

County Wildlife Sites in Norfolk

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What are County Wildlife Sites?

County Wildlife Sites (CWS) are areas of land rich in wildlife: a tract of heath, a meadow, a copse or a village pond. CWS can be found throughout Norfolk and outside of the nationally protected areas (such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest and National Nature Reserves) they are the best areas for wildlife in the County.

Threats to CWS can include:

- Neglect
- Over abstraction of water
- Inappropriate management, such as over- or under-grazing and spraying
- Fertiliser or pollution run-off from neighbouring land
- Fly tipping and vandalism
- Changes in land use, such as forestry and building
- Inappropriate planting of trees
- Excavation of permanent waterbodies and/or development of stillwater coarse fisheries

Why are County Wildlife Sites important?

- CWS can support both locally and nationally threatened wildlife species and habitats
- Many sites will contain habitats and species that are priorities for the UK
- Together with the statutory protected areas (see above), CWS represent the minimum habitat we need to protect in order to maintain the current levels of wildlife in Norfolk
- CWS complement SSSIs and other protected areas by helping to maintain links between these sites. In recent years there has been a growing recognition of the importance of conserving such places, so that wildlife can survive in the wider countryside and move through the landscape.

County Wildlife Sites in Norfolk – how the system operates

The CWS system in Norfolk is managed by Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT), in partnership with Norfolk County Council (NCC), Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS), Natural England (NE), Environment Agency (EA) Broads Authority (BA), Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) and other Local authorities. Managing the system involves:

- Maintaining an up to date directory of all CWS in Norfolk.
- Notifying new CWS in accordance with strict criteria and updating data on existing sites
- Supplying information on the location and wildlife interest of CWS to landowners, local authorities and utilities. NBIS provide information to consultants for a fee.

It should be stressed that notification does not confer any rights of access either for the general public or nature conservation organisations; it is simply recognition of a site's nature conservation value.

Advice to owners and managers

The majority of County Wildlife Sites are privately owned and their survival depends on owners and managers who are sympathetic to the needs of wildlife.

The high wildlife value of a CWS is often a direct result of land management practices that have allowed wildlife to flourish. This is often management of a traditional nature, such as coppicing of woodlands, and grazing or cutting of grasslands. The continuation of such management is usually essential to prevent a decline in the wildlife value of the site.

The CWS partnership recognises the difficulties that site owners and managers often face when looking after a CWS and are keen to provide advice on maintaining and enhancing the special value of these sites, as well as providing information on grants available to help.

Other advisory bodies, such as the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), Norfolk County Council, Natural England and the Department of Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), can also provide assistance.

Advice available to CWS owners can cover:

Why the site is valuable:

Information can be provided about the wildlife and nature conservation interest of the site.

What needs to be done:

A plan can be produced identifying objectives for management and priorities for action to maintain or improve the site's value to wildlife.

How it can be achieved:

Names of contractors and volunteers able to carry out conservation work can be provided. Machinery and tools appropriate for conservation management can be identified. Advice can be given on the increasingly valuable and diverse grants available for conservation in the Norfolk countryside.



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County Wildlife Sites in Norfolk – planning and development

County Wildlife Sites are recognised and valued by local councils in Norfolk and the sites are listed in their local plans, which set out guidance on the location and scope of future developments in each district. All local councils in Norfolk have developed policies that give County Wildlife Sites some protection. If a CWS is, or appears to be, likely to be affected by a development, the views of NWT will normally be sought as part of the consultation process.

Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) are required by DEFRA when areas of uncultivated land (including CWS) are to undergo agricultural change. Changes requiring an EIA include increases in stock density, cultivation, soil spreading and new drainage work. Further information is available from Norfolk Wildlife Trust.

For more information

The team

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