



## Views About Management

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Section 28(4) (as amended)

### **A statement of Natural England's views about the management of Dallow Downs and Winsdon Hill Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)**

This statement represents Natural England's views about the management of the SSSI for nature conservation. This statement 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 SSSI of its views about the management of the land.

Not all of the management principles will 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 the management of this site conserves and enhances the features of interest, and to ensure that all necessary prior consents are obtained.

#### **Management Principles**

In order to maintain a herb-rich sward and its associated invertebrates, calcareous grassland requires active management. Without management it rapidly becomes dominated by stands of rank grasses, such as tor-grass. These grasses, together with the build-up of dead plant matter, suppress less vigorous species and lower the botanical diversity of the site. Eventually, the site reverts to scrub and the special grassland interest will be lost.

Traditionally, management of calcareous grassland is achieved by grazing. The precise timing and intensity of grazing will vary both between and within sites, according to local conditions and requirements (such as type of stock or the needs of particular vegetation types, individual plants or animals of conservation concern; on some sites, for example, certain invertebrates can benefit from the presence of taller vegetation) but should aim to keep a relatively open sward without causing excessive poaching. Light trampling can be beneficial by breaking down leaf litter and providing bare patches for seed germination and some invertebrates.

Whilst recognising that grazing is the optimal management regime, in some instances it may not be a practical management option. Where this is the case, an appropriate cutting regime should be used to reduce the dominance of the more vigorous plant species. Care should be taken to ensure that the timing, frequency, height and extent of any cut would not conflict with the management of any important botanical or invertebrate interest that may be present. In order to maximise plant diversity, arisings from cutting should be removed from the site as part of this management process.

The grassland management also needs to take account of the habitat requirements for great pignut *Bunium bulbocastanum*. This species thrives in slightly taller areas of the sward, so parts of the site that are of particular importance for it should be identified, and ideally have grazing or cutting timed for later in the season to allow it to flower and set seed.

An element of managed scrub, both within and fringing calcareous grassland, will add diversity to the site but excessive scrub should be controlled. Surrounding, well-managed hedgerows can provide important additional wildlife habitat.

The application of pesticides, including herbicides, or any fertilizer would be damaging to the sward.

**Date notified:** 13 October 2020