

APPENDIX H

Protecting Special Sites

Background

Your site may have a plant or animal living on it that is protected to preserve a particular type of habitat and/or species. Before thinking about any physical alterations or improvements you must first research the designation and therefore protection the site may have. Common examples of designation are Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs).

Although any change to a site will have to be approved by the site manager, you can find out some information about your site via the Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL) website, in particular by using the search on the iGiGL map pages www.gigl.org.uk.

SSSIs, SACs et al

There are over 4,000 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in England, covering around 7% of the country's land area. Over half of these sites, by area, are internationally important for their wildlife, and designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) or Ramsar sites. Many SSSIs are also National Nature Reserves (NNRs) or Local Nature Reserves (LNRs).

SSSIs are the country's very best wildlife and geological sites. They include some of our most spectacular and beautiful habitats - large wetlands teeming with waders and waterfowl, winding chalk rivers, gorse and heather-clad heathlands, flower-rich meadows, windswept shingle beaches and remote uplands moorland and peat bog.

It is essential to preserve our remaining natural heritage for future generations. Wildlife and geological features are under pressure from development, pollution, climate change and unsustainable land management. SSSIs are important as they support plants and animals that find it more difficult to survive in the wider countryside. Protecting and managing SSSIs is a shared responsibility, and an investment for the benefit of future generations.

The unique and varied habitats of SSSIs have developed over hundreds of years through management practices such as grazing and forestry, and need active management to maintain their conservation interest. Natural England works with over 26,000 separate owners and land managers, who work very hard to conserve these important sites. Maintaining goodwill and building upon the enthusiasm, knowledge and interest of owners is vital to successfully manage these nationally important sites.

For further reading on SSSIs refer to the natural England website at www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk.