

Open Coastal Fens

Landscape Sensitivity & Change

This open coastal landscape is wholly managed for conservation as a freshwater habitat and it is subject to significant pressure from sea level rise. It is an unsettled landscape, framed by wooded higher ground.

The Open Coastal Fens are part of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and in combination with the landscape types around it, contributes to the special character of the AONB. Furthermore, the majority of the Open Coastal Fens is protected for its ecological interest, as both a European Designated Site and a nationally important Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Key Forces for Change

- Nature conservation management.
- Development on the fringes of this landscape.
- Sea level rise and the intrusion of salt water into this landscape.

Development Management

Conserve the setting of this landscape

The construction of new buildings on the coastal slope, or changes of land use, may have adverse affects on the setting of this landscape. If these changes are to be permitted the highest standards of design and effective mitigation strategies should be applied to minimise the detrimental impact on both the visual amenity and character of this landscape.

Construction of buildings that project above the skyline should be avoided if at all possible, while repositioning the proposal or adding a planting scheme behind the building can be partially successful. However, reducing the height of the development may also be required and should be considered even if this entails significant level changes.

Even if it does not puncture the skyline, the majority of new building is likely to be visible from the Saltmarsh and Intertidal Flats. Therefore, construction related to existing clusters and the use of sympathetic and unobtrusive materials is always to be preferred.

Maintenance of the open coastal fens for wildlife conservation

There is continued scope for habitat management and enhancement of these fen sites for wildlife benefit. However, these changes need to be managed sensitively, giving careful consideration to the historic landscape and wider visual landscape impacts, especially in relation to visitor management.

Land Management Guidelines

Support the continuation of traditional economic activities

Restore and maintain the grazing with cattle. The continuation of traditional agricultural practices is integral to the character and condition of these landscapes and grazing is often critical to the successful management of important wildlife sites in this landscape.

Restore and retain the pattern of drainage

The pattern of meadows divided by ditches and dykes are a characteristic feature of this landscape and should be maintained with sympathetic management. This will also deliver ecological benefits.

Maintain levels of grassland

Arable reversion through agri-environment schemes, or with the expansion of livestock enterprises, can help maintain the character of this landscape and also deliver ecological benefits.