

Views About Management



A statement of English Nature's views about the management of Croxton Park 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

Wood pasture

Wood pastures are typically mosaics of scattered old trees (often pollards), and relatively extensive open areas (often acid grassland or heath), with patches of scrub and young growth. They are maintained in this mixed state by higher levels of grazing than are common in woods with a coppice or high forest history. Many wood pastures now lack one or other of the components of the mosaic or are no longer grazed. The preferred management is usually aimed at restoring the missing elements.

Old pollards may need attention in terms of reducing competition from younger growth or lightening the crown, for example, by repollarding. Dealing with old pollards is a specialist job as each has a unique structure and context. Dead wood is also a valuable resource in the context of wood pasture as it supports various parts of the life cycle of many dead wood invertebrates associated with long continuity of old trees. Large cut branches, fallen dead wood or the remains of old trees should be retained where it is safe to do so, as they may contain populations of important fungi or invertebrates. Grazing or cutting helps to maintain old trees in relatively open conditions, which is desirable where these are important for lichens on the lower trunks.

The pasture may be of conservation interest in its own right and grazing or cutting also promotes open semi-natural vegetation with some scrub and young trees in between the main woodland trees. Care needs to be taken to establish the most appropriate stocking density or cutting regime.

Lichens on trees

The key management principal for the management of lichens on trees in parkland and woodland is to ensure that there is continuity of substrate i.e. there is an age range of trees to ensure opportunities of succession as the trees age. Veteran trees may require pollarding at intervals to extend their life span. Optimal light levels will depend on the lichen communities concerned, with those on parkland and wayside trees generally requiring higher light levels than those in woodland. There may be a need for scrub control, particularly where holly and rhododendron are present, and this can be achieved either by grazing/browsing or manual cutting. Climbing plants, particularly ivy, are a strong direct threat and should be removed. There should be no application of slurry or fertilisers in the vicinity of the trees because lichens are very sensitive to nutrient enrichment.

Lowland acid grassland

Free-draining, acidic soil is the key requirement of the grassland communities at this site, but their maintenance also depends on active management. If neglected, the sward becomes dominated by tall, vigorous grasses or bracken which, together with an associated build up of dead plant matter, suppress less vigorous species and reduce the botanical richness of the site. Eventually the sward reverts to scrub and even woodland. Traditionally, management has consisted of stock grazing and this remains the most appropriate management tool. Grazing, through the removal of plant matter and nutrients, helps to maintain an open sward of small tussocky grasses. It also, through disturbance and trampling, creates areas of open ground suitable for colonization by the lichens, ephemeral plants and invertebrates that are often characteristic of this type of grassland. However, rabbit grazing, though difficult to control, can also be a useful management tool in some situations. Occasional management of invasive scrub and bracken may be necessary.

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.