in and around these habitats are dependent on the water chemistry and flow rate. Mosses, liverworts, sedges and rushes are common and often predominate, whilst several species of orchid are also associated with these communities.

The quantity and quality of the groundwater must be maintained, though the quantity is not likely to be naturally constant throughout the seasons or between wet and dry years. Groundwater is often susceptible to contamination by agricultural fertilisers, or by pollution leaking from landfill sites

Grazing is often required to keep the vegetation short and open around springs and flushes. The precise timing and intensity of grazing will vary according to local

conditions and requirements but should aim to keep a relatively open sward without causing excessive poaching. Feeding of stock should take place well away from the springs (and any other sensitive habitat), and the location of structures such as animal shelters should not encourage the animals to gather in the area. This is to ensure the springs and flushes do not become enriched by nutrients from animal food or dung, or even from carcasses. Light trampling by grazing animals can be of benefit in moderation by breaking down leaf litter and by creating areas of bare soil, needed by some invertebrates and mosses and for seedling establishment.

Drainage schemes should not intercept the source of groundwater to springs or flushes, or reduce the area of surface they irrigate.

Calcareous grassland

In order to maintain a species-rich sward and its associated insects and other invertebrates, calcareous grassland requires active management. Without management it rapidly becomes dominated by stands of rank grasses, such as Tor-grass. These grasses, together with the build up of dead plant matter, suppress less vigorous species and lower the diversity of the site. Eventually, the site will scrub over. Traditionally, management is achieved by grazing. The precise timing will vary both between and within sites, according to local conditions and requirements. These may include stock type or the needs of particular plants or animals; certain invertebrates, the black veined moth for example, require the presence of taller vegetation, whilst others such as the adonis blue need shorter swards. Many insects require flowers, as a source of nectar and pollen through out the spring and summer, achieved by rotating the grazing animals around different pastures throughout the summer months. However, for areas that are not important for the rare black veined moth grazing should generally aim to keep a relatively open sward without causing excessive poaching. Light trampling can be beneficial by breaking down leaf litter and providing bare patches for seed germination and some invertebrates. An element of managed scrub, both within and fringing calcareous grassland can be of great importance to certain birds and invertebrates, but excessive scrub should be controlled.

Unique or Finite Mineral, Fossil and Other Geological Interests (IM sites)

The geological interests at this site are finite and irreplaceable. The main management principles are to conserve the resource in the long-term, while permitting scientific usage, which often involves collecting specimens. Balancing these two opposing principles is the key to long-term positive management.

Judgment of how much collecting can be permitted, while sustaining the resource, must be made on a site-by-site basis. Collecting of specimens requires very careful management to ensure that the geological resource is conserved. Where there is any doubt, caution should be applied before removing or allowing any material to be removed.

Sites with a unique or finite geological resource are particularly sensitive because they are often small and the important interest features are typically restricted in volume. In addition to specimen collecting, any activity which conceals or requires removal of part or all of the geological interest features can cause irreparable damage or destruction.

Vegetation management, involving removal of large trees and scrub, may be required to recreate or maintain exposure of the geological features. In some cases, removal of rock debris and loose material from faces may be required.

Static Geomorphological Sites (IS)

A wide range of features are included in the category of static geomorphological sites. These include eskers, dry valleys, raised beaches, static beach and dune systems, ground depressions and patterned ground. All of these sites share the same primary management principle of minimal interference with the features of interest. This is partly because the features generally need to be considered as a whole in order to understand how they have formed and also because some of these sites are easily damaged. However, some positive management may be necessary on some sites to maintain the features that make the site special. This may, for example, involve clearance of vegetation, removal of debris or rubbish and fencing to protect sensitive interest features.

Activities which can cause damage to static geomorphological interest features include developments, coastal protection schemes, removal of material and tree planting. Collecting of geological specimens may also be damaging on some of these sites. A precautionary approach should be adopted before removing or allowing any material to be removed or undertaking any other activity which may cause damage.

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 managed.