



# Benefits of Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Defra

*Annex 4 – Summary of Focus Group Discussions*

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## Document control

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# 1 Introduction and methods

## 1.1 Introduction

The report in this annex provides a summary of the qualitative discussion of SSSIs and their benefits by participants in 10 focus groups, held in 5 locations in England and Wales. The focus groups also included a choice experiment valuation, the results of which are presented separately in Annex 3.

The focus groups aimed to identify people's personal interests, views and experiences in relation to named SSSIs in the area and its immediate hinterland (a catchment of c.15 miles from the focus group venue).

Sections 2 and 3 draw out some of the main points to emerge from the focus group discussions on people's use and knowledge of SSSIs and the associated benefits they perceived.

Section 4 briefly considers these qualitative results, discusses them in context with other relevant studies, and considers how the findings could be taken forward in future.

Section 5 provides summary tables for the qualitative outcomes and the related key quotes from all the focus groups.

## 1.2 Methods

A series of 10 focus groups, each involving between 14 and 17 members of the public, were completed in September 2010 to explore people's understanding of and preferences for SSSIs, and, through a choice experiment, their willingness to pay for SSSIs and the benefits they provide.

There was a total of 154 participants. The sample was stratified to comprise a representative cross section of the general public.

The focus groups took place in the following locations, with two group sessions per evening in each location:

- Wells, Somerset, 7 September
- Carmarthen 8 September
- Southport, 14 September
- Hexham, 15 September
- Ipswich, 21 September.

At each location, one 90 minute session was undertaken with an older group (46-75 years), and another with a younger group (18-45 years), with between 14 and 17 participants in each, drawn from both genders and from a range of the demographic classes AB/C1/C2D.

Each focus group involved a one hour briefing and guidance for participants to undertake the choice experiment, and half an hour discussion on people's personal awareness of, use of, and concern for SSSIs in the area.

All participants were asked about their personal knowledge of the sites, and their use of the sites, and this information was recorded in order to provide an understanding of people's familiarity and types of use and benefits.

As well as stating the extent and the type of their knowledge and use of local SSSIs, participants were also asked to select two other topics, from a set list, covering different aspects of benefits from the SSSIs, on which to offer feedback. These responses are shown in section 5 below, in quoted text in the specific tables from each group. The feedback from the above points is summarised in tables A – N. Below. Tables A-D set out the aggregate results from all of the focus groups, while tables E – N summarise the specific outcomes of each of the 10 focus groups.

In addition, at the first two focus groups in Wells, participants offered views on the term and title 'SSSIs' as an acronym and in full. As a result, for the subsequent focus groups in other locations, specific time was allocated to ask people about their familiarity with the term SSSIs and their view on the resonance of the term. Specific tables with this feedback are included (tables O-V below), following the main material from each location's focus groups.

## 2 Uses and Benefits of SSSIs

### 2.1 General Awareness and Use of SSSIs

The use, knowledge and understanding of the sites varied from non-existent in some cases to relatively frequent, and an extensive knowledge and understanding, in a small sample of others. Most people had a limited experience of engaging with the sites in some way, although some participants had not known of a site that they visited being an SSSI until seeing its name on the list at the event. To these people, the site was a nature reserve, a local amenity, or place in the local countryside that they visited, and they were unaware that it had SSSI status. It should also be recognised that in many instances, participants knew few of the sites and had visited a very low number of them.

Amongst those who were unaware of the sites, some people were frustrated that they had not become aware of the locations through their general life and activities as a citizen in the area, and expressed this in their feedback. These people implied that they felt they had been missing out, and unaware of something relatively important, regardless of whether they would have experienced the sites.

Awareness of the name and concept of SSSIs is indicated in the tables below for each group, with results being uneven across the sample. For those who had come across the term and the concept, there were two main influences: some people knew of SSSIs through the exposure in local or national media (BBC TV's *Countryfile* programme was the most frequently quoted specific source); while some others had been alerted to SSSIs within part of a course in further education. In particular this highlights the role of the media in communicating the purpose of SSSIs, and in some instances, a local controversy, such as a threat to a site, had prompted the media coverage. Pro-active and positive explanation of the functions and the range of benefits of SSSIs may be more difficult to achieve in the media, although more promotion of results of surveys and research might help prompt such coverage.

### 2.2 Comparison of older and younger groups

Tables A-D provide aggregate totals of the main responses in each group. It is striking that the older group (over 45 years) and the younger group (up to 45 years) categories show similar trends in their responses relating to 'knowledge of the local SSSIs' and 'visit and use of the local SSSIs'. Only one category in these summary tables is distinctly different: amongst the older sample, 12% never visit or use a local SSSI, while amongst the younger participants, only 6% never visit or use a local SSSI. The exercise did not have time to explore the reasons for people's propensity to visit.

Older participants were much more likely to have heard of the term SSSI, with just 24% not knowing or having heard of the term, while 60% of the younger participants were unfamiliar with the term, even though some of them used or visited one or more location that happened to be an SSSI. The greater awareness amongst older participants may be partly due to their proportional stronger interest in the range of media likely to mention SSSIs, and partly due to life experience.

### 2.3 Support for the concept of SSSIs and government funds

There was virtually no dissent within the focus groups about SSSIs being worthwhile and deserving of public funds. Only in one group did one person ask if the public were paying for activities which would happen anyway, and a handful of people across the focus groups expressed disinterest in SSSIs. Otherwise, participants appreciated that SSSIs were a relevant part of government spending, they supported the concept of SSSIs, and many felt pleased to be able to voice an opinion and potentially influence a deserving and meaningful activity of government. Comments to this effect included the following, which were stated in the context of SSSIs:

*“A moral obligation to protect habitat and species for future generations”* - Carmarthen younger group

*“It would be tragic if these areas and places were lost – wildlife, space and nature benefits would disappear”* - Ipswich older group

*“To me, protection of our natural environment ranks extremely highly”* - Carmarthen older group

## 2.4 Wildlife benefits of SSSIs

The actual and specific wildlife present in SSSIs was not especially prominent in people's feedback, mainly because people's comments mainly related to the full scope of experience they obtained and perceived from SSSIs, and because the sample was non-specific, thus few people with specialist knowledge or specialist interest in wildlife were present amongst the focus groups. Nevertheless, some specific aspects of nature, relating to the main purposes of SSSIs, certainly did feature and were expressed very positively by people, as illustrated below.

*“[If SSSIs were lost..] My bird watching would be curtailed and my quiet times would deteriorate”* - Wells older group

*“[SSSIs are about] Seeing things for real, not just in books”* - Carmarthen older group

*“Fresh air, sea birds, wild flowers, lizards, toads”* - Southport older group

*“Nice place to walk and enjoy wildlife. Means badgers and other cool animals get preserved which makes me happy”* - Ipswich younger group

## 2.5 Functional use of SSSIs

Amongst the groups, the majority of participants who had experience of visiting one or more SSSIs did so because of an amenity or recreational use such as walking or exercising a dog, or for experiencing nature with their family or children. However, also amongst the sample, a few participants had experience of a more functional kind, due to their involvement in farming, field sports, having undertaken practical work on an SSSI, or because they fished in the local river, which also happened to be an SSSI. Thus there were different user perspectives on SSSIs amongst the sample, although rarely more than two in each group had this more functional perspective on an SSSI.

## 2.6 Mental health benefits

There was a widespread view that SSSIs offered an important tonic for people, as a place to relax, de-stress, and refresh the mind. This kind of benefit often gets expressed through such terms as thinking time, ability to reflect and contemplate, and ability to escape from daily pressures. Such points were made throughout all groups, and examples included the following:

*“Exercise, relaxation, and thinking time”* - Wells older group

*“They are places where you can reflect on issues and escape the modern world for an hour or two”* - Southport older group

*“De-stress, relax, sleep better, lifts mood”* - Southport older group

*“What SSSIs mean to me - Simple. Relaxation. Intellectual. Natural”* - Wells younger group

## 2.7 Togetherness with family or friends

The ability to experience SSSIs with family and friends was cited several times in consistent ways within the feedback from the groups. Perhaps partly linked to the above point on mental health benefits, SSSIs clearly provide situations in which families can share experiences amongst each other and between generations.

*“Dog walking; time with family to enjoy our local environment”* - Wells younger group

*“Family time together. Wonder of God’s creation”* - Carmarthen older group

*“The chance to take grandchildren to see wildlife”* - Hexham older group

*“Walking with friends and family”* and *“Family contact”* - Ipswich older group

## 2.8 The draw of a wildlife-rich environment

Many respondents made the point that they were undertaking routine activities, such as physical exercise or walking the dog, but elected to do so in a pleasant and stimulating environment provided by an SSSI. In this sense they were enjoying the wildlife as part of the need to exercise a dog or go for a walk, but appreciated the wider benefits of the SSSI, such as its tranquillity, peace, views, and natural sights and sounds. Many participants recognised they could exercise their dog in a local park or similar but emphasised that they preferred to spend this time in the rich environment provided by an SSSI. Typical of such views are the following:

*“Inspirational walking area”* and *“SSSIs are fantastic areas for inspiration”* Wells younger group.

*“Walking my dog – plus it’s nice and relaxing to walk with a nice view”* - Hexham younger group.

*“Exercise in lovely surroundings”* - Carmarthen older group.

*“Walking, enjoy nature, enjoy the space”* - Ipswich older group.

## 2.9 Helping children to experience wildlife on SSSIs

A consistent theme through the focus group related to the educational role of SSSIs and the importance of children having contact with nature. Thus many participants expressed the importance of SSSIs as places where children could see and experience wildlife. Examples of such views included:

*“I have a young family – it is important to get away from the television and to get them interested in other living things”* - Ipswich younger group

*“Introducing young children to wildlife”* - Southport older group

*“I want my children to know nature”*. Southport older group

*“Educational for children spotting different wildlife”* - Hexham younger group

## 2.10 Disbenefits of SSSIs

In each focus group, amongst the optional questions, participants were invited to identify any disbenefits or disadvantages that local SSSIs might present. A small range of negative points were raised by participants, but with two main types of disbenefits expressed:

First, in several of the groups, one person voiced a concern that SSSIs represented a barrier to ‘progress’ and ‘growth’, and felt that the potential constraining role of SSSIs should be recognised. Examples of such views included:

*“Prevents commercial growth and development of transport routes”* Southport younger group

*“Restricted development potential making property in ‘home’ areas costly and out of reach”* Carmarthen younger group

Second, the other main type of disadvantage was perceived as SSSIs being potential or actual locations for accumulation of litter, fly tipping, and anti-social behaviour. The challenge here is that avoidance of such undesirable activity might require additional management facilities and/or management staff, which has a resource implication. Specific quotes illustrating such views included:

*“Teen drinking – spoiling area with mess and intimidating behaviour, puts off the vulnerable”* - Ipswich younger group



*“Litter – some places could do with more care” - Southport younger group*

### 3 Attitudes to the term “Site of Special Scientific Interest”

The term ‘Site of Special Scientific Interest’, or ‘SSSI’ was a popular talking point within the focus groups. Reactions to the term were not sought at the first two groups in Wells, yet people offered a view during the open discussion, and this led to the topic being formally raised in all the subsequent groups following the two at Wells.

The nature of people’s reactions can be gauged clearly from the quotes reproduced in tables O - V. With only a handful of exceptions, there was consistent agreement that the term SSSI, in full or as an acronym, was off-putting for the following main reasons:

**Unrepresentative:** it was widely felt that the term did not do justice to the range of qualities possessed by SSSIs. People recognised the relevance of the scientific tag but felt that from all that they had heard and discussed in the focus group, SSSIs embraced a wider range of factors. Examples of such views included:

*“It doesn’t do what it says on the tin”*

*“Needs to be more relevant to the subject”.*

**Clumsy:** the term was thought to be convoluted, long winded, and hard to recall. Examples of such views included:

*“Too long winded”*

*“Complicated – hard to remember”.*

**Too scientific and specialist:** the scientific label was felt to be too specialist and too off putting, implying for science specialists only. This view was even voiced by participants who had some knowledge and training in science-based subjects. Examples of such views included:

*“Emphasises the science too much” ;*

*“sounds like test tubes and science where these sites are about nature”, and*

*“too scientific – no popular appeal”.*

**Too exclusive:** Related to the prevalence of science in the name, people felt the term was too exclusive, and even elitist. Examples of such views included:

*“too elitist”*

*“sounds like the areas could have restricted access”.*

## 4 Qualitative Findings

### 4.1 The findings

The range of issues emerging from this qualitative element of the focus groups has helped indicate some of the main benefits that the public experience from SSSIs, mainly from the direct use of relatively local sites. Inevitably in this context, it is cultural services which have been expressed most.

These results point to the factors which could be considered when managing SSSIs for their primary purpose and for considering the cultural services they offer. The cultural services may be derived from both the wildlife and geology of the sites, from other specific features which may be present (such as historical features) or from the wider characteristics of the sites (such as their tranquillity and their sense of wildness – see below). It is this full range of factors which need to be considered in relation to the wider benefits of SSSIs and especially the cultural services which people experience. In turn, this understanding could inform management approaches for SSSIs to harness their cultural services effectively for people.

### 4.2 What provides benefits to people from the SSSI, beyond the wildlife and geology?

The results highlight that SSSIs are more than places of high wildlife and geological value, and are used and appreciated for other factors central to people's welfare. From the feedback received, it is evident that some of the main wider characteristics of SSSIs which provide benefits to people include the following:

- the aesthetic interest of many SSSIs
- the sense of wildness which many SSSIs exhibit
- the tranquillity afforded by many SSSIs
- the variety of experiences offered within many SSSIs
- the accessible location, with environmental and amenity interest, offered by an SSSI if it has provision for public access (not all SSSIs have public rights of way or access opportunities).

The above characteristics may provide their own distinct benefits and may reinforce or supplement the benefits which people derive from the specific wildlife and geology of SSSIs. It is evident from the feedback that these characteristics often form part of the experience of an SSSI from which cultural benefits are obtained. Managing SSSIs to retain or improve these characteristics (such as wildness, tranquillity and aesthetic appeal) is not an explicit policy objective, although some SSSI management plans may allude to such factors or partially address them to different degrees, often depending on the ownership and the evolved use of the site in question.

### 4.3 Comparisons with other qualitative studies on the natural environment

The above outcomes from the focus groups chime strongly with some of the main messages from other recent studies which partly address cultural services and the natural environment, in particular:

- **The MENE report 2010** (Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment) for Natural England, Defra and Forestry Commission; and
- **Experiencing Landscapes** Research Box et al 2009 and 2010 for Natural England.

The MENE report findings on motivations for visiting the natural environment conclude: Exercising a dog was a motivation on 47 per cent of visits to the natural environment. The other most frequently provided reasons for taking a visit were "for health and exercise" (34

per cent), to “relax and unwind” (25 per cent), “for fresh air or to enjoy pleasant weather” (21 per cent) and “to enjoy scenery” (20 per cent).

The two Experiencing Landscapes reports used focus groups and depth interviews to consider how people related to different kinds of landscapes and to identify the more common experiences that people expressed. Amongst the work, the results highlighted the following kinds of cultural benefits which were also recorded from the above SSSI focus groups:

- mental health benefits (such as relaxing or de-stressing)
- education (and learning and discovery)
- being together with family and friends, and enjoying the social interaction in the outdoors environment.

Thus there appears to be a consistent message in relation to some key cultural services which people seek and hope to experience when they encounter the natural environment in its different forms, including SSSIs.

#### 4.4 People’s motivations, habits, and attitudes

Amongst the main factors which influence people’s propensity to visit the natural environment, such as SSSIs, are motivations, habits, and attitudes. The SSSI focus groups did not have time to probe these issues, but a greater understanding of these factors in the context of SSSIs, could help inform the management of sites to enhance the cultural services they provide. In addition, it may be valuable to understand how people frame their experience of an SSSI when visiting it, to better understand the links between the wildlife and geological components, and other attributes of sites.

#### 4.5 Potential future qualitative research on SSSI benefits

If resources became available in future there are a range of issues which could be explored further, to help inform the management of SSSIs in relationship to people’s non-specialist use of sites, and the associated cultural services that people experience. Key possibilities are set out below, relating to an understanding of:

- **People’s motivations, habits and attitudes:** Including how these inter-relate with the special wildlife and geology of SSSIs.
- **Primary and secondary influence:** the degree to which the special wildlife and geology of an SSSI acts as a primary draw, or a secondary draw, for people’s visits, and the relationship between the primary reason for visiting (eg. dog walking) and experiencing the special wildlife or geology.
- **How people can most effectively learn about the special wildlife:** ways in which people can be helped most effectively to understand and appreciate the special wildlife and geology of SSSIs.
- **People’s relationship to a site:** How do people’s relationships with the site relate to the SSSI’s special interest? Do they relate strongly to it, reinforce it, feed off it, have no consequence, or even counter it?
- **Positive relationships – how to identify and harness these:** Understanding the extent to which experiencing cultural services, and the special wildlife and geology of an SSSI leads to an affinity with the site, such as a willingness to volunteer help, engendering a sense of belonging to the site, prompting people to be an advocate for the site and its wildlife and other assets.
- **Constituencies of use and support for sites:** Understanding the specialist, non specialist, and user types associated with particular sites. This might entail undertaking stakeholder mapping for a sample of types of SSSIs to understand the different constituencies of people using, visiting and relating to the site. The extent to which

management of sites addresses the needs and interests of these constituencies can then be assessed. In addition, the scope for the skills and resources of these participants to be harnessed to help contribute to the management of the site could be more effectively considered.

**Research methods** for probing these topics could include:

- focus groups, with samples derived from known users, or with participants derived from recruited open samples of the public
- workshops with representatives of user types and visitor types
- on site surveys for direct interviews with visitors
- on site 'drop in stalls' for discussion based interviews with visitors
- guided walk sessions, with participants learning about the special wildlife and geology, with subsequent interview of participants

## 5 Feedback from the focus groups – specific results on the qualitative issues

The tables below set out the feedback on qualitative issues received at the focus groups. These are labelled as follows:

**Tables A-D:** Collective responses for all 10 groups

**Tables E-N:** Response summary per location for each older and each younger group

**Tables O-V:** Response summary on people’s views of the term SSSI, following prompting on this topic at the first groups in Wells.

### ALL GROUPS

#### Older groups: total participants across all groups = 76

**Knowledge of the SSSIs:** Do you know of any of these locations?

None (3) 4%	A few (53) 70%	Many (14) 18%	Most (6) 8%	All (0) 0%
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**Visit and use:** Do you visit, use or identify with any of these locations?

Never (9) 12%	Occasionally (23) 30%	Sometimes (25) 33%	Frequently (12) 16%	In the Past (5) 6%	Travelling past (2) 3%
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#### Younger groups: total participants across all groups = 78

**Knowledge of the SSSIs:** Do you know of any of these locations?

None (3) 4%	A few (49) 63%	Many (19) 24%	Most (7) 9%	All (0) 0%
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**Visit and use:** Do you visit, use or identify with any of these locations?

Never (5) 6%	Occasionally (25) 32%	Sometimes (27) 35%	Frequently (15) 19%	In the Past (3) 4%	Travelling past (3) 4%
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#### All participants: total participants in all groups = 154

**Knowledge of the SSSIs:** Do you know of any of these locations?

None (6) 4%	A few (102) 66%	Many (33) 21%	Most (13) 9%	All (0) 0%
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**Visit and use:** Do you visit, use or identify with any of these locations?

Never (14) 9%	Occasionally (48) 31%	Sometimes (52) 34%	Frequently (27) 18%	In the Past (8) 5%	Travelling past (5) 3%
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#### Heard of term SSSI before? N= 125

Not heard of SSSIs before

**Older group**

**Younger group**

**TOTAL**

(26)

(38)

(64)

24%

60%

51%

Heard of SSSIs before

(36)

(25)

(61)

58%

40%

49%

#### How heard of SSSIs? N= 61

TV

39%

Newspaper or Magazine (national or local)	26%
At school	5%
At College /University	5%
Information from farming and game bodies	5%
Word of mouth	6%
Direct experience at site (eg visiting, volunteering)	7%
Other	7%

**WELLS older group**

Responses on the 29 SSSIs listed within c.15 miles of Wells

**E. Wells older group n=14**

**Knowledge of the SSSIs:** Do you know of any of these locations?

None	A few <b>10</b>	Many <b>3</b>	Most <b>1</b>	All
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**Visit and use:** Do you visit, use or identify with any of these locations?

Never <b>1</b>	Occasionally <b>2</b>	Sometimes <b>7</b>	Frequently <b>3</b>	In the Past <b>1</b>	Travelling past
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**Wildlife-related benefits to you from nearby SSSIs**

- “An escape to nature”
- “Keeping the wildlife working”
- “Happiness”
- “Tranquillity”
- “A chance to see unusual species as well as normal wildlife not being shot at!”

**Other benefits to you from nearby SSSIs**

- “Exercise, relaxation, and thinking time”
- “Dog walking” x2
- “Exercise and dog walking”
- “Walking and painting”

**If these places were not looked after, how would this matter to you...**

- “My bird watching would be curtailed and my quiet times would deteriorate”
- “Loss of natural England and Wales”
- “I’m not sure if I would notice other than from a litter and parking point”
- “It would matter to me because the facilities I can use would become inaccessible”

**What do these places mean to you?**

- “An escape from the rat race”
- “The enjoyment of seeing all”
- “Places of interest”
- “Everything that is British”
- “Look after or lose”
- “SSSIs mean protection of species, environment and land so that the area is enjoyed now and in the future and contributes to a sustainable farming, water balance and CO2 balance.”

**Are there problems or disbenefits relating to these places?**

- “There are none. However, most SSSIs are man-made. How would they have deteriorated without designation?”
- “Not maintaining paths contributes to wet areas for frogs but means that ground is eroded”
- “Some parts are not disabled friendly”

**WELLS younger group**

Responses on the 29 SSSIs listed within c.15 miles of Wells

**F. Wells younger group n=15**

**Knowledge of the SSSIs:** Do you know of any of these locations?

None	A few 3	Many 11	Most 1	All
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**Visit and use:** Do you visit, use or identify with any of these locations?

Never	Occasionally 3	Sometimes 6	Frequently 6	Visit in past	Travelling past
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**Wildlife-related benefits to you from nearby SSSIs**

- “At Ebbor Gorge: walking; views; photography; local schools project; woodland plants”
- “Dog walking; time with family to enjoy our local environment”
- “Leisure, art, walks etc”
- “Identifying species and seeing them in their natural environment”
- “Education and seeing different animals”

**Other benefits to you from nearby SSSIs**

- “Biking in the old quarries”
- “Walking (sometimes with dogs), and pleasure from beauty”
- “Fitness training (walking), especially at Ebbor Gorge”
- “Dog walking”
- “Dog walking; days out with children”
- “Dog walking; peace & quiet; education with nieces and nephews”
- “Walks; sightseeing with visiting friends using related sites”

**If these places were not looked after, how would this matter to you...**

- “I feel it would be a great loss of inspirational walking area”
- “Worse enjoyment and bonding time with family”
- “Become unsafe (quarries); lose special birds”
- “Loss of access to areas for walking and enjoyment of wildlife. Loss for future generations”
- “Ebbor Gorge would be a loss of unusual location; it would restrict family social activity; restrict photography and reduce local knowledge”
- “Loss of connection to nature. Loss of areas of interest to me”

**What do these places mean to you?**

- “A connection to history. Something interesting and a place to escape to.”
- “Places feel special to me, local knowledge, proud of them to show other people who visit”
- “SSSIs provide me with an interesting and diverse place to visit and see unique features and learn more about the environment and preservation”
- “A place to go with family”
- “Simple. Relaxation. Intellectual. Natural”

**Are there any problems or disbenefits relating to these places?**

- “Disabled access and maintenance of pathways already in place”
- “Attraction of rubbish”
- “Contentious issues arising from development plans”
- “Tourism during the summer months”
- “Tourism can cause some of these sites to be heavily used”
- “Commercialism at some of these sites”
- “Traffic going to Wookey Hole and Cheddar in the summer. Commercialisation of some of these sites”

**Other comments**

- “The term SSSIs sounds a bit vague – difficult to work out exactly what one is”
- “SSSIs (the term) sounds like a disease!”
- “SSSIs is a vague title. Unclear what it relates to – don’t automatically think wildlife”
- “SSSIs are fantastic areas for inspiration”



**CARMARTHEN older group**

Responses on the 28 SSSIs listed within c.15 miles of Carmarthen

**G. Carmarthen older group N=14**

**Knowledge of the SSSIs:** Do you know of any of these locations?

None <b>1</b>	A few <b>10</b>	Many <b>3</b>	Most	All
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**Visit and use:** Do you visit, use or identify with any of these locations?

Never <b>4</b>	Occasionally <b>4</b>	Sometimes <b>3</b>	Frequently <b>2</b>	Visit in past	Travelling past <b>1</b>
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**Wildlife-related benefits to you from nearby SSSIs**

- “Children learn about environment, wildlife etc”
- “Seeing things for real, not just in books”
- “Identifying wildlife”
- “Keeping different species”
- “Have friends who visit some of these places with children”

**Other benefits to you from nearby SSSIs**

- “Exercise”
- “Exercise with dog”
- “Exercise and dog walking”
- “Exercise for me and dog. Spiritual sustenance”
- “Exercise in lovely surroundings”
- “Educational”
- “Educational. Important for our future”
- “Family time together. Wonder of God’s creation”
- “Friends who go fishing at some of these sites”

**If these places were not looked after, how would this matter to you...**

- “Lost opportunities. Less interesting alternatives. Less healthy alternatives”
- “It would matter to me”
- “It would have no impact on me”

**What do these places mean to you?**

- “Wilderness aspect of SSSIs is a great appeal”
- “SSSIs should not be overruled in numerous planning applications”
- “SSSIs may provide a check to unrestricted population growth and resulting development.”

**Are there any problems or disbenefits relating to these places?**

- “I can’t think of any problems – to me, protection of our natural environment ranks extremely highly”
- “The problems relate to lack of awareness of the locations”

**CARMARTHEN younger group**

Responses on the 28 SSSIs listed within c.15 miles of Carmarthen

**H. Carmarthen younger group N=15**

**Knowledge of the SSSIs:** Do you know of any of these locations?

None 1	A few 13	Many 1	Most	All
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**Visit and use:** Do you visit, use or identify with any of these locations?

Never 1	Occasionally 6	Sometimes 4	Frequently 2	Visit in past 1	Travelling past 1
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**Wildlife-related benefits to you from nearby SSSIs**

- "Plantation benefits & nice to see the wildlife"
- "Fishing – brings visitors to the area"
- "I am a keen game shooter who enjoys shooting ducks on the Towy"

**Other benefits to you from nearby SSSIs**

- "Walking the dogs"
- "Exercising pets. Walking"
- "Used to walk the dogs alongside the river and along the beach. Quiet, pleasant environment & peaceful"
- "Friends fish"
- "Fishing on the local river is important in the area"
- "Exercise. Knowledge leads to education"
- "Educational, exercise"
- "Exercise, taking children on walks"
- "Being able to promote the area as a place you can walk and that is dog friendly"

**If these places were not looked after, how would this matter to you...**

- "Yes, I'd be unable to walk in these beautiful areas"
- "There would be less places to go and relax away from daily pressures. Less peaceful natural surroundings"
- "Yes – moral obligation to protect habitat and species for future generations"

**What do these places mean to you?**

- "Exercise, nature, interesting"
- "They are important parts of the local environment"
- "Regular walks with my family"

**Are there any problems or disbenefits relating to these places?**

- "Restricted development potential making property in 'home' areas costly and out of reach"
- "I have not been aware of these areas thus not visited – more community knowledge needed"

**SOUTHPORT older group**

Responses on the 14 SSSIs listed within c.15 miles of Southport

**I. Southport older group N=17**

**Knowledge of the SSSIs:** Do you know of any of these locations?

None	A few <b>9</b>	Many <b>4</b>	Most <b>4</b>	All
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**Visit and use:** Do you visit, use or identify with any of these locations?

Never	Occasionally <b>4</b>	Sometimes <b>6</b>	Frequently <b>4</b>	Visit in past <b>3</b>	Travelling past
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**Wildlife-related benefits to you from nearby SSSIs**

- "Opportunities to see rare birds etc"
- "Wildlife, birds, flowers, insects"
- "Walking... birds, beach, woodlands, fauna & flora"
- "Fresh air, sea birds, wild flowers, lizards, toads"
- "Introducing young children to wildlife"
- "Berry picking"

**Other benefits to you from nearby SSSIs**

- "Walking, dog walking"
- "Dog walking, family days out, removing stress, sense of peace"
- "Dog walking, educational"
- "Golf, exercise"
- "Exercise & wellbeing"
- "Pleasure – walking and fitness"
- "Beautiful environment encourages you to enjoy fresh air & exercise"
- "De-stress, relax, sleep better, lifts mood"
- "Educational for self & future generations"
- "Educational, support school trips"

**If these places were not looked after, how would this matter to you...**

- "Loss of enjoyment. Protected species would disappear. Coastline damage"
- "I would be upset. I want my children to know nature. The amenities would be lost but the wildlife loss would be permanent"

**What do these places mean to you?**

- "Nice places, but there are more important things"
- "Wildlife experience"
- "Walking. Love of countryside"
- "Walking in the dunes"
- "Pleasant peaceful places to visit"
- "They are places in our region which we can use and visit"
- "They are places where you can reflect on issues & escape the modern world for an hour or two"

**Are there any problems or disbenefits relating to these places?**

- "Some sites eg. Martin Mere are expensive to visit"
- "Doggie bags & litter"
- "Inherent dilemma – more people equals more damage but if people pay via tax they expect to enjoy"
- "Lack of land for suitable affordable housing"

**SOUTHPORT younger group**

Responses on the 14 SSSIs listed within c.15 miles of Southport

**J. Southport younger group N=16**

**Knowledge of the SSSIs:** Do you know of any of these locations?

None	A few 11	Many 2	Most 3	All
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**Visit and use:** Do you visit, use or identify with any of these locations?

Never 1	Occasionally 6	Sometimes 6	Frequently 2	Visit in past 1	Travelling past
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**Wildlife-related benefits to you from nearby SSSIs**

- “Seeing wildlife. Health benefits”
- “Knowledge of local wildlife”
- “Educational enjoyment”
- “Educational”
- “Education towards family & school”
- “Bird watching”
- “Views, animals, cleaner air”
- “Nice places to visit”

**Other benefits to you from nearby SSSIs**

- “Dog walking”
- “Walks with children and family”
- “Exercise, fresh air, peaceful”
- “Exercise, fresh air, family day out”
- “Running, exercise, playing golf”

**If these places were not looked after, how would this matter to you...**

- “Yes, my children wouldn’t be able to visit”
- “I’m concerned that places can be mis-treated”

**What do these places mean to you?**

- “Something to do if bored, nice walks”
- “Nature, places of beauty”
- “Nice places for adventure”
- “Nice environment to walk – healthy fresh air – good exercise”
- “Compared to living in the city, Sefton Coast and fresh air”
- “Being on the coast with the kids”
- “Golf”
- “Recreation (golf) kitesurfing, fishing, walking, running, health”

**Are there any problems or disbenefits relating to these places?**

- “Prevents commercial growth and development of transport routes”
- “Litter – some places could do with more care”

**HEXHAM older group**

Responses on the 14 SSSIs listed within c.15 miles of Hexham

**K. Hexham older group N=15**

**Knowledge of the SSSIs:** Do you know of any of these locations?

None <b>1</b>	A few <b>10</b>	Many <b>3</b>	Most <b>1</b>	All
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**Visit and use:** Do you visit, use or identify with any of these locations?

Never <b>1</b>	Occasionally <b>7</b>	Sometimes <b>5</b>	Frequently	Visit in past <b>1</b>	Travelling past <b>1</b>
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**Wildlife-related benefits to you from nearby SSSIs**

- "More diverse wildlife"
- "All the wildlife and birds"
- "Birds & butterfly watching. Watching for any rare species of other creature"
- "Bird watching"
- "Food chain – keep rid of pests"

**Other benefits to you from nearby SSSIs**

- "Dog walking"
- "Dog walking, exercise"
- "Dog walking & taking the kids to enjoy the countryside"
- "Walking"
- "Fishing"
- "Canoeing – beautiful scenery"
- "Exercise"
- "Walking & cycling"
- "Walking; spiritual"
- "Walking with family, education for children"

**If these places were not looked after, how would this matter to you...**

- "We have a responsibility to preserve our surroundings. If not us – who?"
- "Yes – visually"
- "More flooding"

**What do these places mean to you?**

- "SSSIs provide a buffer zone of tranquility"
- "Areas of outstanding natural beauty"
- "Peace & quiet. Nature's gifts"
- "The chance to take grandchildren to see wildlife"
- "Family outings"

**Are there any problems or disbenefits relating to these places?**

- "The need for a car to get to some of the sites (I've no car)"
- "Anti-social behavior and vandalism"
- "Some constraints of SSSIs can be severe – need to recognise the costs of these"

**HEXHAM younger group**

Responses on the 14 SSSIs listed within c.15 miles of Hexham

**L. Hexham younger group N=17**

**Knowledge of the SSSIs:** Do you know of any of these locations?

None <b>1</b>	A few <b>13</b>	Many	Most <b>3</b>	All
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**Visit and use:** Do you visit, use or identify with any of these locations?

Never <b>2</b>	Occasionally <b>5</b>	Sometimes <b>6</b>	Frequently <b>2</b>	Visit in past <b>1</b>	Travelling past <b>1</b>
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**Wildlife-related benefits to you from nearby SSSIs**

“Educational for family and for my business and for my young Scout group”  
 “Educational for children spotting different wildlife”  
 “Educating children”  
 “More animals and habitats for endangered species”  
 “Woodland”

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**Other benefits to you from nearby SSSIs**

“Walking my dog – plus it’s nice and relaxing to walk with a nice view”  
 “Exercise, dog walking”  
 “Wildlife, exercise, education, relaxation”  
 “Exercise, dog walking, days out”  
 “Educational, exercise, and good for flower picking”  
 “Walking and getting out and about”  
 “Horse riding, swimming, take children paddling”  
 “Sport – canoeing”  
 “Going fishing”  
 “Spiritual – getting close to nature”  
 “Heather gathering”

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**If these places were not looked after, how would this matter to you...**

“Yes - lost species, areas overgrown and lost to site and may not recover”  
 “It would have to matter financially to me”

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**What do these places mean to you?**

“Places of natural beauty”  
 “Spent three years travelling these moors – loved their natural beauty”

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**Are there any problems or disbenefits relating to these places?**

“We’re paying for what happens naturally”  
 “Youths using the areas to escape the authorities”  
 “Lack of facilities for visitors eg. toilets, and lack of bins for dog poo”

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**IPSWICH older group**

Responses on the 17 SSSIs listed within c.15 miles of Ipswich

**M. Ipswich older group N=16**

**Knowledge of the SSSIs:** Do you know of any of these locations?

None 1	A few 14	Many 1	Most	All
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**Visit and use:** Do you visit, use or identify with any of these locations?

Never 3	Occasionally 6	Sometimes 4	Frequently 3	Visit in past	Travelling past
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**Wildlife-related benefits to you from nearby SSSIs**

- "Prolific bird life at estuary"
- "Observing wildlife – birds, butterflies, that otherwise not seen"
- "Bird and animal watching"
- "I enjoy walking, I enjoy bird watching, I also enjoy different plants and rivers"

**Other benefits to you from nearby SSSIs**

- "Dog walking, exercise, and at certain times of year spiritual pleasure"
- "Dog walking" x3
- "Daily dog walking with friends. Often walk other people's dogs too"
- "Walking the dog as a social activity"
- "Fishing" x2
- "Walking with friends and family" x2
- "Family contact"
- "Walking, enjoy nature, enjoy the space"
- "Calming effect"
- "None – I don't use them"

**If these places were not looked after, how would this matter to you...**

- "Would reduce my pleasure in the countryside"
- "Degradation of the environment. Great loss to the current and future generations"
- "Would be tragic if these areas and places were lost – wildlife, space and nature benefits would disappear"

**What do these places mean to you?**

- "I don't find these places an attraction"
- "Peace"

**Are there any problems or disbenefits relating to these places?**

- "Detrimental to development"
- "Lack of maintenance for safety elements"
- "One problem is that these places are often used for fly tipping"

**IPSWICH younger group**

Responses on the 17 SSSIs listed within c.15 miles of Ipswich

**N. Ipswich younger group N=15**

**Knowledge of the SSSIs:** Do you know of any of these locations?

None 1	A few 9	Many 5	Most	All
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**Visit and use:** Do you visit, use or identify with any of these locations?

Never 1	Occasionally 5	Sometimes 5	Frequently 3	Visit in past	Travelling past 1
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**Wildlife-related benefits to you from nearby SSSIs**

"My friend lives by one of the locations. We enjoy walks with the family and identifying all the different nature"

"Nice place to walk and enjoy wildlife. Means badgers and other cool animals get preserved which makes me happy"

"I have friends that use some of these places for exercise, dog walking, and for looking at lizard and snake species in the area. Also, I know of family and friends who enjoy taking photos in these areas"

"Rare animals and plants to find"

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**Other benefits to you from nearby SSSIs**

"Dog walking" x2

"I have a young family – it is important to get away from the television and to get them interested in other living things"

"I can use some of these locations for walking and running off road in a nicer environment. After growing up in London, I enjoy getting out and about in some of the places mentioned"

"Being with friends and family. Visit with children – picnics, wildlife watching, personal places"

"Places that are near to visit with children"

"Peace & quiet, exercise, fresh air"

"Exercise. Thinking. Relaxation. Fun with friends"

"Walking, personal contentment, memories, educational, recreation"

"Walking"

"My father in law works on the River Orwell"

"Fishing" x2

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**If these places were not looked after, how would this matter to you...**

"Access may be restricted. No where to escape from town"

"Unable to enjoy both scenery and wildlife"

"The immediate issue would be the overall impact on the environment eg. use of CO2 which will in the long run affect species of plants and animals"

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**What do these places mean to you?**

"Relaxation, fun (rowing), scenery (Constable Country) "

"These places are a source of touristic potential. It also preserves the beauty of the countryside and provides areas for geological research"

"Not directly important to me but would miss if gone"

"Animal and plant reserves. Place to think"

"These are places in my area which show the history and evolution of the area"

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**Are there any problems or disbenefits relating to these places?**

"Anti-social behavior (fire starting)"

"Teen drinking – spoiling area with mess & intimidating behavior, puts off the vulnerable"

"Problems with litter & drugs by less scrupulous members of society"

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**Knowledge of the term SSSIs – Carmarthen focus groups**

<b>O. Carmarthen <i>Older</i> Group Total</b>	<b>14</b>	
Not heard of SSSIs before	3	
Heard of SSSIs before	11	
How heard of SSSIs?		
Local media (esp planning and development issues)	9	
Defra/WAG information for farmers		1
Course at local College	1	
Views on the term 'SSSIs'		
Sounds elitist		
Sounds exclusive		
Emphasises the science too much		
A bit misleading in being science focused		
Implies that SSSIs have definite protection, which in some cases they do not		
<b>P. Carmarthen <i>Younger</i> Group Total</b>	<b>15</b>	
Not heard of SSSIs before	7	
Heard of SSSIs before	8	
How heard of SSSIs		
A level geology	1	
My geography degree	1	
From work – a gamekeeper	1	
Local and national TV	5	
Views on the term 'SSSIs'		
Disappointed I've never been told about them		
SSSIs is a bit of a mouthful		
Sounds like the areas could have restricted access		
Title makes you think of the research element (science) rather than the broader benefits		

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### Knowledge of the term SSSIs – Southport focus groups

<b>Q. Southport Older Group Total</b>	<b>17</b>
Not heard of SSSIs before	11
Heard of SSSIs before	6
How heard of SSSIs	
From golf club (which has an SSSI)	1
National Trust membership info	1
A local area was threatened which was an SSSI	1
Discovery Channel documentary	1
TV	2
Views on the term ‘SSSIs’	
Ambiguous	
Elitist	
Sounds specialist	
Sounds like test tubes and science where these sites are about nature	
‘In half an hour I’ll have forgotten it’	
‘It does not say what is in the tin’	
<b>R. Southport Younger Group Total</b>	<b>16</b>
Not heard of SSSIs before	16
Heard of SSSIs before	0
How heard of SSSIs	
<i>Not Applicable</i>	
Views on the term ‘SSSIs’	
“Not the best”	
“I’ve never heard of it – it needs more advertisement... maybe schools”	
“Complicated. Hard to remember”	
“SSSIs??? Can’t understand easily. Can’t remember what it stands for”	
“Boring name. Needs to catch you. Too boring”	
“Already can’t remember it now – needs to be snappier”	
“It’s hard to understand”	
“Confusing. Keep forgetting what it stands for”	
“Doesn’t have any connection to what it actually means”	
“Needs to be more relevant to the subject”	
“Confusing” x2	
“I’ve got a lisp – use a better acronym. Thanks”	

### Knowledge of the term SSSIs – Hexham focus groups

<b>S. Hexham Older Group Total</b>	<b>15</b>
Not heard of SSSIs before	6
Heard of SSSIs before	9
How heard of SSSIs	
TV (including Countryfile)	4
Newspaper	2
From shooting and fishing friends	1
Read sign at an SSSI	1
University course	1
Views on the term ‘SSSIs’	
Too scientific – no popular appeal	
Too long winded	
Meaningless	
Too detailed	

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Sounds like a disease 'I like it – distinctive'	
T. Hexham <i>Younger</i> Group Total	17
Not heard of SSSIs before	9
Heard of SSSIs before	8
How heard of SSSIs	
TV	2
Newspaper	2
At Scout group	1
Used to live next to one	1
A friend explained when passing one	1
A level geography	1

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Views on the term 'SSSIs'

Covers more than the title implies

More knowledge of them would perhaps encourage more people to be willing to support them

Sites should give more information on what is going on at them

Terminology too narrow

"SSSIs says to me 'don't touch' they are special areas for scientists to monitor and you should not disturb the area."

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**Knowledge of the term SSSIs – Ipswich focus groups**

<b>U. Ipswich Older Group Total</b>	<b>16</b>
Not heard of SSSIs before	6
Heard of SSSIs before	10
How heard of SSSIs	
TV (including Countryfile)	4
Radio	1
Local newspaper	2
Teaching while at prison	1
Family member is a naturalist	2
Views on the term ‘SSSIs’	
Unclear acronym – more jargon	
Doesn’t reflect that they are about the countryside	
If so important – how come people have never heard of them?	
‘I like it – sums it up well’	
<b>V. Ipswich Younger Group Total</b>	<b>15</b>
Not heard of SSSIs before	6
Heard of SSSIs before	9
How heard of SSSIs	
TV (including Countryfile)	4
Shooting Magazine	1
National Geographic Magazine	1
Worked on one, clearing trees	1
From school	1
Parents mentioned it to me	1
Views on the term ‘SSSIs’	
The science tag can turn people off (‘and I’m a scientist’)	
‘Even now, I can’t remember what it is and what it stands for’	
Difficult to get an initial grasp of what it is	
Is the ‘I’ for interest or importance? Too much of a tangle	
‘It stands out: I like the three Ss’	