Performance review:
SSSIs in National Park Authority Management

The issues

What are the specific performance/cost issues that the review has been set up to tackle?

1. The priority for the review is to ascertain why 93% of SSSI land under Authority management is in an 'unfavourable and declining' condition (March 2025), and to consider options for improving it.

Why do the issues matter?

2. As an organisation committed to restoring nature, it is of concern that a high percentage of SSSI land under our direct management is in 'unfavourable and declining' condition, even though it represents only a tiny area (0.1% of all the SSSI land in the National Park).

3. SSSI condition within protected landscapes (national parks and national landscapes) underpins specific targets in the UK Government's Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF). Under PLTOF, protected landscapes must fulfil their potential to address climate change and nature recovery. The PLTOF targets that relate to SSSIs are:

   a. Bring 80% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes into favourable condition by 2042;

   b. 60% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.

4. It should be noted that that the PLTOF targets referred to are based on the percentage of SSSI 'features', not the percentage of SSSI area. This reflects the new national approach introduced by Natural England – and all future figures (including those for Authority-owned land) will be calculated in this way.

Current performance

How is the service currently being delivered?

5. All the relevant sites currently owned by the Authority were transferred from North Yorkshire County Council at the time that the Authority became an independent body in 1997.

6. The Authority manages the SSSIs it is responsible for in-house; the work is not contracted out, although some land is let for grazing. Authority-managed SSSIs are the joint responsibility of Park Services (the Rangers team), and the Land Management section (Wildlife Conservation, Trees & Woodlands, Farm Conservation).

7. The specific management arrangements for each site are set out in **Appendix A**.

What are we supposed to be achieving?

8. In the National Park Management Plan (NPMP) 2020-2025, Objective C1 was:

- all the blanket bog in [SSSIs] is 'recovering', and 50% of the other land in such sites has reached 'favourable' condition by 2024. '

9. This has now been replaced in the NPMP 2025-2030 by Objective A1 to:

- Improve the condition of protected wildlife sites so that 60% of features in Sites of Special Scientific Interest are assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by the start of 2028, and at least 45% are in favourable condition by 2030.

10. Although these objectives are for the national park as a whole, the Authority contributes in a small way to achieving them through the SSSIs it manages.

What are we actually achieving?

11. In 2024/25, only 3% of the total SSSI area managed by the Authority was in favourable condition (see Table 1).

Table 1: SSSI land in National Park Authority (NPA) management, ha and %

Year	2024/25
Area (ha) of SSSI land in NPA management	69
Area (ha) in 'favourable' condition	2
Area (ha) in 'unfavourable but recovering' condition	3
Area (ha) in 'unfavourable and declining' condition	64
% in 'favourable' condition	3%
% 'unfavourable but recovering' condition	4%
% in 'unfavourable and declining' condition	93%

12. A list of the SSSIs that the Authority owns and manages – and their condition - is in **Appendix B**. The largest sites are:

i) Langcliffe Scars, Jubilee, Albert and Victoria Caves, which covers 50 ha (73% of the total area of SSSIs we own/manage);

ii) Freeholders' Wood, which covers 14 ha (20% of the total SSSI area).

13. The above two sites account for 93% of the SSSI land managed by the NPA (with the other 7% being made up of multiple small slivers of land). Consequently, the low percentage of SSSI land in NPA management that is in 'favourable' condition is almost entirely down to those two sites.

14. At the time this review was commissioned, Langcliffe Scars was failing because of historical damage within Victoria Cave (a tiny part of the 50 ha site). Freeholders Wood was assessed as 'unfavourable declining' because of the presence of Ash Dieback.

How much is it costing?

15. **Appendix C** shows the estimated staff costs for the annual management of Ox Close (Ballowfields), Freeholders Wood and Langcliffe Scars SSSIs. The total estimated annual costs are £20,025. There is an off-setting annual income of £3,150 from the lease to graze land at Langcliffe Scars and Attermire.

3. The evaluation

How do our current costs and performance compare to other bodies (NPAs and/or other bodies providing the same type of service)?

16. Compared to the other nine national park authorities in England, the Authority owns or manages the smallest area of SSSI (see table 2). The two authorities below YDNPA did not have data to report.

Table 2: Area of SSSI land owned or managed by each National Park Authority (2024/25)

Rank	NPA	Area of SSSI in NPA management (ha)
1	Lake District	6,338
2	Exmoor	4,739
3	Peak District	4,659
4	North York Moors	1,273
5	Dartmoor	990
6	South Downs	288
7	Northumberland	155
8	Yorkshire Dales	69
9	The Broads	-
10	New Forest	-
-	**Total**	**18,511**

17. The Authority was eighth out of the ten national park authorities in England for the percentage of their SSSI land that was in favourable condition (see Table 3)

Table 3: Rank of national parks for % SSSI land in favourable condition in NPA management 2024/25

Rank	NPA	% favourable
1	South Downs	97
2	Peak District	29
3	North York Moors	27
4	Northumberland	25
5	Dartmoor	8
6	Lake District	6
7	Exmoor	6
8	Yorkshire Dales	3
-	**Average**	**25**

18. The Authority was also eighth out of the ten national park authorities for the proportion of their SSSI land in unfavourable-recovering condition (see Table 4).

Table 4: Rank of national park authorities for % SSSI land in unfavourable-recovering condition in NPA management 2024/25

Rank	NPA	% unfavourable-recovering
1	Exmoor	94
2	Dartmoor	86
3	Northumberland	75
4	North York Moors	70
5	Peak District	65
6	Lake District	23
7	Yorkshire Dales	4
8	The Broads	-
-	**Average**	**52**

Are the current objectives realistic given the current priority of the programme and any funding decisions already taken?

19. In the abstract, the objectives (see paras 8 and 9) should be realistic. 'Wildlife' is one of the Authority's priority programmes – and has been for many years – and the Authority is committed to supporting nature recovery. However, for the reasons set out in the following sections, there are some significant constraints to improving the Authority's apparent performance.

What are the potential options for alternative ways of delivering the service to improve value for money - given the current priority of the programme and any funding decisions already taken?

20. As noted above, the Authority's performance is almost entirely dependent on two sites: Freeholders Wood and Langcliffe Scars:

a. **Freeholders Wood**. In August 2025, the Authority adopted a new 10-year management plan for Freeholders Wood to try to address Ash dieback. As a result, Natural England has re-classified the site as 'unfavourable-recovering'. Natural England has explicitly recognised that the site is being well-managed but it is not currently possible for it to be brought into favourable condition, for the reasons set out in **Appendix D**.

b. **Langcliffe Scars**, Victoria Cave is classed as 'unfavourable–declining' due primarily to historical damage to the soft sediment from people entering the cave. Whilst low-key barriers have been put in place this has not stopped the damage. Officers had assumed that it would not be possible to return the site to favourable condition because the damage would be irreparable. However, as part of this review, advice was obtained from Natural England to the effect that preventing access to the sensitive areas would return the assessment to 'unfavourable-recovering' and could potentially return the site to 'favourable' condition. Further details are set out in **Appendix E.**

21. The likely cost of the measures required to prevent access to the sensitive areas of Victoria Cave are significant (c£50,000). For that reason, it is recommended that no action be taken until formal confirmation has been secured from Natural England that those measures would make a meaningful difference to the condition of the SSSI.

22. A less significant aspect of the Authority's management is the disproportionately complex nature of the current performance monitoring and reporting. This arises because of the inherited slivers of land (see Appendix B) – which are so tiny as to be irrelevant to the overall condition of the SSSI but which require reporting every year. As set out in para. 4, the national system of condition monitoring for SSSIs has changed to a features-based assessment. All National Park Authorities will need to align with this. This provides an opportunity to rationalise the Authority's approach (see **Appendix F**) and reduce reporting to cover only those features (three – one at each of three sites) where the Authority has meaningful influence.

23. The review revealed that it is likely that several of the slivers of SSSI that the Authority appears to own may be the result of mapping errors (see **Appendix G**). Whilst not urgent, it may be worth exploring whether these can be easily resolved.

Are there any other options (e.g. ending the service, reducing quality etc)?

24. A number of different options have been considered as part of the review. These are set out in **Appendix H**. Overall, the review team's view was that there was little to be saved by seeking to dispose of the main SSSI sites or by 'outsourcing' their management, and the Authority should continue to manage them in-house.

Future action

Recommended action plan

Issue	Action	When	Who
All sites	Continue to manage all SSSI land in-house through the ranger service and relevant Land Management Section staff	Immediate	Head of Park Services; Head of Land Management
Freeholders Wood	Implement the newly-agreed Management Plan, accepting that good management will not achieve favourable condition for reasons out of the Authority's control	Immediate	Senior Wildlife Conservation Officer; Area Ranger - Wensleydale
Victoria Cave	Seek formal confirmation from Natural England that barring public access to the cave deposits would have a meaningful/material positive impact on the SSSI condition	Jul 2026	Head of Land Management
	Subject to the above, work up more detailed costings for the preferred option, including for securing necessary consents, and bring to the Authority for determination	Dec 2026	Head of Park Services
	Should a decision be taken to undertake the recommended works, seek external funding to mitigate the costs to the Authority	2027	Head of Park Services
Monitoring and reporting SSSI condition	Move to feature-based monitoring. Monitor and report condition only on the 3 sites where the Authority has meaningful control of the condition of a SSSI site feature	May 2026	Senior Wildlife Conservation Officer
Mapping errors	Work with Natural England to resolve the mapping anomalies relating to the 5 areas of land that the Authority believes are not actually part of a SSSI	Mar 2027	Senior Wildlife Conservation Officer

Future funding/resourcing implications

25. There are no new funding/resourcing implications other than the potential proposals for Victoria Cave, which could involve significant costs. As set out above, no such works would be carried out without seeking express approval from the Authority.

YDNPA Management of SSSIs

Attermire SSSI

Due to the nature of the site this is let on a grazing lease. The advertising, issuing, valuation and on-going practical management of the lease (invoicing) decisions are made by the Area Manager, Park Services. The actual content of the lease conservation aspects (Senior Wildlife Officer) general legal input (Solicitor) decisions about content are made by the individual officers. Lease discussions are between the Area Manager and the tenant

The general rule of thumb is Area Manager makes decisions on the practical implications of managing the site guided by the Conservation Team, either verbally or through existing management plans for the site. Area Rangers are responsible for the Health and Safety elements of the site annual Risk Assessment and programmed inspections, as well as taking and implement decisions that result from monitoring H&S. Guided by other Authority staff as required.

Langcliffe Scars and Jubilee, Albert and Victoria Caves SSSI

Also part of the Attermire SSSI and grazing lease. The difference is the cave aspects where the Senior Archaeologist has guided the practical works required which are in some cases implemented by the Ranger Service or contractors. For example, the fitting of grills, barriers, interpretation boards fitting/removal, rabbit control. The Ranger Service makes decisions about the public footpath works required and implements these. The general rule of thumb remains the same as Attermire SSSI.

Aysgarth/Freeholders Wood/River Ure Grasslands (Riddings Field)

Management of Aysgarth SSSI is similar to Attermire SSSI. Practical and H&S implications/decisions are made by the Ranger Service guided by the Conservation Team and the management plan (Trees and Woodland Officer) for the site or other officers as required. The Area Ranger makes decisions on a day-to-day basis regarding practical management around the site, guided by management plan and other officers as appropriate.

River Ure Grasslands SSSI (Riddings Field, Aysgarth) has a grazing agreement.

Ox Close SSSI (Ballowfields)

General rule of thumb is that the Area Ranger makes decisions on a day-to-day basis regarding practical management around the site.

Condition of SSSIs owned and/or managed by YDNPA

SSSI Name	Total unit ha (YDNPA ha)	Managed	Habitat	Assessment	Reason for adverse condition
Attermire	26.2 (0.008)	Grazing agreement	Fen, marsh and swamp - upland	Unfavourable - Recovering	M10 alkaline fen or basic flush feature more or less meets CSM requirements. There are some rushes or grassier swards around the margins and a western flush lacks a 6th indicator species, however it is small with a limited water supply so is unlikely to ever diversify much.
	21.0 (1.5)		Fen, marsh and swamp - upland	Unfavourable - Recovering	
Aysgarth	17.9 (3.9)	In-house	Earth heritage	Favourable	-
Freeholders Wood	14.3 (13.7)	In-house	Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland - upland	Unfavourable - Declining	Ash dieback extent. The 2017 Woodland Management Plan (WMP) mentioned Ash Dieback as a threat, though the disease had not been detected at that time. Because the WMP does not deal with Ash Dieback, there is currently no mechanism in place to address this pressure.
River Ure Grasslands	4.3 (0.1)	In-house	Neutral grassland - upland	Unfavourable - Declining	Cover and frequency of negative indicator species and the continued problem of localised grazing and associated ground disturbance by rabbits on the interest community areas.
	4.0 (2.7)	In-house	Neutral grassland - upland	Unfavourable - Recovering	Under-grazing. A management/restoration plan has been agreed between Natural England and the NPA, involving the removal of scrub on the calcareous knolls. A mowing programme and the reintroduction of autumn/winter grazing sheep has been agreed. This should create more favourable conditions for the Burnt Orchid.

Appendix B

SSSI Name	Total unit ha (YDNPA ha)	Managed	Habitat	Assessment	Reason for adverse condition
Langcliffe Scars; Jubilee, Albert and Victoria Caves	327.5 (0.2)	In-house	Earth heritage	Favourable	-
	74.7 (50.1)		Earth heritage	Unfavourable - Declining	Pleistocene vertebrata feature was found to be in unfavourable-declining condition due to soft sediment being worn away by footfall at Victoria Cave, littering was also noted.
	11.7 (0.02)		Earth heritage	Favourable	-
Malham-Arncliffe	102.4 (0.2)	In-house	Neutral grassland - upland	Favourable	-
Ox Close (Ballowfields)	1.2 (0.9)	In-house	Neutral grassland - upland	Favourable	-
	2.4 (0.00001)		Inland rock	Favourable	-
River Wharfe	8.5 (0.003)		Rivers and streams	Unfavourable - Recovering	No information available

Annual staff days, costs and income for management of main Authority-owned SSSIs

Property	Ballowfield	Freeholders Wood	Langcliffe Scars
Access Ranger	0	20	
Area Ranger	0	5	1
Area Manager	0.25	1	3
Trees & Woodlands Team	0.5	6	
Historic Environment Team			2
Wildlife Conservation Team	0.25	2	2
Finance Team			0.5
Legal Team			0.25
Total Staff Days	1	34	8.75
Total Staff Costs*	**£300**	**£10,200**	**£2,625**
Total Volunteer Days		44	10
Total Volunteer Costs*		**£4,400**	**£1,000**
Capital works (annualised)		£1,500	
Total Capital works		**£1,500**	
Total costs	**£300**	**£16,100**	**£3,625**
Lease income			-£3,150
Total Income			**-£3,150**
Total Net cost	**£300**	**£16,100**	**£475**

***** indicative costs calculated @ £300 per day for staff and £100 per day for volunteers (£100 per day is the value of a volunteer day used in the National Park Family Indicators).

AN ASSESSMENT OF WHAT THE OPTIONS WOULD BE FOR GETTING FREEHOLDERS WOOD INTO FAVOURABLE CONDITION

Background

The site was assessed by Natural England on 20 May and 6 June 2024.

Previous visit: May 2010 (Natural England) when the SSSI was determined to be 'Favourable' condition.

Features: Monitored feature for CSM is Broad-leaved, mixed and Yew woodland – Upland Mixed Ash woodlands (W8/W9).

Feature assessed: Broad-leaved, mixed and Yew woodland – Upland Mixed Ash woodlands.

NE Comments: *There was no loss of area of ancient/ semi-natural woodland, and the structure and composition of the woodland were good. Natural processes were apparently functioning well, with plentiful dead wood present. Regeneration potential was good, with many seedlings/saplings of all local tree species present, and generally good re-growth from coppiced Hazel. Any new planting was appropriate. The ground flora was suitably diverse, with the expected species present. There was no issue with non-native species. There was very little evidence of browsing by herbivores, although it was noted that the ground flora was generally taller in areas surrounded by Gen-guards, suggesting that some Rabbit/Deer grazing may be taking place. A large patch of Herb Paris was found in the expected location. The calcareous flush was not poached or over-shadowed and retained its characteristic species composition. The above attributes therefore passed the condition assessment.*

However, the assessment failed on the death/destruction criterion, which is a mandatory attribute and exceeded the 10% target at several stops (16.47% on average), because of Ash Dieback disease. All the mature Ash trees in the wood appear to be affected, and many have died already. These are being left as deadwood. There are many young Ash seedlings, growing to sapling height (approx. 1.5m). Some of these may turn out to be disease resistant, although some have already died.

The Woodland Management Plan (WMP), which was agreed in 2017, mentioned Ash Dieback as a threat, though the disease had not been detected within Freeholders' Wood at that time. Because the WMP does not deal with Ash Dieback, there is currently no mechanism in place to address this pressure and so the SSSI is in 'Unfavourable-declining' condition.

The original NE report stated that "*to achieve 'recovering' condition, it is recommended that the WMP is updated with details of how the disease situation will be addressed. Some Ash seedlings/saplings may be more tolerant to the disease and these may need marking and protecting from herbivores. If the intention is to let Dieback take its course and allow other tree species to replace the Ash through natural regeneration over time, then some management may be required to make*

sure that the balance of species in the wood does not tip in favour of fast-growing species like Sycamore and Elder".

A revised WMP for Freeholders' Wood was adopted by YDNPA in August 2025 and is valid for 10 years from 01/09/2025 to 31/08/2025. As a result, the site has been re-classified as being in 'Unfavourable – Recovering' condition.

Potential Options for Getting Freeholders Wood into Favourable Condition

The site is judged to be unfavourable because the amount of dead Ash exceeds the 10% target for dead wood. Hypothetically the only way to reduce this amount would be to remove dead wood so that that amount falls below the 10% threshold.

The current best practice guidelines (here) state that " Where ash trees pose a low safety risk, for example trees in hedges between two fields with no public access, they should be left to decline naturally so they can continue to contribute benefits to the environment". The majority of dead trees would be in this category and so favourable SSSI condition could only be hypothetically achieved by going against recognised best practice.

Although there is no definite research, a recent Forestry Commission blog (see here) has suggested that despite "dire predictions back in 2012 of 95% mortality [of ash] have not yet materialised. If we can afford to let trees be, some may well recover.". Further reason for not undertaking large-scale felling.

In addition to the cost of undertaking this work, it is likely that the removal could damage the ground flora within the wood, one of the citation features of the SSSI.

Introduction

Victoria Cave is classed as 'Unfavourable – declining' due to soft sediment being worn away by footfall (i.e. people entering the cave). Since this damage has already happened, it was assumed that it would not be possible to return it to favourable condition. However, recent advice from Natural England has suggested otherwise.:

> "I know there is a low barrier at the cave entrance, but this does not prevent people accessing the cave and causing sediment erosion. I think a locked gate would be the only solution to prevent access and prevent further erosion of the geological interest.
>
> Completing the works above would certainly return the assessment to unfavourable recovering or potentially to favourable if we can show the works definitely prevent further erosion of the sediments".

Options

1. Preventive barrier (fence) and gate entrance of cave. Shortest distance of options. 11m wide. Protects entire cave area. Initial entry area no sediments present. Visually most intrusive. Easiest and cheapest option
2. Preventive barrier (fence) and gate set back from entrance. Across from start of first bar. 13.5m wide. Less intrusive. Protects all sediments. Allow partial access to the cave. Next easiest and cost-effective option.
3. Preventive barrier (fence) and gate rear or cave. In line with 3rd barrier. 19m wide. Does not protect all sediments. Main area of sediments only. Least intrusive
4. Combination of 2&3. Line following existing bars then following part of option 2. Significantly longer. Protects all sediments. Allows greater access to cave. Most difficult and expensive option
5. Adaptions to current barriers.
6. Remain as current

The installation of barriers/gate is severely constrained by the cave's irregular topography, including variable elevations and uneven surfaces, as well as the challenges of safely and effectively anchoring structures to natural walls, floors, and boulders. Access to the site is severely restricted with no vehicle access direct to site. Access agreement will be required from adjacent landowner. Whatever option is considered this will be bespoke and require fabrication. Therefore, expensive and difficult to estimate.

The options will also be constrained by the fact that the cave is also a designated Scheduled Monument. Consent for works will need to be secured from Historic England.

There may be an opportunity through links with the local caving community in the Dales to seek assistance in any proposed survey/works.

Any of options 1-4 would have a significant impact on access to the cave, as well as a lesser or greater visual impact. It would probably be necessary, therefore, to incorporate some form of information and interpretation to explain why the works had been carried out.

Timeframe

2026/27	Preparation, permissions, access agreement, feasibility study, cave survey, accurate costing
2027/28	Conduct works on site

Indicative Costs

Feasibility Study and Designs	Private Contractor	£10k
Permissions and access agreement	Legal	£5k
Works (dependent on option)	Works	£30k-£50k

Determining the minimum size for inclusion in YDNPA SSSI performance reporting

1. Natural England has changed from a geographical unit to a feature-based assessment for monitoring the condition of SSSIs. There may be multiple features to an SSSI. This means that that Authority must now consider which of the features it can reasonably influence, when assessing its own performance in managing SSSIs.

Option 1

2. There are currently no maps showing the locations of features within each SSSI. Natural England adopted the rule that if at least 30% of the entire SSSI is in a Protected Landscape, then this was a large enough area to be representative of the SSSI and its monitored features.

3. If all sites where the Authority owns less than 30% of a SSSI were excluded, this would leave only one SSSI where the Authority's management may reasonably be expected to contribute to feature condition:

    - Freeholders Wood SSSI (one feature: upland mixed ashwoods)

Option 2

4. There are a further two sites where the Authority owns less than 30% but we know for certain that the land is essential to the condition of at least one feature (because the Authority owns a unit containing a significant part of the feature):

    - Langcliffe Scars and Jubilee, Albert and Victoria Caves SSSI. Feature: pleistocene vertebrata (the Authority-owned Victoria Cave is the sole location of the feature).
    - Aysgarth SSSI. Feature: fluvial geomorphology. The Authority owns a section of the river area so has influence over this feature.

5. This would mean that the Authority would in future be reporting on the condition of three features at three sites.

Option 3

6. An alternative way of determining the SSSI features that the Authority could influence is by using the size of the smallest SSSI in the UK as the minimum size. SSSIs can be as small as a building; the current smallest by area is Sylvan House Barn SSSI, which is only 0.004 ha. YDNPA does not manage any buildings designated as SSSIs, however, so this baseline may be too low. The smallest SSSI by area that is a land area is Winceby Rectory Pit SSSI at 0.03 ha.

7. The only SSSI where the Authority owns less than 0.03 ha in total is River Wharfe SSSI (two features: river supporting habitat and rivers and streams). All other Authority-owned SSSI units would still be included. See Annex 1 for SSSI areas. This would mean the Authority would still be reporting on the condition of 33 features across 7SSSI sites, even though several of the holdings are miniscule.

Conclusion

8. It is proposed that option 2 be adopted as a reasonable basis for monitoring the condition of SSSI features that are being managed by the National Park Authority. That would mean reporting on the condition of three features – one at each at Freeholders Wood; Langcliffe Scars and Jubilee, Albert and Victoria Caves; and, Aysgarth

Authority-owned SSSIs: potential mapping errors

SSSI Name	Total unit Area (ha)	Area owned by YDNPA (ha)	% owned by YDNPA
Attermire SSSI	26.21	0.018*	0.03
Langcliffe Scars and Jubilee, Albert and Victoria Caves SSSI	327.49	0.183*	0.056
	11.68	0.017*	0.145
Malham-Arncliffe SSSI	102.39	0.158^	0.154
	2.41	0.00001*	0.0005
River Ure Grasslands SSSI	4.34	0.084^	1.935
River Wharfe SSSI	8.51	0.003*	0.033

* Suspected mapping error

^ Minimal area but not necessarily a mapping error

Alternative options for management of Authority-owned SSSIs

1	Reduce resources put into SSSI management	The Authority has a legal obligation to manage our SSSI sites appropriately. Reducing resources might result in an inappropriate level of management which could lead to intervention by Natural England, risking reputational damage and enforcement action. Nature recovery is one of the Authority's two prioritised ambitions, and the Wildlife programme is one of the Authority's priority work programmes. So, it would be perverse to seek to significantly reduce the quality of our SSSI management.
2	Contract out management to the private sector, public sector or community/parish organisation	As the landowner, the Authority would need to oversee the work of the contractor(s), to ensure that management was appropriate and not damaging the site. This would still involve similar levels of staff time. However, the Authority should not rule out occasional contracting out where appropriate for individual sites on a case by case basis
3	Transfer the Authority-owned SSSI land to trusts/community-based/parish-based organisations	This would involve additional staff time in the short-term to negotiate and complete any sale but ultimately should transfer costs away from the Authority. There is no reason to think that SSSIs cannot be well-managed by other bodies. The Authority previously determined (Review of Properties, 2013) to seek to dispose of several sites – including Ballowfields SSSI - in this way as part of austerity measures. However, the review concluded that the largest SSSI sites (Freeholders Wood, Attermire and Craven Lime Works) should be retained. This was partly because of a feeling that we would still expend significant staff time in influencing the future management of the properties, and because of their value to the Authority as sites that can be used for educational visits, volunteer groups etc
4	Sell the Authority-owned SSSI land on the open market	As for Option 5
5	Use Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) credits to fund improvements to SSSIs	BNG credits are related to the degree of uplift from lower to higher biodiversity value. If a site has a low value and the degree of uplift is high, then BNG credits will be higher. If the site already has a good biodiversity value and can only be uplifted slightly, then the BNG credits will be lower.

		Officers' opinion is that BNG uplift would be low for both Freeholders Wood and Attermire/Langcliffe (the only two significant areas of SSSI we own), since the level of biodiversity cannot be increased significantly, so this is not a viable option.
6	De-notification of all or part of some SSSIs	Current UK Government guidance on SSSIs states that Natural England will only de-notify SSSIs in exceptional circumstances e.g. loss of special interest that cannot be restored due to natural causes or planning permission for development. Sites that have been illegally damaged or neglected will not be de-notified. De-notification or a boundary change might be a logical solution to resolve some of the slivers of SSSI land owned by the Authority (and potentially to deal with the irreparable damage at Victoria Cave). However, the process is likely to be extremely time-consuming and will not be a priority for Natural England's limited resources.

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