

Case Study – Warcop and Otterburn SSSI English Nature Awards



Warcop SSSI Team



Duncan Glen from the Otterburn SSSI
(photo by Paul Glendell, English Nature)

Summary

English Nature’s SSSI Award Scheme recognises the excellent work and achievements of owners and occupiers of SSSI land. MOD staff at Otterburn and Warcop received awards for Habitat Management for work ‘above and beyond the call of duty’.

Environmental protection

Warcop:

The MoD’s Warcop area in Cumbria extends to 9,700 hectares with over two thirds of this area forming part of the the SSSI at Appleby Fells and Helbeck Wood. Concern had been expressed regarding over-grazing on the fells some years ago and the area was classed as unfavourable declining condition. English Nature has recently reassessed the majority of the SSSI land on the fell as unfavourable recovering. Of course, for the MoD, this is principally a military training area and it could have been all too easy to leave it that. But there has been a real commitment to improving the SSSI. The MoD’s new grazing regime will also give English Nature valuable information on the way sheep move around an area.

Implementing the new grazing regime on Warcop has been challenging, but we wanted to embrace the problem of the condition of the SSSI, and everyone involved, from farmers to sheep monitors, has put in 110% to improve it. We were happy to take the management those few steps further and help where we can, even when it involves radio tagging sheep! The recovery of the fell shows that all our hard work has paid off. It’s great to see. (Clare Hetherington)

Lt Col. Andrew Drake, Clare Hetherington and Jez Kalkowski were responsible for the great work done on the Helbeck Wood and Appleby Fells SSSIs.

Otterburn:

There are 12 distinct SSSIs on Otterburn Training Area, covering 1,458 hectares. In 2003, a number of these sites were in unfavourable condition and failing the Government's SSSI target of achieving 95% favourable condition by 2010. As a result of altered management plans and hard work Otterburn is now 96% favourable condition, five years ahead of schedule.

In the Otterburn area, the MoD owns and manages 13 SSSIs. A year ago, only 30% of their SSSI land was in favourable or recovering condition – today, the figures stands at 95%. Targeted grazing, no-go areas for burning, restoration projects, monitoring habitats and working with tenant farmers have all been part of their enthusiastic approach.

Maintenance of Operational Effectiveness

The work on both of these sites significantly contributes to MOD's SSSI targets under the Sustainable Development in Government initiative.

'The MoD is committed at the highest level to getting SSSI's into as good a condition as possible – this comes from both management and from the military on-site. We want to get our SSSIs onto a care and maintenance footing so that the gains we've made can be consolidated.'

- Duncan Glen