

Suffolk County Wildlife Sites

What are County Wildlife Sites?

County Wildlife Sites (CWS) are areas of county or regional importance for wildlife. The designation is non-statutory, but is a recognition of a site's high value for biodiversity.

CWS 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), CWS are the most important areas for wildlife in Suffolk
- CWS support 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

CWS 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 Biodiversity Information Service and Natural England manage the Suffolk County Wildlife Site system in partnership. This involves:

- Maintaining an up to date database of CWS in Suffolk and sharing it with partners, local authorities and other conservation organisations.
- Designating new CWS and modifying information held on existing sites when changes occur. The CWS panel meets to review sites which are notified in accordance with selection criteria.
- Supplying information on the wildlife of CWS to landowners and others whose work may affect CWS.

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, such as increases in stock density, cultivation, soil spreading and new drainage work.

CWS designation does not confer any new rights of access to the general public or conservation organisations.

Working with Landowners and Managers of CWS

The high wildlife value of CWS is due to land management practices that allowed wildlife to thrive, such as rotational coppicing of woodland, hay cutting or grazing of grasslands. Ensuring appropriate management continues is vital to maintain the wildlife value of a site. Therefore good working relationships with landowners and managers is essential.

We appreciate the difficulties that conservation management of CWS can

present and are therefore happy to offer advice on management and 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 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 graziers and help and advice on applying for grant funding.



For further information on Suffolk County Wildlife Sites

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