

# Target 2010

The condition of England's SSSIs in 2005 owned and managed by business



working towards *Natural England*  
for people, places and nature

# Target 2010

The condition of England's SSSIs in 2005 owned and managed by business



Boom crop spraying. Peter Wakely/English Nature 18,983

English Nature is the statutory body responsible for protecting and managing the 4,118 Sites of Special Scientific Interest<sup>1</sup> (SSSIs) in England. They are owned and managed by individuals and organisations in the public and private sector. English Nature maintains data on the condition of all SSSIs, as part of the UK's commitment to biodiversity reporting. This business supplement (based on data for December 2005) shows how businesses (81 companies in the FTSE 350 and public bodies with statutory responsibilities for SSSIs) are managing their sites to meet the Government's Public Service Agreement Target (PSA) for SSSIs<sup>2</sup>. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs uses the data to monitor the contribution that businesses make to the implementation of the England Biodiversity Strategy.

English Nature works with companies to meet the PSA target and help them to minimise the business risks associated with implementing nature conservation legislation. Setting meaningful targets with measurable outcomes for biodiversity is difficult because of a lack of reliable, regularly updated spatial data. English Nature's data on SSSIs is one of the few sources of reliable biodiversity data, and we would encourage all companies with SSSIs to use it as the basis for an indicator or performance measure in their corporate social responsibility or environmental reports.

We hope that when a company or English Nature publishes data, it will be used by:

- the company to benchmark its performance within its sector;
- industry associations in measuring the biodiversity performance of their members;
- investors and financial institutions with an interest in socially responsible investment; and by
- business and environment programmes.



View across Millom Marsh from the hill, Duddon Estuary SSSI, Cumbria. Peter Wakely/English Nature 13,555



## How are companies doing?

- 81 companies own or manage 84,500 hectares of SSSI land (8% of the total SSSI land in England).
- The water sector has the biggest direct influence, with 16 companies owning or managing 40,000 hectares (4% of the total SSSI land in England). 55% of this land is meeting the PSA target.
- Other FTSE sectors with an impact on SSSIs include transport, construction and building materials, electricity, steel and other metals and leisure, entertainment and hotels.
- 71% of SSSI land owned by companies is meeting the Government's PSA target (special habitats and species are in a healthy state and are being conserved for the future). This is a 14% improvement in the last two years.
- Agriculture is the land use with by far the greatest impact on SSSIs. Inappropriate agricultural management accounts for 72% of all sites not in target condition (sites are not being conserved and species and habitats are in poor condition). Food producers, processors and retailers, who source their products in England, play a vital role in influencing the actions of many farmers and landowners through their supply chain and purchasing decisions.
- English Nature's full report *Target 2010 - The condition of England's SSSIs in 2005 owned and managed by business* gives a breakdown of the data for 10 of the 16 water companies to show the area of SSSI land for which they are responsible, the condition of that land, whether it is meeting the PSA target, and the issues they face in managing sites.

The full report is available on our website: [www.english-nature.org.uk](http://www.english-nature.org.uk)

The report is a supplement to *Target 2010 - The condition of England's SSSIs in 2005*, which is a national report, with regional supplements, summarising the major factors affecting SSSI condition and the key actions that need to be carried out over the next five years if the target is to be achieved.

The next business supplement will be published on *Natural England's* website in January 2008.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are selected by English Nature and protected under the Government's wildlife legislation, strengthened by the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000. They form a nationally important series of the best and rarest examples of our wildlife and geological features.

<sup>2</sup> The Government has a Public Service Agreement Target for 95% of all SSSIs to be in favourable or recovering condition by 2010. This means the special habitats and species are in a healthy state and are being conserved for the future by appropriate management.

<sup>3</sup> In October 2006 English Nature is merging with Defra's Rural Development Service and the Landscape, Access and Recreation function of the Countryside Agency to form a new government agency called *Natural England*. Although this new organisation will have a broader countryside remit, the 2010 PSA target will remain a core focus of our work.

## Network Rail

Network Rail owns and maintains 21,000 miles of track across Britain and is one of the UK's largest landowners, with an estate of 57,000 hectares. As part of this landholding, Network Rail owns all, or part, of more than 317 SSSIs in England. Railway land is often relatively undisturbed and acts as a wildlife corridor through areas where habitats may have been lost to intensive agriculture or urban development.

Network Rail has been working closely with English Nature, using the Remedies database<sup>4</sup>, to obtain an accurate assessment of the condition of its SSSIs.

The majority of Network Rail's SSSIs are in target condition, and the company is working with English Nature to prioritise and specify what action is necessary on other sites. In addition, Network Rail is working to ensure that these improvements and actions for SSSIs will be integrated into the guidelines for the day-to-day maintenance of the railway.

Another challenge for Network Rail is ensuring that maintenance teams and contractors fully understand conservation obligations, and that sites are properly considered during maintenance and renewal works.

They have made a Biodiversity Action Plan that provides guidance on site and species protection available to all staff and contractors. In addition, they have a biodiversity toolkit, guidance notes, an environment handbook and several training videos. To ensure that protected sites are considered during work planning, the precise locations of all these sites are referenced through both the company intranet, on a GIS mapping system, and in the Network Rail Hazard Directory that is available to all contractors. Finally, all Network Rail SSSI boundaries are marked with clearly visible warning signs for track workers.

Roade Cutting SSSI, Northamptonshire. Network Rail



<sup>4</sup> For each unit in adverse condition English Nature has identified the 'remedy' to the problem i.e. the management action which needs to take place to bring the unit into favourable condition and who is responsible for its delivery. A land owner can access the remedies for any unfavourable units through a secure intranet site.

## United Utilities Sustainable Catchment Management Programme (SCaMP)

United Utilities is the water supply company for the north west of England. It is a major landowner in the uplands of Bowland and the Peak District. It has obtained approval from the water regulator, OFWAT, to invest in a programme of land management designed to improve the quality of drinking water supplies. These are currently affected by intensive farming and moorland drainage, causing peat staining and other problems. A subsidiary objective of the Sustainable Catchment Management Programme (SCaMP) project is to improve the quality of SSSI land, in order to achieve target condition by 2010 in line with the Government's PSA for SSSIs. The work is being carried out in partnership with English Nature, Defra, the Environment Agency, RSPB and others.

The programme entails working with United Utilities's tenant farmers in the two upland areas to develop and implement Whole



River Eden and Tributaries SSSI, Cumbria. Peter Wakely/English Nature 21,796

Farm Plans. These will include improvements in farm infrastructure to facilitate sustainable land management practices and a low-impact farming regime; the restoration of catchment hydrology; and the

re-creation of damaged wildlife habitats. This is the biggest land management project carried out by a water company, and should serve as a precedent for future investment in water-quality improvements.

## Chew Valley Lake

Chew is one of the best places in the country for water birds and for those specialising in lake edge living, such as reed warblers.

Bristol Water has managed wildlife habitats under a plan agreed with English Nature for many years, resulting in a lake that makes a significant contribution to wildlife conservation.

The lake is an excellent place for thousands of visitors to see the regular birds and to spot the occasional rarity.

Many of the water birds nest on the ground, which makes their eggs and young very vulnerable to predation. Predators don't usually swim across deep water, so providing nesting islands gives protection to the ducks, grebes, geese and swans which nest at Chew. The islands that Bristol Water provided 20 years ago have gradually been worn away, so they are currently working to recreate and improve the islands. This will benefit many bird species, including tufted duck, pochard, mallard, swans and, when the rushes and reeds grow up, great crested and little grebes.



Chew Valley Lake SSSI. Bristol Water



ENGLISH  
NATURE

English Nature, the Rural Development Service and the Countryside Agency. Working in partnership to conserve and enhance our landscapes and natural environment, to promote countryside access and recreation as well as public well-being, now and for future generations.

This is one of a range of publications published by:  
External Relations Team  
English Nature  
Northminster House  
Peterborough PE1 1UA

[www.english-nature.org.uk](http://www.english-nature.org.uk)

© English Nature 2006

Printed on Evolution Satin,  
75% recycled post-consumer waste  
paper, elemental chlorine free.

ISBN 1 85716 918 2

Catalogue code ST13.0

Designed and printed by  
[statusdesign.co.uk](http://statusdesign.co.uk), 0.5M.

Front cover photographs:  
Top left: Goss and Tregoss Moors SSSI, Cornwall.  
Paul Glendell/English Nature 25,769  
Middle left: Port of Felixstowe – Orwell Estuary SSSI, Suffolk.  
Peter Wakely/English Nature 9,451  
Bottom left: Huntsman's Quarry SSSI, Gloucestershire.  
Peter Wakely/English Nature 19,320  
Main: Cowgreen Reservoir, Upper Teesdale SSSI, Durham.  
Peter Wakely/English Nature 8,226



awarded by excellence