

Agricultural threats to SSSIs

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Day to day farming activities can cause significant harm to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). Farmers can be held responsible for damage to protected habitats and may be required to restore them.

- A substantial area of the UK is designated as SSSIs.
- The Environmental Liability Directive applies to all SSSIs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

SSSIs in the UK

Country	Total number of SSSIs
England	4,115
Wales	1,019
Scotland	1,456
Northern Ireland	280

Natural England's top ten reasons for the adverse condition of SSSIs

Reason for adverse condition of SSSIs (more than one condition may affect a single SSSI)		Number of sites affected (as available)	Percentage of total area failing Public Service Agreement target ¹
1	Overgrazing		24.47
2	Inappropriate moor burning	1,332	17.5
3	Coastal squeeze / coastal erosion		15.88
4	Water pollution – agriculture / run off		15.19
5	Drainage (eg, of blanket bogs)		11.16
6	Water pollution – discharge		9.21
7	Undergrazing	1,161	8.27
8	Lack of appropriate scrub control		8.14
9	Forestry and woodland management		4.71
10	Inappropriate water levels		4.43

1. The Government's Public Service Agreement (PSA) target to have 95% of the SSSI area in favourable or recovering condition by 2010. Source: Natural England, 2009.

