

Moving ahead Restoring Britain's landscape



We've carried out over £400,000 of improvements at our SSSI with our partners in the New Forest.

We own and manage many Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) around Britain.

As one of the UK's biggest landowners we're very aware of our responsibility to protect the environment around us. We're investing £6.1m in our SSSIs to help move them into a positive conservation status by the end of 2010.

In England, sites are designated as SSSIs by Natural England and protected by law being of national, and sometimes international importance for ecological and geological reasons. The sites include grassland, railway cuttings and coastal areas.

In 2000, Natural England and the Government agreed a target to bring 95 per cent of SSSI land in England into a 'favourable'¹ or 'recovering'² condition by December 2010. The delivery of this target is coordinated by Natural England.

¹Meeting the set conservation objectives.

²Meaning that the necessary management measures are in place and that a favourable condition will be reached in time.

21 of our SSSIs are included in it. We set up a £6.1m investment programme to meet the target and Natural England has reported that 82.1 per cent of these 21 SSSIs are now in favourable or recovering status – a great improvement on last year (2008/09: 52.2 per cent).

Two sites that highlight the range and impact of our improvements are Dawlish Cliffs and the New Forest.

Dawlish Cliffs SSSI

The railway runs right along the base of Dawlish Cliffs near Plymouth, a site of national geological importance.

Over the years, the cliff faces have been invaded by Hottentot fig, which has found a foothold where our weed sprayers can't easily reach. Our team in Plymouth have worked hard to remove vegetation at the base of the cliffs to allow them to spray and kill the invasive fig and reveal more of the cliffs. This work has put the site into Natural England's 'recovering' status.

The New Forest SSSI

The New Forest is not simply a forest. It has a range of habitat types, including large tracts of unenclosed pasture land, heathland and forest, and is home to numerous species of birds, reptiles and mammals. The site is of national and international importance for both biological and geological reasons.

Our team in Eastleigh has worked closely with Natural England, the Forestry Commission and the New Forest Verderers to carry out over £400,000 of improvements on this SSSI – a complex task alongside the operational railway which runs through the New Forest.

Working in partnership with Natural England, we have helped restore the natural landscape, and we're delighted that the site has now been designated by Natural England as recovering.

The railway runs right along the base of Dawlish Cliffs near Plymouth, a site of national geological importance.

Dawlish Cliffs after works have taken place showing where the Hottentot fig has died.

