

**High Weald Grassland SNCI
Landowner Liaison Project**

A review of current biodiversity status, management regimes and management issues for High Weald unimproved grassland sites with SNCI/LWS status

***Dolphin Ecological Surveys
2013***

***On behalf of
The High Weald AONB Unit***

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1.0 BACKGROUND AND AIMS OF THE REVIEW

1.1 Unimproved Grassland with Non-statutory Designation

Lowland, unimproved, neutral grassland is a fragmented, declining and vulnerable habitat of high ecological value.

The extent and quality of the unimproved grassland resource within the High Weald is of national importance and there are high value grassland sites spread across the AONB in East Sussex, Kent and West Sussex.

Nationally more than 97% of unimproved neutral meadows were lost between 1930 and 1984. On a more local scale, in a report for English Nature (now Natural England) in 1990 there was a recorded loss of 40.5ha of unimproved grassland habitat from just 5 sites in East Sussex between 1978 and 1990 (A Botanical Survey of Unimproved Neutral Grassland in East Sussex. Stevens 1990).

A large number of unimproved and species-rich neutral grassland sites within the High Weald AONB have non-statutory recognition for their wildlife value. In Sussex these “Local Sites” (as defined by Defra) are known as Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs) whilst in Kent they are called Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). In this report SNCI is used as the generic term.

The majority of Sussex SNCIs were identified between 1990 and 1995 whilst designation of most Kent LWS first took place in 1986, with subsequent amendments and updates. The importance of these ecologically valuable High Weald grasslands has thus been recognised for more than 20 years.

In East Sussex and West Sussex the County Councils have primary responsibility for designating and administering their Local Wildlife Site networks. In Kent it is the County Wildlife Trust that takes the lead role. Each county has different mechanisms for delivering this service but all of them work in partnership with other local authorities, conservation bodies and land management advisors.

The SNCI/LWS qualifying criteria, process of site declaration, landowner contact protocols and the resources available to support these sites differ between the three counties. Internal review mechanisms for the status of SNCIs also vary greatly between the different lead bodies in the AONB.

Local Authorities must provide data on improved local biodiversity directly to Defra as part of their obligations under Single Data List 160-00 (previously supplied under National Indicator 197). This data is used to assess the proportion of Local Wildlife Sites under positive conservation management. However, the Single Data reporting mechanism can yield quite misleading results for unimproved grassland SNCIs since “positive conservation management” status is not rigorously defined for different habitats. For example, simply being on land within an Entry Level Stewardship agreement is sufficient to earn positive conservation management status but unimproved grassland needs consistent, active and well-informed management to retain its special interest.

1.2 The Need for a Targeted Review of High Weald Grassland SNCIs

The High Weald AONB Unit commissioned this grassland SNCI landowner liaison project as a direct consequence of a recent investigation into the state of East Sussex SNCIs that was

carried out on behalf of East Sussex County Council (ESCC) by the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre in 2011.

The review of all East Sussex SNCIs was based on aerial photo interpretation. It suggested that there could have been a substantial loss of area, and perhaps a reduction in quality, of SNCI grassland sites. However, aerial photos of grassland sites are notoriously difficult to interpret and the results can rarely be substituted for field survey. The East Sussex review also revealed a significant lack of accessible data about the ownership, condition and management status of unimproved grassland SNCIs.

It was apparent that there had been little or no active engagement with some owners of SNCI grassland sites in East Sussex since the years immediately following the original SNCI designation process in the early 1990s. It was also probable that at least some of the sites had changed ownership in the time since designation and that the new owners might not be aware of the status and importance of their grassland SNCIs.

There are numerous different conservation organisations and land management advisors who may provide help and support to the owners of grassland SNCIs, so the exact situation for many sites was far from clear.

1.3 Outputs of the Review

The High Weald Unit has been helping to support landowners and advise them on the management of ecologically valuable grassland through the Weald Meadows Initiative (WMI), the High Weald Management Plan and other projects since 1995. Advisors from the Unit have a good understanding of the various difficulties that can be encountered by meadow owners in the High Weald AONB.

The purpose of this review was to update the available information about the ownership and status of species-rich, neutral grassland SNCIs in the High Weald, their management regimes and the condition of the remaining SNCI unimproved grassland resource. Updated information about SNCI owners and grassland condition will help the Unit to direct and prioritise future landowner engagement and assistance.

Botanical surveys carried out by the WMI and others from the mid-1990s onwards have confirmed that there are many more areas of unimproved and semi-improved species rich grassland in the High Weald which are of equivalent quality to the SNCI series. However, this review is limited to sites that have actually been designated as SNCI/LWS.

The review aimed to provide the following:

- Updated landowner contact details for grassland SNCIs in the High Weald AONB
- Engagement with as many landowners as possible, in the time available, who have not been contacted in the last 3 years and to present a summary of the communication
- A review of the condition of grassland SNCIs
- Insight into current grassland SNCI management regimes
- A summary of current management issues and threats to grassland SNCIs
- A better understanding of how to assist and communicate with grassland SNCI owners

2.0 REVIEW METHODS

2.1 A Definitive List of High Weald Grassland SNCIs

The starting point for this review was to produce a definitive list of unimproved or species-rich grassland SNCIs/LWS that fall within the AONB boundary.

Initially the HW Unit provided a list of 195 unimproved grassland fields/sites designated as SNCIs that were scattered across the High Weald; 85 in Kent, 101 in East Sussex and 9 in West Sussex. This was based on the AONB Policy Manager's analysis of SNCI data and the High Weald grassland dataset held at the Unit.

This list was subsequently modified and the number of individual sites was considerably reduced, for example by grouping multiple fields belonging to a single SNCI site and removing sites that had a very minor grassland component of limited ecological significance or those which had primarily been designated for other habitats/features, such as woodland sites with herb-rich rides. Conversely some extra grassland SNCIs were added to the list following consultation with West Sussex County Council (WSCC) and Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT).

Comparing some of the most basic data about sites in the different counties can be difficult as Local Sites information is captured and stored differently in each county. SNCI citations and maps were consulted to help ensure that the most appropriate sites were included in the review.

A degree of judgement was used to decide exactly which sites to include in the review and some of the SNCIs were considered to be borderline cases. The main purpose of the review was to assess the status of species-rich meadow and pasture sites, but there is inevitably some overlap with related habitats such as wetland and heathland, which may contain unimproved grassland elements. There are also some sites which include very small areas of neutral grassland, for example a disused railway line in East Sussex.

Information about the grassland SNCIs was sought from the major conservation and land management partners that are likely to be in contact with High Weald SNCI meadow owners. These are the High Weald Unit, Natural England, the county wildlife trusts, county councils, the WMI and the Kent High Weald Project (KHWP). Partners were asked to supply as much information as possible about landowner contact details, recent contact with landowners, management regimes, site condition and any threats to the SNCIs.

2.2 Prioritising Sites for Landowner Contact

The final list of 104 SNCI grassland sites had to be prioritised for contact and review because there was a limited amount of time available for this project.

Sites where the landowner had definitely been contacted by a conservation body, local authority or land management advisor in the period 2009-2012 were largely excluded from the review so that time and effort could be focussed on those landowners who had apparently not been offered any assistance or support for more than 3 years.

Where there was known to be a potential threat to a meadow SNCI, even if there had apparently been some fairly recent contact with the landowner, the site was given an increased priority for engagement.

East Sussex sites were given higher priority for contact with landowners because in recent years this county has not had dedicated staff or other resources available specifically to monitor SNCIs, in contrast to West Sussex and Kent where support for SNCIs/LWS has been much better resourced.

2.3 Contact and Engagement with SNCI Owners

A brief, structured interview format was designed to help capture in a short time as much information as possible about SNCI status and management (see Appendix 4 for the questionnaire format).

The interview questions were intended to initiate or renew engagement with landowners who had not been contacted by conservation or land management advisors in recent years and to open a pathway for more regular future contact. Owners were specifically asked whether they would be willing to have further contact from the High Weald Unit and how they would prefer that contact to be made.

Dawn Brickwood, the former WMI Officer who has had a considerable amount of engagement with many grassland owners and managers in the High Weald in the past, carried out most of the landowner interviews.

Where current landowner contact details of high priority site were already known, a structured interview was conducted over the phone or the questionnaire was emailed to the owner for them to complete.

Where landowner details were uncertain or completely unknown then a variety of methods were used to track down the current SNCI owner. These included site visits to the SNCIs and nearby properties to enquire directly about ownership of the land as well as informal contact with local farmers and others known to WMI who might have useful information or leads.

Sites that are managed under Environmental Stewardship agreements are shown on the government land-use mapping site www.magic.gov.uk. Natural England holds information about the landowners on such sites and in some cases NE was able to request that they allowed their contact details to be released for the purpose of this review.

3.0 RESULTS OF THE REVIEW

3.1 Data Sharing Constraints

The main difficulty in carrying out a review of this kind, which involves different organisations sharing third party contact details, is that due consideration must be shown to organisations' Data Protection policies.

In this case WSCC was able to provide landowner contact details on the basis that the information is only used for SNCI related work purposes and is not shared beyond the HW Unit. In contrast KWT was not able to supply any specific landowner details, but instead was willing to indicate whether one or more LWS owners are known to KWT.

Natural England is aware of landowner details for sites where there is an Environmental Stewardship agreement in place, but cannot share these details without the explicit consent of the landowner. In one case this consent was sought but a reply was not forthcoming at the time of writing.

3.2 County Differences

It very quickly became clear that the emphasis and scope of the grassland SNCI review would need to be quite different for each of the three counties of East Sussex, West Sussex and Kent.

3.2.1 West Sussex

WSCC has put considerable staff resources into monitoring and supporting their SNCI series over many years and had a dedicated SNCI officer for several years. The West Sussex system is very effective and they have good, recent information for the vast majority of the sites in their county. WSCC has ongoing SNCI landowner engagement with many of those people who are willing to accept it.

WSCC was able to provide a complete list of site owners, contact details and condition assessments of their High Weald grassland SNCIs. All but one of the 11 sites had had recent contact or attempts at contact by WSCC.

The West Sussex SNCI owners were therefore not considered to be a priority for further engagement under this review.

3.2.2 East Sussex

Until very recently ESCC has devoted far less staff time to their SNCI series than has WSCC and as a consequence their direct engagement with SNCI owners has been minimal.

East Sussex has been a focus of considerable meadow conservation and management effort in the past through the High Weald Unit, WMI and others. East Sussex SNCIs include some extensive and very important examples of lowland unimproved grassland. However, the contact and support offered specifically to grassland SNCI owners in East Sussex appears to have been much less than in other parts of the High Weald.

The East Sussex SNCI owners were therefore made the highest priority for contact under this review.

3.2.3 Kent

The information supplied by KWT about Kent unimproved grassland LWS (SNCI) site owners was rather opaque due to data sharing constraints, which made prioritising these sites problematic.

It appeared that many sites had been contacted by KWT since 2009 and would thus be of lower priority for this review. KWT endeavours to survey each LWS at least every 10 years and produces an occasional newsletter for LWS owners every 2-3 years.

The recorded date of most recent contact with Kent site owners may only reflect when KWT has sent a letter to the last known owner of the LWS, it may not mean that the owners are in any way engaged by KWT or that they are managing their sites appropriately.

However, KWT does have a regular schedule for engagement with LWS owners in the county and there is a risk that too many different approaches to landowners from diverse sources may become an annoyance and ultimately be counter-productive.

The Kent site owners were therefore not made a priority for contact under this review, though future targeted contact of sites for which there is little data, in partnership with KWT, could be very valuable.

Additional information about Kent sites was sought from the Kent High Weald Project (KHWP). This body has helped grassland owners on several sites by producing management plans and assisting with entry into HLS, which will promote appropriate, sustainable management of unimproved grassland. For example, KHWP directly manage the grassland at the Brokes Wood LNR site by conservation grazing.

3.3 High Weald Grassland SNCIs Site List

A summary list of the High Weald grassland SNCIs included in the review is given in Table 1 below and a more detailed spreadsheet forms a confidential appendix to this report.

The spreadsheet contains a grid reference for each site but this may reflect the central point of the larger SNCI/LWS and not necessarily the exact location for the grassland component(s). It also contains the names and full contact details of all the SNCI owners that were found for this review and hence is not included within the body of the report, which may be distributed beyond the HW Unit.

3.4 Landowner Contact and Interviews

Direct contact was made with 28 East Sussex SNCI owners or managers by phone and in person, mostly by Dawn Brickwood (former WMI Officer) but also on a small number of sites by Kate Ryland (Dolphin Ecological Surveys).

In some cases the landowners were not keen to be involved with the SNCI review, in others a questionnaire was sent to the owners for completion but was not returned in time for inclusion in the report. Structured interviews resulting in a completed questionnaire were achieved for 17 of these SNCIs. The completed questionnaires are reproduced in full in the confidential appendix to this report.

The results of all the landowner engagement conversations form a substantial part of the review but information about the status and condition of grassland SSSIs also came from other sources including WSCC, ESCC, WMI, SWT, KHWP and KWT.

The review results are summarised in section 3.5 and include information about management regimes, issues with management and threats to SSSIs from the landowners' perspective.

Table 1. Grassland SNCI/LWS in the High Weald

High priority was given to those sites where there does not appear to have been any contact with the owners since pre-2009 and those sites which may be under threat for some reason.

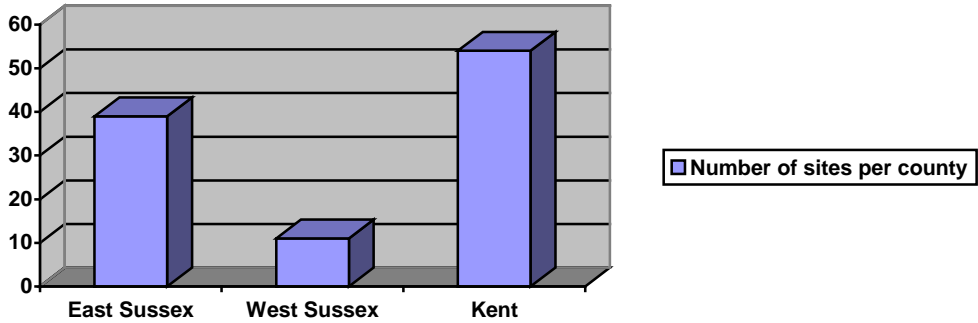
Sites where the owners' details were confirmed or who were successfully contacted during the review (even if they declined further contact) are shaded.

East Sussex		
CR07	Hole Farm Meadows	High priority
CR10	Wheel Cottage Meadow	High priority
CR11	Ashburnham Forge Meadows	
CR13	Hurst Green Meadows	High priority
CR16	Cripps Corner Meadows	
CR17	Burnt Chimney Farm Meadows	
CR18	Disused Railway, Crowhurst	
CR19	Battle Cemetery	
CR20	South Park Pony Stud Meadows	
CR25	Boonshill Farm Meadow	High priority
CR26	Brays Hill Meadow	High Priority
CR37	Lankhurst Meadow	
CR38	Darwell Reservoir Complex	High priority
CR39	Dabchick Cottage Meadow & Woodland	
CR40	Limekiln Wood Complex	
CR51	Henhurst Farm Wood & Meadows	
CR52	High Lankhurst Farm Meadow	
CR55	The Haven Meadow	High priority
CW01	Washwell Lane Scrub	High priority
CW03	Furnace Lane Meadow	High priority
CW04	Fosters North	
CW06	Frant Meadows	High priority
CW07	Newick Lane Meadow	
CW08	Upper Old Mill Meadows	
CW09	Hastingford Meadow	
CW12	Sheffield Park & Meadows	High priority
CW13	Canter sand Meadows & Gillhope Bank Wood Gill	High priority
CW20	Hadlow Down Churchyard	
CW26	Three Cups Corner Meadows	High priority
CW34	Dryads Field	High priority
CW49	Selwyns Wood Meadow	High priority
CW50	Snape House Meadow	
CW51	Stephens Farm Meadow	High priority
CW60	Holtye Common	High priority
CW69	Rowland Wood Meadow	
CW70	Clays Wood	High priority
CW76	Mayfield College Playing Field & Gill	High priority
CW77	Bramble Cottage Meadow	High priority
CW90	Chantlers Farm Meadows	
West Sussex		
M21	Lower & Upper Lakes & Meadows, Gravetye Estate	
M22	Balcombe Lake and associated woodland	
M27	Mill Place Meadow	
M29	High Beeches	

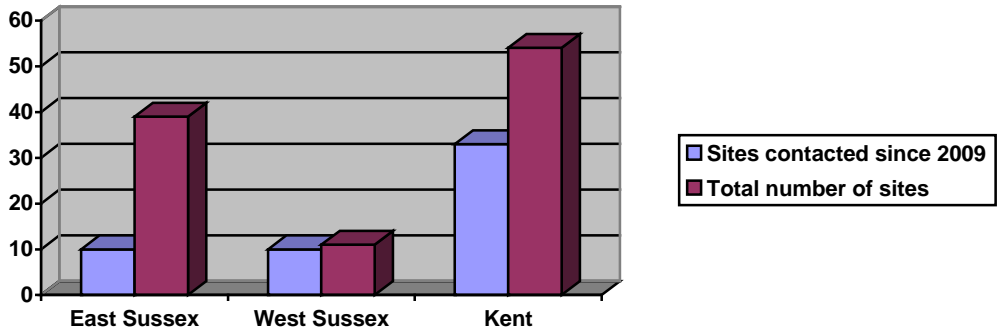
M32	Ashplatts Wood	
M35	Balcombe Marsh	
M36	Burstye Farm	
M38	Hook Farm Pasture	
M40	Loder Valley - Hanging Meadows (part of Ardingly Reservoir)	
M41	Herries Pasture, Ashurst Wood	
M52	Stonelands Farm Pasture, West Hoathly	
Kent		
AS06	Heronden Woods & Pasture	High priority
AS08	Rother Levels & adjacent woods	
AS09	Halden Place Orchard	
AS43	Woods and pasture, Millpond Farm near St. Michaels	High priority
AS65	Rolvenden Churchyard	
SE20	River Eden	
SE21	Moorden Meadow	
SE26/TM26	River Medway	High priority
SE27	Hever Pasture	
SE28	Woods south of Chiddingstone Castle	High priority
SE29	Stonewall Park, Chiddingstone Hoath	High priority
SE30	Pasture and Woods near Hobb's Hill Farm, Cowden	High priority
SE31	Woods & Pasture Cowden	High priority
SE34	Gilridge, Cobhambury and Shernden Woods	High priority
SE56	Pasture & Woods Cowden Pound	
SE57	Tubbs Hole Pastures	
SE59	Old Orchards & Woodlands near Markbeech	
TW04	Angley Wood, Cranbrook	
TW06	Goudhurst Pasture	High priority
TW07	Bedgebury Park School	
TW08	Bedgebury Forest, Hawkhurst	
TW11	Old Swan Farm	
TW12	Woods & Pasture Nr River Teise	
TW13	White Chimney Wood	
TW14	Horsmonden Churchyard	
TW16	Brenchley Wood	High priority
TW17	Pembury Walks	High priority
TW18	Tudeley Woods	High priority
TW19	Somerhill Park	
TW21	High Wood, Hawkenbury	
TW22	Windmill Farm, Hawkenbury	
TW23	Friezland Wood, Tunbridge Wells	
TW25	Brokes Wood	
TW26	Bidborough Woods & Pasture	
TW27	Southborough Common	
TW28	Southbrough Cemetery	
TW29	Benenden Churchyard	
TW32	Priest Wood	High priority
TW33	Nine Acre Wood & Gill	
TW34	Shirrenden Woods, Park & Pond	
TW35	St Lawrence Churchyard Hawkhurst	
TW36	Avery's Wood, Bullingstone	High priority
TW39	All Saints Churchyard, Brenchley	
TW41	Beston Farm Pasture & Orchard	
TW44	St Marys Churchyard, Speldhurst	
TW46	Broomhill and Reynolds Lane Pastures	
TW48	Bayham Woods	

TW49	St Nicholas's Church, Sandhurst	
TW51	St Peters Old Church, Pembury	
TW54	Bokes Farm, near Hawkhurst	High priority
TW56	Goudhurst Churchyard	
TW57	Benenden Hospital Grounds	High priority
TW58	Kent and Sussex Cemetery, Hawkenbury	
TW59	The Down, Lamberhurst	

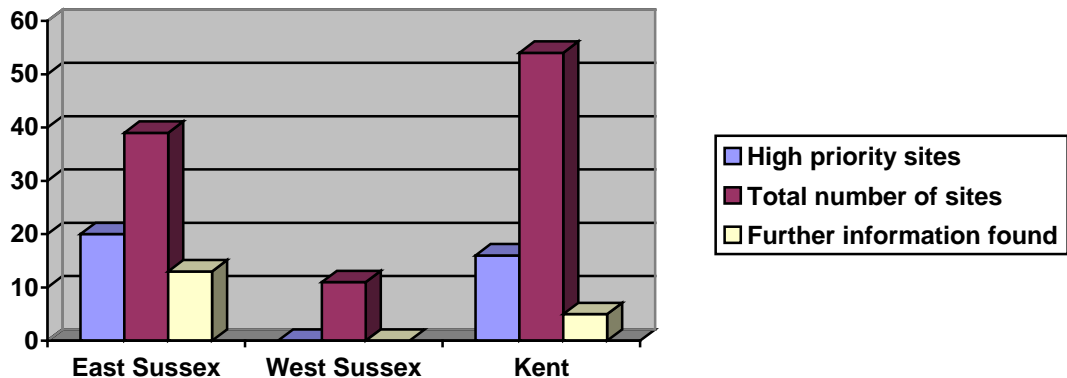
3.5 Summary of SNCI Review Results



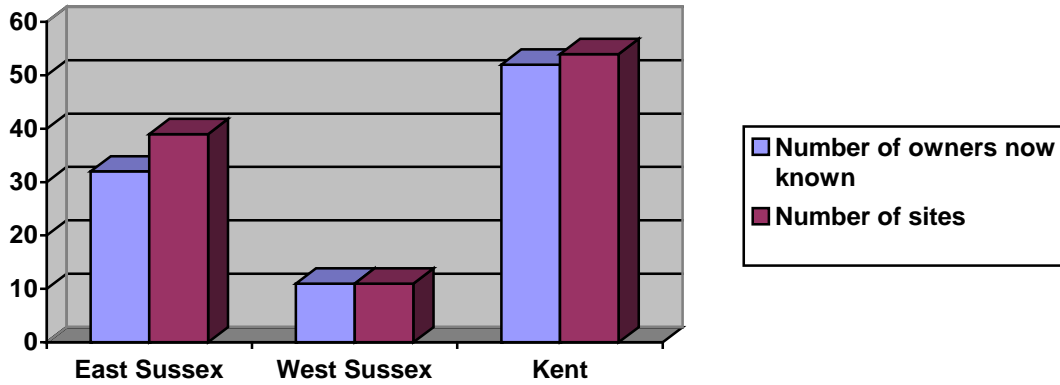
- 104 unimproved grassland SNCIs in the High Weald AONB were reviewed
- 39 in East Sussex, 11 in West Sussex and 54 in Kent



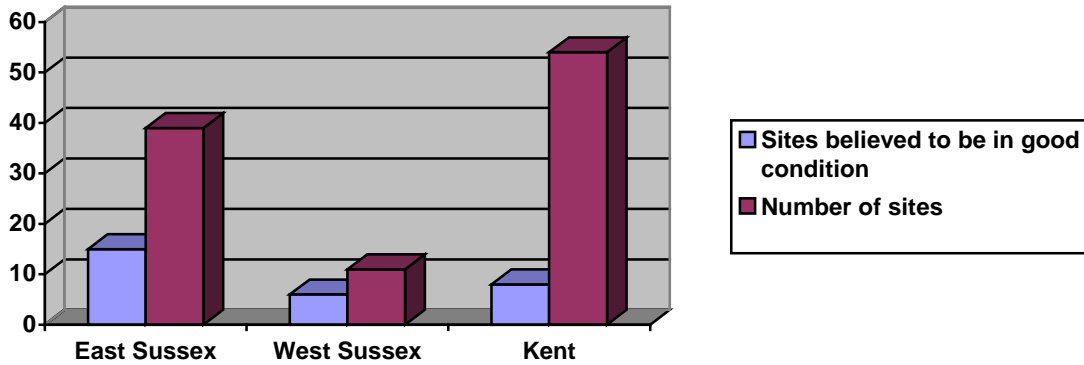
- 53 sites were known (or believed) to have been contacted between 2009 and 2012
- 10 in East Sussex, 10 in West Sussex, 33 in Kent



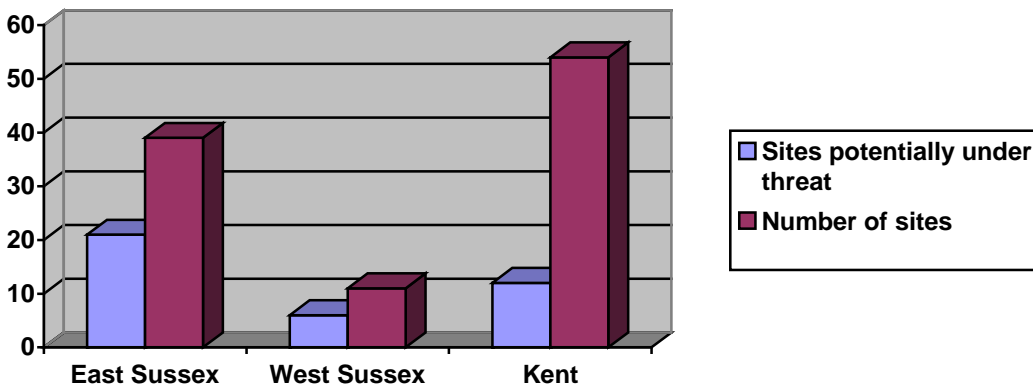
- 36 sites were considered to be high priority for landowner contact/engagement
- 20 in East Sussex, 0 in West Sussex, 16 in Kent
- 13 of the East Sussex sites were successfully contacted, further information was found about 5 of the Kent sites



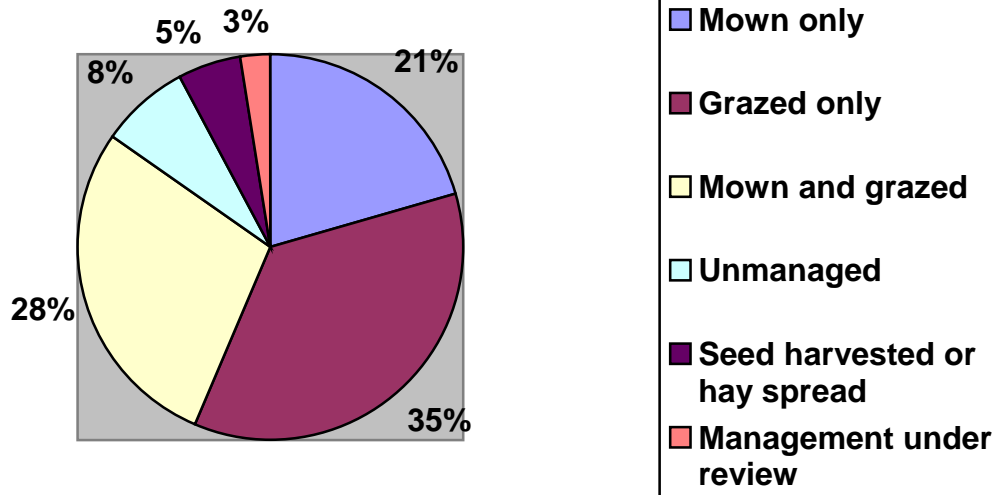
- **Ownership data is now known for 95 sites**
- 32 in East Sussex, 11 in West Sussex and 52 in Kent (of which 24 are known independently of the KWT-supplied data)



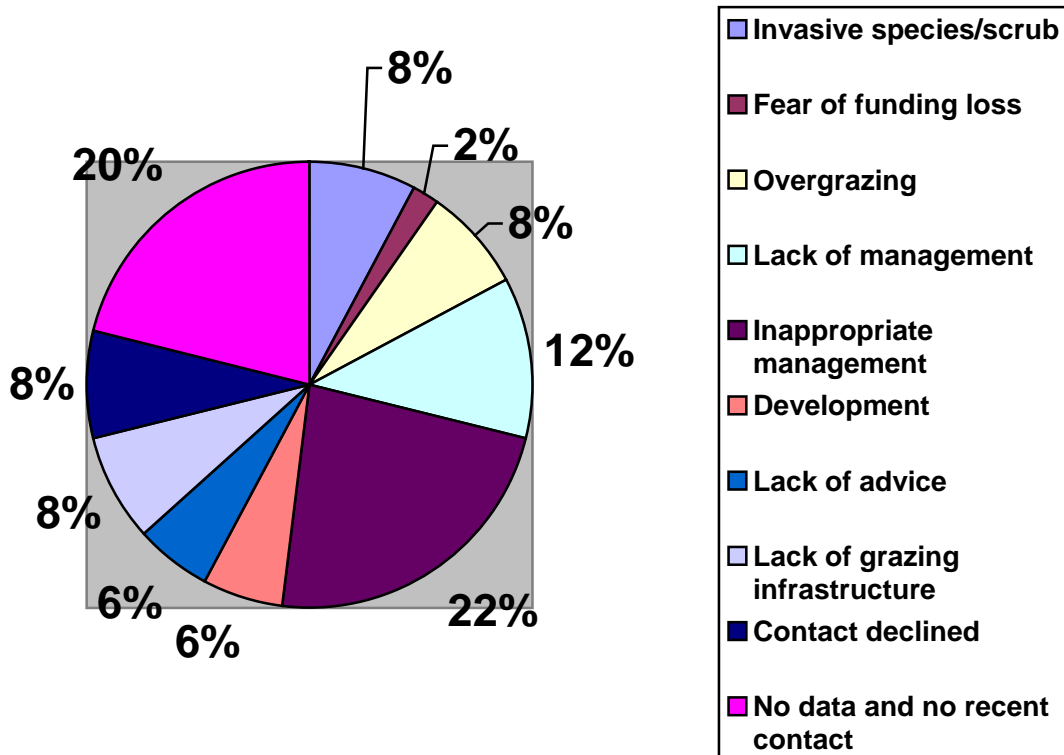
- **Only 29 sites are confirmed or believed to be in good condition/well managed**
- 15 in East Sussex, 6 in West Sussex and 8 in Kent (*Note: information on the condition of most Kent sites was not available*)



- **39 sites are potentially under threat and/or their owners perceive a threat**
- 21 in East Sussex, 6 in West Sussex, 12 in Kent



- Management information for 37 sites in Sussex revealed a mixture of regimes
- 8 mown (or topped), 14 grazed, 11 mown and grazed, 3 unmanaged, 2 seed harvested/hay spread, 1 currently under review



Of the 39 potentially threatened sites, the types of threat known or believed to exist (not limited to one threat per site)

Potential Threats to Unimproved Grassland SNCIs Encountered During the Review

- Invasive species/scrub = 4 sites
- Fear of ES funding withdrawal = 1 site
- Overgrazing = 4 sites
- Lack of management = 6 sites
- Inappropriate management = 12 sites
- Under threat from development of some sort = 3 sites
- Lack of advice or management knowledge = 3 sites
- Lack of grazing infrastructure or livestock = 4 sites
- Engagement/further contact was declined = 4 sites
- No data, but no recent contact (Kent sites) = 11 sites

4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This review has helped to collate some important information about the status, ownership and management issues of SNCI grasslands in the High Weald, particularly sites in East Sussex for which data and contact details were lacking.

Perhaps predictably the review also illustrates that many of the problems associated with unimproved grassland conservation and management that were identified at the inception of the Weald Meadows Initiative in the 1990s remain the same into the 21st Century.

4.1 Current SNCI Monitoring Mechanisms

The current mechanism for Local Authorities to report to Defra on the condition of Local Wildlife Sites allows quite broad assumptions to be made about the impact of land management schemes on habitat quality and is probably promoting an over-optimistic picture of the actual condition of unimproved grassland sites. This reporting method may obscure the level of threat to the habitat, which is particularly vulnerable to inappropriate management and needs to be carefully and appropriately managed to maintain its biodiversity value.

Where the Local Authority is not primarily responsible for administering the SNCI/LWS series (such as in Kent), the potential for inaccurate reporting to Defra on condition is even greater.

There needs to be a far more accurate and in-depth system for monitoring and reporting on the condition of SNCI grassland sites in the High Weald. Site visits will inevitably be needed to assess grassland condition properly. It is not wise to assume that ELS or even HLS agreements on a landholding will necessarily result in the appropriate management or protection of valuable SNCI unimproved grassland.

4.2 Management Issues

The difficulties of managing unimproved grassland were clearly identified within documents such as the High Weald Meadows Strategy 2008 and the High Weald AONB Management Plan.

In summary the perennial problems affecting grassland SNCIs include; owners' lack of knowledge or understanding of grassland ecology and management, owners who are either unaware of or uninterested in the biodiversity value of unimproved grassland, difficulties of access to small, isolated sites, an absence of the machinery needed to take hay crops, lack of grazing infrastructure including fencing and livestock, problems of weed and scrub control, and sometimes simply the lack of money to manage small, uneconomic meadows.

Details of the management regime were obtained for approximately one third of the High Weald SNCI grasslands reviewed, all of them in Sussex. The majority of these sites are under some form of management by a combination of mowing and/or grazing.

Tellingly, a third of the sites reviewed were considered to be under some threat and inappropriate management was identified as the source of threat in a significant proportion of those sites. Inappropriate management may include over-grazing, too frequent mowing and topping without removal of cut material.

In contrast a proportion of the sites for which data was obtained are under some form of traditional grassland management, which is maintaining the SNCIs in good condition. It is interesting to note that several of those owners who carry out sensitive and appropriate management of their SNCIs and consider them to be in good condition, nevertheless feel that their grassland is under threat.

4.3 Communication with Landowners

There is scope for better co-ordination between the various conservation bodies and land management advisors who may have contact with SNCI grassland owners in the High Weald.

This review was very successful in making contact with SNCI owners in East Sussex, many of whom were glad to be offered ongoing advice and support with their grasslands. It would be very useful to extend this direct approach to some of the Kent SNCI owners whose sites do not appear to have been assessed recently.

With some landowners there is always likely to be an element of resistance to advice (“interference”) from conservation management advisors, especially if more than one organisation makes an approach. This makes it particularly important to share information between conservation partners about sites, owners and any existing engagement with them. Alienating SNCI owners due to clumsy, multiple approaches from different bodies can only be counter-productive.

4.4 Suggested Further Engagement in 2013

Several of the East Sussex SNCIs reviewed stand out as being of high priority for further landowner engagement, ideally in 2013, in order to capitalise on contact made for the review.

In some cases the owners expressed an interest in further help or advice during the structured interview (for example Cripps Corner Meadows, Boonshill Farm Meadow and Cantersand Meadows) and this should be pursued if possible.

Other high priority sites require more input for successful contact with the owners to be made (for example Brays Hill Meadow, Frant Meadow and Selwyns Wood Meadow).

However, even more important than selecting just a few sites for more input is the establishment of a robust, rolling programme of ongoing engagement and monitoring of all grassland SNCIs in the High Weald.

4.5 Designation of New SNCIs

Grassland surveys carried out via the WMI in 2004-2009 show that SNCIs represent only a fraction of the valuable species-rich and unimproved grassland resource within the High Weald AONB. However, SNCIs are the sites that have some degree of non-statutory protection and receive recognition within the planning system.

The designation of new sites as SNCIs when they are found has been very patchy and the loss of valuable but undesignated unimproved grassland sites is likely to have continued over the last decade.

A more robust system for reviewing existing SNCIs, designating new sites and providing support to owners/managers is urgently needed, particularly in East Sussex but also to some extent in Kent.

The West Sussex and Kent systems are slightly different but offer models that could be adopted in East Sussex.

A key element in the very successful WSCC system is the availability of sufficient dedicated staff time to provide adequate engagement with the owners and run a rolling programme of survey and review of the SNCI series.

APPENDIX 1. Site Owners and Grassland Condition

East Sussex Sites

Site Code	Date of last known contact	Owner details known?	Type of owner (if known)	Keen for contact or advice?	ES and condition (condition mostly owner defined)
CR07	NK	Probable	Farmer	NK	ELS
CR10	1990	Yes	Field separate from property	Yes	Good condition
CR11	2012	Yes	Farmed estate	Yes	HLS. Good condition
CR13	1990?	Yes	Tenant farmer	Yes	Moderate condition
CR16	2004	Yes	Absentee	Yes	Declining
CR17	2008	Yes	Farmers on site	No	Possibly declining
CR18	NK	Uncertain	Possibly ESCC	NA	Uncertain
CR19	2007	Yes	Town Council	Yes	Good condition
CR20	2009	Yes	Farmers (2)	Yes	HLS area good condition. Single field moderate condition
CR25	2000	Yes	Farmer (retired)	Yes	Moderate condition
CR26	NK	Uncertain	Fields adjoining property	NK	NK
CR37	2012	Yes	Field adjoining property	Yes	Moderate condition
CR38	2007	Yes	Part farmer part smallholder part water company	NK	HLS area probably in best condition, remainder NK
CR39	2009	Yes	Field adjoining property	Not very!	Moderate condition
CR40	1995	Yes	British Gypsum	Yes	Small part HLS. Moderate condition
CR51	2009	Yes	Farmer	NK	HLS. Good condition confirmed by NE
CR52	2007	Yes	Farmer	Yes	Good condition
CR55	2007	Yes	Field adjoining property	Possibly	Formerly declining and at risk
CW01	2007	Yes	Large estate	No	Reported by owner to be in good condition. Possibly at risk
CW03	2007	No	NK	NA	NK
CW04	2012	Yes	Field adjoining property	Yes	Good condition
CW06	1990	Yes	Large estate	Yes	NK
CW07	2007	Yes	Field separate from property	No	Moderate condition
CW08	2008	Yes	Fields adjoining property	Yes	Declining
CW09	2010	Yes	Farmer	No	HLS
CW12	2010	Yes	National Trust	Yes	HLS. Good condition
CW13	NK	Yes	Stables	Yes	Moderate-poor condition
CW20	2009	Yes	Church of England	Yes	Moderate condition
CW26	NK	Yes	NK	NK	NK
CW34	NK	No	NK	NK	NK
CW49	NK	Yes	Field adjoining property	NK	NK
CW50	2009	Yes	Field adjoining property	Yes	Good condition

Site Code	Date of last known contact	Owner details known?	Type of owner (if known)	Keen for contact or advice?	ES and condition (condition mostly owner defined)
CW51	Pre-2000	Yes	Field adjoining property	Yes	Poor condition and declining
CW60	2007	Yes	Golf course	Yes	Good condition
CW69	2011	Yes	Field separate from property	Yes	HLS. Good-moderate condition
CW70	2007	Uncertain	Farmer?	NK	NK
CW76	Attempted review for WDC 2009	No	NK	NK	At risk following development
CW77	NK	Yes	Field adjoining property	NK	NK
CW90	2012	Yes	Farmer	Yes	HLS. Good (moderate) condition

West Sussex Sites

Site Code	Date of last known contact	Owner details known?	Type of owner (if known)	Keen for contact or advice?	ES and condition
M21	2010 (WSCC)	Yes	Hotel estate	No	Believed to be declining
M22	2008 (WSCC)	Yes	Large estate	No?	Declining
M27	2009 (WSCC)	Yes	Absentee owner	No	Declining
M29	2012 (WMI)	Yes	Large gardens	Yes?	Good condition?
M32	2012 (WSCC)	Yes	Local management group	Yes	Good condition
M35	2009 (WSCC)	Yes	Large estate	No?	Declining
M36	2009 (WSCC)	Yes	Farmer	Yes?	Good condition
M38	2010	Yes	Farmer	Yes?	Good condition
M40	2012 (WMI)	Yes	RBGK	Yes	Good condition
M41	2009	Yes	Farmer	No	OELS. Condition not known
M52	2012 (WSCC)	Yes	Tenant farmer	Yes?	Mostly good

Kent Sites

The Kent data is summarised slightly differently from the Sussex data. The column indicating whether owners are keen for further contact is omitted since no owners were contacted for the review. Ideally further landowner engagement should only be initiated in partnership with KWT/KHWP to avoid alienating owners due to excessive contacts from different bodies.

Site Code	Date of last known contact	Owner known by KWT and/or confirmed during the review?	Type of owner (if known)	ES and condition (where known)
AS06	2003	KWT		
AS08	2008	KWT and 1 other	Multiple owners	HLS in part
AS09	2011	Yes	Large landowner	HLS
AS43	2004	KWT		
AS65	2006	Yes	Church Commissioners	
SE20	2009	KWT		
SE21	2011	KWT		

Site Code	Date of last known contact	Owner known by KWT and/or confirmed during the review?	Type of owner (if known)	ES and condition (where known)
SE26/TM26	2004	KWT	Multiple owners	Deteriorating?
SE27	2011	Yes		
SE28	2001	KWT and 1 other		ELS
SE29	2002	Yes		
SE30	2012	KWT		
SE31	2003	No		
SE34	2006	No		
SE56	2008	Yes	Convent	
SE57	2010	KWT and 1 other		
SE59	2011	KWT		
TW04	2007	KWT		
TW06	2010	Yes		ELS
TW07	2010	KWT		
TW08	2000	KWT and 1 other	Forestry Commission	
TW11	2010	Yes	Farmer	HLS. Good condition
TW12	2010	KWT		
TW13	2011	Yes	Farmer	HLS. Moderate condition?
TW14	2010	Yes	Church Commissioners	
TW16	2007	KWT		
TW17	2000	KWT	Possibly RSPB or TWBC	
TW18	2000	KWT	RSPB	
TW19	2011	KWT		
TW21	2010	KWT	NE possibly know owner	Good condition
TW22	2012	KWT		
TW23	2010	KWT		
TW25	2011	KWT		
TW26	2011	KWT		
TW27	2012	Yes	Southborough Town Council	2012 management plan
TW28	2010	Yes	Southborough Town Council	
TW29	2011?	Yes	Church Commissioners	
TW32	2000	KWT		
TW33	2011	KWT		
TW34	2012	Yes		
TW35	2006	Yes	Church Commissioners	
TW36	2000	KWT		
TW39	2009	Yes	Church Commissioners	
TW41	2011	Yes	Large landowner	
TW44	2009	Yes	Church Commissioners	
TW46	2010	KWT		2010 Management plan. Part in good management
TW48	2010	KWT		
TW49	2009	Yes	Church of England	

Site Code	Date of last known contact	Owner known by KWT and/or confirmed during the review?	Type of owner (if known)	ES and condition (where known)
TW51	2010	KWT		
TW54	2000	KWT		
TW56	2002	Yes	Church Commissioners	
TW57	2002	KWT		
TW58	2011	Yes	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	2010 Management plan
TW59	2005	KWT and 1 other	Lamberhurst PC	Good condition

APPENDIX 2. Management of Sussex Sites

Information on management was not obtained for all sites and no useful data on management was found for Kent sites during the review.

Site Code	Mowing	Grazing	Other/comments
CR10	Hay	Sheep	
CR11	Hay	Cattle	
CR13		Cattle	
CR16			Seed harvesting in past. No regular management now
CR17	Hay	Cattle	Erratic management and limited livestock
CR19	Mown		
CR20	Hay	Cattle	Use herb rich hay to enhance other fields on site
CR25		Sheep	Formerly hay cut but now grazed year round
CR37		Sheep	Grazing due to commence 2013 following difficulties with management in the past
CR39		Sheep	
CR40			Management currently under review. Good scope for contact
CR52		Sheep	
CR55		Horses	
CW01		Sheep	Possibly under-grazed but further contact declined
CW04	Hay/mown	Occasional grazing	Managed with advice from WMI
CW07		Sheep	Details of management not known
CW08	Topped		Site not fenced for grazing. Cut material left in situ
CW09		Cattle?	No contact for review, but managed under HLS
CW12	Mown		NT property. Livestock not viable in gardens but good mowing regime
CW13	Hay occasionally	Horses	Owner thinking of over-sowing some areas posing possible threat to the site
CW20	Mown		
CW49		Horses?	
CW50	Mown		Managed with advice from WMI
CW51	Mown frequently	Deer	Managed as part of garden
CW60	Mown		Managed as part of golf course but with biodiversity in mind
CW69	Mown	Formerly sheep now deer	Managed as nature reserve, difficulties sourcing livestock recently. Scrub and bracken control
CW90	Hay	Mixed stock	Well managed and annual visits from Plumpton college students
M22			Small grassland area is largely unmanaged
M27			Unmanaged
M29	Hay		Managed with advice from WMI
M32	Hay		Volunteers undertake management with help from WSCC
M35		Cattle	Sporadic, sometimes unplanned access by livestock
M36		Sheep and cattle	Periodic scrub clearance
M38	Topping	Cattle (rabbit and deer)	Coarse species (nettle, bracken, scrub) possibly increased since designation but are controlled
M40	Hay	Sheep	Seed harvesting and other work with WMI
M41		Sheep?	
M52		Horses and cattle	Only 2 fields are grazed, others are unmanaged

APPENDIX 3. Sites Potentially Under Threat

Site Code	Site Name	Threat	Most recent contact (prior to 2013 review)
CR 10	Wheel Cottage Meadow	Low level invasive bracken	2009
CR11	Ashburnham Forge Meadows	Invasive hemlock water-dropwort. Withdrawal of Stewardship funding	2012
CR13	Hurst Green Meadows	Possibly too much summer cattle grazing	NK
CR16	Cripps Corner Meadows	Lack of management for around 10 years due to poor fencing and lack of available livestock	2009
CR17	Burnt Chimney Farm Meadows	Some potential for inappropriate and erratic management including over-grazing, herbicide use and ploughing. Engagement declined. Change of ownership in future a major threat	2008
CR18	Disused Railway, Crowhurst	Lack of management and possibly loss to road scheme	NK
CR20	South Park Pond Stud Meadows	Owner of single field would like more advice and support especially with livestock	2010
CR25	Boonshill Farm Meadow	Inappropriate management. Year round grazing and lack of hay cut	NK
CR37	Lankhurst Meadow	Enthusiastic owner, but has difficulties typical of a small, isolated meadow	2012
CR38	Darwell Reservoir	Possible planning application affecting part of the site. Inappropriate management also possible in some areas	2007
CR39	Dabchick Meadow	Inappropriate management. Year round grazing by Hebridean sheep	2009
CR55	The Haven	Inappropriate management with horses	2007
CW01	Washwell Lane Scrub	Grazed but possibly under-managed. Engagement declined	2007
CW06	Frant Meadow	?	
CW07	Newick Lane Meadow	Grazed but condition unclear and possibly inappropriate management. Engagement declined	2007
CW08	Upper Old Mill Meadows	Inappropriate management. Topped but not fenced or grazed. Elderly owner and no prospect of change in management at present	2008
CW13	Cantersand Meadows	Horse grazing and occasional hay crops but owner wants to over-seed, so inappropriate management a risk. Lack of advice	None since designation
CW20	Hadlow Down Churchyard	Some invasive bracken and bramble affecting herb rich areas observed in 2009	2009
CW51	Stephens Farm Meadow	Inappropriate management and lack of advice. Meadow treated as garden	Pre-2000
CW69	Rowland Wood Meadow	Invasive bracken and bramble scrub. Reduced grazing in recent years due to lack of available livestock	2011
CW76	Mayfield College Playing Field and Gill	Development or inappropriate management following development? Contact not established during review	2009 assessment attempted
M21	Lower and Upper Lakes	Inappropriate management	2010 by WSCC

Site Code	Site Name	Threat	Most recent contact (prior to 2013 review)
	Meadows, Gravetye Estate		
M22	Balcombe Lake and Associated Woodland	Lack of management	2008 by WSCC
M27	Mill Place Meadow	Lack of management	2009 by WSCC
M35	Balcombe Marsh	Management difficulties over many years not overcome. Inappropriate management despite involvement by SWT	2009 by WSCC
M41	Herries Pasture	Management advice declined. Condition unknown	2009 by WSCC
M52	Stonelands Pasture	Lack of management in some areas	2010 by WSCC
SE21	Moorden Meadow	No data	No KWT survey since 2000
SE26/TM26	River Medway	Possibly unmanaged and deteriorating	No KWT contact since 2004
SE30	Pasture and Woods near Hobbs Hill Farm, Cowden	No data	No KWT survey since 1999
TW16	Brenchley Wood	No data	No KWT contact since 2000
TW17	Pembury Walks	No data	No KWT survey since 2000
TW22	Windmill Farm, Hawkenbury	No data	No KWT survey since 2000
TW25	Brokes Wood	No data	No KWT survey since 2000
TW26	Bidborough Woods and Pasture	No data	No KWT survey since 2000
TW29	Benenden Cemetery	No data	No KWT contact since 2000
TW32	Priest Wood	No data	No KWT contact since 2000
TW36	Avery's Wood, Bullingstone	No data	No KWT survey or contact since 2000
TW54	Bokes Farm near Hawkhurst	No data	No KWT survey or contact since 2000

APPENDIX 4. Landowner Questionnaire

HIGH WEALD AONB SNCI GRASSLAND OWNERS' REVIEW 2013 QUESTIONNAIRE TEMPLATE

	Fill in the gap or circle the answer(s) that apply	Comments/Details
PRELIMINARY DETAILS		
Site name		
SNCI code		
Contact date		
Method of contact	Phone / visit DB / KR	
Type of land holding	Working farm / field attached to dwelling / field(s) separate from dwelling / local authority site / nature reserve / other (state what)	
OWNER DETAILS		
Name		
Address		
Phone number		
Email		
Consent for HW unit to store and use details?	Yes / No	

	Fill in the gap or circle the answer(s) that apply	Comments/Details
Would more contact be welcomed?	Yes / No (to more contact)	What form of contact?
SITE MANAGEMENT		
Management regime	Grazing / mowing / weed control / scrub management / other (state what)	Timing, livestock used etc.
Management problems	Cost / knowledge / availability of livestock / availability of machinery / invasive species / other (state what)	
Owners' opinion of SNCI condition	Good / moderate / poor	
Condition assessed on site visit?	Yes / No	Good / moderate / poor
Level of threat	High / moderate / low / no threat	
Source of threat	Neglect / inappropriate management / change of use / lack of owner knowledge / development / other (state what)	
SNCI STATUS OF GRASSLAND		
Owners' management aims	Hay crop / grazing for livestock or horses / biodiversity / other (state what)	
Does owner know that their site is an SNCI?	Yes / No	
Does owner know what an SNCI is?	Yes / No	
Has owner had contact with conservation bodies or advisors? When?	WMI / ESCC / KWT / Kent HWP / FWAG / other (which?) Date of last contact (approx)	
What would help to manage their SNCI?	Encouragement / advice / financial support / machinery / livestock / other (state what)	