

# Assessing Isle of Wight Sites Through Vegetation Surveys

## CHALLENGE

ECOSA was commissioned to undertake vegetation surveys to provide ecological data for assessing the effects of potential changes in hydrology of sites, and to identify sites that would benefit from conservation management.

## SOLUTION

A total of 25 sites were surveyed, quadrat samples were occasionally recorded using the DOMIN method, and computer analysis later helped confirm the NVC diagnosis, while present habitats were mapped using GIS software.

## RESULT

Many sites were suffering from lack of management, leading to natural succession of open wet grassland and marsh vegetation types to denser tall herb fen and willow carr. Management was provided with recommendations to improve the situation.

The Isle of Wight Council commissioned ECOSA, a Trinity Consultants team, to undertake vegetation surveys of wetland sites on the isle, funded by the Environment Agency. The main purpose of the study was to provide ecological data that could be used to assess the effects of potential changes in hydrology of sites, and to identify sites that would benefit from conservation management.

The survey provided an assessment of the impact of water abstraction at the sites and a baseline for future ecological monitoring. A total of 25 sites were surveyed during the study, mostly consisting of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) as designated by the Council, but for which detailed information on vegetation and flora was lacking, and three potential sites of ecological interest without current designations.

Notes were made on dominant and characteristic species in each vegetation type and the vegetation was identified to National Vegetation Classification (NVC) community or sub-community level where possible. Quadrat samples were occasionally recorded using the DOMIN method, and computer analysis later helped confirm the NVC diagnosis. The present habitats were mapped using GIS software.

Many sites were suffering from lack of management, leading to natural succession of open wet grassland and marsh vegetation types to denser tall herb fen and willow carr. Most likely, some areas of species-rich vegetation had been replaced with species-poor vegetation, and ecological value had decreased as a result. Management was provided with recommendations to improve the situation.