ENGLISH NATURE

Views About Management

Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 Section 28(4) as inserted by Schedule 9 to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

A statement of English Nature's views about the management of Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay 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.

This statement does not constitute consent for any of the list of operations requiring English Nature's consent. The written consent of English Nature is required before carrying out any of those 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

Geomorphological interests

From a management perspective the geomorphological interest of the SSSI falls into three categories: buried deposits, surface features and the actively evolving coastal landforms. In areas with buried geomorphological interest, management should aim to limit disturbance or removal of material of interest, or drying out of peat deposits and to maintain opportunities for accessing the interest features by boreholes, remote sensing techniques and temporary trenches. Development adjacent to these areas may also impact upon the subsurface features, for instance through drainage.

The static geomorphological features, most significantly the ridge features away from the active coastal front, are important as a long-term record of coastal change. They are irreplaceable if destroyed and management should aim to protect these areas from activities that may damage or obscure them. Such activities range from development and coastal defence schemes to recreational pressures, such as off-road driving.

Conservation of the active shoreline is focussed on minimising disruption to coastal processes and allowing the shoreline to function as naturally as possible in the face of a range of pressures, including climate change. It is acknowledged that both the Dungeness and Rye Harbour elements of the site have been strongly influenced by human activities; however the site remains of classic importance. Indeed part of the interest is in understanding how human activity influences its long-term evolution. However, coastal management measures should work with and not against coastal processes, and operate in synergy with the evolutionary trends of the shingle foreland.

Biological interests

Many of the areas that support important habitats or species may require little or no management intervention as they are maintained naturally by active coastal processes, such as the evolution of the cuspate foreland, sand dune formation and estuary dynamics. However, there are situations where active management may be required, including those cases where natural processes have been interrupted or modified by human activities.

As is the case with many of the static geomorphological features with which they chiefly associated, the key requirement in areas of vegetated shingle is to avoid disturbance, especially in more open communities. Where there are significant recreational pressures, access may need to be managed, and light grazing may be required in more closed vegetation communities.

Not all saltmarsh habitats need active management but where this is required, grazing has traditionally been used. Timing and intensity of grazing will vary according to local conditions and requirements and care should be taken not to overgraze the site. Good water and sediment quality should be maintained.

Management of dune systems should take into account the need to maintain a range of habitats and associated species reflecting different stages of succession, by maintaining or restoring the natural processes and dynamics of dune development and succession. Selective scrub management and grazing or mowing may be necessary, especially where dunes have become over stabilised.

Any management of saline lagoons needs to be tailored to the needs of each individual lagoon, and should be based on an understanding of the natural features of importance and the external factors affecting the lagoon. Maintaining salinity and water depth can be particularly important.

Grazing marshes are primarily managed by grazing. Agricultural operations should take into account the needs of breeding, wintering and migrating wetland birds (careful timing of operations is important), invertebrates (which may require the protection of their food plants from grazing) and water voles (which require the maintenance of sufficient vegetation cover on ditch banks). Regular and careful management or restoration of ditches, drains and other wetland features may be necessary, such as periodic removal of sediment and vegetation to return ditches to an early stage of the management cycle. Ideally, ditch management should be undertaken on a rotation, creating a series of different management stages across a site at any one time. Ditches should be managed to ensure that there is a sufficient depth of water (0.3-0.5m) throughout much of the ditch network for most of the year, although some species favour desiccated ditches. Good water quality is essential in maintaining a healthy wetland system.

Management should seek to retain swamp communities in the same place or should acknowledge the dynamics of succession by ensuring there is always a new niche for swamp communities to develop in. A programme of rotational cutting to maintain reedbeds may be necessary to encourage growth whilst preventing excessive build up of litter. Management should ensure water quality is maintained according to the requirements of the wetland communities present.

In artificial standing water bodies, such as gravel pits, management should aim to maintain the habitats associated with shallowly sloping margins and to ensure that a

range of vegetated and bare margins and islands are present for wetland plants and invertebrates, and for feeding, roosting and nesting by wetland birds.

Management must ensure that the local surface water that drains into basin fens and other natural shingle wetlands is of appropriate quality. Management may be necessary to prevent the encroachment of trees and scrub and in most cases these should be restricted to a few small scattered stands for the benefit of lichens, birds and invertebrates.

Great crested newts preferentially breed in unshaded, medium-sized water bodies up to 2 m deep, in the vicinity of suitable terrestrial habitat. Any pond management work is best carried out in late autumn or early winter, after adult newts have left the pond and before ground conditions become too wet. A variety of ponds differing in depth and permanence, offer a safeguard against the effects of drought and fish. Barriers to newt movement should be avoided.

Date notified: 16 August 2006