



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

**Rooksmoor Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
Site Code: UK0012681**



Marsh fritillary © Natural England/Allan Drewitt 2004

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About this document

This document provides Natural England's supplementary advice about the European Site Conservation Objectives relating to Rooksmoor 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	Rooksmoor Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
Location	Dorset
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	61.36 ha
Designation Changes	Not applicable
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)	Lydlinch Common and Stock Wood SSSI Rooksmoor SSSI In 2012 the above SSSI were re-notified and integrated into the Blackmore Vale Commons and Moors SSSI
Relationship with other European or International Site designations	None

Site background and geography

Rooksmoor SAC comprises species-rich meadows and copses and unenclosed Common Land on neutral to acidic soils over Oxford clay in the Blackmore Vale and Vale of Wardour National Character Area ([NCA 133](#)). The low lying impermeable clay soils are periodically flooded in the winter. The SAC supports an exceptionally large population of marsh fritillary butterfly *Euphydryas aurinia*. A large outlying population at Lydlinch Common is also included within the SAC as it is considered to be part of the meta-population in this area. Adjacent land outside the SAC at e.g. Alners Gorse, a nature reserve owned by Butterfly Conservation contains extensive *Molinia* pastures supporting habitat for the same meta-population and Deadmoor Common is sporadically occupied.

The pastures and common grazing have extensive *Molinia* dominated grassland a community which is otherwise rare in Dorset, and is intermediate between a common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* - crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* neutral grassland and a purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* - meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum* fen meadow. At least thirty species of grass are present on the site, including bents *Agrostis* spp., fescues *Festuca* spp., sweet vernal grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and Timothy *Phleum pratense*. Tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa* is abundant while wood small-reed *Calamagrostis epigejos*, reed canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea* and purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* are locally frequent. Devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, the food plant of the marsh fritillary caterpillar, is abundant.

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:

- **H6410. *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*); Purple moor-grass meadows**

Molinia meadows are found mainly on moist, moderately base-rich, peats and peaty gley soils, often with fluctuating water tables. They usually occur as components of wet pastures or fens, and often form mosaics with dry grassland, heath, mire and scrub communities. This habitat type includes the most species-rich *Molinia* grasslands in the UK, in which purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea* is accompanied by a wide range of associated species, including rushes, sedges and tall-growing herbs. The more impoverished forms of *Molinia* pasture on acidic substrates are excluded from the Annex I definition.

In the UK these grasslands are represented by two NVC types:

- M24 *Molinia caerulea* – *Cirsium dissectum* fen-meadow
- M26 *Molinia caerulea* – *Crepis paludosa* mire

M24 *Molinia* – *Cirsium* fen-meadow is the more widespread and diverse community and is widespread across the SAC. At Rooksmoor SAC the *Molinia* pasture is a variant of M24 with associated species from MG9.

Molinia meadows are important habitats for a number of

The grassland and adjoining woodland supports a rich assemblage of species such as narrow-bordered bee hawk-moth *Hemaris tityus*, lesser butterfly orchid *Platanthera bifolia*, Dingy Mocha moth *Cyclophora pendularia* and a significant population of the nationally scarce Brown hairstreak *Thecla betulae*.

Qualifying Species:

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

Representing marsh fritillary *Euphydryas aurinia* in the southern part of its range in England, Rooksmoor SSSI is an exceptionally large population within a cluster of sites in the Dorset stronghold. A large outlying population at Lydlinch Common SSSI has been included in the SAC as it is considered to be part of the meta-population in this area.

The marsh fritillary butterfly *Euphydryas aurinia* is found in a range of habitats in which its larval food plant, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, occurs. Marsh fritillaries are essentially grassland butterflies in the UK, and although populations may occur occasionally on wet heath, bog margins and woodland clearings, most colonies are found in damp acidic or dry calcareous grasslands. In Northern Ireland it occurs in fens and on sand dunes. Management in both wet and dry situations is predominantly by low-intensity cattle or pony grazing. Sheep selectively graze devil's-bit scabious and are therefore detrimental to marsh fritillary populations, except at very low stocking rates. Burning and mowing are also known to have caused the extinction of populations.

Populations of marsh fritillary vary greatly in size from year to year, and, at least in part, this is related to cycles of attack from parasitic wasps. Adults tend to be sedentary and remain in a series of linked metapopulations, forming numerous temporary sub-populations, which frequently die out and recolonise. Where unable to do this, populations do not seem to be able to persist in habitat fragments. It is therefore essential to conserve a cluster of sites in close proximity. *Euphydryas aurinia* has declined dramatically in Europe and is regarded as endangered or vulnerable in most of its European range. On the basis of existing knowledge, the UK and Spain constitute the European strongholds for this species.

Table 1: Supplementary Advice for Qualifying Features: H6410. *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinia caeruleae*); Purple moor-grass meadows

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	Restore the total extent of the feature in areas where suitable soils and hydrology are present i.e. peaty mineral soils with impeded drainage and periodic flooding	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>H6410 purple moor-grass meadows is present in the SAC on peaty mineral soils with impeded drainage. These soils are present at Lydlinch Common where historic ground disturbance on the unenclosed common grazing has brought subsoil e.g. clay to the surface and the <i>Molinia</i> M24 community is present in a mosaic with MG5 and MG9 neutral grassland. At Rooksmoor <i>Molinia</i> meadows are enclosed by a network of diverse hedgerows and boundary trees.</p> <p>Target set to Restore as there are areas with suitable soils etc. where there is encroachment of e.g. blackthorn, birch, gorse and mixed scrub across Lydlinch Common and hedgerow creep and tree regeneration at Rooksmoor. There is also a need for sustainable grazing to be in place to create a sward structure with species diversity.</p>	<p>This attribute will be periodically monitored as part of Natural England's site condition assessments</p> <p>NATURAL ENGLAND 2014</p> <p>NATURAL ENGLAND 2016</p> <p>PORLEY 1998</p> <p>HEATH AND STEPHENS 1994</p>

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
Extent and distribution of the feature	Spatial distribution of the feature within the site	Restore the distribution and configuration of the H6410 purple moor-grass feature including where applicable its component vegetation types, across the site	<p>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.</p> <p>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. Smaller fragments of habitat can typically support smaller and more isolated populations which are more vulnerable to extinction.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>See 'Extent' text above</p> <p>Target set to Restore as there are areas with suitable soils etc. where there is encroachment of e.g. blackthorn, birch, gorse and mixed scrub across Lydlinch Common and hedgerow creep and tree regeneration at Rooksmoor. There is also a need for sustainable grazing to be in place to create a sward structure with species diversity.</p>	<p>This attribute will be periodically monitored as part of Natural England's site condition assessments</p> <p>NATURAL ENGLAND 2016</p> <p>PORLEY 1998</p> <p>HEATH AND STEPHENS 1994</p>
Structure and function (including its typical species)	Vegetation community composition	<p>Ensure the component vegetation communities of the H6410 purple moor-grass feature are referable to and characterised by the following National Vegetation Classification type (s)</p> <p>M24 <i>Molinia caerulea</i> – <i>Cirsium</i></p>	<p>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).</p> <p>Maintaining or restoring these characteristic and distinctive vegetation types, and the range of types as appropriate, will be</p>	<p>This attribute will be periodically monitored as part of Natural England's site condition assessments</p> <p>NATURAL ENGLAND 2016</p> <p>PORLEY 1998</p>

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
		<p><i>dissectum</i> fen-meadow with MG9 <i>Holcus lanatus-Deschampsia cespitosa</i> grassland</p>	<p>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).</p> <p>Target set to Restore as there are areas with suitable soils etc. where there is encroachment of e.g. blackthorn, birch, gorse and mixed scrub across Lydlinch Common and hedgerow creep and tree regeneration at Rooksmoor. There is also a need for sustainable grazing to be in place to create a sward structure with species diversity.</p>	HEATH AND STEPHENS 1994
Structure and function (including its typical species)	Key structural, influential and/or distinctive species	<p>Restore the abundance of the typical species listed below to enable each of them to be a viable component of the Annex 1 habitat;</p> <p>M24 Grasslands support a suite of scarce plants and animals with an oceanic distribution in the UK. These plants are a distinctive component of the M24 Molinia pasture:</p> <p>Narrow-bordered bee hawk-moth <i>Hemaris tityus</i>, Lesser butterfly orchid <i>Platanthera bifolia</i>, Dingy Mocha moth <i>Cyclophora pendularia</i> Brown hairstreak <i>Thecla betulae</i>. marsh fritillary butterfly <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i></p>	<p>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 habitat feature at a particular site. These species will include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>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.</p>	<p>This attribute will be periodically monitored as part of Natural England's site condition assessments</p> <p>NATURAL ENGLAND 2016</p> <p>PORLEY 1998</p> <p>HEATH AND STEPHENS 1994</p>

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
			Target set to Restore as there are areas with suitable soils etc. where there is encroachment of e.g. blackthorn, birch, gorse and mixed scrub across Lydlinch Common and hedgerow creep and tree regeneration at Rooksmoor. There is also a need for sustainable grazing to be in place to create a sward structure with species diversity.	
Structure and function (including its typical species)	Vegetation: undesirable species	<p>Restore 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.</p> <p>Restore 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:</p> <p>Mixed scrub e.g. Blackthorn, gorse , willow</p> <p>Tree regeneration e.g. oak, birch , willow</p> <p>All invasive non-native species, including <i>Impatiens glandulifera</i> Indian balsam</p> <p>Undesirable species (see explanatory notes)</p>	<p>Undesirable non-woody and woody vascular plants species may require active management to avert an unwanted succession to a different and less desirable state. Often they may be indicative of a negative trend relating to another aspect of a site's structure and function. These species will vary depending on the nature of the particular feature, and in some cases these species may be natural/acceptable components or even dominants.</p> <p>Many of the species listed are natural components of M24 Molinia meadows and will be beneficial for e.g. invertebrates. However, in certain circumstances (such as when they encroach on stands of rare plants or become extremely abundant) they can be undesirable and/or indicate negative pressures on the site.</p> <p>The level of willow in certain areas may be higher (>20%) due to its importance as the food plant for the rare red data book dingy mocha moth <i>Cyclophora pendularia</i> . However these will be young bushes and not dense or growth >5years old.</p> <p>Scrub provides habitat for the Red listed nightingale <i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i> at Lydlinch Common and the rare S41 Brown Hairstreak Butterfly <i>Thecla betulae</i> across the SAC</p> <p>Undesirable species may include: <i>Cirsium arvense</i> Creeping thistle, <i>Cirsium palustre</i> Marsh thistle, <i>Cirsium vulgare</i> Spear thistle, <i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i> Tufted hair-grass, <i>Juncus acutiflorus</i> Sharp-flowered rush, <i>Juncus articulatus</i> Jointed rush <i>Juncus subnodulosus</i> Blunt-flowered rush, <i>Juncus conglomeratus</i> Compact rush, <i>Juncus effusus</i> Soft rush, <i>Juncus inflexus</i> Hard rush, <i>Molinia caerulea</i> Purple moor-grass <i>Myrica gale</i> Bog-myrtle, <i>Phragmites australis</i> Common reed,</p>	<p>This attribute will be periodically monitored as part of Natural England's site condition assessments</p> <p>NATURAL ENGLAND 2014</p> <p>NATURAL ENGLAND 2016</p> <p>LILEY D, UNDERHILL-DAY J & UNDERHILL-DAY J 2006 <i>The distribution and habitat selection of nightingales at Lydlinch Common, Dorset</i> Footprint Ecology/English Nature Unpublished Report</p>

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
			<p><i>Rumex crispus</i> Curled dock, <i>Rumex obtusifolius</i> Broad-leaved dock, <i>Senecio aquaticus</i> Marsh ragwort, <i>Urtica dioica</i> Common nettle</p> <p>Target set to Restore as there are areas with suitable soils etc. where there is encroachment of e.g. blackthorn, birch, gorse and mixed scrub across Lydlinch Common and hedgerow creep and tree regeneration at Rooksmoor. There is also a need for sustainable grazing to be in place to create a sward structure with species diversity.</p>	
Structure and function (including its typical species)	Vegetation community transitions	Restore the pattern of natural vegetation zonations/transitions	<p>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.</p> <p>H6410 purple moor-grass meadows is present in the SAC on peaty mineral soils with impeded drainage. These soils are present at Lydlinch Common where historic ground disturbance on the unenclosed common grazing has brought subsoil e.g. clay to the surface and the <i>Molinia</i> M24 community is present in a mosaic with MG5 and MG9 neutral grassland. At Rooksmoor M24 is present with MG9. It is the aspiration that with suitable livestock grazing MG9 will become a smaller component of the sward.</p> <p>Target set to Restore as there are areas with suitable soils etc. where there is encroachment of e.g. blackthorn, birch, gorse and mixed scrub across Lydlinch Common and hedgerow creep and tree regeneration at Rooksmoor. There is also a need for sustainable grazing to be in place to create a sward structure with species diversity.</p>	<p>This attribute will be periodically monitored as part of Natural England's site condition assessments</p> <p>NATURAL ENGLAND 2016</p> <p>PORLEY 1998</p> <p>HEATH AND STEPHENS 1994</p> <p>EDWARDS, B. 2011</p>
Structure and function (including its typical)	Soils, substrate and nutrient cycling	Maintain the properties of the underlying soil types, including structure, bulk density, total carbon, pH, soil nutrient status	Soil is the foundation of basic ecosystem function and 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	NATURAL ENGLAND 2016

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
species)		and fungal:bacterial ratio, to within typical values for the habitat. For this feature, soil P index should typically be index 0 (< 9 mg l ⁻¹)	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)	Water quality	Where the feature is dependent on surface water and/or groundwater, restore water quality and quantity to a standard which provides the necessary conditions to support the feature	<p>For many SAC features which are dependent on wetland habitats supported by surface and/or ground water, maintaining the quality and quantity of water supply will be critical, especially at certain times of year. Poor water quality and inadequate quantities of water can adversely affect the structure and function of this habitat type.</p> <p>Typically, meeting the surface water and groundwater environmental standards set out by the Water Framework Directive (WFD 2000/60/EC) will also be sufficient to support the achievement of SAC Conservation Objectives but in some cases more stringent standards may be needed. Further site-specific investigations may be required to establish appropriate water quality standards for the SAC.</p> <p>Target set to Restore as water quality is known to have been poor at point sources of agricultural pollution and winter flooding across the SAC and adjacent land is likely to be importing nutrients from surrounding improved farmland.</p>	<p>This attribute will be periodically monitored as part of Natural England's site condition assessments</p> <p>NATURAL ENGLAND 2016</p>
Structure and function (including its typical species)	Hydrology: Water table	Restore a hydrological regime that provides a sub-surface water table during the summer (range - 2 to -48 cm below ground level) and a winter water table ± at the surface. Inundation should be absent or only occasional to a minor degree in winter	<p>Defining and maintaining the appropriate hydrological regime is a key step in moving towards achieving the conservation objectives for this site and sustaining this feature. Changes in depth, duration, frequency, magnitude and timing of water supply can have significant implications for the assemblage of characteristic plants and animals present. This target is generic and as precise tolerances are not known, further site-specific investigations may be required to fully inform conservation measures and/or the likelihood of impacts.</p> <p>Target set to Restore because ditches may be disrupting and drawing water away from the Molinia pastures particularly in the summer months and this requires further investigation.</p>	<p>EA and NE <i>Rooksmoor SAC Review of Consents</i> NE Unpublished Document</p> <p>NATURAL ENGLAND 2016</p>
Structure and function (including its typical species)	Supporting off-site habitat	Restore the extent, quality and spatial configuration of land or habitat surrounding or adjacent	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	<p>EDWARDS, B. 2011</p> <p>EDWARDS B. 2015 <i>A Vegetation</i></p>

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
typical species)		to the site which is known to support the feature	<p>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.</p> <p>There is considerable scope for restoring M24 Molinia pasture within the Blackmore Vale Commons and Moors SSSI . Remnant M24 Molinia grassland is present at Deadmoor Common and Alners Gorse.</p>	<i>Survey Of Alner's Gorse Reserve</i> Dorset Environmental Records Centre For Butterfly Conservation November
Structure and function (including its typical species)	Maintaining integrity of hydrological catchment	Restore the full range of hydrological/hydrogeological aspects of a site's catchment that contribute to its functioning and the maintenance of the feature	<p>The movement, quality and distribution of water within a site's wider catchment and outside of the site's boundary will affect its ability to support this wetland habitat feature. Catchment size will vary. A site's water table and other hydrological aspects may be affected by changes in the use of the land surface, water abstraction, flood alleviation, development and mineral extraction in the wider catchment.</p> <p>Rooksmoor SAC is entirely dependent on rainfall and subsequent flooding for maintenance of suitable soils conditions</p> <p>Target set to Restore because ditches may disrupting the hydrology and drawing water away from the Molinia pastures particularly in the summer months and this requires further investigation.</p>	NATURAL ENGLAND 2016
Structure and function (including its typical species)	Functional connectivity with wider landscape	Restore the overall extent, quality and function of any supporting features within the local landscape which provide a critical functional connection with the site	<p>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.</p> <p>These features may also be important to the operation of the supporting ecological processes on which the designated site</p>	NATURAL ENGLAND 2016 EDWARDS, B. 2011

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
			<p>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.</p> <p>Rooksmoor SAC represents the highest quality M24 meadows and common grazing in a more extensive landscape in the clay vales recently recognised as the Blackmore Vale Commons and Moors SSSI. This SSSI contains Molinia grasslands at Deadmoor Common and Alners Gorse which both have the potential for increasing the area of Molinia grassland through habitat restoration thereby increasing resilience within the landscape.</p>	
Structure and function (including its typical species)	Adaptation and resilience	Restore 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	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The overall vulnerability of this SAC to climate change has been assessed by Natural England (2015) as being high, taking into account the sensitivity, fragmentation, topography and management of its habitats and supporting habitats.</p> <p>This means that this site is considered to be the most vulnerable sites overall and are likely to require the most</p>	<p>NATURAL ENGLAND 2016</p> <p>NATURAL ENGLAND (2015) <i>Climate Change Theme Plan and supporting National Biodiversity Climate Change Vulnerability assessments ('NBCCVAs') for SACs and SPAs in England</i> Available at http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4954594591375360</p>

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
			<p>adaptation action, most urgently. A site based assessment should be carried out as a priority. This means that action to address specific issues is likely, 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 advisable.</p> <p>Rooksmoor SAC represents the highest quality M24 meadows and common grazing in a more extensive landscape in the clay vales recently recognised as the Blackmore Vale Commons and Moors SSSI. This SSSI contains Molinia grasslands at Deadmoor Common and Alners Gorse which both have the potential for increasing the area of Molinia grassland through habitat restoration thereby increasing resilience within the landscape.</p>	
Supporting processes (on which the feature relies)	Air quality	Restore as necessary, 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).	<p>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.</p> <p>There are critical levels for ammonia (NH₃), oxides of nitrogen (NO_x) 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.</p> <p>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</p>	<p>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).</p> <p>NATURAL ENGLAND 2014</p> <p>NATURAL ENGLAND 2016</p>

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
			measures to tackle diffuse air pollution, within realistic timescales.	
Supporting processes (on which the feature 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	<p>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. Conservation measures for this feature typically include grazing, cutting, scrub management, weed control, recreation/visitor management. Also covered is maintenance of surface drainage features such as drains, grips, gutters and foot drains. Retention of suitable land use infrastructure/patterns to enable site management e.g. pastoral livestock farming</p> <p>Target set to Restore as there are areas with suitable soils etc. where there is encroachment of e.g. blackthorn, birch, gorse and mixed scrub across Lydlinch Common and hedgerow creep and tree regeneration at Rooksmoor. There is also a need for sustainable grazing to be in place to create a sward structure with species diversity.</p> <p>Target set to Restore as there are areas with suitable soils etc. where there is encroachment of e.g. blackthorn, birch, gorse and mixed scrub across Lydlinch Common and hedgerow creep and tree regeneration at Rooksmoor. There is also a need for sustainable grazing to be in place to create a sward structure with species diversity.</p> <p>Target set to Restore because ditches draining adjacent agricultural land may be importing nutrients during times of flooding and this requires further investigation.</p> <p>Target set to Restore because ditches may disrupting the hydrology and drawing water away from the Molinia pastures particularly in the summer months and this requires further investigation</p>	<p>NATURAL ENGLAND 2014</p> <p>NATURAL ENGLAND 2016</p> <p>This attribute will be periodically monitored as part of Natural England's site condition assessments</p>

Attributes	Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
Version Control Advice last updated: N/A			
Variations from national feature-framework of integrity-guidance: N/A			

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)
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 S1065 marsh fritillary feature and/or its supporting habitats.	<p>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.</p> <p><i>Molinia</i> pastures require low intensity grazing management to maintain suitable structure and food plant density for the marsh fritillary butterfly. If grazing is too intensive the sward becomes too uniform and the abundance of devil's-bit scabious declines. Conversely, if grazing is insufficient then vegetation becomes too coarse. Optimum grazing regimes alone are not sufficient to control scrub and maintain open areas of <i>Molinia</i> pasture and additional scrub control is also required.</p> <p>Target set to Restore as there are areas with suitable soils etc. where there is encroachment of e.g. blackthorn, birch, gorse and mixed scrub across Lydlinch Common and hedgerow creep and tree regeneration at Rooksmoor. There is also a need for sustainable grazing to be in place to create a sward structure with species diversity.</p> <p>Target set to Restore because ditches draining adjacent agricultural land may be importing nutrients during times of flooding and this requires further investigation.</p> <p>Target set to Restore because ditches may disrupting the hydrology and drawing water away from the <i>Molinia</i> pastures particularly in the summer months and this requires further investigation.</p>	<p>This attribute will be periodically monitored as part of Natural England's site condition assessments.</p> <p>NATURAL ENGLAND 2016</p> <p>NATURAL ENGLAND 2014</p>
Supporting habitat: extent and distribution	Extent of supporting habitat	Restore the total extent of the habitat(s) which support the feature in areas where suitable soils and hydrology are present	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.	This attribute will be periodically monitored as part of Natural England's site condition assessments .

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
		i.e. peaty mineral soils with impeded drainage and periodic flooding	<p>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.</p> <p>H6410 purple moor-grass meadows is present in the SAC on peaty mineral soils with impeded drainage. These soils are present at Lydlinch Common where historic ground disturbance on the unenclosed common grazing has brought subsoil e.g. clay to the surface and the Molinia M24 community is present in a mosaic with MG5 and MG9 neutral grassland. At Rooksmoor Molinia meadows are enclosed by a network of diverse hedgerows and boundary trees.</p> <p>Target set to restore as there are areas with suitable soils etc. where there is encroachment of e.g. blackthorn, birch, gorse and mixed scrub across Lydlinch Common and hedgerow creep and tree regeneration at Rooksmoor. There is also a need for sustainable grazing to be in place to create a sward structure with species diversity.</p>	<p>NATURAL ENGLAND 2016</p> <p>NATURAL ENGLAND 2014</p> <p>PORLEY 1998</p> <p>HEATH AND STEPHENS 1994</p>
Supporting habitat: extent and distribution	Distribution of supporting habitat	Restore 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	<p>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.</p> <p>Target set to restore as there are areas with suitable soils etc. where there is encroachment of e.g. blackthorn, birch, gorse and mixed scrub across Lydlinch Common and hedgerow creep and tree regeneration at Rooksmoor. There is also a need for sustainable grazing to be in place to create a sward structure with species diversity.</p>	<p>This attribute will be periodically monitored as part of Natural England's site condition assessments</p> <p>NATURAL ENGLAND 2016</p> <p>EDWARDS, B. 2011</p> <p>EDWARDS B. 2015 <i>A Vegetation Survey Of Ainer's Gorse Reserve</i> Dorset Environmental Records Centre For Butterfly Conservation November</p>

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
			There is considerable scope for restoring M24 Molinia pasture within the Blackmore Vale Commons and Moors SSSI . Remnant M24 Molinia grassland is present at Deadmoor Common and Alners Gorse.	
Supporting processes (on which the feature and/or its supporting habitat relies)	Adaptation and resilience	Restore 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	<p>This recognises the increasing likelihood of supporting 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.</p> <p>The overall vulnerability of this SAC to climate change has been assessed by Natural England (2015) as being high, taking into account the sensitivity, fragmentation, topography and management of its habitats and supporting habitats.</p> <p>This means that this site is considered to be the most vulnerable sites overall and are likely to require the most adaptation action, most urgently. A site based assessment should be carried out as a priority. This means that action to address specific issues is likely, 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 advisable.</p> <p>Target set to Restore because encroaching scrub and tree cover needs to be reduced across the SAC in conjunction with</p>	<p>NATURAL ENGLAND 2015 Climate Change Theme Plan and supporting National Biodiversity Climate Change Vulnerability assessments ('NBCCVAs') for SACs and SPAs in England</p> <p>Available at http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4954594591375360</p>

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
			suitable stock grazing system.	
Supporting habitat: structure/function	Soils, substrate and nutrient cycling	Restore 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.	NATURAL ENGLAND 2016
Supporting processes (on which the feature and/or its supporting habitat relies)	Water quantity/quality	Where the feature or its supporting habitat is dependent on surface water and/or groundwater Restore water quality and quantity to a standard which provides the necessary conditions to support the feature	<p>For many SAC features which are dependent on wetland habitats supported by surface and/or ground water, maintaining the quality and quantity of water supply will be critical, especially at certain times of year. Poor water quality and inadequate quantities of water can adversely affect the structure and function of this habitat type. Typically, meeting the surface water and groundwater environmental standards set out by the Water Framework Directive (WFD 2000/60/EC) will also be sufficient to support the achievement of SAC Conservation Objectives but in some cases more stringent standards may be needed to reflect the ecological needs of the species feature. Further site-specific investigations may be required to establish appropriate water quality standards for the SAC.</p> <p>Rooksmoor SAC is entirely dependent on rainfall and subsequent flooding for maintenance of suitable soils conditions</p> <p>Target set to Restore because ditches may disrupting the hydrology and drawing water away from the Molinia pastures particularly in the summer months and this requires further investigation.</p> <p>Target set to Restore because ditches draining adjacent agricultural land may be importing nutrients during times of flooding and this requires further investigation.</p>	NATURAL ENGLAND 2016

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
			Target set to Restore as water quality is known to have been poor at point sources of agricultural pollution and winter flooding across the SAC and adjacent land is likely to be importing nutrients from surrounding improved farmland.	
Supporting processes (on which the feature and/or its supporting habitat relies)	Air quality	Maintain or, where necessary, restore 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).	<p>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.</p> <p>There are critical levels for ammonia (NH₃), oxides of nitrogen (NO_x) 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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>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).</p> <p>NATURAL ENGLAND 2016</p> <p>NATURAL ENGLAND 2014</p>
Supporting habitat: structure/function	Vegetation structure - sward height (neutral grassland)	Restore appropriate sward conditions, with a typical sward height of 5-60 cm on average (during summer months)	<p>M24 Sward greater than 5 cm (excluding <i>Juncus</i> spp.) but no more than 25% over 60 cm. In areas which support, or have the potential to support, Marsh Fritillary, the Marsh Fritillary 'vegetation heterogeneity' attribute (see below) will have precedence.</p> <p>The M24 vegetation at Lydlinch Common is not typical and may be the case on several other units, as it occurs over much of the SAC as an intermediate community between M24 and MG9. For this reason the frequency of <i>Molinia</i> and the list of positive indicator species targets need to be adapted to reflect</p>	<p>This attribute will be periodically monitored as part of Natural England's site condition assessments</p> <p>NATURAL ENGLAND 2016</p>

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
			the site specific conditions.	
Supporting habitat: structure/function	Vegetation composition - presence of food plants	Restore an abundance of devil-bit scabious <i>Succisa pratensis</i> within supporting habitat	As the feature's larval food plant, <i>Succisa pratensis</i> 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.	This attribute will be periodically monitored as part of Natural England's site condition assessments
Supporting habitat: structure/function	Ground moisture	Grazing regime should allow for a sufficiently long sward during the summer months to avoid desiccation of the <i>Succisa</i> plants on which the larvae feed.	Sward height should be long enough during spring/ summer months that the larval food plant does not become desiccated.	This attribute will be periodically monitored as part of Natural England's site condition assessments NATURAL ENGLAND 2016
Supporting processes (on which the feature and/or its supporting habitat relies)	Grazing pressure	Restore a cattle or pony-dominated grazing regime. Stock may be removed May-September, but light continuous cattle grazing is more beneficial than short-term heavy grazing, as long as the correct sward structure is maintained and sites do not become overgrazed.	Cattle grazing is preferable as it produces a less uniform sward; also sheep tend to selectively graze the <i>Succisa</i> , 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 <i>Succisa</i> plants (if they aren't actually eaten!). Sheep should not graze during the summer months - cattle/ pony grazing during summer may be OK if at a low stocking density. Target set to Restore because encroaching scrub and tree cover needs to be reduced across the SAC in conjunction with suitable stock grazing system.	NATURAL ENGLAND 2014 NATURAL ENGLAND 2016
Population (of the feature)	Population abundance	Restore the abundance of the population	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	This attribute will be periodically monitored as part of Natural England's site condition assessments . BULMAN C. R, WILSON R. J, HOLT A. R, BRAVO L. G, EARLY R. I, WARREN M. S, THOMAS C. D 2007. <i>Minimum viable metapopulation size, extinction debt and the conservation of a declining species</i> . Ecological Applications 17 : 1460-1473

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
			<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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 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.</p> <p>Marsh fritillary occurs as a meta-population and occupies suitable M24 Molinia pasture across the Blackmore Vales and Commons SSSI and likely suitable habitat further afield within the dispersal range of this species. In addition, the butterfly is prone to large fluctuations in numbers, both within sites and across the meta-population as a whole. Butterfly Conservation have routinely monitored the population at Rooksmoor SAC for several decades using larval web counts as the most reliable</p>	<p>BULMAN et al. 2011.</p> <p>BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION 2018</p>

Attributes		Targets	Supporting and Explanatory Notes	Sources of site-based evidence (where available)
			<p>measure of population size.</p> <p>Bulman <i>et al</i> (2007) suggests that assessing the favourable habitat within a fragmented network is reasonably accurate in determining the minimum viable meta-population size for the Marsh Fritillary Butterfly <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>.</p> <p>Considering the natural fluctuations of Marsh Fritillary Butterfly <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i> populations due to fluctuations in parasites, weather and dispersal success, it is not appropriate to set minimum adult or larval web numbers in assessing the conservation status of the species against a target. The evidence available indicates that Marsh Fritillary Butterfly <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i> presence, habitat condition, area and connectivity between fragmented breeding sites are appropriate assessment tools to determine if the feature is in favourable condition.</p> <p>Target set to Restore because encroaching scrub and tree cover on the Molinia pastures needs to be reduced across the SAC in conjunction with suitable stock grazing system.</p>	
<p>Version Control Advice last updated:</p>				
<p>Variations from national feature-framework of integrity-guidance: Attribute removed as irrelevant to Rooksmoor SAC: Supporting habitat: structure/function calcareous grassland</p>				

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