

Suffolk County Wildlife Sites

What are County Wildlife Sites?

County Wildlife Sites (CWSs) are areas known to be of county or regional importance for wildlife.

CWS designation is non - statutory, but is recognition of a site's high value for biodiversity.

CWSs have been identified throughout Suffolk and range from small meadows, green lanes, dykes and hedges through to much larger areas of ancient woodlands, heathland, greens, commons and marsh.



Why are County Wildlife Sites Important?

- Outside of statutorily protected areas (such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local and National Nature Reserves), CWSs are the most important areas for wildlife in Suffolk
- CWSs can support both locally and nationally threatened wildlife species and habitats
- Many sites support habitats and species that are priorities for conservation under the UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plans

CWSs complement statutorily protected areas and nature reserves by helping to maintain habitat links between these sites. The importance of ecological networks for conservation is now widely recognised, better enabling wildlife to survive on reserves and in the wider countryside. Linked habitats are also likely to be important in allowing wildlife to adapt to the effects of climate change.

Suffolk County Wildlife Site System – how does it work?

Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Biological Records Centre and Natural England manage the Suffolk County Wildlife Site system in partnership. This CWS system involves:

- Maintaining an up to date database of CWSs in Suffolk. Partners, local authorities and other conservation organisations have copies of the database
- Designating new CWSs and modifying information held on existing sites when changes occur. At the annual CWS panel meeting, new sites are notified in accordance with selection criteria.
- Supplying information on wildlife interest of CWSs to landowners and other organisations whose work may affect CWSs.

The importance of CWSs is recognised by local authorities in Suffolk and they have all developed policies that give CWSs some protection in line with national planning policy. If a CWS is likely to be affected by development the views of the CWS partners is normally sought as part of the consultation process.



Environmental Impact Assessments are required by Natural England when areas of uncultivated land are to undergo agricultural change including operations such as increases in stock density, cultivation, soil spreading and new drainage work.

It is important to be aware that the designation of a site as a CWS does not confer any new rights of access either to the general public or conservation organisations.



Working with Landowners and Managers of CWS

The high wildlife value of many CWSs has developed through land management practices that have allowed wildlife to thrive e.g. traditional and historical management such as rotational coppicing of woodland, hay cutting or grazing of grasslands. Ensuring the continuation of such appropriate management is vital to maintain the wildlife value of a site. Establishing and maintaining good working relationships with landowners and managers is therefore essential

The CWS partnership appreciates the difficulties that achieving the conservation management of CWSs can present and is therefore happy to offer advice on management and on potential sources of funding.

Free Advice to CWS owners and managers includes

- Information on the wildlife and nature conservation interest of the site
- Advice and site visits can be made to establish the best management to maintain and enhance wildlife value. Suffolk Wildlife Trust is always happy to offer site visits.
- Advice on suitable contractors, contacts for possible graziers and help and advice on applying for sources of grant funding for management.

For further information on Suffolk County Wildlife Sites

Suffolk Wildlife Trust

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