



Views About Management

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Section 28(4)

A statement of Natural England's views about the management of Cotswold Water Park Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

This statement represents Natural England's views about the management of Cotswold Water Park SSSI for nature conservation. It sets out, in principle, our views on how the site's special conservation interest can be conserved and enhanced. Natural England has a duty to notify the owners and occupiers of SSSIs of its views about the management of the site.

Not all of the management principles will necessarily be equally appropriate to all parts of the SSSI. Also, there may be other management activities, additional to our current views, which can be beneficial to the conservation and enhancement of the features of interest.

This Statement does not constitute consent for any of the 'operations requiring Natural England's consent'. The written consent of Natural England is required before carrying out any of those operations. Natural England welcomes consultation with owners, occupiers and users of the SSSI to ensure that management of this site conserves and enhances the features of interest, and to ensure that all necessary prior consents are obtained.

Background

Gravel pits, despite their origins, may support wildlife equal in value to that of natural lakes, and can be important habitats for a range of specialised aquatic plant and animal species. The rich variety of wetland habitats associated with flooded gravel pits include extensive shallow and deep open water, vegetated margins, reedbed, fen, damp grassland, surface pools, ditches, scrub and wet woodland, all of which can add considerably to the diversity of the habitats and species present. For example, they often support important populations of wintering waterbirds and breeding bird assemblages typical of lowland open waters and their margins plus associated scrub habitats, as well as important populations of aquatic plants.

Management principles

A variety of water levels and chemistry within the main water bodies is necessary for the maintenance of both the bird species assemblages and charophytes. Charophytes (stoneworts) are aquatic plants which vary in size from a few centimetres to over a metre in length. They are often associated with the early stages of succession in newly dug or cleared waterbodies which have very clear, good quality water which is low in nutrients. They are particularly abundant in calcareous or brackish habitats. In some cases, the more robust species can develop perennial charophyte communities which can last for several decades. For the more sensitive pioneer species suitable habitat conditions require regular management of the early successional stage, so that they will not eventually be 'squeezed out' by more competitive aquatic and emergent vegetation. Such management can often be achieved by periodic and regulated re-disturbance of habitat.

The lateral movement of groundwater through the Cotswold Water Park is important in maintaining water quality, but where pollution occurs in one lake this means that further lakes may be affected in due course. All efforts should be made to eliminate point sources of pollution or prevent them developing. Management actions on the surrounding land should be carried out in ways that do not contribute to diffuse water pollution.

The presence of extensive shallow water and wet marginal substrates will provide the feeding conditions required by a variety of wintering, passage and breeding waterbirds, such as dabbling ducks and waders, whilst other species may require larger areas of open deep water. Structural diversity within and between stands of aquatic vegetation (including emergent, floating and submerged vegetation) can provide important habitat for the immature stages of many fish, and