



Discussions at CWS 1190



Reffley Wood CWS 2078



Highland cattle on CWS 2139

Norfolk Local Sites Handbook

- a guide to the County Wildlife Site (CWS) and County Geodiversity Site (CGS) systems in Norfolk.



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This Handbook is a guide to the Local Sites Systems in Norfolk. It is for countryside advisors, planners and local government officers, as well as the owners and managers of the sites themselves.

The Handbook enables relevant organisations to understand their role within the Norfolk Local Sites Systems, both in promoting sympathetic land management practice and in relation to forward planning or development management.

If you have any queries or would like further information on the Local Sites Systems in Norfolk, please contact:

Norfolk Wildlife Trust Bewick House 22 Thorpe Road Norwich NR1 1RY Tel. (01603) 625540 E: admin@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk W: www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk	Natural England Dragonfly House, 2 Gilders Way, Norwich NR3 1UB Tel. (01603) 698400 E: W: www.naturalengland.org.uk	Community & Environmental Services Norfolk County Council Floor 6 County Hall, Martineau Lane Norwich NR1 2SG Tel. (01603) 222773 E: environment@norfolk.gov.uk W: www.norfolk.gov.uk	Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service Floor 6 County Hall Martineau Lane Norwich NR1 2SG Tel. E: nbis@norfolk.gov.uk W: www.nbis.org.uk	Norfolk FWAG Honingham Thorpe Colton Norwich NR9 5BZ Tel. (01603) 814869 E: advice@norfolkfwag.co.uk W: www.norfolkfwag.co.uk
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What are Local Sites?

What are Local Sites?

At a national level, Local Sites embrace both Local Wildlife Sites and Local Geological Sites.

Local Sites contain features of “substantive nature conservation or geological conservation value”. The selection criteria for each county define what qualifies as “substantive” in the local context. The purpose of notifying a Local Site is to recognise its value and to help conserve those features by affording it a degree of protection.

Local Sites designated for their nature conservation value are known as County Wildlife Sites (CWS) in Norfolk.

Local Sites designated for their geodiversity interest are termed County Geodiversity Sites (CGS) in Norfolk.

CWS in Norfolk are defined areas which can be found on both publicly and privately owned land and vary greatly in size and habitat type. Habitats present can include ancient woodland, species-rich grassland, heath, fen and water bodies. These habitats are often of national priority, as set out in the Habitat Action Plans for England (<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk>). The habitats

and species present often exist because of past management and many sites provide a refuge for rare or threatened plants and animals. Such sites play a vital role in the conservation of the UK’s natural heritage by providing essential wildlife refuges as well as stepping stones and corridors for wildlife travelling between other habitats.

CWS complement the internationally and nationally designated sites, such as Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas for Conservation (SACs) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). These designations are frequently notify only the very best examples of habitats; in contrast, the CWS system selects all sites that match the relevant criteria. Taken together, CWS and the statutory sites form the minimum natural capital for a county – that is the area of habitat needed to maintain biodiversity at its current level.



National guidance

The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has established a national standard for the operation of Local Sites systems, set out in "*Local Guidance on the Identification, Selection and Management of Local Sites*", DEFRA 2006. This document recognises the following:

- Local Sites networks provide a comprehensive rather than representative suite of sites.
- Local Sites provide wildlife refuges for most of the UK's fauna and flora and through their connecting and buffering qualities, they complement other site networks.
- Local Sites have a significant role to play in meeting overall national biodiversity targets.
- Local Sites represent local character and distinctiveness.
- Local Sites contribute to the quality of life and the well-being of the community, with many sites providing opportunities for research and education.

Defra also recognise that Local Sites contribute to the protection of biodiversity through:

- Their inclusion in formal planning and development control processes,
- Providing a comprehensive framework for the promotion and prioritisation of nature conservation in the wider countryside,

- Monitoring the condition of the best habitats remaining in the wider countryside (that is outside of the statutory nature conservation sites) and hence to some extent effectiveness of conservation action being taken.



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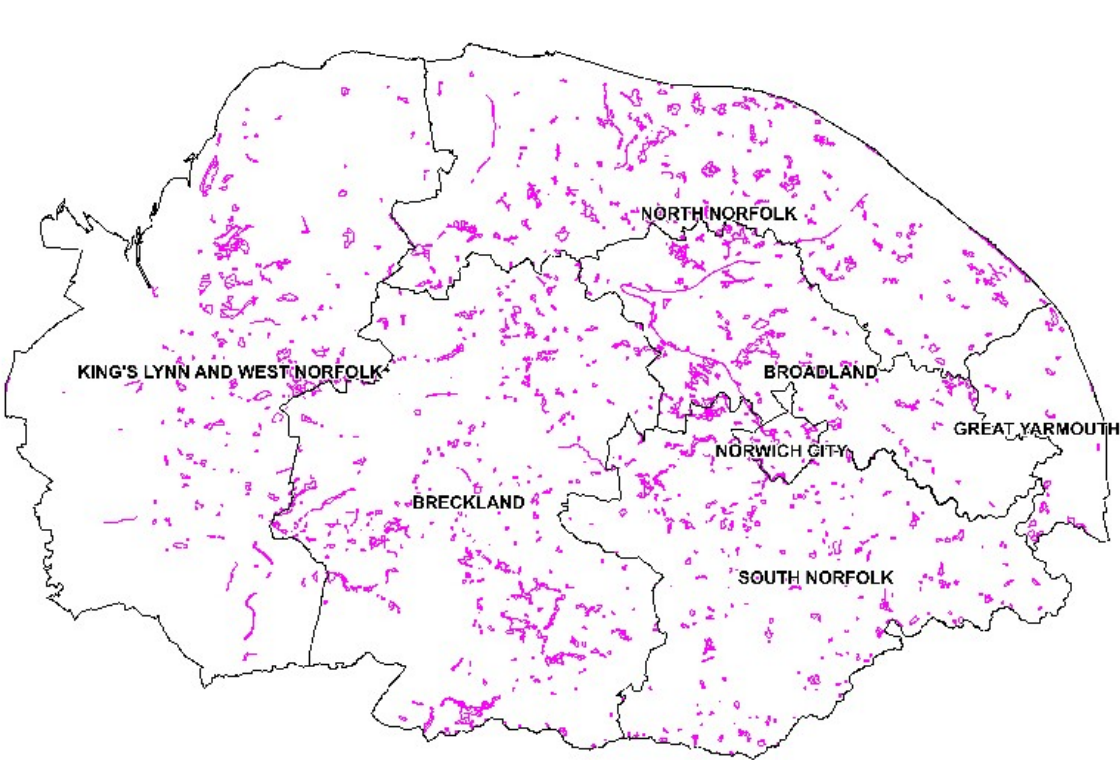


CWS in Norfolk

There are 1386 CWS in Norfolk (May 2025) and in the region of 35 000 across the country. This figure is subject to change as sites are surveyed and added, deleted or modified.

For a larger scale map of CWS and other designated sites in Norfolk please click here:

http://www.nbis.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Designated_WildlifeSites_2025_600dpi.pdf



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The CWS system

What is a CWS system?

The County Wildlife Site System describes the processes involved in selecting and assessing sites, advising on management, supplying information, protecting sites, monitoring the sites and monitoring the effectiveness of the whole system.

The cornerstone of the CWS system is the Norfolk CWS Partnership, which maintains the CWS register, develops the CWS strategy and works to deliver the aims and objectives set out below.

Aims of County Wildlife Site System in Norfolk

The overall aims of the County Wildlife Sites system in Norfolk are to:

- Protect, maintain and enhance the existing wildlife resource of Norfolk outside of statutory sites;
- Establish recognition of the CWS system by landowners, statutory bodies and other relevant organisations as a major tool for delivering biodiversity targets;
- Promote the role and importance of CWS at strategic level, including in the delivery of BAP targets, delivering green infrastructure, land use planning and the targeting of agri-environment schemes;

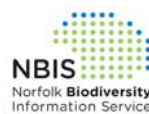
- Encourage the sympathetic management of CWS and measures to improve habitat connectivity;
- Identify and promote funding opportunities for CWS work and management.



The CWS partnership

The purpose of the CWS system is to identify, protect and enhance the most important places for wildlife outside of the statutory designated sites. The roles of partnership are:

- To co-ordinate the survey, re-survey and condition monitoring of CWS.
- To promote and support the provision of advice to CWS owners, aimed at ensuring the appropriate management of the CWS so they are in a favourable condition.
- To raise awareness of CWS and the need for appropriate management.
- To maintain the register of CWS in Norfolk and all data relevant to the register.
- To disseminate up to date information on the status of CWS in Norfolk, especially to those organisations that use the information for forward planning, development and land management advice.



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Members of the CWS partnership

Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT) chairs the CWS Partnership and manages the CWS system; the Trust also co-ordinates and contributes to site survey work, responding to planning consultations, raising awareness and targeting management advice. NWT is one of 45 Wildlife Trusts throughout the UK, most of which are involved in their local Wildlife Sites system. They aim to achieve the standards set out in the Wildlife Trusts' Wildlife Sites Handbook (1994), and provide input to the advancement of Wildlife Sites on a national basis.

Natural England (NE) provides support and input to the CWS system through its role as the statutory nature conservation organisation for England. Their Position Statement on Sites of Importance to Nature Conservation (1995) is relevant to CWS. They also provide advice to landowners on a range of issues and administer the agri-environment grant schemes. Their knowledge of Norfolk and a close working relationship on the relevant grant schemes is of benefit both to CWS owners and the CWS system.

Norfolk County Council's (NCC) Community and Environmental Services Department, through the Natural Environment Team, contributes to the overview and running of the system and has helped with funding surveys.

Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS). NBIS works as a hub for the collection, collation, management and dissemination of wildlife information for the county, especially in regard to biological records. Working with NBIS ensures that the CWS system retains good links with local naturalists and recorders, as well as working together with record centre staff on the supply and gathering of vital data. NBIS produces and sends out the annual update on the CWS system, and

continues to monitor the proportion of sites in positive conservation management.

The **Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership** exists to produce and deliver Biodiversity Action Plans and to provide a network for the conservation agencies in Norfolk to work together in the production and delivery of these plans.

The **Environment Agency (EA)** is a Government agency which aims to protect and improve rivers and riverine environments. EA participates directly in the notification and management of CWS rivers, including funding survey work.

The **Broads Authority (BA)** is a statutory body with a duty to manage the Broads for biodiversity, as well as for landscape, cultural heritage and recreation. BA has contributed to the promotion and notification of County Wildlife Sites in the Norfolk Broads.

Norfolk Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (Norfolk FWAG) delivers expert independent advice and guidance to farmers and land managers to help them integrate best practice environmental management into their commercial farm businesses.

As well as involvement in the CWS Partnership, all of the above organisations work closely with a range of statutory and voluntary bodies to promote the importance of CWS and to deliver the central aims of safeguarding sites and encouraging the positive management of habitats. This work includes distributing CWS data and participating in biodiversity topic groups.



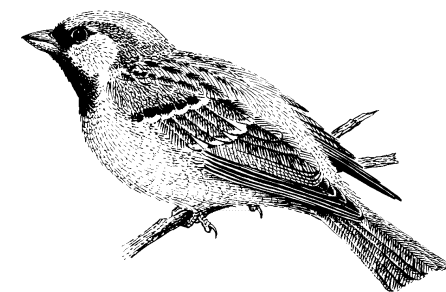
Raising the profile of CWS in Norfolk

Raising the profile of County Wildlife Sites in Norfolk

The principal mechanism for promoting County Wildlife Sites is the distribution of the Norfolk County Wildlife Site Register, which is made available to a range of conservation organisations, planning authorities and utility companies.

The Register includes detailed descriptions of all CWS in Norfolk and boundary maps for sites.

It is also important that the general public are made aware of the CWS system in order to increase awareness of the need to conserve and enhance biodiversity in the wider countryside (as opposed to a perception that conservation is solely nature reserve based). Raising awareness encourages local communities to take action on land in their control and to become more involved in practical nature conservation work such as surveying and site management. However, the availability of detailed information on CWS to a wide audience may unintentionally imply unrestricted access to sites, which is a major fear of many landowners. Such publicity may jeopardise relations with landowners and thus undermine the success of the whole CWS system. Therefore promotion of access for informal recreation and education will be restricted to those CWS that are owned by a local authority or voluntary organisations and where public access is appropriate without being detrimental to the nature conservation value of the site.



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Sparrow



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What are County Geodiversity Sites (CGS)?

Norfolk has a rich Earth heritage of geological and landscape features, including soils and water. This geodiversity is the physical aspect of the natural world. It is valuable in itself and for economic, scientific, educational and cultural reasons, so it is something worth conserving.

County Geodiversity Sites (CGS) are local nature conservation sites designated for their geodiversity interest. CGS are the geodiversity equivalent of County Wildlife Sites, and like CWS they are sites of substantive conservation value at County level. They were formerly known in Norfolk as RIGS (Regionally Important Geological / geomorphological Sites).

CGS are covered by **DEFRA policy guidance on Local Sites**. See:

- *Circular 06/2005 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – statutory obligations and their impact within the planning system* (DEFRA 2005)
- *Local Sites - guidance on their identification, selection and management* (DEFRA 2006) contained in it).

For more information about CGS in Norfolk, please see:

[Designating CGS](#)

[What does CGS mean for a landowner?](#)

[CGS data](#)

[Appendices](#)



Rising Hill Pit, Field Dalling, a County Geodiversity Site



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CGS in Norfolk

Seven CGS have been designated in Norfolk (as of 2016). This small number reflects a lack of resources which historically have been available to designate them, rather than any lack of significance regarding the county's geodiversity. Five CGS are detailed below:

Breckland District

Newton by Castle Acre Chalk Pit; also known as Needham Chalks Quarry

Grid reference: TF837149

An active quarry displaying Cretaceous Chalk of the Coniacian Stage (transitional M.cortestudinarium / M.coranguinum Zones) and Santonian Stage. Fossils include Inoceramus, Micraster, ammonites, fish and bryozoans. Large, fresh exposures available. Date of designation: 12.11.1999

Great Hockham Erratic, also known as the Village Stone

Grid reference: TL95309257

Large erratic boulder of Cretaceous Spilsby Sandstone Formation. Discovered on farmland east of the village and resited on the Village Green c.1880; ritually turned over to mark notable events in the life of the parish.

Date of designation: 23.11.2009

Broadland District

Pinebanks Pit, Thorpe St Andrew

Grid reference: TG261089A disused gravel pit exposing sands of Pleistocene Anglian outwash and/or Pliocene Norwich Crag displaying sedimentary structures. Site has educational potential, being close to Norwich and part of a recreational area. Date of designation: 30.08.2000

North Norfolk District

Rising Hill Pit, Field Dalling

Grid reference: TG033404

Disused quarry with good exposures of Pleistocene Anglian fluvio-glacial sand, gravel and chalky mud overlain by a thin sheet of chalk-rich glacial diamicton. Interpreted as a deglacial sequence dominated by ice-contact meltwater deposits and meltout tills. Complements the nearby Bilsey Hill geological SSSI. Date of designation: 22.01.1999

Hempton Quarry

TF904284

Partly landfilled former quarry, exposing Pleistocene Anglian sediments, comprising a glacio-tectonised sequence of bedded silty sands overlain by fine, sandy, well-bedded gravels, all with high chalk content. Adjacent to Hempton Green County Wildlife Site. Date of designation: 04.04.2000



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Norfolk CGS Group

Local Sites of geodiversity interest in Norfolk are designated by the **County Geodiversity Sites Group**, which is managed as a sub-committee of the Norfolk Geodiversity Partnership. It includes representatives from the Geological Society of Norfolk, Norfolk County Council, Natural England and the Norfolk Wildlife Trust.

The CGS Group is recognised by Natural England and GeoConservationUK as the competent body for designating Local Sites of geodiversity interest in the county.

For more information about the conservation of Earth heritage through Local Sites, see:

- DEFRA – <http://archive.defra.gov.uk/rural/documents/protected/localsites.pdf>
- GeoconservationUK – <http://wiki.geoconservationuk.org.uk/>
- Natural England – <http://www.gov.uk/protected-or-designated-areas>

Norfolk County Geodiversity Sites Group contacts:

- Tim Holt-Wilson | timholtwilson@onetel.com | 01379 870411
- Gilbert Addison | aardvark@wildtrees.co.uk



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Hockham village stone



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Notifying CWS

County Wildlife Sites are selected by assessing their wildlife importance in a county context. Survey data is assessed against carefully constructed selection criteria, with those passing the thresholds set out in the criteria becoming CWS.

Programmes for site survey are dependent on available resources; however, a small number of sites are surveyed or re-surveyed every year as part of the work of the NWT Conservation Officers. Larger scale survey projects require external funding.

Potential County Wildlife Sites

NWT maintains, on behalf of the Partnership, a list of Potential County Wildlife Sites; sites are added to this when they are brought to the Partnership’s attention through project work, by other agencies, by County Recorders or other naturalists and by landowners themselves.

CWS Survey

Following landowner permission being given, a survey is carried out to an agreed template and format, then the site is assessed against the CWS Criteria; assessment is carried out by the CWS Selection Panel; surveys may also be sent to other agencies or experts in specialist fields for information and input.

CWS survey in Norfolk is based upon an extended Phase 1 survey, including a habitat map and species list. NWT provide a template and guidelines for survey, which includes a requirement to record

structures and features on the site, as well as current and potential management.

Existing sites may be re-surveyed for the following reasons:

- Information on existing survey considered to be “dated”, usually more than 20 years old.
- As part of a monitoring or re-survey programme.
- To provide information required by the local authority for use in planning casework; in such cases, re-survey is most likely to be undertaken by a consultant, rather than a member of the CWS partnership.
- Where members the CWS Partnership or other agencies have noted a marked change in the site, including a change of area.

Where a site is to be re-surveyed, the procedure for access and provision of information will be as for surveys of new sites.

Surveys of existing sites should include a justification for proposed changes to the site boundary and should also make use of the template and guidelines supplied by NWT. Information on significant changes or damage to the site should also be recorded.

Landowner permission for survey

Permission for access to survey an existing or potential CWS will be sought through contact with the owner; surveys will not take place without landowner permission. However, if the land has open public access, a preliminary visit might be made to assess if a further survey is warranted. At the time of the initial contact with the landowner, information on CWS, their importance and the implications of owning a CWS will be provided.

At the point of requesting access, landowners will be provided with a clear explanation of the purpose of the survey. It is important that the landowners are involved and informed throughout this process.

If permission for survey is not given, then surveyors will not trespass on land and the landowner's wishes will be respected. Once the survey has been completed and assessed by the Site Selection Panel, landowners will be informed and sent a copy of the survey. Landowners will also be offered management advice at this point.

Where permission to re-survey an existing site is not granted, the site will remain a CWS based on the available data. Sites will not be deleted without a re-survey.



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Norfolk CWS selection criteria

The use of selection criteria in a standardised, objective manner promotes confidence that a CWS meets the required standard. The selection criteria take into account available information on habitats and species, as well as historical and structural aspects, where relevant.

The selection criteria have been developed to define what qualifies as “substantive nature conservation value” in a local context; this includes the use of thresholds and typical species as defined by the Natural Vegetation Classification (NVC). However, these are sensitive to local conditions and are cross-referenced with the Norfolk Flora, as well as with information on locally and nationally rare and scarce species; information on Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority habitats and species may also be relevant. These selection criteria were founded on the “Guidelines for the Selection of Biological SSSI’s” (JNCC, 1997), but are modified to reflect local conditions where necessary and unlike for SSSI’s, the CWS system seeks to select all sites that meet the selection criteria, rather than a representative selection.

Selection criteria are reviewed as and when required.

For full 2018 criteria lists, please see the appendices:

[Habitat selection criteria](#)
[Species selection criteria](#)
[Rare and scarce plants in Norfolk](#)
[Rare and interesting epiphytes](#)



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Habitat attributes when selecting CWS

The attributes taken into account in identifying CWS are described in general terms below. The first five attributes are of primary importance, the remaining three of secondary importance

Naturalness This assesses the closeness of a habitat to its form unmodified by human influence. In Norfolk, as elsewhere in Britain, all terrestrial habitats are modified to varying extents. In many cases, therefore, this characteristic seeks to relate a site to its state under traditional management

Diversity Most sites will show diversity in vegetation communities and in complement of species. Many will be species-rich in county terms.

Size The importance and value of a site generally increases with its size. It is generally agreed that each habitat has a size below which its nature conservation value may not be sustainable.

Rarity The decline and thus increasing rarity of Norfolk's semi-natural habitats is a basic presumption of the CWS designation. The presence of rare or scarce species may warrant CWS status.

Typicalness This criterion relates to the typical species composition and structural elements of habitats found in Norfolk; it is especially important when including intrinsically species-poor

habitats, such as acidic oak-birch woodlands, which need to be included in the CWS system as characteristic and important habitats of the County.

Fragility All sites are sensitive to environmental change. Some sites may be particularly susceptible, and as a consequence may be particularly rare and therefore important, but also difficult to safeguard.

Potential Value Some sites with remnants of former habitats or those with a predictable course of natural succession will often show a substantial increase in their nature conservation interest, the former through positive management and the latter through non-intervention.

Intrinsic Appeal Some sites may have considerable and widely perceived intrinsic appeal; others may be important for informal recreation.

Terms used in CWS criteria

“Significant” describes population size, in this case in a county context. For vascular plants, “size differences should be taken into account in site evaluation, though above a certain level of rarity, presence or absence becomes the main criterion. Large population size is especially relevant to nationally localised species, including those at the edge of their range. Population size is relevant to issues of population viability”. (*Guidelines for selection of biological SSSIs*, Ratcliffe 1997).

“Appropriate” relates to the species found on a site, in terms of the diversity of native species typical of the habitat. Diversity has to be considered in context. “Some plant communities are intrinsically more species rich than others; so comparisons on this criterion are valid only between examples of the same community and not between different communities. The standard of floristic diversity for each community is guided by the NVC (National Vegetation Classification) tables.” (*Guidelines for selection of biological SSSIs*). Hence the Norfolk CWS criteria require some sites to be “appropriately species rich”: the species themselves being set out in tables that have been developed by cross-referencing the NVC lists for each habitat with the vascular plant records for Norfolk.



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Dog's mercury



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CWS site selection

Following survey or re-survey, the site will be assessed by the CWS Site Selection Panel, in order to speed proceedings. NWT may present recommendations on site selection, modification and rejection and circulate surveys in advance.

The CWS Selection Panel is drawn from the CWS Partnership.

If a site meets the thresholds set out in the selection criteria, the site is selected, with the date and a justification for selection recorded. Information on sites failing to be selected is also recorded. Information on modifications to sites and re-surveys may also be considered by the site selection panel.

At the annual CWS Selection meeting and based on available survey data, one of five possible outcomes will be recorded:

- Site accepted as CWS
- Site rejected as CWS
- Modifications made to existing site, include change of description or boundary
- Site deleted
- Site recommended for further survey, or passed to other experts for specialist input into the selection (e.g. EA for rivers or NCC officers for woodland).

Notifying landowners

Ensuring that CWS owners and managers are informed of the wildlife value of their land and the significance of CWS status is an on-going and important aspect of the CWS system. It is acknowledges that by building relationships with owners and managers, the wildlife resource can be protected and improved.

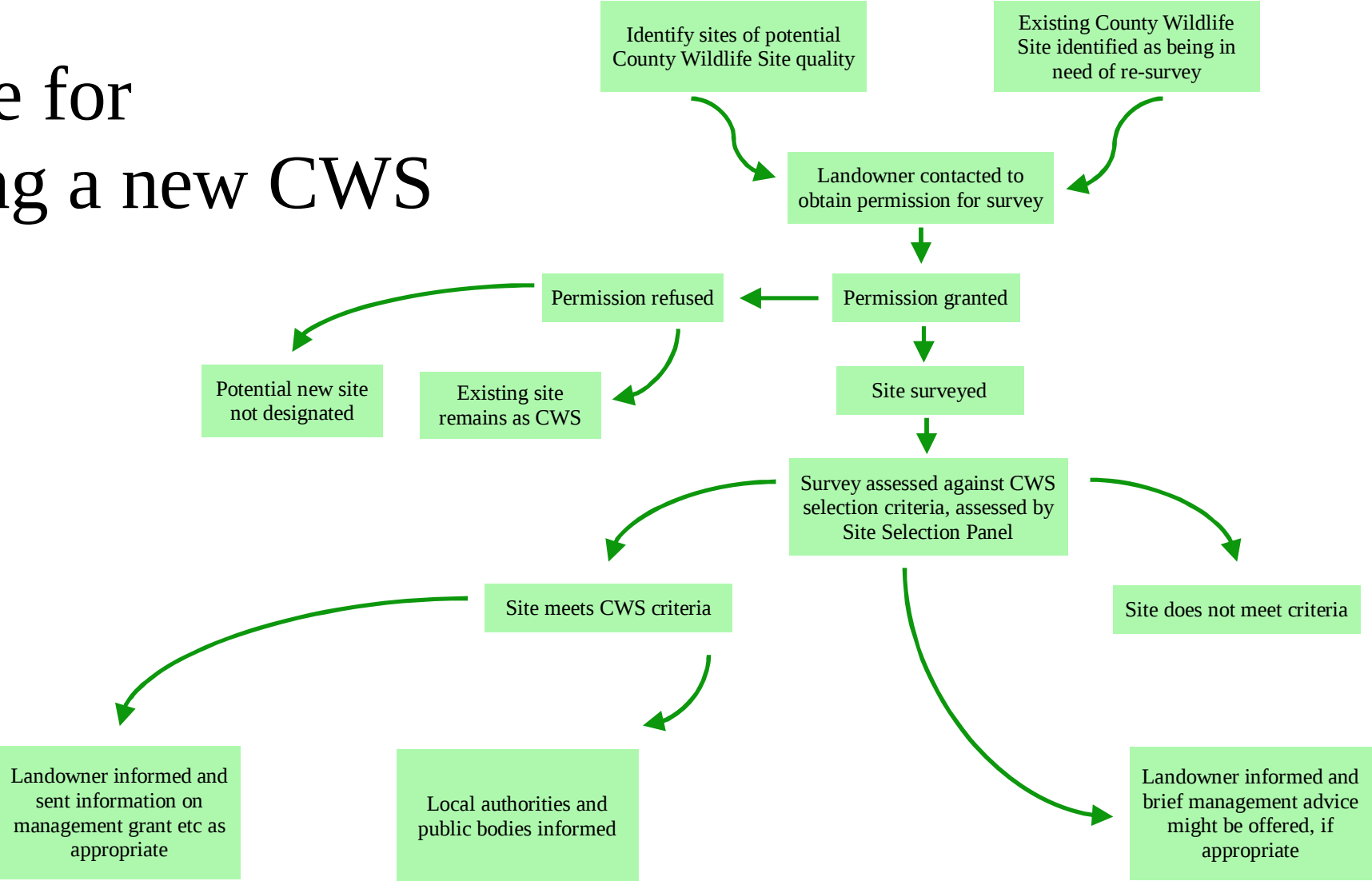
Following the decision of the CWS Selection Panel, landowners will be sent a copy of the survey, an offer of management advice and further information on County Wildlife Sites.



Marbled white butterfly

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Procedure for identifying a new CWS



Removal of CWS status

A site, or part thereof, will remain a CWS until data is collected that proves it no longer meets the criteria. A site cannot have its status removed for political reasons, or as a result of wilful and deliberate destruction or neglect. The presumption is against de-selecting sites.

Sites to be considered for deletion will be subject to survey by a person endorsed by the CWS Partnership and with permission from the landowner. Where landowner permission for survey is not forthcoming, the site will remain a CWS. As with all surveys and re-surveys, the CWS Site Selection Panel will consider and evaluate the survey information against the selection criteria.

De-selection may be recommended where the site’s nature conservation interest has deteriorated to such an extent that it no longer qualifies as a CWS and where it is not possible to restore it through appropriate management. The potential for restoration will be an important factor in the decision.



Early purple orchid

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Designating CGS

CGS are designated on the basis of their ‘**substantive conservation value**’. This value is based on selection criteria recommended by GeoConservationUK supported by the policy guidance of DEFRA, and which are summarised in the Norfolk Site Selection Criteria document (see Appendix 2).

Conservation value includes the following factors:

- **Scientific** – providing research resources for investigating the remote past;
- **Cultural** – for example, contribution to economic activity and local beauty;
- **Diversity** – the uniqueness of a site at county or regional level;
- **Usability** – suitability for public use;
- **Education** – suitability for learning at all levels;
- **Conservation status** – the presence of existing designations, e.g. for wildlife.

Selecting and designating a CGS is a four-stage process:

1. **Proposal** Stage. Information about a site’s features and potential geoconservation value, its ownership and current management is gathered. The landowner is contacted and land

management options (access, and conservation) and implications of the possible designation are discussed and agreed.

2. **Designation** Stage
Using information from the Proposal Stage, the CGS group decides whether or not to designate the site. If the site is accepted for designation the Secretariat sends a letter of acknowledgement and thanks to the landowner.
3. **Publication** Stage
Partner organisations such as the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and Natural England and local planners are informed of the details of the designation.
4. **Review** Stage
After seven years the site is checked to see whether it continues to meet its designation criteria. If not, a site may be de-designated, and the landowner, planners and others are informed by the Secretariat.

Please contact the CGS Group if you have interesting geological features and landforms on your land which you like to conserve (see details in section 3 above).

[Criteria for notification of CGS](#) (Appendix)

CWS data

The County Wildlife Site (CWS) system generates a range of data, which can include:

- Habitat surveys
- Species records
- Site records
- Site ownership records
- Records of contact with landowner/managers, management advice given and site condition assessments.

Each site also has a written description, or citation, which includes a boundary map, plus information on habitats and species found on the site.

Norfolk Wildlife Trust holds original citations (including maps), original site surveys, site ownership records, records of contact with landowners/managers and records relating to development issues. These are held in paper and electronic formats and in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS) holds copies of citations and surveys and holds species records produced from the site surveys and by county recorders, in order to disseminate through the NBIS standard enquiry service. NBIS also holds the

full datasets (including GIS) in relation to the annual assessment of the national biodiversity indicator "Single Data List (SDL) 160 – Local sites in Positive Conservation Management" (Previously National Indicator 197). All data, both paper and electronic, is held in accordance with the data protection act, Norfolk County Council's data protection policy. Procedures regarding Intellectual Property, Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2005 (PSI) and Environmental Information Regulations and Freedom of Information Acts, are also followed. See the privacy and disclaimer pages on the NBIS website for more details (www.nbis.org.uk).

Norfolk Record Office holds photocopies of original surveys as a backup in case these are lost or damaged; the Records Office does not disseminate this data.

As much of the data on CWS is commissioned by and provided to local authorities and public bodies, much of it is in the public domain. This does not include potentially sensitive data, such as landowner details.



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Great crested newt



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Confidentiality and data protection

The systems used to store and handle CWS data have been assessed against the relevant data protection legislation and are, to the best of the CWS Partnership's knowledge, fully compliant. All data collected as part of surveying, is covered by the provisions of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. This means that all species and habitat data will be considered available for release (including to consultants and developers), unless it is in the public interest not to do so. On balance, there is a policy in favour of the release of survey data.

Information on protected species and advice on any legal implications is given to the owners and managers of sites where appropriate.

Information on data management will be explained to landowners when they are contacted to seek permission for survey. It will be made explicit that CWS status does not imply a right of public access and that although information on sites is publicly available, details of individual sites are not promoted publicly.



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CWS 2078 Reffley wood



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Distribution and availability of data

The following parties are the main users of CWS data:

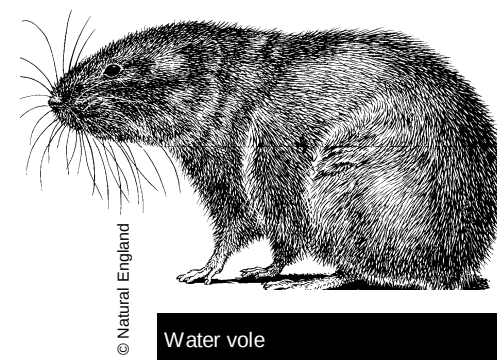
- Site owners
- Planning authorities
- Statutory authorities
- Advisory organisations
- Consultancies and private companies

In Norfolk, most CWS data originates from survey work and monitoring conducted by Norfolk Wildlife Trust. NWT is responsible for ensuring that NBIS is provided with the most up to date information on CWS for it to be disseminated to those who require it.

NWT acts as the main point of contact for enquiries relating to the CWS system and for conservation management advice. NWT is also the main point of contact for advisory bodies and agencies involved in development management and forward planning, who seek advice and information beyond species data and CWS citations.

Formal enquiries for information and species data from consultancies and private companies should be directed to NBIS,

as the main contact for information on sites. This includes consultancies, local authorities, statutory agencies, the research community, NGOs and the public in relation to species information, site boundaries and data related to SDL 160 (Previously NI197).



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CGS data

Information about CGS is held by **NBIS** (the Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service) and by the relevant district / borough / city planning authorities. NBIS also holds wider information about Norfolk's geodiversity.

In 2007/08, Norfolk Geodiversity Partnership commissioned a survey of geosites and landform features based on information collected from published literature and personal communications. The resulting **Norfolk Geodiversity Audit** is a digest of over 360 significant features, including SSSIs, and there is an ongoing 'ground-truthing' programme to verify their condition. The result is an up-to-date Earth heritage database for the county, now known as candidate County Geodiversity Sites (cCGS).

Since 2019, cCGS, CGS and SSSIs have been made available to all via the NBIS enquiry service. Please note that this will not include private and sensitive information, such as site ownership and access.



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Cockthorpe Chalk Pit, a site recorded in the Norfolk Geodiversity Audit



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Promoting positive management of CWS

The majority of County Wildlife Sites in Norfolk are in private ownership, with many of the rest being owned by parish councils and local poors trusts or fuel allotment trusts.

The CWS Partnership recognises that it is important that landowners are aware of the presence and significance of their site for wildlife and the role of the CWS system as a tool for achieving nature conservation objectives. In order to deliver this aim, landowners are offered support and encouragement to maintain and enhance their sites.

Providing information to landowners & managers

The key to conservation is information. It is crucial that people are aware of where CWS are and why they are important. With this information, landowners and conservation bodies can work together to safeguard sites and secure their future management.

Private landowners and managers play a crucial role in protecting and enhancing sites, whilst local authorities, including parish councils, have a duty to have regard for biodiversity when planning the management of land they are responsible for.

Consistent and regular contact with landowners is essential. From the outset, CWS owners will be provided with both information on how the CWS system works and its implications, as well as information on their site/s.

Once a site is selected as a CWS, landowners/managers are provided with an information sheet on CWS. This emphasises that the majority of ordinary land management and agricultural operations remain unaffected and that identification of a CWS does not give anyone other than the landowner/manager control over the land management, but that there is a need for the site to retain its wildlife interest. The information sheet also sets out the help and advice available from NWT and can be found at www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk.



Advice to CWS owners

Norfolk Wildlife Trust is the main contact for advice on the care and management of County Wildlife Sites in Norfolk; however, other organisations, including Natural England and the Forestry Commission, may also give advice.

In order to deliver the very best for biodiversity, NWT is able to provide the following to landowners and managers:

- Site visits to discuss management and advise on the best way to care for sites,
- Written management plans or shorter management statements,
- Advice on possible sources of grant aid and help with applying for grants. Funding is often the key to encouraging positive management for nature conservation on a CWS because management sympathetic to wildlife is characteristically less intensive and often less economically productive than the current 'norm',
- Information on contractors, graziers and volunteer groups able to carry out practical site management.

Organisations providing conservation management advice in Norfolk need to work closely together to ensure that expertise is used to its full potential for the benefit of the CWS; it is important

to avoid duplication of effort on sites, especially where advice leads to securing a management grant. Much of the communication for this work is delivered through the CWS panel and by maintaining a high level of contact with other conservation organisations.



Highland cattle on CWS 2139

CWS condition monitoring

Monitoring the condition of CWS is essential for the following reasons to:

- Ensure CWS data is up-to-date
- Help focus resources on priority sites
- Assess the effectiveness of site protection
- Assess the effectiveness of site management
- Increase the understanding of causes of site loss and damage and habitat change
- Establish and justify the need for continued action
- Report against performance indicators and to record progress against BAP targets
- Record positive management as a contribution towards the County Council's responsibility to report to government on SDL 160 (previously NI197) – an indicator assessing local sites in Positive Conservation Management

The distribution and abundance of habitats and species is always changing in response to natural and man-made influences. CWS are vulnerable to change so regular surveying and monitoring are needed to help keep CWS data up to date and to support action that will protect and enhance CWS. In general terms the CWS Panel aims to ensure that all CWS are comprehensively resurveyed on a rolling programme.

Monitoring is a valuable tool for assessing how successful the CWS system is in achieving its aim of protecting and enhancing sites, and in determining how to use the system to maximise its effectiveness. A common condition monitoring methodology has been developed for Norfolk and is capable of providing robust information to inform monitoring of the Biodiversity Action Plans and other indicators such as those included in Sustainable Community Strategies and Local Development Frameworks.

Positive conservation management is management that contributes to maintaining or enhancing the features of interest for which a site has been selected. To show that positive conservation management has been or is being implemented on a CWS, there must be documented evidence of appropriate management activities. NWT is working closely with NCC to gather information on the management of sites and to report on the progress of meeting the biodiversity indicator targets for Norfolk.



What does CGS mean for a landowner?

County Geodiversity Sites are **non-statutorily protected**, so they can only be conserved with the goodwill and support of the landowner.

A CGS designation is a **voluntary agreement**. It does not place any legal obligations on the landowner, nor confer any right of public access. **Existing public rights of way are not affected** and no new footpaths are created. The level of access is agreed: for example, 'open access', 'access by prior notification only', 'for groups', 'for research only'.

As part of the designation process, the features of geological interest are explained to the landowner, so it is clear why they are important enough to be designated. **Options for positive management are discussed and agreed**; for example these might include keeping rock exposures clear of vegetation, discouraging vandalism and fly-tipping, maintaining natural springs, opening up permissive footpath access, keeping peat soils wet.

Designation cannot restrict agricultural operations or digging for minerals; in fact mineral extraction may help provide access to new geological information.

Although Local Sites enjoy no legal protection, local authorities may give their features a degree of protection from **adverse**

development through planning policies set out in the Local Plan and Minerals & Waste Development Local Framework processes. For any significant **change of land use**, the planning authorities will take a CGS designation into account, along with other planning considerations, notably wildlife and archaeology

A CGS designation can feature in a **Farm Environment Plan**, and favourable management can be funded through HLS options where appropriate.



Site Safeguard: planning and development

County Wildlife Sites are not designated on a statutory basis, but they receive a degree of protection in the development control process through their recognition in the policies of the Local Planning Authorities development plans and in the plans of other public bodies. In this context, site protection relies on the commitment of local authorities and public bodies to protect sites against damaging development,

Legislative and policy context

Under Section 74 of the **Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000** (CROW Act), every minister and Government department has a duty to have regard to the purpose of the conservation of biological diversity in the exercising of its functions and to take, or promote the taking by others, steps to further the conservation of the habitats and species which together are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity.

Section 40 The **Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006** (NERC Act) introduced a new duty for public authorities stating that “Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity”. The role local authorities, including parish councils, have in land use planning and managing their own land is relevant to the CWS system.

The **UK Biodiversity Action Plans** (BAPs) created between 1995 and 1999 and reviewed in 2007, identified measures to conserve the most threatened species and habitats. The plans have been superseded by the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework but the original BAP species and habitat lists were used to draw up Section 41 of the NERC Act (Priority Habitats and Species). Most CWS contribute help to S41 targets.

The **EU Habitats Directive** (1992) requires Member states to “encourage the management of features on the landscape which are of major importance for wild flora and fauna”. This requirement has been transposed into UK law in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. Although primarily concerning sites and species of European importance, the Directive also establishes the principle of ecological networks. Following from this, policies should be included in development plan documents to promote the conservation of networks of natural habitats that link sites of biodiversity importance. County Wildlife Sites can contribute to fulfilling this requirement and play an important role in linking and supporting nationally or internationally recognised sites.



Planning policies and the planning system

Planning is the spatial tool that integrates social, economic and environmental considerations and it is important that CWS are afforded the protection available to them through the planning system. This is afforded through policies in the Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) of Local Planning Authorities. The presumption should always be in favour of site protection rather than mitigation; development on CWS is to be avoided. Where it is not possible to do this, impacts should be mitigated wherever possible to maintain the integrity of sites and of the CWS system as a whole.

Planning applications that may impact on a CWS should be accompanied by an appraisal of likely impacts and recommendations of how such impacts can be avoided or mitigated. The report should also identify residual impacts and compensatory methods to offset them. A suitably qualified ecologist should produce such appraisals with other specialist knowledge as required – e.g. tree assessments or pollution control measures.

Mechanisms to deliver protection and enhancements to CWS include the implementation of planning conditions and Section 106 Planning Agreements and potentially through Biodiversity Off-setting and contributions for Green Infrastructure (GI) from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

It must also be recognized that development has the potential to adversely affect habitats and biodiversity in the area outside of the development footprint. It is therefore necessary to consider potential impacts on CWS in the wider environment surrounding a proposed development. These indirect effects may include pollution of air and water, hydrological impacts, disturbance, increased risk of vandalism, fires and fly tipping, unregulated access, ancillary development and operations (such as access roads and dredging) and the displacement of individuals and populations of species leading to increased pressure on other sites. These factors may be compounded by the cumulative effects from a number of developments and climate change may further increase the significance of such issues. These indirect effects are often poorly addressed in determining planning applications and their significance is often not recognised or acknowledged by decision makers. Nevertheless, such effects may be as harmful to the biodiversity of a locality as direct CWS loss.

The Town & Country Planning Order 1995 and subsequent amendments grants rights known as permitted development rights to carry out certain limited forms of development without the need to make an application for planning permission. Operations outside planning control may still have impacts on CWS and therefore consultation in such cases should be encouraged wherever possible.



Other strategic plans

There are a number of other strategic plans which should give due consideration to CWS; these include:

- Sustainable Community Strategies
- Catchment Flood Management Plans and Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies prepared by the Environment Agency
- Green Infrastructure Strategy and delivery plans
- Surface Water Management plans (SWaMPs)
- Water Level Management Plans



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Consultation process

The CWS Partnership has agreed that Norfolk Wildlife Trust should be the primary contact for planning applications likely to affect a CWS. NWT aims to maintain and develop its present good relations with local authority planning departments over CWS to ensure that appropriate consultation occurs.

When an application which may have an impact on the wildlife value of a CWS is submitted to the local authority, an objection, if deemed appropriate, will be lodged at the earliest opportunity by Norfolk Wildlife Trust.

Reaction will be based on an assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the nature conservation value of the site, using all available information. In cases where the conservation value is not compromised, this may mean no objection.

[Click here for a link to the model consultation procedure for County Wildlife Sites](#)



Badger



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Appendices

Please click these links for the full criteria for the selection of CWS in Norfolk:

[Habitat selection criteria](#)

[Species selection criteria](#)

[Rare and scarce plants in Norfolk](#)

[Rare and interesting epiphytes](#)

Please click these links for more on Geodiversity conservation in Norfolk:

[Conserving Geodiversity in Norfolk](#)

[Selection of CGS in Norfolk](#)



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