



## **Views About Management**

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Section 28(4) as inserted by  
Schedule 9 to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

### **A statement of Natural England's views about the management of Down Farm 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**

#### **Lowland meadows with an assemblage of grassland fungi**

It is essential that old un-fertilised grassland with a diverse community of grassland fungi should be managed using sympathetic and generally traditional methods. Applications of lime (except in exceptional circumstances and after consultation), artificial fertilisers, herbicides and fungicides should be avoided.

Grazing and/or mowing should keep the grassland short. Without such management or intervention the sward becomes progressively dominated by tall and vigorous grasses which, together with an associated build-up of dead plant matter, suppress less vigorous species, reduce botanical diversity and may compromise the fungal diversity of the site. Any clippings should be removed from the site rather than left on the ground.

At Down Farm the grassland is managed in most years by taking a hay cut in mid to late summer, with aftermath grazing through late summer to late winter, but the precise timing depends on local factors, including past management and current weather conditions. This management ensures the season's vegetation growth is removed and the sward kept relatively short through the autumn and winter. Stock tends to be removed in late winter with flexibility to graze spring growth before shutting up for the hay sometime in spring.

Occasionally the meadows have been treated as pasture land, maintained by longer periods of grazing. In general, the precise timing and intensity of grazing will vary, according to local conditions and requirements (such as the type or availability of stock, or the needs of individual plants or fungi) but should aim to keep a relatively open sward. Ideally, grazing should be removed at the peak time of fungal fruiting, although light grazing will help maintain a short sward into autumn/winter.

Light trampling can be of benefit by breaking down leaf litter and providing areas for seed germination, but excessive trampling that causes noticeable poaching of the meadows should be avoided at all times.

Surrounding, well-managed hedgerows may considerably add to the habitat in providing shelter for invertebrates.

**Date notified: 7 February 2019**