

Views About Management



A statement of English Nature's views about the management of Folkestone Warren 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 (EC and EF sites)

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.

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.

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 (IA)

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.

Developments do not necessarily have to take place within the boundary of a site to cause damage. Natural systems can be complex. For example, development in one area can disrupt active processes in a site many miles away by altering rates of erosion. 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 the management of 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.

Breeding birds on sea cliffs

England's sea cliffs provide breeding grounds for internationally important populations of birds. The steep cliff faces and the summits of stacks and pinnacles are used by fulmar, kittiwake and Peregrine falcon.

It is important to retain the current extent and condition of the habitat whilst allowing natural coastal processes to operate along the length of the rocky coast. The cliffs should remain as steep slopes with many patches of bare rock. Natural erosion is vital to maintain this, and as such, cliffs should not be deliberately stabilised. If this occurs it will result in the bare ground and pioneer vegetation becoming progressively overgrown, creating a much less suitable nesting habitat. Similarly, other developments which may indirectly increase erosion rates and cause habitat loss, including building at the cliff top, should be prevented. The importance of grasslands at the cliff top should not be overlooked, as these provide the starting point for the cliff plant communities. They should certainly not be converted to other habitat types, and should remain grazed to prevent scrub encroachment of the cliffs below.

Seabird colonies attract large numbers of visitors during the breeding season, and whilst this should not be discouraged, it is important that access is managed appropriately so that the birds, and indeed the cliffs themselves, are not unduly disturbed.

Maritime cliff grassland

Maritime cliff grasslands on slopes or cliff tops are maintained by a combination of grazing and natural factors, such as erosion and exposure to salt-spray and wind. Together these maintain an open sward characteristic of maritime grassland vegetation. Recently, changes in agricultural practices have led to the abandonment of grazing and subsequently scrub encroachment can occur.

Where grazing is still practised, it should continue. The precise timing and intensity will vary between sites according to local conditions and requirements, such as the type or availability of stock, and the practicalities of grazing in often inaccessible areas of cliffs. Where grazing has lapsed, reintroduction should be given careful consideration. However, where there has not been a history of grazing, on exposed sites the maritime grassland can be sustained as part of a successional cycle. Where grazing-sensitive species are present, grazing should not be introduced.

The cliff top communities of vegetated maritime cliffs and slopes often form part of (or are adjacent to) land managed for agricultural purposes, which may be outside the SSSI boundary. Management of this land should take into account the indirect impact arising from the application of herbicides, pesticides and artificial fertilisers. Cliff-top vegetation can also be destroyed where it is squeezed between a receding cliff face and cultivated land, therefore the management of adjacent land should seek to limit this where possible.

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, for example, can benefit from the presence of taller vegetation, others from 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, 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.

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.