European Site Conservation Objectives: Supplementary advice on conserving and restoring site features

Prescombe Down Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
Site Code: UK0012553

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About this document

This document provides Natural England's supplementary advice about the European Site Conservation Objectives relating to Prescombe Down SAC.

This advice should therefore be read together with the SAC Conservation Objectives available here.

You should use the Conservation Objectives, this Supplementary Advice and any case-specific advice given by Natural England when developing, proposing or assessing an activity, plan or project that may affect this site"

This Supplementary Advice to the Conservation Objectives presents attributes which are ecological characteristics of the designated species and habitats within a site. The listed attributes are considered to be those that best describe the site's ecological integrity and which, if safeguarded, will enable achievement of the Conservation Objectives. Each attribute has a target which is either quantified or qualitative depending on the available evidence. The target identifies as far as possible the desired state to be achieved for the attribute.

The tables provided below bring together the findings of the best available scientific evidence relating to the site's qualifying features, which may be updated or supplemented in further publications from Natural England and other sources. The local evidence used in preparing this supplementary advice has been cited. The references to the national evidence used are available on request. Where evidence and references have not been indicated, Natural England has applied ecological knowledge and expert judgement. You may decide to use other additional sources of information.

In many cases, the attribute targets shown in the tables indicate whether the current objective is to 'maintain' or 'restore' the attribute. This is based on the best available information, including that gathered during monitoring of the feature's current condition. As new information on feature condition becomes available, this will be added so that the advice remains up to date.

The targets given for each attribute do not represent thresholds to assess the significance of any given impact in Habitats Regulations Assessments. You will need to assess this on a case-by-case basis using the most current information available.

Some, but not all, of these attributes can also be used for regular monitoring of the actual condition of the designated features. The attributes selected for monitoring the features, and the standards used to assess their condition, are listed in separate monitoring documents, which will be available from Natural England.

These tables do not give advice about SSSI features or other legally protected species which may also be present within the European Site.

If you have any comments or queries about this Supplementary Advice document please contact your local Natural England adviser or email HDIRConservationObjectivesNE@naturalengland.org.uk

About this site

European Site information

Name of European Site	Prescombe Down Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
Location	Wiltshire
Site Map	The designated boundary of this site can be viewed here on the MAGIC website
Designation Date	1 April 2005
Qualifying Features	See section below
Designation Area	76.14 ha
Designation Changes	None
Feature Condition Status	Details of the feature condition assessments made at this site can be found using Natural England's Designated Sites System
Names of component Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)	Prescombe Down SSSI
Relationship with other European or International Site designations	None

Site background and geography

Prescombe Down is a botanically rich downland site in south Wiltshire, located within the Dorset Downs & Cranborne Chase National Character Area (NCA Profile 134), with a flora characteristic of the south and south-west chalk grassland. The site consists of a deep, forking, coombe system eroded into an escarpment of the Upper Chalk. The steep sides of the dry valleys exhibit a variety of aspect which is reflected in the species composition of the turf.

The calcicolous NVC community represented at Prescombe Down is CG2 *Festuca ovina - Avenula pratensis* grassland. The site also includes areas of the mesotrophic grassland community MG5 *Cynosurus cristatus - Centaurea nigra* and transitions between the two.

Prescombe Down holds a significant population of early gentian *Gentianella anglica.* It is likely to be one of the two largest populations in Britain and in some years the site may have the highest population of this species. The downland also supports a rich butterfly community, including scarce species such as Adonis blue *Polyommatus belargus* and marsh fritillary *Euphydryas aurinia*.

The western part of the site is designated as a National Nature Reserve. A Scheduled Monument - Church Bottom Earthwork Enclosure - is located within the SAC boundary.

About the qualifying features of the SAC

The following section gives you additional, site-specific information about this SAC's qualifying features. These are the natural habitats and/or species for which this SAC has been designated.

Qualifying habitats:

- **H6210: Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*) (dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone).**

These grasslands occur on thin dry soils on chalk or limestone and are usually very rich in plant species, particularly herbs and grasses. The range of plant species present is dependent mainly on climatic factors, and varies greatly within the UK, but typically found are common rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, meadow oat-grass *Helictotrichon pratense*, sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina* and lady's bedstraw *Galium verum*.

The calcicolous NVC community represented at Prescombe Down is CG2 *Festuca ovina - Avenula pratensis* grassland. South and south-west facing slopes are dominated by sheep's-fescue *Festuca ovina* and dwarf sedge *Carex humilis*. In contrast, on north and north-east facing slopes sheep's-fescue is co-dominant with glaucous sedge *Carex flacca*. Red fescue *Festuca rubra* is generally abundant and many other grasses, such as downy oat-grass *Helictotrichon pubescens*, quaking grass *Briza media* and crested hairgrass *Koeleria macrantha* are widespread. Chalk herbs are well represented in the sward.

Species such as harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, fairy flax *Linum catharticum* and salad burnet *Sanguisorba minor* are common throughout, whereas others, including horseshoe vetch *Hippocrepis comosa*, common rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, squinancywort *Asperula cynanchica* and early gentian *Gentianella anglica* are more restricted to the warm south-facing slopes and sheltered coombes.

Qualifying Species:

- **S1654 Early gentian *Gentianella anglica***

Early gentian is an annual plant occurring in calcareous grassland, mainly on steep, south-facing slopes. It grows on bare ground or in thin turf that is kept open by a combination of rabbit or sheep grazing and trampling by livestock on thin droughted soils. In dense turf it becomes shaded out and unable to compete with other more vigorous species. This species can undergo significant population fluctuations, both regionally due to weather conditions and on individual sites as a reflection of grazing levels.

Early gentian occurs mainly on chalk escarpments in central southern England, but its range extends to Cornwall and south west Wales and northwards to Lincolnshire. Prescombe Down is one of three sites selected in the central part of the range. It holds very significant populations of hundreds of thousands of plants in high quality chalk grassland and in some years may be the largest population in Britain.

- **S1065 Marsh fritillary butterfly *Euphydryas* (*Eurodryas*, *Hypodryas*) *aurinia***

Marsh fritillary is found in a range of habitats in which its larval food plant devil's bit scabious *Succisa pratensis* occurs. Field scabious *Knautia arvensis* and small scabious *Scabiosa columbaria* can also be used. Most colonies are found in damp acidic or dry calcareous grassland. Populations vary greatly in size from year to year which at least in part is related to attacks from parasitic wasps. Larvae congregate in silk webs from late summer and overwinter in grass tussocks close to the ground. Adults tend to be sedentary and remain in a series of linked metapopulations, forming numerous temporary subpopulations which frequently die out and then recolonise. Sheep selectively graze devil's bit scabious and are therefore detrimental to marsh fritillary populations except at very low stocking rates.

It is not certain if marsh fritillary is still present at Prescombe Down or has ever been breeding there. Past records have been sporadic with numbers variable and the most recent confirmed record is from 1998. It is thought the species may only use the site in particularly good years when individuals overflow

from nearby sites. Currently the habitat is not ideal for marsh fritillary with a relatively short sward and very few records of the main foodplant.

Table 1: Supplementary Advice for Qualifying Features: H6210. Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia); Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
Extent and distribution of the feature	**Extent of the feature within the site**	Maintain the total extent of the feature at 47.5 ha. (= area CG2)	There should be no measurable reduction (excluding any trivial loss) in the extent and area of this feature, and in some cases, the full extent of the feature may need to be restored. The baseline-value of extent given has been generated using data gathered from the listed site-based surveys. Area measurements given may be approximate depending on the methods, age and accuracy of data collection, and as a result this value may be updated in future to reflect more accurate information. The extent of an Annex I habitat feature covers the sum extent of all of the component vegetation communities present and may include transitions and mosaics with other closely-associated habitat features. Where a feature is susceptible to natural dynamic processes, there may be acceptable variations in its extent through natural fluctuations. Where a reduction in the extent of a feature is considered necessary to meet the Conservation Objective for another Annex I feature, Natural England will advise on this on a case-by-case basis.	NATURE CONSERVANCY COUNCIL (1989) Wiltshire Chalk Grassland NVC Survey. NATURAL ENGLAND (2009) Definition of Favourable Condition -Prescombe Down SSSI (Consultation Draft) (Available from Natural England on request) This attribute will be periodically monitored as part of Natural England's SSSI condition assessments
Extent and distribution of the feature	**Spatial distribution of the feature within the site**	Maintain the distribution and configuration of the feature, including where applicable its component vegetation types, across the site	A contraction in the range, or geographic spread, of the feature (and its component vegetation and typical species, plus transitional communities) across the site will reduce its overall area, the local diversity and variations in its structure and composition, and may undermine its resilience to adapt to future environmental changes. This may also reduce and break up the continuity of a habitat within a site and how well its typical species are able to move around the site to occupy and use habitat. Such fragmentation can impact on their viability and the wider ecological composition of the Annex I habitat.	NATURE CONSERVANCY COUNCIL (1989) Wiltshire Chalk Grassland NVC Survey. NATURAL ENGLAND (2009) Definition of Favourable Condition -Prescombe Down SSSI (Consultation Draft) (Available from Natural England on request) NATURAL ENGLAND (2014) Prescombe Down National

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
			Smaller fragments of habitat can typically support smaller and more isolated populations which are more vulnerable to extinction. These fragments also have a greater amount of open edge habitat which will differ in the amount of light, temperature, wind, and even noise that it receives compared to its interior. These conditions may not be suitable for some of the typical and more specialist species associated with the Annex I habitat feature.	Nature Reserve (NNR) Management Plan (Available from Natural England on request)
Structure and function (including its typical species)	**Vegetation community composition**	Ensure the component vegetation communities of the feature are referable to and characterised by the following National Vegetation Classification type: • CG2 *Festuca ovina - Avenula pratensis* grassland	This habitat feature will comprise a number of associated semi-natural vegetation types and their transitional zones, reflecting the geographical location of the site, altitude, aspect, soil conditions (especially base-status and drainage) and vegetation management. In the UK these have been categorised by the National Vegetation Classification (NVC). Maintaining or restoring these characteristic and distinctive vegetation types, and the range of types as appropriate, will be important to sustaining the overall habitat feature. This will also help to conserve their typical plant species (i.e. the constant and preferential species of a community), and therefore that of the SAC feature, at appropriate levels (recognising natural fluctuations).	Wiltshire Chalk Grassland NVC Survey, 1989 This attribute will be periodically monitored as part of Natural England's SSSI condition assessments
Structure and function (including its typical species)	**Vegetation: proportion of herbs (including *Carex* spp.)**	Maintain the proportion of herbaceous species within the range 60%-90%	A high cover of characteristic herbs, including sedges (*Carex* species) is typical of the structure of this habitat type.	NATURAL ENGLAND (2009) Definition of Favourable Condition -Prescombe Down SSSI (Consultation Draft) (Available from Natural England on request) This attribute will be periodically monitored as part of Natural England's SSSI condition assessments
Structure and function (including its	**Key structural, influential**	Maintain the abundance of the typical species listed below to enable each of them to be a	Some plant or animal species (or related groups of such species) make a particularly important contribution to the necessary structure, function and/or quality of an Annex I	NATURAL ENGLAND (2009) Definition of Favourable Condition -Prescombe Down

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
typical species)	**and/or distinctive species**	viable component of the Annex 1 habitat: • Constant and preferential plant species of the CG2 *Festuca ovina - Avenula pratensis* grassland NVC vegetation types at this SAC • Butterfly / moth assemblage including Adonis blue *Polyommatus belargus,* marsh fritillary *Euphydryas aurinia,* chalkhill blue *Polyommatus coridon,* dingy skipper *Erynnis tages,* grizzled skipper *Pyrgus malvae,* wood tiger moth *Parasemia plantaginis,* • Yellow meadow ant *Lasius flavus*	habitat feature at a particular site. These species will include; • **Structural** species which form a key part of the Annex I habitat's structure or help to define that habitat on a particular SAC (see also the attribute for 'vegetation community composition'). • **Influential** species which are likely to have a key role affecting the structure and function of the habitat (such as bioturbators (mixers of soil/sediment), grazers, surface borers, predators or other species with a significant functional role linked to the habitat) • **Site-distinctive** species which are considered to be a particularly special and distinguishing component of an Annex I habitat on a particular SAC. There may be natural fluctuations in the frequency and cover of each of these species. The relative contribution made by them to the overall ecological integrity of a site may vary, and Natural England will provide bespoke advice on this as necessary. The list of species given here for this Annex I habitat feature at this SAC is not necessarily exhaustive. The list may evolve, and species may be added or deleted, as new information about this site becomes available.	SSSI (Consultation Draft) (Available from Natural England on request) WILSON, PJ, (2004). A Vegetation Survey of Prescombe Down National Nature Reserve (Available on request from Natural England) WILSON, P and PRICE, D (Species Recovery Trust), (2017). Early gentian *Gentianella anglica:* Sample Survey of Sites in England This attribute will be periodically monitored as part of Natural England's SSSI condition assessments
Structure and function (including its typical species)	**Vegetation: undesirable species**	Maintain the frequency/cover of the following undesirable species to within acceptable levels and prevent changes in surface condition, soils, nutrient levels or hydrology which may encourage their spread:	There will be a range of undesirable or uncharacteristic species which, if allowed to colonise and spread, are likely to have an adverse effect on the feature's structure and function, including its more desirable typical species. These may include invasive non-natives such as Cotoneaster spp, or coarse and aggressive native species which may uncharacteristically dominate the composition of the feature. Undesirable species include**:** Creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense,* spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare,* curled dock *Rumex crispus,* broad leaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius,* common ragwort *Senecio jacobaea,* common nettle *Urtica dioica;* tor grass *Brachypodium pinnatum,* upright brome *Bromopsis erecta*	NATURAL ENGLAND (2009) Definition of Favourable Condition -Prescombe Down SSSI (Consultation Draft) (Available from Natural England on request) This attribute will be periodically monitored as part of Natural England's SSSI condition assessments

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
Structure and function (including its typical species)	**Vegetation community transitions**	Maintain the pattern of natural vegetation zonations/transitions.	Transitions/zonations between adjacent but different vegetation communities are usually related to naturally-occurring changes in soil, aspect or slope. Such 'ecotones' retain characteristics of each bordering community and can add value in often containing species not found in the adjacent communities. Retaining such transitions can provide further diversity to the habitat feature, and support additional flora and fauna. As well as calcicolous grassland the site includes species-rich neutral grassland (MG5) and areas which exhibit a transition between CG2 and MG5. In addition, species-poor grassland is found on deeper soils at the top and bottom of slopes. Vegetation transitions are associated with differences in soil depth, slope, aspect and microclimatic conditions.	NATURAL ENGLAND (2009) Definition of Favourable Condition -Prescombe Down SSSI (Consultation Draft) (Available from Natural England on request) WILSON, PJ, 2004. A Vegetation Survey of Prescombe Down National Nature Reserve
Structure and function (including its typical species)	**Soils, substrate and nutrient cycling**	Maintain the properties of the underlying soil types, including structure, bulk density, total carbon, pH, soil nutrient status and fungal: bacterial ratio, to within typical values for the habitat.	Soil is the foundation of basic ecosystem function and its properties strongly influence the colonisation, growth and distribution of those plant species which together form vegetation types, and therefore provides a habitat used by a wide range of organisms. Soil biodiversity has a vital role to recycle organic matter. Changes to natural soil properties may therefore affect the ecological structure, function and processes associated with this Annex I feature.	
Structure and function (including its typical species)	**Supporting off-site habitat**	Maintain the extent, quality and spatial configuration of land or habitat surrounding or adjacent to the site which is known to support the feature.	Include only where applicable. The structure and function of the qualifying habitat, including its typical species, may rely upon the continued presence of areas which surround and are outside of the designated site boundary. Changes in surrounding land-use may adversely (directly/indirectly) affect the functioning of the feature and its component species. This supporting habitat may be critical to the typical species of the feature to support their feeding, breeding, roosting, population dynamics ('metapopulations'), pollination or to prevent/reduce/absorb damaging impacts from adjacent land uses e.g. pesticide drift, nutrient enrichment. Corridors of suitable habitat will help link the site to nearby areas of species-rich grassland and facilitate movement of	

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
			invertebrates, notably Lepidoptera Where appropriate there should be buffer strips adjacent to the site to protect the species-rich grassland from the effects of pesticide drift and nutrient enrichment.	
Structure and function (including its typical species)	**Functional connectivity with wider landscape**	Maintain the overall extent, quality and function of any supporting features within the local landscape which provide a critical functional connection with the site	This recognises the potential need at this site to maintain or restore the connectivity of the site to its wider landscape in order to meet the conservation objectives. These connections may take the form of landscape features, such as habitat patches, hedges, watercourses and verges, outside of the designated site boundary which are either important for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of those typical species closely associated with qualifying Annex I habitat features of the site. These features may also be important to the operation of the supporting ecological processes on which the designated site and its features may rely. In most cases increasing actual and functional landscape-scale connectivity would be beneficial. Where there is a lack of detailed knowledge of the connectivity requirements of the qualifying feature, Natural England will advise as to whether these are applicable on a case by case basis. Maintaining and restoring connectivity with other existing species-rich grassland to the north, east and west will benefit invertebrate species, in particular marsh fritillary where individual colonies are linked as a wider metapopulation.	
Structure and function (including its typical species)	**Adaptation and resilience**	Maintain the feature's ability, and that of its supporting processes, to adapt or evolve to wider environmental change, either within or external to the site	This recognises the increasing likelihood of natural habitat features to absorb or adapt to wider environmental changes. Resilience may be described as the ability of an ecological system to cope with, and adapt to environmental stress and change whilst retaining the same basic structure and ways of functioning. Such environmental changes may include changes in sea levels, precipitation and temperature for example, which are	NATURAL ENGLAND, 2015. Climate Change Theme Plan and supporting National Biodiversity Climate Change Vulnerability assessments ('NBCCVAs') for SACs and SPAs in England

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
			likely to affect the extent, distribution, composition and functioning of a feature within a site. The vulnerability and response of features to such changes will vary. Using best available information, any necessary or likely adaptation or adjustment by the feature and its management in response to actual or expected climatic change should be allowed for, as far as practicable, in order to ensure the feature's long-term viability. The overall vulnerability of this particular SAC to climate change has been assessed by Natural England as being low, taking into account the sensitivity, fragmentation, topography and management of its habitats. This means that some adaptation action for specific issues may be required, such as reducing habitat fragmentation, creating more habitat to buffer the site or expand the habitat into more varied landscapes and addressing particular management and condition issues. Individual species may be more or less vulnerable than their habitat itself. In many cases, change will be inevitable so appropriate monitoring would be required	
Supporting processes (on which the feature relies)	**Air quality**	Maintain the concentrations and deposition of air pollutants to at or below the site-relevant Critical Load or Level values given for this feature of the site on the Air Pollution Information System (www.apis.ac.uk).	This habitat type is considered sensitive to changes in air quality. Exceedance of these critical values for air pollutants may modify the chemical status of its substrate, accelerating or damaging plant growth, altering its vegetation structure and composition and causing the loss of sensitive typical species associated with it. Critical Loads and Levels are recognised thresholds below which such harmful effects on sensitive UK habitats will not occur to a significant level, according to current levels of scientific understanding. There are critical levels for ammonia (NH3), oxides of nitrogen (NOx) and sulphur dioxide (SO2), and critical loads for nutrient nitrogen deposition and acid deposition. There are currently no critical loads or levels for other pollutants such as Halogens, Heavy Metals, POPs, VOCs or Dusts. These should be considered as appropriate on a case-by-case basis.	More information about site-relevant Critical Loads and Levels for this SAC is available by using the 'search by site' tool on the Air Pollution Information System (www.apis.ac.uk).

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
			Ground level ozone is regionally important as a toxic air pollutant but flux-based critical levels for the protection of semi-natural habitats are still under development. It is recognised that achieving this target may be subject to the development, availability and effectiveness of abatement technology and measures to tackle diffuse air pollution, within realistic timescales.	
Supporting processes (on which the feature relies)	**Conservation measures**	Maintain the management measures (either within and/or outside the site boundary as appropriate) which are necessary to maintain the structure, functions and supporting processes associated with the feature	Active and ongoing conservation management is needed to protect, maintain or restore this feature at this site. Further details about the necessary conservation measures for this site can be provided by contacting Natural England. This information will typically be found within, where applicable, supporting documents such as Natura 2000 Site Improvement Plan, Site Management Strategies or Plans, the Views about Management Statement for the underpinning SSSI and/or management agreements.	NATURAL ENGLAND (2003) Prescombe Down SSSI - Views About Management NATURAL ENGLAND (2015). Site Improvement Plan: Prescombe Down SAC NATURAL ENGLAND (2014) Prescombe Down National Nature Reserve (NNR) Management Plan (Available from Natural England on request)
Version Control Advice last updated: N/A				
Variations from national feature-framework of integrity-guidance: **Structure and function: vegetation – proportion of herbs.** Lower limit of target changed from 40% to 60% to match Definition of Favourable Condition for Prescombe Down SSSI				

Table 2: Supplementary Advice for Qualifying Features: S1065. *Euphydryas (Eurodryas, Hypodryas) aurinia*; Marsh fritillary butterfly

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
Population (of the feature)	**Population abundance**	Restore the potential for a viable population on the site	This will ensure there is a viable population of the feature which is being maintained at or increased to a level that contributes as appropriate to its Favourable Conservation Status across its natural range in the UK. Due to the dynamic nature of population change, the target-value given for the population size or presence of this feature is considered to be the minimum standard for conservation/restoration measures to achieve. This minimum-value may be revised where there is evidence to show that a population's size or presence has significantly changed as a result of natural factors or management measures and has been stable at or above a new level over a considerable period (generally at least 10 years). The values given here may also be updated in future to reflect any strategic objectives which may be set at a national level for this feature. Given the likely fluctuations in numbers over time, any impact-assessments should focus on the current size of the site's population, as derived from the latest known or estimated level established using the best available data. This advice accords with the obligation to avoid deterioration of the site or significant disturbance of the species for which the site is designated, and seeks to avoid plans or projects that may affect the site giving rise to the risk of deterioration. Similarly, where there is evidence to show that a feature has historically been more abundant than the stated minimum target and its current level, the ongoing capacity of the site to accommodate the feature at such higher levels in future should also be taken into account in any assessment. Unless otherwise stated, the population size or presence will be that measured using standard methods, such as peak mean counts or breeding surveys. This value is also provided recognising there will be inherent variability as a result of	NATURAL ENGLAND (2009) Definition of Favourable Condition -Prescombe Down SSSI (Consultation Draft) (Available from Natural England on request) NATURAL ENGLAND (2014) Prescombe Down National Nature Reserve (NNR) Management Plan (Available from Natural England on request) NATURAL ENGLAND (2015). Site Improvement Plan: Prescombe Down SAC Butterfly Conservation (2015). Rapid assessment of potential to support marsh fritillary and Duke of Burgundy. Unpublished report for Natural England. (Available from Natural England on request)

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
			natural fluctuations and margins of error during data collection. Whilst we will endeavour to keep these values as up to date as possible, local Natural England staff can advise that the figures stated are the best available. For this feature counting the conspicuous larval webs is a good measure of population density; as well as the more standardised transect counts of adults. Past records of marsh fritillary are sporadic and there are none from recent years (since SAC designation). Records are from 1976; 1986 ("numerous in valley bottom"); 1990 (99 individuals); 1991 (12 individuals); 1996; 1998. It is thought the species may only use the site in particularly good years when individuals overflow from nearby sites. Restoration of a suitable habitat structure in selected areas together with increasing the abundance of the food-plant would provide greater opportunity for colonisation from nearby populations, although this needs to be balanced against the management required for the other designated features.	
Supporting habitat: extent and distribution	**Distribution of supporting habitat**	Maintain the distribution and continuity of the feature and its supporting habitat, including where applicable its component vegetation types and associated transitional vegetation types, across the site.	A contraction in the range, or geographic spread, of the feature (and its component vegetation) across the site will reduce its overall area, the local diversity and variations in its structure and composition, and may undermine its resilience to adapt to future environmental changes. Contraction may also reduce and break up the continuity of a habitat within a site and how well the species feature is able to occupy and use habitat within the site. Such fragmentation may have a greater amount of open edge habitat which will differ in the amount of light, temperature, wind, and even noise that it receives compared to its interior. These conditions may not be suitable for this feature and this may affect its viability. *Succisa pratensis* is currently only recorded in two small areas of the site.	BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION (2015). Rapid assessment of potential to support marsh fritillary and Duke of Burgundy. Unpublished report for Natural England. (Available from Natural England on request)

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
Supporting habitat: extent and distribution	**Extent of supporting habitat**	Restore the availability of suitable habitat which can support the feature.	In order to contribute towards the objective of achieving an overall favourable conservation status of the feature at a UK level, it is important to maintain or if appropriate restore the extent of supporting habitats and their range within this SAC. The information available on the extent and distribution of supporting habitat used by the feature may be approximate depending on the nature, age and accuracy of data collection, and may be subject to periodic review in light of improvements in data. The extent of supporting habitat is currently limited, mainly due to the rarity of *Succisa pratensis* on the site, but also a lack of suitable sward structure due to the differing management requirements for other key features on the site.	BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION (2015). Rapid assessment of potential to support marsh fritillary and Duke of Burgundy. Unpublished report for Natural England. (Available from Natural England on request)
Supporting habitat: structure/ function	**Ground moisture**	Grazing regime should allow for a sufficiently long sward during the summer months to avoid desiccation of the *Succisa* plants on which the larvae feed.	Sward height should be long enough during spring/ summer months that the larval foodplant does not become desiccated (especially important on calcareous grassland sites). This presents a conflict with the management needed for other features on the site (including CG2 grassland, early gentian and Adonis blue) which require a short sward.	
Supporting habitat: structure/ function	**Vegetation composition - presence of foodplants**	Restore a wider distribution of devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis* within supporting habitat.	As the feature's larval foodplant, *Succisa* should be common enough in the sward that there will always be a good and continuous number of suitable plants for egg-laying; this is particularly important on calcareous grassland sites, which are more prone to drought. Currently *Succisa* is only present in small, localised patches. Increasing this would potentially require the introduction of seed or plug plants. Larvae are also known to use field scabious *Knautia arvensis* or field scabious *Scabiosa columbaria,* both of which are more common on the site.	NATURAL ENGLAND (2014) Prescombe Down National Nature Reserve (NNR) Management Plan (Available from Natural England on request) NATURAL ENGLAND (2015). Site Improvement Plan: Prescombe Down SAC
Supporting habitat:	**Vegetation structure -**	Maintain appropriate sward conditions, with a typical sward	The larval foodplant grows on calcareous, as well as neutral, grassland, but this habitat is drier and more prone to draught;	This attribute will be periodically monitored as part of Natural

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
structure/ function	**sward height (calcareous grassland)**	height of 10 -15 cm on average (during summer months)	so the sward height should be longer to ensure the *Succisa* is usable by the larvae. This presents a conflict with the management needed for other key features of the calcareous grassland (notably CG2, early gentian and Adonis blue) which require a shorter sward. Soil depth and aspect may help to favour a longer sward in parts of the site, particularly on north east facing slopes.	England's SSSI condition assessments
Supporting habitat: structure/ function	**Vegetation structure - sward height (neutral grassland)**	Maintain appropriate sward conditions, with a typical sward height of 5-10 cm on average (during summer months)	The extent of neutral grassland (MG5) within the SAC/SSSI is around 6ha (excluding areas of transition/ mosaic with CG2). *Succisa pratensis* is not known to be present in these areas and there are no marsh fritillary records associated with the neutral grassland.	Wiltshire Chalk Grassland NVC survey, 1989
Supporting habitat: structure/ function	**Soils, substrate and nutrient cycling**	Maintain the properties of the underlying soil types, including structure, bulk density, total carbon, pH, soil nutrient status and fungal: bacterial ratio, within typical values for the supporting habitat	Soil supports basic ecosystem function and is a vital part of the natural environment. Its properties strongly influence the colonisation, growth and distribution of those plant species which together form vegetation types, and therefore provides a habitat used by a wide range of organisms. Soil biodiversity has a vital role to recycle organic matter. Changes to natural soil properties may therefore affect the ecological structure, function and processes associated with the supporting habitat of this Annex II feature.	
Supporting processes (on which the feature and/or its supporting habitat relies)	**Adaptation and resilience**	Maintain the feature's ability, and that of its supporting habitat, to adapt or evolve to wider environmental change, either within or external to the site	This recognises the increasing likelihood of natural habitat features to absorb or adapt to wider environmental changes. Resilience may be described as the ability of an ecological system to cope with, and adapt to environmental stress and change whilst retaining the same basic structure and ways of functioning. Such environmental changes may include changes in sea levels, precipitation and temperature for example, which are likely to affect the extent, distribution, composition and functioning of a feature within a site. The vulnerability and response of features to such changes will vary.	NATURAL ENGLAND, 2015. Climate Change Theme Plan and supporting National Biodiversity Climate Change Vulnerability assessments ('NBCCVAs') for SACs and SPAs in England

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
			Using best available information, any necessary or likely adaptation or adjustment by the feature and its management in response to actual or expected climatic change should be allowed for, as far as practicable, in order to ensure the feature's long-term viability. The overall vulnerability of this particular SAC to climate change has been assessed by Natural England as being low, taking into account the sensitivity, fragmentation, topography and management of its habitats. This means that some adaptation action for specific issues may be required, such as reducing habitat fragmentation, creating more habitat to buffer the site or expand the habitat into more varied landscapes and addressing particular management and condition issues. Individual species may be more or less vulnerable than their habitat itself. In many cases, change will be inevitable so appropriate monitoring would be required	
Supporting processes (on which the feature and/or its supporting habitat relies)	**Air quality**	Maintain concentrations and deposition of air pollutants to at or below the site-relevant Critical Load or Level values given for this feature of the site on the Air Pollution Information System (www.apis.ac.uk).	The supporting habitat of this feature is considered sensitive to changes in air quality. Exceedance of these critical values for air pollutants may modify the chemical status of its substrate, accelerating or damaging plant growth, altering its vegetation structure and composition (including food-plants) and reducing supporting habitat quality and population viability of this feature. Critical Loads and Levels are recognised thresholds below which such harmful effects on sensitive UK habitats will not occur to a significant level, according to current levels of scientific understanding. There are critical levels for ammonia (NH3), oxides of nitrogen (NOx) and sulphur dioxide (SO2), and critical loads for nutrient nitrogen deposition and acid deposition. There are currently no critical loads or levels for other pollutants such as Halogens, Heavy Metals, POPs, VOCs or Dusts. These should be considered as appropriate on a case-by-case basis. Ground level ozone is regionally important as a toxic air pollutant but flux-based critical levels for the protection of seminatural habitats are still under development. It is	More information about site-relevant Critical Loads and Levels for this SAC is available by using the 'search by site' tool on the Air Pollution Information System (www.apis.ac.uk).

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
			recognised that achieving this target may be subject to the development, availability and effectiveness of abatement technology and measures to tackle diffuse air pollution, within realistic timescales. The average nitrogen deposition is within the Critical Load limit for the supporting habitat class.	
Supporting processes (on which the feature and/or its supporting habitat relies)	**Conservation measures**	Restore the management measures (either within and/or outside the site boundary as appropriate) which are necessary to restore the structure, functions and supporting processes associated with the feature and/or its supporting habitats.	Active and ongoing conservation management is needed to protect, maintain or restore this feature at this site. Further details about the necessary conservation measures for this site can be provided by contacting Natural England. This information will typically be found within, where applicable, supporting documents such as Natura 2000 Site Improvement Plan, site management strategies or plans, the Views about Management Statement for the underpinning SSSI and/or management agreements. There is a potential conflict between appropriate management for marsh fritillary and that for other features on the site which require different conditions (e.g. CG2 grassland, early gentian and Adonis blue). Providing some areas of longer sward for marsh fritillary whilst retaining a short sward elsewhere is difficult to manage across large grazing units. Additional fencing could exclude stock from core habitat areas at certain times of year, but would be complicated to implement.	NATURAL ENGLAND (2014) Prescombe Down National Nature Reserve (NNR) Management Plan (Available from Natural England on request) Natural England (2015). Site Improvement Plan: Prescombe Down SAC
Supporting processes (on which the feature and/or its supporting habitat relies)	**Grazing pressure**	Maintain a cattle-dominated grazing regime.	Cattle grazing is preferable as it produces a less uniform sward; also sheep tend to selectively graze the *Succisa*, which is likely to be detrimental to marsh fritillary populations. If sheep are used it should be at a very low stocking ration (especially on calcareous sites, where care should be taken that sites aren't overgrazed, resulting in a short sward and increased risk of desiccation of *Succisa* plants (if they aren't actually eaten!). Light continuous cattle grazing is more beneficial than short-term heavy grazing, as long as the correct sward structure is	

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
			maintained and sites do not become overgrazed. Sheep should not graze during the summer months - cattle/ pony grazing during summer may be OK if at a low stocking density. Prescombe Down SAC is cattle grazed through summer/autumn with sheep in autumn/winter. The grazing regime needs to be appropriate for other features on the site which require a shorter sward.	
Version Control Advice last updated: N/A				
Variations from national feature-framework of integrity-guidance: **Conservation measures**: Target set to restore as there is potential to improve habitat availability, however, this should be considered within the context that there may never have been a viable population of marsh fritillary on the site and also the potential conflict with management requirements for the other designated features **Water quality/quantity**: Attribute removed as not relevant to this feature **Vegetation composition**: Presence of foodplants: target set to restore, however, this should be considered within the context that there may never have been a viable population of marsh fritillary on the site and habitat conditions are largely unsuitable **Population abundance:** Target set as restore, however, this should be considered within the context that there may never have been a viable population of marsh fritillary on the site and also the potential conflict with management requirements for the other designated features				

Table 3: Supplementary Advice for Qualifying Features: S1654. *Gentianella anglica*; Early gentian

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
Population (of the feature)	**Population abundance**	Maintain the abundance of the population at a level which exceeds 100,000 in four out of five years	Populations may fluctuate considerably from year to year, depending on habitat condition, weather, etc. Flowering performance may also vary between years, affecting the plant's visibility. This will ensure there is a viable population of the feature which is being maintained at or increased to a level that contributes as appropriate to its Favourable Conservation Status across its natural range in the UK. Due to the dynamic nature of population change, the target-value given for the population size or presence of this feature is considered to be the minimum standard for conservation/restoration measures to achieve. This minimum-value may be revised where there is evidence to show that a population's size or presence has significantly changed as a result of natural factors or management measures and has been stable at or above a new level over a considerable period (generally at least 10 years). The values given here may also be updated in future to reflect any strategic objectives which may be set at a national level for this feature. Given the likely fluctuations in numbers over time, any impact-assessments should focus on the current size of the site's population, as derived from the latest known or estimated level established using the best available data. This advice accords with the obligation to avoid deterioration of the site or significant disturbance of the species for which the site is designated, and seeks to avoid plans or projects that may affect the site giving rise to the risk of deterioration. Similarly, where there is evidence to show that a feature has historically been more abundant than the stated minimum target and its current level, the ongoing capacity of the site to accommodate the feature at such higher levels in future should also be taken into account in any assessment. Unless otherwise stated, the population size or presence will be	NATURAL ENGLAND (2009) Definition of Favourable Condition -Prescombe Down SSSI (Consultation Draft) (Available from Natural England on request) NATURAL ENGLAND (2014) Prescombe Down National Nature Reserve (NNR) Management Plan (Available from Natural England on request)

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
			that measured using standard methods, such as peak mean counts or breeding surveys. This value is also provided recognising there will be inherent variability as a result of natural fluctuations and margins of error during data collection. Whilst we will endeavour to keep these values as up to date as possible, local Natural England staff can advise that the figures stated are the best available.	
Population (of the feature)	**Population structure: presence of *Gentianella amarella, Gentianella x davidii* and 'intermediates'**	Maintain the presence of pure *G. anglica*	Intermixed populations have been recorded from many sites, with the hybrid recorded especially from sites near edge of range of *G. anglica*. Phenological differences (flowering time) usually helpful in distinguishing between *G. anglica* and autumn gentian *G. amarella*. Note: there is still some uncertainty about the extent to which these two species hybridise, or indeed whether the two species are actually one. It is believed the population at Prescombe Down is solely *G. anglica* with no hybrids (G. *x davidii*) recorded.	WILSON, PJ, (2004). A Vegetation Survey of Prescombe Down National Nature Reserve. (Available on request from Natural England) WILSON, P and PRICE, D (Species Recovery Trust), (2017). Early gentian *Gentianella anglica:* Sample Survey of Sites in England
Supporting habitat: extent and distribution	**Distribution of supporting habitat**	Maintain the distribution and continuity of the feature and its supporting habitat, including where applicable its component vegetation types and associated transitional vegetation types, across the site. Early gentian is associated with the CG2 grassland community (particularly sub-community CG2a)	A contraction in the range, or geographic spread, of the feature (and its component vegetation) across the site will reduce its overall area, the local diversity and variations in its structure and composition, and may undermine its resilience to adapt to future environmental changes. Contraction may also reduce and break up the continuity of a habitat within a site and how well the species feature is able to occupy and use habitat within the site. Such fragmentation may have a greater amount of open edge habitat which will differ in the amount of light, temperature, wind, and even noise that it receives compared to its interior. These conditions may not be suitable for this feature and this may affect its viability.	NATURAL ENGLAND (2014) Prescombe Down National Nature Reserve (NNR) Management Plan (Available from Natural England on request) WILSON, P and PRICE, D (Species Recovery Trust), (2017). Early gentian *Gentianella anglica:* Sample Survey of Sites in England
Supporting habitat:	**Extent of supporting**	Maintain the total extent of the habitat which supports the	In order to contribute towards the objective of achieving an overall favourable conservation status of the feature at a UK	WILSON, P and PRICE, D (Species Recovery Trust), 2017.

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
extent and distribution	**habitat**	feature at 47.5 ha (the extent of CG2 grassland), although suitable locations within this will depend on aspect, sward height and bare ground.	level, it is important to maintain or if appropriate restore the extent of supporting habitats and their range within this SAC. The information available on the extent and distribution of supporting habitat used by the feature may be approximate depending on the nature, age and accuracy of data collection, and may be subject to periodic review in light of improvements in data. The early gentian population is distributed over much of the west, south west and east facing slopes at the head of the main (NNR) coombe and the west facing slope of the main valley. The major population is on the spur that separates the forks of this coombe.	Early gentian *Gentianella anglica:* Sample Survey of Sites in England WILSON, PJ, 2004. A Vegetation Survey of Prescombe Down National Nature Reserve This attribute will be periodically monitored as part of Natural England's SSSI condition assessments
Supporting habitat: structure/ function	**Habitat structure and bare ground: regeneration/ colonisation niches**	Maintain patches of bare ground and an open-textured sward to provide creating suitable regeneration/ colonisation niches. Bare ground should be in range c. 5-10%.	Patches of suitable vegetation often occur in mosaics with less suitable areas, and generally associated with steeper slopes, more southerly aspects, thinner soils, heavier grazing or trampling. All available evidence points to need for there being plenty of bare ground in a short/tightly grazed open-textured sward. Many sites best described as 'sparsely vegetated'). Some evidence suggests that *G. anglica* tends to occur in microsites recovering after disturbance (whereas autumn gentian *G. amarella* may also occur as a pioneer in recently disturbed sites).	
Supporting habitat: structure/ function	**Soils, substrate and nutrient cycling**	Maintain the properties of the underlying soil types, including structure, bulk density, total carbon, pH, soil nutrient status and fungal: bacterial ratio, within typical values for the supporting habitat	Soil supports basic ecosystem function and is a vital part of the natural environment. Its properties strongly influence the colonisation, growth and distribution of those plant species which together form vegetation types, and therefore provides a habitat used by a wide range of organisms. Soil biodiversity has a vital role to recycle organic matter. Changes to natural soil properties may therefore affect the ecological structure, function and processes associated with the supporting habitat of this Annex II feature.	
Supporting habitat: structure/	**Substrate**	Maintain a substrate of skeletal drought-prone relatively infertile soils overlying calcareous	See above for floristic indicators that may indicate changes in soil nutrient status (increase in fertility).	

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
function		bedrock (chalk), with a generally SE, S or SW aspect.		
Supporting habitat: structure/ function	**Vegetation composition: negative indicators**	Maintain the frequency/cover of the following undesirable species at acceptable levels and which are not encouraged by changes in surface condition, soils, nutrient levels or changes to hydrology • Cover of tall grasses should typically not exceed about 10% • Indicators of increased soil fertility should be rare or absent • "Agricultural weeds" should be rare or absent	This feature can be adversely affected by changes to the grass: herb ratio (increased grassiness), often in tandem with sward becoming 'thicker' (less bare ground) or more rank. Undesirable species may be an indication of lack of management, increases in soil fertility / agricultural improvement or poor land management and loss /degradation of suitable habitat. Tall grasses include: *Brachypodium pinnatum, Bromopsis erecta, Avenula pubescens, Arrhenatherum elatius, Dactylis glomerata* Indicators of increased soil fertility include: *Lolium perenne, Holcus lanatus, Cynosurus cristatus, Trisetum flavescens, Trifolium repens*, "Agricultural weed" species include: *Cirsium arvense, Cirsium vulgare, Galium aparine, Plantago major, Rumex obtusifolius, Senecio jacobaea and Urtica dioica*	This attribute will be periodically monitored as part of Natural England's SSSI condition assessments
Supporting habitat: structure/ function	**Vegetation height**	Maintain a sward typically in the range of 2-5cm, but may also occur in slightly taller swards (5-20cm) as long as these still have plenty of bare ground and an absence of 'grassy' dominants.	Swards usually require moderate to heavy grazing and/or trampling to keep them sufficiently short and open; but on some coastal sites, drought and exposure may be sufficient on their own to maintain suitable sward conditions. Grazing may be by rabbits, deer, sheep or cattle. Generally, rabbits and/or sheep preferred to cattle (see, e.g. Telfer 1994), although WILSON (2000) suggests for sites in Wilts that summer (April-October) cattle grazing at 1.5 animals/ha, plus less intensive grazing in the winter, is suitable for many sites, with sheep used in late summer to remove any excess grass growth. Sward height may vary from year to year, depending not only on stocking rates and timing but also on the weather.	This attribute will be periodically monitored as part of Natural England's SSSI condition assessments
Supporting	**Vegetation**	Maintain the area of suitable	Vegetation composition of this feature can be variable,	WILSON, PJ, 2004. A Vegetation

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
habitat: structure/ function	**structure and composition**	supporting habitat which is short (2-5 cm), tightly-grazed and trampled calcicolous grassland with typically 5-10% bare ground which corresponds to the following NVC communities: CG2a, CG2b.	depending on habitat, aspect, management regime and underlying geology/soils, but the frequent presence of the following species tend to be positive indicators of suitable early gentian habitat in its usual CG2 NVC community: *Poterium sanguisorba, Cirsium acaule, Thymus praecox, Polygala vulgaris, Carex flacca, Hippocrepis comosa, Blackstonia perfoliata, Linum catharticum, Leontodon hispidus, Pilosella officinarum, Ranunculus bulbosus*. Grasses such as *Avenula pratensis, A. pubescens, Brachypodium pinnatum, B. sylvaticum* and *Bromopsis erecta* may be frequent as an open grassy 'overstorey', but never abundant or dominant. Early gentian may often occur with autumn gentian *Gentianella amarella*, but the two species usually occupy different microsites and seasonal timings, although there may be considerable overlap on some sites.	Survey of Prescombe Down National Nature Reserve This attribute will be periodically monitored as part of Natural England's SSSI condition assessments
Supporting processes (on which the feature and/or its supporting habitat relies)	**Adaptation and resilience**	Maintain the feature's ability, and that of its supporting habitat, to adapt or evolve to wider environmental change, either within or external to the site	This recognises the increasing likelihood of natural habitat features to absorb or adapt to wider environmental changes. Resilience may be described as the ability of an ecological system to cope with, and adapt to environmental stress and change whilst retaining the same basic structure and ways of functioning. Such environmental changes may include changes in sea levels, precipitation and temperature for example, which are likely to affect the extent, distribution, composition and functioning of a feature within a site. The vulnerability and response of features to such changes will vary. Using best available information, any necessary or likely adaptation or adjustment by the feature and its management in response to actual or expected climatic change should be allowed for, as far as practicable, in order to ensure the feature's long-term viability. The overall vulnerability of this particular SAC to climate change has been assessed by Natural England as being low, taking into account the sensitivity, fragmentation, topography	NATURAL ENGLAND, 2015. Climate Change Theme Plan and supporting National Biodiversity Climate Change Vulnerability assessments ('NBCCVAs') for SACs and SPAs in England

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
			and management of its habitats. This means that some adaptation action for specific issues may be required, such as reducing habitat fragmentation, creating more habitat to buffer the site or expand the habitat into more varied landscapes and addressing particular management and condition issues. Individual species may be more or less vulnerable than their habitat itself. In many cases, change will be inevitable so appropriate monitoring would be required	
Supporting processes (on which the feature and/or its supporting habitat relies)	**Air quality**	Maintain concentrations and deposition of air pollutants to at or below the site-relevant Critical Load or Level values given for this feature of the site on the Air Pollution Information System (www.apis.ac.uk).	The supporting habitat of this feature is considered sensitive to changes in air quality. Exceedance of these critical values for air pollutants may modify the chemical status of its substrate, accelerating or damaging plant growth, altering its vegetation structure and composition (including food-plants) and reducing supporting habitat quality and population viability of this feature. Critical Loads and Levels are recognised thresholds below which such harmful effects on sensitive UK habitats will not occur to a significant level, according to current levels of scientific understanding. There are critical levels for ammonia (NH3), oxides of nitrogen (NOx) and sulphur dioxide (SO2), and critical loads for nutrient nitrogen deposition and acid deposition. There are currently no critical loads or levels for other pollutants such as Halogens, Heavy Metals, POPs, VOCs or Dusts. These should be considered as appropriate on a case-by-case basis. Ground level ozone is regionally important as a toxic air pollutant but flux-based critical levels for the protection of semi-natural habitats are still under development. It is recognised that achieving this target may be subject to the development, availability and effectiveness of abatement technology and measures to tackle diffuse air pollution, within realistic timescales.	More information about site-relevant Critical Loads and Levels for this SAC is available by using the 'search by site' tool on the Air Pollution Information System (www.apis.ac.uk).
Supporting processes (on which the feature and/or	**Conservation measures**	Maintain the management measures within the site boundary which are necessary to maintain the structure, functions	Active and ongoing conservation management is needed to protect, maintain or restore this feature at this site. Further details about the necessary conservation measures for this site can be provided by contacting Natural England.	Natural England, 2015. Site Improvement Plan: Prescombe Down SAC

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
its supporting habitat relies)		and supporting processes associated with the feature and/or its supporting habitats.	This information will typically be found within, where applicable, supporting documents such as Natura 2000 Site Improvement Plan, site management strategies or plans, the Views about Management Statement for the underpinning SSSI and/or management agreements.	Natural England, 2014. Prescombe Down National Nature Reserve (NNR) Management Plan
Supporting processes (on which the feature and/or its supporting habitat relies)	**Grazing pressure**	Maintain a grazing regime to keep the sward short (preferably 2-5cm)	Swards usually require moderate to heavy grazing and/or trampling to keep them sufficiently short and open; but on some coastal sites, drought and exposure may be sufficient on their own to maintain suitable sward conditions. Grazing may be by (any combination of) rabbits, deer, sheep or cattle. Generally, rabbits and/or sheep preferred to cattle (see, e.g. Telfer 1994), although WILSON (2000) suggests for sites in Wilts that summer (April-October) cattle grazing at 1.5 animals/ha, plus less intensive grazing in the winter, is suitable for many sites, with sheep used in late summer to remove any excess grass growth.	NATURAL ENGLAND (2014) Prescombe Down National Nature Reserve (NNR) Management Plan (Available from Natural England on request) NATURAL ENGLAND (2015). Site Improvement Plan: Prescombe Down SAC
Version Control Advice last updated: N/A				
Variations from national feature-framework of integrity-guidance: **Water quality/quantity** attribute removed as not relevant to this feature				