

Implications for landowners

County Wildlife Sites are recognised by local authorities in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and are acknowledged within their local planning policies. All local authorities in the county have established policies that give County Wildlife Sites some protection from development. If a County Wildlife Site is affected by development, planning conditions and agreements will be used to protect and enhance the wildlife value of the site. The views of the Wildlife Trust will normally be sought as part of the consultation process.

County Wildlife Site recognition does not impose any legal duties on landowners. However, for those owners in the Single Farm Payment Scheme, cross compliance and the codes relating to maintaining the land in "Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition" require that semi-natural habitats such as County Wildlife Sites must be protected.

If intensification of land use is being considered, it may be necessary to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment under the 2006 Regulations. For more information on the Regulations, call the Natural England freephone EIA helpline on 0800 028 2140.



What can landowners do?

Get a survey/management plan. The Wildlife Trust aims to survey each County Wildlife Site every 5 to 10 years. This allows us to find out what wildlife is using the site, and to provide help or advice where it is needed. If you own a County Wildlife Site, or a site that you think might qualify, please contact the Wildlife Trust for a free survey and management advice.

Continue traditional management. Where sites have high wildlife value, this is often a direct result of long-term, regular management. For example, traditionally grazed or hay-cut meadows provide the ideal conditions for many of our native wildflowers, birds and insects.

Apply for funding. We recognise the difficulties in managing County Wildlife Sites for their wildlife interest, and can provide assistance in applying for funding to help manage your site.

Join Cut&Chew. The Wildlife Trust maintains a livestock grazing network called Cut&Chew. This puts landowners in touch with local graziers, as well as local contractors who can help with fencing or hay cutting. It's free to use, and can be found at www.cutandchew.org.uk

Further information

For more information about County Wildlife Sites, please contact the Cambridgeshire Wider Countryside team at:

Address: The Wildlife Trust, The Manor House, Broad Street, Great Cambourne, Cambridge CB23 6DH
Phone: 01954 713500
Email: cambridgeshire@wildlifebcn.org

Or find us online at www.wildlifebcn.org/wildlife/wider-countryside/local-wildlife-sites/cambridgeshire

The County Wildlife Sites system is supported by:



County Wildlife Sites



What are County Wildlife Sites?

County Wildlife Sites (CWS) are areas of land rich in wildlife. They encompass a variety of habitats such as ancient woodlands, wildflower meadows, wetlands, roadside verges and species-rich hedgerows. They are a range of shapes and sizes and provide habitats for a wealth of wildlife, including rare plants such as orchids, insects including butterflies, dragonflies and bees, and rarer mammals like bats and water voles.

County Wildlife Sites are places where species and habitats flourish because of past and current management. They are the most important areas for wildlife outside of legally protected sites such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs). There are approximately 470 County Wildlife Sites across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

County Wildlife Sites play a vital role in the conservation of the UK's natural heritage by providing essential wildlife refuges, stepping-stones, corridors and buffers linking and protecting other



Bee orchid

© Jon Hawkins



Water vole

© Elliott Neep



Common blue butterfly

© James Fisher

wildlife-rich places, both in towns and the wider countryside.

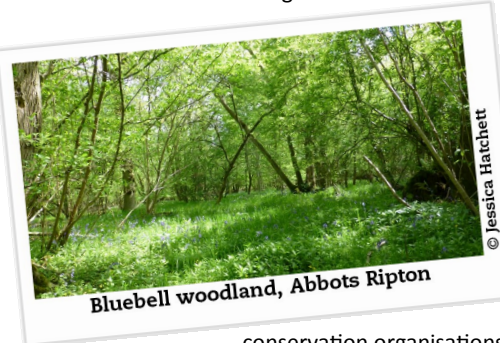
They are owned by a range of organisations such as charities, businesses, schools and estates. Many are also owned by private individuals. They have no statutory protection, and it is through the goodwill of their owners that these sites are conserved and retain their wildlife value.

Why are they so important?

County Wildlife Sites act as refuges for wildlife, both in the countryside and in towns and cities. They are especially valuable to our flora and fauna. Many scarce habitats such as wildflower meadows and wet woodland are largely restricted to County Wildlife Sites, and they are of huge importance to threatened species such as the water vole, skylark, grizzled skipper butterfly and Daubenton's bat.

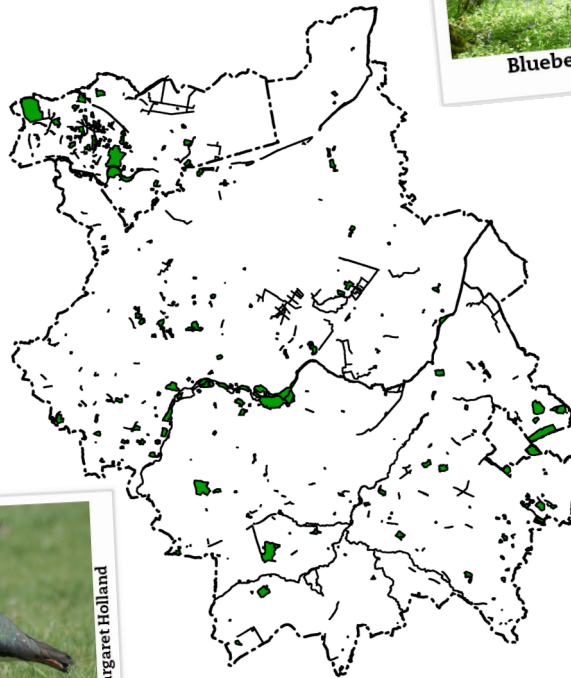
Our nature reserves and SSSIs are often small and disconnected. County Wildlife Sites complement them by forming buffers around or corridors between them, allowing wildlife to thrive across our countryside.

These valuable sites cover less than 3% of the county. Many will contain habitats and species that are priorities under the UK's Biodiversity 2020 strategy, which sets out approaches to conservation for our most vulnerable wildlife.



Bluebell woodland, Abbots Ripton

© Jessica Hatchett



Distribution of County Wildlife Sites across Cambridgeshire



Lapwing

© Margaret Holland

The County Wildlife Site system

The County Wildlife Sites system is based on a partnership involving the Wildlife Trust, the local Environmental Records Centre, local authorities, statutory conservation agencies, local farming advisers, local naturalists and landowners. All County Wildlife Sites are chosen based on their substantive conservation value and are assessed against a publicly available county-based set of criteria. The aim is to select a comprehensive set of locally important sites for wildlife.

County Wildlife Sites are fundamentally different from statutory designations such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

County Wildlife Sites are not overseen by Natural England and confer no obligations on the owner. CWS status is aimed at inspiring sympathetic management of a site for wildlife, and owners and tenants are free to continue to manage their sites as they see fit. Selection of a new County Wildlife Site does not create any new rights of access either for the public or for conservation organisations.

Landowners are always consulted regarding the selection of their land as a County Wildlife Site. After selection, each landowner is offered a free re-survey every few years to find out whether there have been any substantial ecological changes. If desired, these surveys can also provide suggestions for improving the site for wildlife. Where there have been major changes, the evidence is reviewed by a panel of experts from the partner organisations, and landowners are welcome to be present and to speak at these meetings.

Further information about the County Wildlife Site system can be found in the CWS Handbook, which is available for download at

www.wildlifebcn.org/wildlife/wider-countryside/local-wildlife-sites/cambridgeshire



Red-eyed damselfly

© Vicky Nail