

Views About Management

A statement of English Nature's views about the management of Parkhurst Forest 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 semi-natural woodland

There are many different ways in which broadleaved 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.

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.

Deer management and protection from rabbits or livestock are often necessary. Whilst light or intermittent grazing may increase woodland diversity, heavy browsing can damage the ground flora and prevent successful regeneration. Invasive species, such as Sycamore, *Rhododendron* or Himalayan balsam, 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.

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. Large cut branches, fallen dead wood or the remains of old trees should be left on site 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.

Neutral pasture

Neutral pasture requires active management if it is to retain its conservation interest. In order to maintain a species-rich sward, each year's growth of vegetation must be removed. Otherwise the sward becomes progressively dominated by tall and vigorous grasses which, together with an associated build up of dead plant matter, suppress less vigorous species and reduce the botanical diversity of the site. On pasture land this management is achieved by grazing. The precise timing and intensity of grazing will vary both between and within sites, according to local conditions and requirements (such as, for example, type or availability of stock or the needs of individual plants or animals of conservation concern) but should aim to keep a relatively open sward without causing excessive poaching. Light trampling can be of benefit by breaking down leaf litter and providing areas for seed germination. Any surrounding, well-managed hedgerows may considerably add to the habitat in providing shelter for invertebrates. Occasional dressings of lime may be acceptable.

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.