

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)

The aim of these rules is to help protect, manage and maintain Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) because they are important for rare species, habitats, geology and landscapes.

A. You must

1. get Natural England's consent in writing before carrying out, causing or allowing any operation listed in an SSSI's legal documents¹;
2. comply with all management notices² served by Natural England or the terms of any restoration orders served by a court.

B You must not

1. intentionally or recklessly destroy or damage any of the SSSI's special interest features, or disturb any fauna that are a special interest feature. This rule can apply to actions that take place outside the SSSI itself but which have the same consequences.

You will not break any of these rules if you have reasonable excuse³ to carry out certain operations.

These rules apply to all SSSIs. Where the land is also classified as a European site (Special Protection Area or Special Area of Conservation) and there is a breach we will also consider the non-compliance under the relevant requirement (SMR 1) or (SMR 5).



Further advice and guidance

For general information, to find out whether your land is an SSSI, to find out why an SSSI is of special interest, and to get a copy of the operations requiring Natural England's consent on an SSSI visit the Natural England website at www.naturalengland.org.uk, and click on the link 'Information for > SSSI owners and occupiers'. To find out why an SSSI is of special interest, follow the above link and click on 'Search for SSSI details' and enter the name of the SSSI into the search box and read the 'citation'. Alternatively, call Natural England on 0845 600 3078.

Guidance for *Cross Compliance in England: Management of Habitats and Landscape Features* (rpa176) is available on our website at rpa.defra.gov.uk/crosscompliance/farmerguidance.

Natural England: 0845 600 3078

- 1 If you have a management agreement, such as a Higher Level Stewardship agreement, you already have consent for the operations outlined in that document. Similarly, if you have planning permission or permission from another public body, you do not need consent from Natural England as well.
- 2 A management notice is different from a management agreement as it legally obliges the recipient to carry out certain activities.
- 3 A 'reasonable excuse' may include: you have planning permission to carry out the work; you have consent from a public body or statutory authority that has complied with its duty to consult Natural England before giving the consent; it is an emergency operation (provided that Natural England is told as soon as possible after the emergency).