

What does this mean for landowners?

Habitats found on Local Wildlife Sites are a priority target for agri-environment grants such as Environmental Stewardship managed by Natural England and the County Council's Somerset Landscape Scheme. These schemes are designed to achieve environmental benefits and aim to make conservation part of farming and land management practice.

If you own or manage a Local Wildlife Site there are no additional statutory restrictions over agricultural operations and absolutely no new rights of access are created. Owners manage their Local Wildlife Sites according to their own wishes and as such can make an important contribution to Somerset wildlife.

Local authorities recognise the importance of Local Wildlife Sites and may show their boundaries on local development plans. The wildlife value of the site, together with all other planning considerations, will be taken into account in any future planning application, or woodland grant, which could adversely affect wildlife on the site.

Somerset Wildlife Trust

Somerset Wildlife Trust is the county's largest voluntary nature conservation organisation, with more than 20,000 members. The Trust owns and manages a network of nature reserves, advises local authorities, statutory bodies, landowners and private individuals on wildlife matters, and promotes sustainable wildlife management in a variety of ways.

Part of the Trust's work is to provide wildlife management advice to owners and managers of Local Wildlife Sites. During face-to-face visits, the wildlife value of each site is discussed and options for continuing and practical management outlined.

The Wildlife Trust can also assist with advice on and applications for agri-environment grant support.

If you would like to arrange for a visit or need further advice, then please contact:

Somerset Wildlife Trust



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Local (County) Wildlife Sites *explained*



Local Wildlife Sites were formerly called County Wildlife Sites



What are Local Wildlife Sites?

Local Wildlife Sites are important areas for the wildlife that they contain, whether plants, birds, mammals, insects, fungi or molluscs. They include traditional meadows and pasture that have not been re-seeded or heavily fertilised, as well as other habitats like ponds and watercourses, wetland, heathland, and ancient broadleaved woodland.

Unlike Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Local Wildlife Site status does not confer any legal or statutory implication and sites rely entirely upon sympathetic management by their owners for their conservation. Somerset Wildlife Trust would like to encourage the continuation of such management and may be able to assist owners to obtain grant support. We can also offer support and advice on management. There are currently over 2000 Local Wildlife Sites throughout Somerset. The Wildlife Sites system also operates in most other counties throughout the UK.



Why are Local Wildlife Sites important?

The rural landscape has been shaped by centuries of traditional farming and land management methods. Its varied and important habitats support many rare species and depend on long-established human practices to survive.

Agricultural practices have changed significantly since the last war as farmers have successfully responded to the pressures put on them to increase food production. In many instances wildlife has been lost as meadows have been re-seeded, marshes drained and old woods abandoned or replanted with conifers.

As a result, there has been a significant decline in habitats for wildlife across the country. In Somerset, however, we are fortunate to still have areas of important habitats which have been maintained by farmers and managers through their sympathetic management. The Trust would like to encourage the continuation of this conservation-friendly management, so that the value of these areas is protected into the future.

How are Local Wildlife Sites selected?

Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC) has been gathering, collating and updating information on wildlife and habitats across Somerset for many years. Using criteria approved by Somerset Biodiversity Partnership, SERC assesses sites for their wildlife importance within the county context. Those sites that meet these criteria are known as Local Wildlife Sites.

Information on Local Wildlife Sites is continually updated onto a map of the county. Information about Local Wildlife Sites can then be used to:

- Support landowners in managing these sites for the wildlife present;
- Provide accurate data for assessing the current condition of these habitats and how this may change in the future;

With the permission of the landowner, ideally site surveys are repeated at regular intervals with the aim of surveying grassland sites about every ten years and woodland sites about every twenty years. Owners always receive a copy of any survey results.

