



Planning: Non-Statutory Designations

There are numerous areas of high biodiversity value that receive no legal (statutory) protection.

Some of these have been designated as Local Wildlife Sites (also known as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation [SINCs], Sites of Nature Conservation Interest [SNCIs], county wildlife sites, nature areas or wildlife areas depending on the local council) through surveys which have established that they meet certain ecological criteria. These partnership projects generally involve the Local Authorities, Natural England, the Local Record Centres, Local Nature Groups and YWT.

Non-statutory designations include:

Heritage Coasts – managed so that their natural beauty is conserved and, where appropriate, accessibility for visitors improved

European Geoparks – contain areas of geological importance and are used to promote the wider understanding of geology to the public

World Heritage Sites – places of international importance for the conservation of our cultural and national heritage

Biosphere Reserves – contribute to the conservation of landscapes, ecosystems and species; foster economic and human development; and provide support for research, monitoring, education and information exchange

Local Sites – important for their scientific, educational, and historical value, as well as their visual qualities

Most Wildlife Sites are in private ownership and do not have public access. Some habitats they support include:

Acid grassland and heath, Ancient semi-natural woodland, Scrub communities, Chalk grassland and

limestone grassland, Species rich meadows and pasture; Wetlands (fens, reedbed, marsh, carr, open water), and Watercourses (rivers, streams and canals).

Protection

Although not protected by law, local authorities have policies to protect Local Wildlife Sites in development plans. Commitments should include:

- Maintaining adequate and up-to-date information about habitats and species. Data for Local Wildlife Sites should demonstrate that sites are of substantive nature conservation value, and data should ideally be as up to date as possible
- Supporting Wildlife Site Projects, which provide information and management advice to owners of Wildlife Sites.

What you can do if concerned about potential threats to these areas

- If a perceived threat is as a result of a proposed development, contact the planning officer dealing with the application at your local authority to ensure adequate procedures have been followed
- You should also contact the relevant Conservation Officer at YWT
- If an area is identified for development in a local plan which you believe is important for wildlife, you should contact your local authority to discuss your concerns
- If you own an area of land that you think is of substantive conservation value and would like further advice contact your local Wildlife Sites coordinator at the council, or the relevant Conservation Officer at YWT
- Guidance on how Wildlife Sites are selected and managed is available from DEFRA