



North Somerset Levels and Moors and Severn Estuary Coast Wildlife Enhancement Scheme

North Somerset Levels and Moors Sites of Special Scientific Interest include Tickenham, Nailsea and Kenn Moors SSSI, Puxton Moor SSSI and Biddle Street SSSI.



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English Nature

Why are the North Somerset Levels and Moors important for nature conservation?

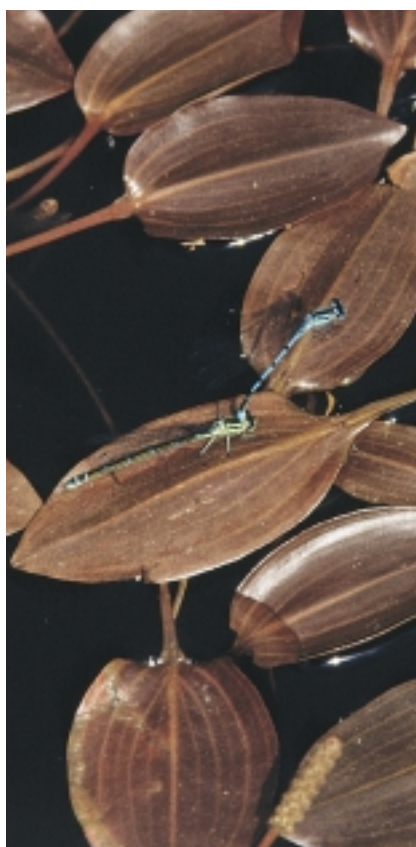
The North Somerset Levels and Moors SSSIs are of outstanding national importance for the variety of ditches and rhynes and the assortment of species found in them.

- The network of ditches support a wide variety of plant communities and large numbers of beetles, snails, dragonflies and damselflies. Over 50 species of water beetle have been found, including the great silver water beetle, Britain's largest beetle.
- The sedges, grasses and rushes on the edges of the ditches provide cover for water voles and birds, such as snipe and warblers.
- Herons and kingfishers fish along open waterways.
- Grazing animals poach the ditch edges, providing open ground for seeds to grow, and marshy areas for aquatic invertebrates.
- Tussocky fields provide nesting areas for birds such as lapwing.

Why is the Severn Estuary Coast important for nature conservation?

The Severn Estuary SSSI is of outstanding international importance for its range of coastal habitats and the species found living on them.

- The intertidal mud flats, sand flats and saltmarsh are visited by internationally important numbers of overwintering waterfowl such as shelduck, dunlin and redshank and passage waterfowl such as whimbrel and wigeon.
- The saltmarsh and sea walls provide homes for some nationally scarce invertebrates and plants.
- Behind the sea wall, the coastal grazing marsh provides sheltered bird roosts during high tides or storms.



David Scott

The Wildlife Enhancement Scheme (WES)

This complex system of habitats, plants, animals and invertebrates has developed as a result of many years of farming on the North Somerset Levels and Moors and Severn Estuary Coast. English Nature's Wildlife Enhancement Scheme (WES) aims to help farmers maintain or restore the management on which this wildlife depends. The objective of the WES is to achieve 'favourable condition' on the land.

The WES is only available to those farmers who farm land within or adjoining the areas designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest. English Nature will work closely with DEFRA to achieve the optimum land management using the best combination of available agri-environmental schemes, especially where the Countryside Stewardship Scheme can be complemented by this WES.



David Scott

What is 'favourable condition' on the land?

- Ditches: supporting a wide variety of plants with stands of sedges, grasses and rushes, floating plants such as frogbit and submerged plants such as water violet.
- Water levels: the water in ditches should be at least two feet deep, although some ditches should be nearly choked with emergent plants.
- Ditch banks: gently sloping with a variety of plants and some poached marshy areas.
- Willows: regularly pollarded.
- Hedges: thick enough to provide cover for birds, but not shading out ditch plants which are also important for feeding birds.
- Grassland: uneven tussocky sward with wildflowers and used by breeding birds.
- Saltmarsh: tussocky sward with a sequence of different communities of flowers and grasses from the sea wall to the low tide mark.

North Somerset Levels and Moors and Severn Estuary Coast

Wildlife Enhancement Scheme

Management Prescriptions

1 Permanent grassland

To provide conditions favourable for a range of farmland wildlife...

Do.....

- Graze extensively with cattle or sheep for a period of at least 10 weeks between 1st April and 31st October. At the end of the season sward height should be uneven: between 5–20cm (2–8 inches)
- Apply agreed stocking rates (normally, up to 1 Livestock Unit per hectare per annum)
- Top pernicious weeds but not from 15 March to 15 July
- Comply with the standards of Good Farming Practice and Article 13 of the Rural Development Implementing Regulation, together with Best Farming Practices recommended by the Environment Agency
- Undertake an agreed programme of rhynes and ditch management.

Do not....

- Cultivate, re-seed, under-drain or alter existing drains (unless also undertaking Supplement C or D)
- Roll, chain harrow or mow from 15 March to 15 July
- Apply pesticides, inorganic fertiliser or slurry but herbicide spot-treatment and weed-wiping may be permitted by prior agreement with English Nature
- Feed supplements to livestock unless by specific prior agreement with English Nature.

Supplement A Rhynes, ditch and pond management*

To provide conditions favourable for aquatic plants and invertebrates ...

- Maintain water levels within rhynes, ditches and ponds at the

Summer penning height[#]

- Outside the Summer penning period, maintain water in rhynes, ditches and ponds at a minimum depth of 15cm (6 inches)
- Rhynes and ditches are to be cleaned to a programme agreed with English Nature. They should demonstrate a varied structure and a range of stages from newly cleaned through to nearly choked with vegetation
- Clean with English Nature-approved keeching equipment, with minimal disturbance to roots and ditch profile
- Cut vegetation on one side only of a rhynes or ditch leaving occasional patches of vegetation for recolonisation. Use a reciprocating cutter, or if necessary a flail mower
- In order to achieve poached edges, do not fence rhynes and ditches unless fields are stocked with sheep.

Supplement B Hay meadow management

To enhance conditions for ground-nesting birds, wildflowers and invertebrates...

- This supplement is only paid when a hay crop has been made and removed in accordance with a grazing and haymaking plan approved by English Nature
- Shut-up fields from 15 March to 15 July
- Leave a 6m (20 foot) uncut strip alongside all ditches, rhynes and ponds
- Make a hay crop after 15 July
- Bales must be removed from fields within 2 weeks of baling and may only be wrapped or

bagged by prior agreement with English Nature

- If required, apply home-produced well-rotted farmyard manure (FYM) as agreed with English Nature
- Do not apply any FYM within 10m (33 feet) of all watercourses, ponds and field edges.

Supplement C Water level management*

To achieve surface splash conditions for wintering wildfowl...

- From 1 November to 15 March control water levels in rhynes, ditches, gutters and ponds to allow the retention of surface water on fields, when weather conditions permit
- For the rest of the year maintain water levels within rhynes, ditches and ponds at the Summer penning height[#].

Supplement D Enhanced water level management*

To achieve winter and spring surface splash conditions suitable for wintering and breeding waders and to reduce disturbance to ground nesting birds...

- From 1 November to 15 March control water levels in rhynes, ditches, gutters and ponds to allow the retention of surface water on fields, when weather conditions permit
- From 16 March to 30 June slowly reduce the area of surface water but aim to retain some wet patches
- For the rest of the year maintain water levels within rhynes, ditches and ponds at the Summer penning height[#]
- Apply agreed stocking rates from 16 March to 30 June.

([#]Dates and heights of Summer penning are provided by your local Internal Drainage Board or the Environment Agency)

Supplement E Small fields of less than 2 hectares*

- Manage small fields to ensure all boundaries are complete (stockproof), permanent and natural and utilised for optimum wildlife benefit in the landscape
- Gateways must not be wider than 3.6m (12 feet)
- Undertake an agreed programme of appropriate field and field margin management.

2 Wildlife headlands

- Leave a 6m (20 foot) uncut strip alongside all ditches, rhynes and ponds
- Control brambles, nettles and thistles by cutting every 2-4 years.

Special Projects*

Payment for special projects may also be available. Please discuss your ideas for any such projects or works with English Nature. As there is no set payment for these, you may be offered a percentage of the agreed costs.

For example, special payments may be available for:

- Saltmarsh and sea wall management
- Registered pedigree Traditional Breeds grazing
- Improving the management of existing arable land for wildlife
- Restoration or enhancement of wildlife habitats
- Nesting boxes for birds and bats
- Whole farm plans
- Geological enhancement works
- Spreading hay from local species-rich grassland
- Pest control and sporting management
- Parasite treatment and control.

* These Supplements may also be available to farmers on land in DEFRA's Countryside Stewardship Scheme agreements.

Works payments

Construction of penning structures (bunds, sluices etc)	
Timber sluice	£150
Brick/stone/concrete sluice	£400
Construction of culverts	£75
Creation or re-instatement of field gutters or gripes	£0.50 per m
Creation of new ditches and reinstatement of old ditches	£2 per m
Creation of scrapes	
First 100 m ²	£1.25 per m ²
Thereafter	£0.25 per m ²
Creation of berms (shelves) and reprofiling	£1.50 per m
Hedge coppicing and laying	£3 per m
Pollarding of trees	£25
Pond creation and restoration	
First 100 m ²	£3 per m ²
Thereafter	£0.50 per m ²
Protective fencing (with hedge coppicing or laying)	£2 per m
Provision of drinking points	£40
Removal of existing fences	£1 per m
Scrub removal (alongside ditches, rhynes and ponds)	£1.50 per m
Timber otter holts	£40
Gate (including posts etc.)	£125

Management payments

Habitat	Payments
1 Permanent pasture	£75 per ha
Supplements	
A Rhyne Ditch and Pond Management	£2 per 100 m
B Hay meadow management	£25 per ha
C Water level management	£25 per ha
D Enhanced water level management	£60 per ha
E Small fields: 1.1 – 2 ha	£20 per ha
0.6 – 1 ha	£40 per ha
0.1 – 0.5 ha	£80 per ha
2 Wildlife headlands	£5 per 100 m

Maximum payment per farm: £5000 per year

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