

Ecological Designations and Acronyms

Many sites of ecological interest in the UK will be covered by a designation such as 'Site of Special Scientific Interest', or 'Local Nature Reserve'. These designations can usually be considered as falling into one of two categories:

- **Statutory designations** – sites designated in accordance with legislation, and typically receiving some kind of legal protection.
- **Non-statutory** or local designations – these are applied at the local level, and are not underpinned by legislation.

Most (but not all) ecological designations also infer some 'level' of value or importance, ranging from internationally important sites, through nationally important, to locally or county-level importance sites. See end of document for a list of commonly used acronyms.

Nationally and internationally designated sites:

- **SSSIs – Sites of Special Scientific Interest.** These are legally protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and are considered 'nationally important' sites. SSSIs can be considered the cornerstone of ecological protection in the UK, but on their own they are far from sufficient to halt the decline of biodiversity, or to provide an adequate natural environment resource. Because of the way SSSIs are designated, not all 'SSSI-quality' sites have been designated as such. More information about SSSIs is available on the Natural England website: www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/designations/sssi/default.aspx
- **SACs – Special Areas of Conservation.** These are sites of European or International importance, and so hold an even higher status than SSSIs. All SACs should also already be designated as SSSIs; the SAC designation adds an additional layer of protection. SACs are designated under the EC Habitats Directive, on the basis of the habitats and species found within them. More information on SACs is available on the Joint Nature Conservation Council website <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-23> .
- **SPAs – Special Protection Areas.** SPAs are similar to SACs, as they are also SSSI sites considered of European importance. However, SACs are designated under the EC Birds Directive, because of the presence of rare or vulnerable bird species. Again, all SPAs should already be designated as SSSIs, and the SPA designation adds an additional layer of protection. More information on SPAs can be found on the Joint Nature Conservation Council website <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-162>
- **Ramsar sites** – Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention. There are currently no Ramsar sites in Derbyshire or Nottinghamshire. More information on Ramsar sites be found on the JNCC website <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-161>

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are sites collectively known as 'European Sites' (or occasionally 'Natura 2000' sites).

Other statutory designations

- **NNRs – National Nature Reserves.** All NNRs are also SSSIs, but only a small proportion of SSSIs are designated as NNRs. National Nature Reserves are considered to be amongst the finest examples of SSSIs in the country, but they also tend to have public access. This may be positively encouraged, as NNRs are intended to provide opportunities for people to experience nature. NNRs are

principally protected by virtue of being SSSIs. More information on NNRs is available from the Natural England website

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/designations/nnr/default.aspx .

- **LNRs – Local Nature Reserves.** These are sites designated for both their wildlife value and their value for people, and must be under the ownership, lease or control of a Local Authority. To qualify for LNR status, the site must be of some substantive value for both people (for scientific study, for education, or for access and enjoyment) *and* for wildlife. Most LNRs are therefore already covered by some other designation (often Local Wildlife Sites (see below) or even SSSI) because of their ecological value. The additional LNR designation confirms that they are also sites intended for public access and enjoyment. Further information on LNRs is available here: www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/designations/lnr/default.aspx .

All sites with statutory designations can be considered as part of our core ecological assets, and must be given the highest level of consideration and protection.

Non-statutory designations

- **Local Wildlife Sites (LWS).** These are sites considered to be of at least county-level ecological value, and are designated under local arrangements – systems managed by the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust (DWT), or by the Nottinghamshire Biological and Geological Records Centre in their respective counties. In Nottinghamshire, LWSs were formerly known as **Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)** – a term occasionally still used. LWSs receive some protection under the planning system, but no legal protection. Nevertheless, LWS should again be considered key ecological assets within both counties. In certain circumstances, some LWSs may be of SSSI quality, but may not be designated as such, simply because of the way the SSSIs designation process operates. More information on LWSs is available here: www.derbyshirebiodiversity.org.uk/sites/index.php?category=WLS or here www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/article/1047/Nottinghamshire-Biological-and-Geological-Record-Centre-NBGR
- **Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS)** – RIGS could also be known as Local Geological Sites, as the system parallels the Local Wildlife Sites system but relates only to geological interest. Unfortunately, RIGS systems are not always as well developed as their wildlife equivalents – this is certainly the case in Derbyshire. In Nottinghamshire, the RIGS/LGS system is understood to lie within the Local Wildlife Sites system. RIGS or LGSs should be considered as sites of county-level geological interest.
- **Nature Improvement Areas – (NIAs).** Nature Improvement Areas are intended to be very large, landscape-scale areas within which concerted action could be taken to enhance the natural environment through partnership working. The purpose of NIAs is to achieve a step-change in natural environment protection and enhancement, working towards a sustainable, coherent and resilient ecological network across the UK. Twelve pilot NIAs were designated across the country in 2012, one of which (the Humberhead Levels NIA) includes a very small part of the Lowland Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire LNP area. A large part of another (the Dark Park NIA) falls into northern Derbyshire and the Peak District, but none of it overlaps with the LNP area at all. The original twelve NIAs received government funding, although it is understood that currently, no further funding is available for new NIAs. However, appropriate partnerships are able and encouraged by Defra to work towards locally-determined NIAs. More information on NIAs is available here: www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/funding/nia/projects and here: www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/funding/nia/default.aspx

Acronyms Frequently used in the Environmental Sector

AMES	Areas of Multiple Environmental Sensitivity	LCA	Landscape Character Assessment
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	LCT	Landscape Character Type (a local subdivision of NCA)
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan	LEPs	Local Enterprise Partnerships
BOM	Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping	LNP	Local Nature Partnership
BRC	Biological Records Centre	LNR	Local Nature Reserve
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy	LRC	Local Records Centre = BRC
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	LWS	Local Wildlife Site (also SINC)
DoE	Dept. of the Environment - now Defra	NCA	National Character Areas (part of LCA)
DWT	Derbyshire Wildlife Trust	NE	Natural England
EA	Environment Agency	NERC Act	Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006)
EBS	England Biodiversity Strategy (Biodiversity 2020)	NEWP	Natural Environment White Paper (2011)
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment	NIA	Nature Improvement Area
ELS	Entry Level Stewardship	NNR	National Nature Reserve
EPS	European Protected Species	NWT	Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust
ES	Environmental Stewardship	PRoW	Public Rights of Way
ESA	Environmentally Sensitive Area	RIGS	Regionally Important Geological Sites
EWGS	English Woodland Grant Scheme	RSPB	Royal Soc. for the Protection of Birds
FC	Forestry Commission	SAC	Special Area of Conservation
FEP	Farm Environment Plan	SAP	Species Action Plan (part of a BAP)
GI	Green Infrastructure	SINC	Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (=LWS)
HAP	Habitat Action Plan (part of a BAP)	SPA	Special Protection Area
HLC	Historic Landscape Character	SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
HLS	Higher Level Stewardship	WES	Wildlife Enhancement Scheme
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee	WFD	Water Framework Directive
LBAP	Local Biodiversity Action Plan		

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Revised NM 26th March 2014