Improvement Programme for England's Natura 2000 Sites (IPENS)

Final Event 'Natura 2000 – a call to action' Report

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improvement-programme-for-englands-natura-2000-sites-ipens

Improvement Programme for England's Natura 2000 Sites

Final Event Report

Introduction

1. The final event for the Improvement Programme for England's Natura 2000 Sites (IPENS) (**Natura 2000 – a call to action**) was held on 21st May 2015 to coincide with European Natura 2000 day. The purpose of the event was to:

    - Share the key findings and recommendations from the IPENS programme.
    - Outline a framework for the long term management of England's Natura 2000 sites.
    - Discuss the key issues affecting England's Natura 2000 sites and the engagement and next steps needed to tackle them.
    - Celebrate the Natura 2000 network, with other EU countries, as part of European Natura 2000 day.

    A copy of the event programme is available at annex 1.

2. The event was attended by 60+ delegates (see annex 2 for delegate list) representing a range of organisations, from the conservation sector, landowning organisations and interest groups (such as the RSPB, Local Nature Partnerships, National Trust, Deer Iniative, NFU, Moorland Association and Royal Yachting Association) to government bodies and agencies (e.g. Defra, Highways England, Natural England, Environment Agency, Marine Management Organisation and JNCC). The event was also attended by a number of other LIFE projects based in England and Wales.

Presentations and Reports

3. Throughout the day there were a series of presentations, workshop sessions along with various opportunities for delegates to network and share their thoughts, ideas and desire to be involved in IPENS implementation via flipcharts around the room.

4. **Presentations**. Guest speakers from Defra, British Trust for Ornithology, West of England Local Nature Partnership and Natural England, along with Samantha Somers (IPENS Programme Manager) provided an excellent and interesting range of presentations which:

    - Celebrated England's Natura 2000 sites and set them within the wider Europe and national biodiversity context.
    - Provided an overview of the work undertaken by IPENS and the key findings and recommendations from the programme, and next steps.
    - Looked at how we manage our Natura 2000 sites from a local perspective.

The presentations are all available on the IPENS publications catalogue.

5. **Reports.** Two new reports produced by the programme were launched at the event - a summary (layman's) report and a longer more technical Programme Report. The reports provide:

   - An overview of the approach IPENS took to identifying the programme of work needed to improve or maintain (where they are already in a good state) the condition of England's Natura 2000 sites.
   - The key findings and recommendations of the programme based on an analysis of all the Site Improvement Plans, theme plans and evidence projects developed by IPENS.
   - Recommendations for what next steps need to be taken to turn the plans into conservation action.

6. A press release on 21st May along with the use of twitter throughout the day (see annex 3) helped to further raise awareness of the new reports, the event and Natura 2000 day.

7. **Workshop sessions.** The workshop sessions provided an opportunity for the delegates to discuss the 11 issues affecting Natura 2000 sites that IPENS has developed theme plans for (see list below), and the engagement and future steps needed to tackle them.

   - Atmospheric nitrogen
   - Climage change
   - Diffuse water pollution
   - Grazing
   - Habitat fragmentation
   - Hydrological functioning
   - Inappropriate coastal management
   - Invasive species
   - Lake restoration
   - Public access and disturbance
   - River restoration

8. A (draft) summary of each theme plan along with its list of proposed actions was provided to the delegates in advance of the event. (Since the event all of the theme plans have been published). Included within this information were some questions which delegates were invited to discuss at the event. The notes from these workshop sessions can be found at annex 4.

9. The discussion from the event workshop sessions will be used to help inform the post-IPENS implementation work (see next steps below), including the implementation of the theme plans.

Next Steps

10. IPENS has identified the actions required to improve the condition of our Natura 2000 sites and we now need to successfully implement them. To do this we need to work with other organisations to:

- Carry out an exercise to **prioritise** the actions identified in the site and theme plans, and use this to inform implementation plans.
- Develop a coordinated approach to **funding Natura 2000 work** and identify how we pay for the actions we do not currently have money for.
- Make best use of existing **skills, knowledge and resources** to manage Natura 2000 sites, and take a collective view of where there might be gaps in these.

11. With the IPENS LIFE project formally finishing on 30 June 2015 an AfterLIFE Implementation Steering Group including representatives from government, the conservation sector and other organisations that manage Natura 2000 sites will coordinate the ongoing work. During the event a number of organisations (for example, Woodland Trust, JNCC, River Restoration Centre, Local Nature Partnerships) expressed an interest to join this group in addition to those who had already agreed to be members of the group (e.g. RSPB, Marine Management Organisation, Environment Agency, Defra).

Annex 1 Event programme

10.30-11.00	**Registration, tea/coffee**
11.00-11.05	**Introduction** **Rob Cooke,** Director, Natural England
11.05-11.10	**Welcome address** **Shirley Trundle,** Director, Defra
11.10-11.30	**Keynote speech – A celebration of the Natura 2000 network** **Andy Clements,** Director, British Trust for Ornithology and Board Member, Natural England
11.30-12.15	**Improvement Programme for England's Natura 2000 Sites (IPENS)** **Samantha Somers**, IPENS Programme Manager ▪ Programme overview. ▪ Key issues affecting England's Natura 2000 sites and the priority actions we need to take to address them. ▪ Strategic Framework for the long term management of England's Natura 2000 sites.
12.15-12.45	**Workshop session one – an introduction to some of the key issues affecting England's Natura 2000 sites and a discussion about the engagement and future steps needed to tackle them:** ▪ Climate change ▪ Grazing ▪ Hydrological functioning ▪ Invasive species

	▪ Lake restoration
12.45-13.45	**LUNCH**
13.45-14.15	**Workshop session two – an introduction to some of the key issues affecting England's Natura 2000 sites and a discussion about the engagement and future steps needed to tackle them:** ▪ Atmospheric nitrogen ▪ Diffuse water pollution ▪ Habitat fragmentation ▪ Inappropriate coastal management ▪ Public access and disturbance ▪ River restoration
14.15-14.45	**Biodiversity 2020: a strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services** **Tom Butterworth,** Principal Adviser Biodiversity, Natural England
14.45-15.20	**Managing our Natura sites – a local perspective** **Matt Heard,** Area Manager, Natural England and **Shelly Dewhurst**, West of England Nature Partnership
15.20-15.45	**Questions & Answers – an opportunity to ask about anything you have heard today**
15.45	**Summing up** **Rob Cooke,** Director, Natural England
16.00	**CLOSE**

Annex 2 Delegate list

Name	Organisation / Project	Role	Workshop session one	Workshop session two
Amanda Anderson	Moorland Association	Director	3. Hydrological functioning	10. Public access and disturbance
Emma Barton	Royal Yachting Association	Planning and Environmental Manager	4. Invasive species	10. Public access and disturbance
Sarah Bentley	Staffordshire CC (representing LNPs)	Environmental Advice Manager	2. Grazing	8. Habitat fragmentation
Peter Birch	Canal & River Trust	National Environment Manager	3. Hydrological functioning	10. Public access and disturbance
Heeran Buhecha	Defra	Head, Protected Areas for Biodiversity Team	1. Climate change	6. Atmospheric nitrogen
Niall Burton	British Trust for Ornithology	Head of Wetland & Marine Research	1. Climate change	10. Public access and disturbance
Gail Butterill	Environment Agency	Biodiversity Technical Specialist	5. Lake restoration	11. River restoration
Tom Butterworth	Natural England	Principal Adviser Biodiversity	3. Hydrological functioning	8. Habitat fragmentation
Ed Clegg	Environment Agency	European Funding Advisor	3. Hydrological functioning	11. River restoration
Andy Clements	British Trust for Ornithology	Director	1. Climate change	9. Inappropriate coastal management
Rob Cooke	Natural England	Director Terrestrial Biodiversity	2. Grazing	7. Diffuse water pollution
Glen Cooper	Natural England	Senior Specialist Water	3. Hydrological functioning	7. Diffuse water pollution
Phil Eckesley	Natural England	Principal Specialist Protected Areas	3. Hydrological functioning	9. Inappropriate coastal management
Tania Crockett	Cumbrian Bogs LIFE Project	Communications Officer	3. Hydrological functioning	6. Atmospheric nitrogen
Alexandra Cunha	Joint Nature Conservation Committee	MPA Advisor	1. Climate change	8. Habitat fragmentation

Name	Organisation / Project	Role	Workshop session one	Workshop session two
Shelly Dewhurst	West of England Nature Partnership	Coordinator	1. Climate change	8. Habitat fragmentation
Iain Diack	Natural England	Senior Specialist Wetlands	3. Hydrological functioning	11. River restoration
Robert Duff	IPENS LIFE Project	Senior Adviser	2. Grazing	7. Diffuse water pollution
Julie Erian	IPENS LIFE Project	Senior Adviser	4. Invasive species	11. River restoration
Emily Field	RSPB	Project Manager	2. Grazing	10. Public access and disturbance
Hannah Freeman	Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust	Government Affairs Officer	4. Invasive species	7. Diffuse water pollution
Steve Griffiths	The Deer Initiative	Projects Manager	4. Invasive species	11. River restoration
Simon Wightman	RSPB	Site Policy Officer	3. Hydrological functioning	7. Diffuse water pollution
Zoe Gutteridge	Joint Nature Conservation Committee	MPA Advisor	4. Invasive species	9. Inappropriate coastal management
Susannah Haley	IPENS LIFE Project	Lead Adviser	1. Climate change	11. River restoration
Richard Handley	Environment Agency	Senior Advisor	3. Hydrological functioning	8. Habitat fragmentation
David Hargreaves	Humberhead Peatland LIFE Project	Project Manager	3. Hydrological functioning	6. Atmospheric nitrogen
Matt Heard	Natural England	Area Manager	1. Climate change	10. Public access and disturbance
Kathryn Hewitt	LIFE Natura 2000 Programme for Wales	Programme Manager	1. Climate change	8. Habitat fragmentation
Dawn Isaac	Natural England	External Funding Senior Advisor	5. Lake restoration	9. Inappropriate coastal management
Martin Janes	The River Restoration Centre	Managing Director	1. Climate change	11. River restoration
Gary Kass	Natural England	Deputy Chief Scientist	5. Lake restoration	11. River restoration
Louisa Knights	IPENS LIFE Project	Marine Senior Adviser	4. Invasive species	9. Inappropriate coastal

Name	Organisation / Project	Role	Workshop session one	Workshop session two
				management
Theresa Kudelska	Natural Resources Wales	Natural Resources Wales	5. Lake restoration	7. Diffuse water pollution
Gen Madgwick	Natural England	Lake Restoration Officer	5. Lake restoration	7. Diffuse water pollution
Chris Mainstone	Natural England	Senior Freshwater Specialist	3. Hydrological functioning	11. River restoration
David Martin	Natural England	Senior Environmental Specialist	2. Grazing	8. Habitat fragmentation
Stuart Masheder	IPENS LIFE Project	Team Leader	5. Lake restoration	8. Habitat fragmentation
Victoria Metheringham	Marine Management Organisation (MMO)	Marine Environment Manager	4. Invasive species	10. Public access and disturbance
Diane Mitchell	National Farmers' Union	Chief Environment Adviser	2. Grazing	6. Atmospheric nitrogen
Russ Money	Natural England	Senior Environmental Specialist	3. Hydrological functioning	7. Diffuse water pollution
Alastair Moralee	Plantlife	Important Plant Area Programme Manager	2. Grazing	8. Habitat fragmentation
Steven Peters	Environment Agency	Environment and Business Advisor	1. Climate change	7. Diffuse water pollution
Gwen Potter	National Trust	Wildlife & Countryside Adviser - London & South East	5. Lake restoration	8. Habitat fragmentation
Jess Price	Sussex Wildlife Trust	Conservation Officer	2. Grazing	8. Habitat fragmentation
Frances Randerson	IPENS LIFE Project	Senior Adviser	1. Climate change	10. Public access and disturbance
Susan Rendell-Read	Little Terns LIFE Project	Project Manager	1. Climate change	9. Inappropriate coastal management
Geoff Richards	Defra	Head of Valuing Nature team	3. Hydrological functioning	11. River restoration
Ann Rooney	Woodland Trust	Head of Grants &	1. Climate	8. Habitat

Name	Organisation / Project	Role	Workshop session one	Workshop session two
		Trusts	change	fragmentation
Zoe Russell	Natural England	Senior Specialist - Air Quality	3. Hydrological functioning	6. Atmospheric nitrogen
Lorraine Smith	IPENS LIFE Project	Evidence and Monitoring Lead Adviser	4. Invasive species	10. Public access and disturbance
Rebecca Smith	IPENS LIFE Project	Programme Coordinator	4. Invasive species	9. Inappropriate coastal management
Mike Smith	Natural England	Manager, Protected Sites	1. Climate change	6. Atmospheric nitrogen
Jean Smyth	Defra	Policy Adviser	2. Grazing	6. Atmospheric nitrogen
Samantha Somers	IPENS LIFE Project	Programme Manager	2. Grazing	10. Public access and disturbance
Jonathan Spencer	Forest Enterprise	Forest Planning & Environment Manager	4. Invasive species	10. Public access and disturbance
Mark Stevenson	Defra	Senior Scientific Officer	2. Grazing	6. Atmospheric nitrogen
Jen Taylor	Defra	Policy advisor	1. Climate change	8. Habitat fragmentation
Sarah Taylor	Natural England	Senior Specialist Climate Change	1. Climate change	8. Habitat fragmentation
Shirley Trundle	Defra	Director	2. Grazing	.
Andy Tully	Defra	Policy Advisor	1. Climate change	7. Diffuse water pollution
Wilbert van Vliet	IPENS LIFE Project	Senior Adviser	3. Hydrological functioning	6. Atmospheric nitrogen
Peter Watson	The Deer Initiative	Executive Director	4. Invasive species	10. Public access and disturbance
Paul Williamson	British Association for Shooting and Conservation	Rural Land Development Manager	1. Climate change	10. Public access and disturbance
Stuart Wilson	Highways England	Midlands and West Team Leader & Ecological Advisor	4. Invasive species	6. Atmospheric nitrogen

Annex 3 Tweets about the 'Natura 2000 – a call to action' event

The following was tweeted from the Natural England twitter account about the IPENS event and new publications on 21st May:

1. 21 May

   Natural England @NaturalEngland

   Thanks to our speakers & all who attended #IPENS event today @_AndyClements @EnvAgency @DefraGOVUK @LIFE_Programme http://ow.ly/Nf59k

   Expand

   - Reply
   - Retweet
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2. 21 May

   Natural England @NaturalEngland

   NE's Tom Butterworth explains how #IPENS work supports #Biodiversity2020 targets http://ow.ly/Nf44Y #Natura2000 pic.twitter.com/K13e5VgAOy

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3. 21 May


Natural England @NaturalEngland

Many thanks @LIFE_Programme & the many organisations involved in #IPENS - we're grateful to all who contributed http://ow.ly/NeuKG

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4. 21 May


Natural England @NaturalEngland

RT @DefraNature: Report on how to improve Natura 2000 sites in England published by @NaturalEngland https://www.gov.uk/government/news/improvement-programme-for-englands-natura-2000-sites-new-report …

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5. 21 May


Natural England @NaturalEngland

RT @_BTO: New @NaturalEngland report launched today sets out improvement programme for England's #Natura2000 sites http://bit.ly/1ShHOgt

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6. 21 May

Natural England @NaturalEngland

Evidence from #IPENS informs @DefraGovUk #Biodiversity2020 strategy for England's wildlife & ecosystem services http://ow.ly/NetBU

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7. 21 May

Natural England @NaturalEngland

Site improvement plans have been produced for every #Natura2000 site in England #IPENS http://ow.ly/Nepiy pic.twitter.com/sEmMd7lvCD

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8. 21 May

Natural England @NaturalEngland

With 270,000 sites #Natura is largest conservation initiative. Amazing network that protects fantastic biodiversity~@_AndyClements #IPENS

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9. 21 May

Natural England @NaturalEngland

There are 338 #Natura2000 sites in England incl the Northumberland coast #Lindisfarne #Northeast pic.twitter.com/zZy3MHiX1u

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10. 21 May

Natural England @NaturalEngland

There are 338 #Natura2000 sites in England incl the beautiful undersea reefs off the Isles of Scilly #Southwest pic.twitter.com/CZFPrPCgDH

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11. 21 May


Natural England @NaturalEngland

New report summarises #IPENS & highlights need for wide ranging #Natura2000 action: http://ow.ly/NejRN @EnvAgency @DefraGovUK

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12. 21 May


Natural England @NaturalEngland

Our #IPENS project conference is being held today to coincide with #Natura2000Day http://ow.ly/NcmUB @LIFE_Programme

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13. 21 May


Natural England @NaturalEngland

NE Board member @_AndyClements is giving the keynote address at our #IPENS conference this morning #Natura2000Day pic.twitter.com/wWdjLygivm

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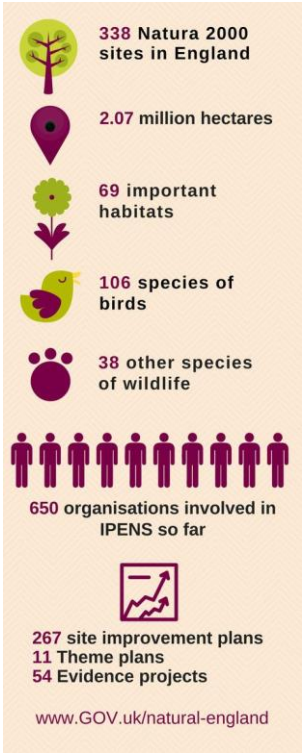
14. 21 May

NATURAL ENGLAND Natural England @NaturalEngland

There are 338 land & marine #Natura2000 sites in England, covering more than 2m hectares~@_AndyClements #IPENS pic.twitter.com/57qgkYN4KH



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15. 21 May

NATURAL ENGLAND Natural England @NaturalEngland

NE Board member @_AndyClements & @DefraGovUK 's Shirley Trundle are up first at our #IPENS event today #Natura2000 #Natura2000Day

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16. 21 May

Natural England @NaturalEngland

We’re hosting an event today that brings together the findings of the ‘Improvement Programme for England’s Natura2000 Sites’ project #IPENS

Collapse

Annex 4 Notes from workshop sessions

Eleven workshop sessions were held throughout the day. The notes from each of the workshops can be found by following the links below. The views in these notes are those of the workshop participants and do not necessarily represent those of Natural England or the Environment Agency.

Atmospheric nitrogren

Hosted by Wilbert van Vliet, IPENS

Wilbert van Vliet gave an introduction to the topic, summarising the theme plan and highlighting the recommendations to trial Site Nitrogen Actions Plans in a limited number of sites.

Feedback:

- It is important to be able to measure benefits of the approach, for example by taking sites that are close to their critical load. Downside would be the uncertainty of actual impacts on those sites. However on sites with significant (historic) impacts, sensitive species may already be lost making ecological improvements difficult to measure.
- Consider what data is available for the trial sites, in particular monitoring of air pollution. Aligning with emissions monitoring or roads NOx monitoring may be beneficial.
- There is an opportunity now to influence long term funding for the strategic roads network by Highways England. This requires a good understanding of critical sites and description of actions needed in specific locations.
- There is a challenge for agricultural measures to identify the relevant farming activities and assemble emission data, as this is not readily available. For the pilot sites, potentially the farming sector could assist in facilitating data collection? There is also a challenge in providing evidence of the effectiveness of measures.
- In approaching farm holdings, a Catchment Sensitive Farming-type approach can be beneficial, focussing on the commercial benefits and potential productivity gain. Communicating in terms of additional benefits rather than ecosystem services is important.
- There may be potential to work with those who influence farmer's decisions: who will a farmer turn to when making investment decisions? E.g. agri consultancies, building designers, farm advisers, investors, insurance. This means targeting the farm advice providers. NFU could play a role in facilitating these discussions.

- Local authorities may have a role where there is alignment with health objectives and in development planning.
- Immediate next steps could focus on establishing the oversight group for strategic actions, establishing SNAPs and sharing data.
- Defra and NFU expressed an interest in participating in the oversight group. Highways England would be happy to provide input.

Climate change

This session was co-hosted by Frances Randerson, IPENS and Sarah Taylor, Natural England

Priorities for further action:

- The effects of climate change on bird flyways and short stopping behaviour needs to be understood and that understanding embedded into business as usual (such as consenting).
- A UK wide approach to this topic will be important (including working with the Welsh LIFE+ project).
- It is important that adaptation of sites to climate change is widened to include the marine environment.
- Designation boundaries need to accommodate climate change adaptation. There are challenges associated with 'hard' boundaries, for example as coastlines retreat.
- The Series Review should contribute information which will be helpful in implementing a designation strategy to address the effects of climate change.
- The planning system should be used to enable climate change adaptation to occur, both in designing development schemes to enable adaptation of sites to climate change; and in planning decisions to ensure the required boundary flexibility for example coastal sites is maintained.
- Consideration should be given to quick wins and large/high impact climate change adaptation projects, as well as to site circumstances, in prioritising work on this topic.

Offers of help with implementation:

- RSPB have offered to provide the information from the Storm Surge effects evidence project from their Little Tern Life+ Project.
- Woodland Trust are carrying out mapping and other climate change resilience work at the moment (also relevant to Invasives).
- BTO have lots of work on this topic underway which they are keen to join up with NE and others on.

Other points raised:

- Shoreline Management Plans will go some way toward enabling climate change adaptation at the coast, but additional actions will also be needed.

Diffuse water pollution

Co-hosted by Robert Duff of IPENS and Russ Money, Senior Specialist, Natural England

Feedback:

- There was discussion whether or not Water Framework Directive (WFD) related actions in Site Improvement Plan (SIP) Actions were subject to review and assessment cycle as part of RBMPs. It was indicated that whilst this may not be explicit in the SIP documents themselves it was considered that it was covered elsewhere in the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) information material.
- A need was identified to transfer Diffuse Water Pollution (DWP) actions from SIPS into Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) delivery planning eg Natural England's CMSi designated sites database (successor to ENSIS).
- To effectively deliver DWP Plans requires good collective involvement and partnership between local partners eg local Environment Agency, RSPB, land managers, Catchment Sensitive Farming etc
- Several pilots are running to engage Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) Partnerships with DWP Plans and their delivery. Its desirable to roll this out across CaBA network.
- Regional level 'Major Landowners Groups' (MLG) have recently been set up in a couple of regions and this may be a useful scale/ level to engage partners particularly the Environment Agency.
- Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) and the voluntary approach is unlikely to reduce DWP enough on its own in catchments and its important that the 'gap' between what can be achieved via the voluntary approach and what the Natura 2000 site requires is identified to inform planning for different or additional measures/mechanisms.
- A question was raised about the level of evidence that would be needed before it could be shown there was a 'gap' or 'shortfall', that would mean new or different mechanisms might be considered. This is uncertain.
- Funding and resources will be prioritised. There may be challenges around the resources available via CSF and Stewardship to fund everything everywhere. It would be useful to understand where those challenges are likely to fall.
- The adequacy of current mechanisms was questioned.
- The Theme Plan make no reference to the use of possible mitigation and remedies that could be deployed within receptor sites to address/lessen impacts.
- Non-agricultural sources – it was highlighted that small sewage discharges were an issue and were not subject to the same permitting regime as other discharges. It was suggested that householders might be more receptive to campaigns to resolve septic tank issues if the importance of Natura 2000 sites was explained.
- More join-up was needed between Environment Agency and Natural England particularly over RBMP targets/ objectives for Natura 2000 sites.

Grazing

Co-hosted by Robert Duff of IPENS and David Martin, Senior Specialist, Natural England

Feedback:

- Consider market values eg new markets for 'unusual grazing animals and associated PR needed and 'standards'.

- Better use of RDPE funding - have we explored others workstreams/ mechanisms.
- Conservation grazing initiatives:
    - How successful they are needs to be determined
    - How can they be improved?
- Take a longer term perspective eg how graziers manage their business (economic factors).
- Payments for eco-system services – we need more buyers. Could we run pilots to look at this?
- Consider the use of funding LIFE? (eg flying flocks/ livestock infrastructure based on local demand (Currently this appears ad hoc and varies in success plus learning not always shared).

- Coherent picture of funding broken down into RDPE, LIFE etc
- Build picture to inform/influence future shape of Common Agricultural Policy now.

Habitat fragmentation

Co-hosted by Sarah Taylor, Senior Specialist, Natural England and Stuart Masheder of IPENS

1. Working together better

- Need a simple way of finding out what is going on. Possible development of the current Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS). It is difficult for us all to know what habitat creation activity and ecological network planning is happening around the country or even on one fairly local location sometimes. It would be better if we could consistently share this information in one accessible location, then we would all know more about what is actually happening and who the contact is for any initiative.
- Local Nature Parnerships (LNPs) – bringing partners together
    - wider Stakeholder engagement eg industry/business could be encouraged further.
    - we need to use appropriate language for the stakeholders/audience we are trying to communicate with. This is in order to put the issue in to terms they understand and are relevant to their ability to input positively to natural environment conservation and enhancement. The right language can make a big difference in our success.
- LNPs are working as a good place for the integration of work and forming partnerships, providing a good example. This example could be better spread to other partnership e.g. Local Economics Partnerships (LEPs). Some LEPs are doing well at including the natural environment but others are not.
- Need to embed this work and the partnership approach in Local Authorities (key to making it happen). Local Authorities are often forgotten as a partner that has significant influence over both conservation and degradation of the natural environment. Our engagement could be better.
    - Planning - both the potentially negative impacts e.g. development, and the positive e.g. Green infrastructure).
    - Loss of resources leading a reduction of input e.g. loss of Local Authorities Ecologists etc. This highlights the need to work better in partnership and be more efficient.

2. Development of tools and capabilities

- Habitat potential mapping would be a useful tool to help narrow down appropriate areas for specific habitat creation potential.
- Making IPENS habitat creation actions available to partners as a spatial layer/dataset would be good.
- 'Softening' of the matrix – it's not only semi-natural habitat creation that will be important. Actions to 'soften the matrix' or make the land between habitats more permeable will be crucial. Essentially, other habitats, land uses and features can contribute to landscape scale connectivity and we need to understand the role that other habitats can play and where they can be best enhanced.
- Need to understand how the quality of the habitat and land ownership and/or management affect connectivity as well as habitat type, in line with Lawton's 'Better' principle. Again, the 'matrix' can be enhance in quality to assist the resilience of species.
- Need tools to share the data (see point 1 on question 1) plus training to use the tools. Need to avoid reinventing the wheel and learn from other people's experiences. Better sharing of tools, data and approaches will create better join up between partners.
- Some tools available;
    - SNH Beetle tool
    - Condatis
    - Ecoserve
    - National Biodiversity Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment
- Need to understand the Ecosystem services provided currently and the potential provided by any habitat creation scheme.
- Need to defragment our data and information as much as our habitats (this is as much in relation to sharing what we have as to refining datasets).
- If we all have access to the same data and tools it would be better to come together to agree on spatial priorities.

3. External funding - Secure in a strategic way

- Influencing the spend of existing money and existing/ongoing management activities:
    - A great example from Natural Resources Wales, where they are actively trying to influence on site activities. For example, where inland flood management works are taking place and if they have diggers etc on site, what else can they do to enhance the site for biodiversity while they are there – it's much cheaper than getting them back another time.
- Strategic project/bid to look at the data or tools available/needed. In relation to question 2, it might be that we can join up to create a shared and agreed way of assessing fragmentation and landscape scale connectivity, or at least a suite of data and tools we can all use. Natural England is starting to work on this with University of Liverpool, so join up here will be needed (to see if the NERC Knowledge Exchange project provides what we need or if there are other elements we need to incorporate).

Hydrological functioning

Co-hosted by Iain Diack, Natural England and Wilbert van Vliet IPENS.

Introduction

In his introduction to the workshop, Iain Diack presented a summary of the IPENS hydrological function theme plan. He explained that a number of the Natura 2000 habitats and species that have specific hydrological requirements, most of these are currently not yet in a favourable condition. Whilst significant hydrological improvements have been achieved and most sites are considered recovering, some sites still have fundamental hydrological issues, in particular through internal and external drainage. The theme plan recommends continued implementation of outstanding actions, as identified in Site Improvement Plans. At a more strategic level, the development of a programme of hydrological restoration should be considered that focusses on a more natural hydrological functioning. Similar to the approach to River restoration, local strategies could be developed with stakeholders and partners. The theme plan recommends the trial of this approach on a limited number of sites/ habitats in first instance.

Feedback from the workshop:

- The importance of considered language was stressed when engaging local stakeholders and partners. For example rather than focussing on how 'damaged' a site is, or whether it's 'failing condition', a local approach should focus on potential and the multiple benefits of hydrological restoration.
- The experience in the uplands, in which an outcomes approach is taken, was mentioned as a good example that could be applied to the hydrological restoration of other sites as well.
- The initial case study sites can be selected where the approach to a natural hydrological functioning is likely to show added benefit and where it is feasible. A first step could be to analyse and categorise the suite of sites involved and use a matrix-approach to identify best potential sites (e.g. scoring the need, added benefits, surrounding land use constraints etc.).
- A long term view should be taken to the restoration of sites, prioritising sites as case studies with best feasibility in first instance, without losing sight of the need to restore other sites at a later stage. Comparable to the approach to river restoration, which focusses on resolving the major issues in the long term (e.g. weir removal) rather than incremental improvements (e.g. fish passage).
- A wide range of partners needs to be involved to combine overall objectives with local needs and ideas.
- Hydrological restoration can have unforeseen consequences, not everything is known in advance. This highlights the need for an adaptive management approach.
- In partnership working the importance of celebrating achievements is important, taking account of local social history. In that context it was advised to take stock of what has already happened.
- It was also advised to keep plan / processes simple for landowners. Understanding and approaching sites using a framework will help, comparable to river restoration strategies.

Inappropriate coastal management

Hosted by Louisa Knights

Priorities:

- Information gathering is a high priority and needs to come early in the timescale.

- Evidence gathering is particularly important as this is needed to base other actions on.
- It is equally important to share evidence as it is gathered, between partner organisations.
- Priority Action 4 (evaluation of the ecosystem services benefits arising from coastal evolution) is fundamental to all of the other actions. This is an ongoing action, however currently there are issues around the language used and it needs to be made more accessible.
- It would be useful to do a cost-benefit analysis for each action.
- Environment Agency cost benefit tests are good, but they need to take full account of the biodiversity value.
- It may be useful to consider prioritising similar sites.
- Priority action 7 (ensure that habitat creation is factored into the RBMPs) also needs to include that they should be monitored as well as delivered.
- Priority action 5 ("Integrate managed realignment work into collective innovative projects…") could be achieved through licensing.
- Longer term, priority action 9 ("more effective use of no active intervention policies in specific locations…") could lead to a more homogenised series of habitats.

Who needs to be involved:

- Environment Agency – national river basin planning service
- National Marine monitoring service
- JNCC – need to be kept informed to aid offshore Natura 2000 site progress / management (high level principles of the approaches)
- JNCC – may be able to help with European sites through knowledge and input around terrestrial Natura 2000 sites.

Top priorities & next steps:

Priority Action Number	**Description**	**Comments from workshop**
Priority Action 1	Natural England and Environment Agency to work with local authorities / stakeholders in identification of potential locations for habitat creation; promote the links with delivery of flood risk management and Coastal Change Management Areas (CCMA). Create case studies using local groups.	Aligning Site Improvement Plans with Shoreline Management Plans through Environment Agency and their stakeholder groups.
Priority Action 2	Ensure it is clear how coastal processes and habitats play a key part in reducing risks, make use of information in the 2013 Adaptation Sub-Committee report.	Identify resources available to collate existing information.
Priority Action 9	More effective use of the 'no active intervention' (NAI) policies in specific	Understanding the NAI approach regarding whether it results in a

	locations to demonstrate effects of storm events and coastal response and how these relate to delivery of conservation objectives.	higher level of biodiversity or a lower level of biodiversity.
Priority Action 10	Development of reliable, trusted and repeatable evidence is needed to demonstrate changes to intertidal habitat linked to presence of coastal management, how this takes account of the Natura 2000 network, and the need to creation of new habitat, and also to demonstrate the suitability of available techniques and management needs to deliver specific objectives.	Identify other projects or partners or pieces of information that can deliver this evidence at fairly low cost (i.e. because it's already being done).
Other		Identifying actions which link with other themes or are large landscape scale projects that can cover / deliver a wide breadth of actions on Site Improvement Plans.
Other		Need to get the Environment Agency signed up to actual dates for starting and finishing delivery of their priority actions).
Other		Current timescales of priority actions are vague and may need some more work.
Other		Use an existing project as a case study to test how the top priority actions work o nthe ground. This overlaps with Priority Action 13.
Other		Possibly change the name of the theme plan – find a better word than 'inappropriate' as it immediately raises a barrier with some stakeholders.

Invasive species

Co-hosted by Julie Erian and Louisa Knights of IPENS

Priorities – identification and working together:

- The top five identified are done so through frequency of occurance in Site Improvement Plans (SIPs) – they are probably the most commonly occurring on sites and therefore in some they are the hardest to manage on the ground.
- In the marine environment recreational marine craft provide an important pathway for the spread of invasive species. It is more effective to communicate with recreational sea users in terms of their general behaviour and actions to address particular topics (eg biosecurity) than about individual species.
- Even if species are not the most frequently occurring, if they are 'easy' to manage / eradicate on a site (or a number of sites), they should perhaps be a high priority for action, as that action will make a marked difference.
- National versus local prioritisation very much depends on the species or issue being prioritised, and both levels of management will be important in some cases where there is crossover.
- Some species cannot just be tackled by site specific action (e.g. Himalayan balsam needs to be tackled at a catchment level).
- There needs to be different approaches for different habitat types – marine, terrestrial, coastal, freshwater (split into standing and moving waters), however this does leave a potential gap for transitional waters – particularly freshwater to marine.
- Strategic approaches to invasive species management also need to consider the requirements of locally occurring sensitive species which may be affected by the management / control mechanisms for the invasive species.
- When prioritising we need to demonstratethat the invasive species are actually affecting the Natura 2000 features or the wider biodiversity.
- Any effects (from invasives) on how people are using particular Natura 2000 sites should be evaluated.

Funding / costs:

- Where funding is associated with management of capital assets, this needs to be used to bring about real changes, rather than simply funding ongoing management. Proposed actions to make real differences are needed to make a business case for investing large amounts of money.
    - It's important to distill work down to material changes (for measurable benefits) to make it easier.
- National strategies / actions (e.g. pathway control & prevention) could be organised and funded national, but implemented locally / site-specifically.
- There is a need to invest funds in areas adjacent to N2K sites with invasives issues, as well as investing in the protected sites themselves.
- Highways England are a potential source of funding (through capital assets to be invested in direct change / intervention work, some management, but not monitoring).
- The Deer Initiative is currently putting together a LIFE bid focussing on deer management.

Other:

- Increasing connectivity between sites will also facilitate movement of some 'pest' invasive species.
- We need to improve links with industry to benefit from their specialised knowledge of control & prevention mechanisms.

- Deer management needs to be implemented at the landscape or regional scale to benefit Natura 2000 sites, not just within sites. There also needs to be targeting of specific species of deer (muntjac for example).
- The importance of holding data spatially was highlighted, particularly to target funding.
- Data (in marine especially) is very hard to obtain (costly, long timescales etc) – this can make it hard to get the good evidence base that is needed to tackle invasives.
- The information base on marine invasives is very poor currently (there are only 6 marine species on the EU list), and this needs addressing urgently.

Existing useful work / projects / legislation:

- Marine licensing as a mechanism, and Marine Plans.
- Marine Pathways project
- Celtic Seas Partnership (has a strand on invasives)
- SEFINS (estuarine invasives – follows on from a previous project)
- Lots of onging academic studies via PhD students and university research
- Local Action Groups – review to be published shortly
- IFCAs hold more information on shellfish & related invasives, as do the Food Standards Agency.
- The European Maritime & Fisheries Fund, which the MMO host on behalf of the EC for the UK, is a mechanism for prevention on local sites via biosecurity measures. They also have funding available for projects (potentially evidence gathering).

Practical Actions:

- Request from Highways England for a list of sites & species (from SIP data) in order of priority (for making a real difference), so that they can bid for / spend their pots of money for improving the environment in and around Highways areas. **ACTION FOR IPENS – give spatial data for invasives in SIPs to Highways England.**

Lake restoration

Hosted by Gen Madgwick

The workshop group discussed the lake restoration theme plan – the key issues affecting England's Natura 2000 lakes and the engagement and future steps needed to tackle them.

Public access and disturbance

Co-hosted by Frances Randerson and Samantha Somers, IPENS

Priorities for further action:

- Dog walking is the most recorded issue in SIPs, therefore can we look at existing evidence, gaps in evidence and action to mitigate any effects related to this use, as a priority.
- BASC and Bournemouth University evidence project relating to disturbance would be useful to draw on in implementation.

- Humber Estuary EMS has the “Humber Hounds” project, also helpful (MMO to send the link).
- When considering mitigating dog walking effects, think about alternative provision to ensure there is somewhere else for people to go (this also applies to other uses).
- Need to move away from anecdotal evidence of disturbance effects to capturing evidence (but consideration needs to be given to scale).
- Guidance and education on why control of access is sometimes needed and what the effects on features can be is required. A description of the issue and the impact, based on evidence, would be helpful.
- Are we clear that public access is an issue on all of the SIPs on which it is included? For example in some circumstances dog walking, horse riding etc may not be having an impact. We need to clarify this on a site by site basis.
- NE is working on an evidence project on the effects of housing development on birds of estuary sites which will be useful when complete.
- Another priority use to investigate is motorised vehicles at sea. Currently we aren’t able to say whether or not this has an impact as there isn’t evidence to support a judgement, but there is a need to prioritise getting this evidence as there is a sense that it might be having a significant effect in some locations.
- Important to recognise that this topic is not just about birds, there are other effects such as erosion, loss of grazing land and impacts on farm business (e.g. as a result of worrying of stock) and other damage to habitats and the habitats of priority species such as stag beetle.
- This topic needs to be tackles on an ‘outcomes approach’ basis, thinking about the benefits, costs, economic value and ecosystem services (ensuring that the legal protection of the European features is not compromised).
- Getting a better understanding of visitor movement/behaviour is important. Where do they come from, what activity they do, what facilities they use, income generated, are there alternative areas they could use? An app could be developed to help with this? Visitor use is well understood at certain sites, so it would be helpful to share that understanding.
- Signage is usually only effective when accompanied by advice for example in the form of guidance.
- Engagement is usually most effective if targeted at user groups and communities.
- Wider stakeholders could be accessed by engaging with the Sports and Recreation Alliance (and possibly Sport England)

Offers of help with implementation:

- Moorland Association have offered help with intelligence-gathering at a site level.
- BASC and MMO are happy to help by sharing existing evidence projects.

Other points raised:

- The language used is negative (“issue”). Implementation planning and action could be on a more positive footing.

River restoration

Hosted by Julie Erian of IPENS

Participants were invited to consider two questions in advance of the breakout session:

1) Being ambitious about restoring natural river habitat function to SSSI / SAC rivers means taking a long view – how do we best manage the trade-off between ambition and timescales?

2) WFD requires ecological status / potential objectives to be met on shorter timescales, which encourages short-term physical mitigation measures that may not be compatible with long-term restoration objectives for SSSI / SAC rivers – how can we better reconcile this interaction?

There were four participants, whose expertise of river restoration varied from very experienced / knowledgeable to very little experience.

Tension between WFD and SAC objectives

The group agreed that taking a long term view of river restoration was necessary, and didn't see a tension between WFD timescales and river restoration ambition, as they accepted that the more stringent Natura 2000 objectives apply for the purposes of WFD, and were of the view that the WFD deadlines are more for demonstrating and reporting improvements for issues such as river restoration, rather than absolute deadlines for achieving objectives.

- Is there a tension? The group accepted the long-term nature of river restoration.
- When is enough enough? The group felt that the missing element for river restoration is currently a lack of criteria or knowledge about when to stop restoration effort. How do we measure when restoration activity has achieved enough to secure good ecological status / favourable condition for physical habitat attributes?
- What does favourable conservation status look like for rivers / physical habitat?
- If there are any short-term fixes possible, they should be acknowledged as such, but coupled with this, the long-term ambition must be clearly articulated.
- It was suggested that the current approach should be re-appraised in the context of costs and benefits.
- There is still some lack of understanding and a need to pull together different interests into a coherent narrative.
- Communicate the benefits of the national programme to all.
- Aim to reduce the costs of short-term fixes in view of their impermanence. Use this to stimulate innovation eg development of cheap fish passes that can be used in the short-term before weirs etc can be removed.
- Unpredictability of natural processes means that short-term fixes can be a waste of money eg bridges or fish passes that become redundant when flood events shift the river channel.
- How do you reassure river owners, fisheries and species interests?

The discussion then branched out into the following areas:

Funding

- There may be scope for better integration with water companies funding streams for river restoration.

Monitoring

- Clearer objectives needed in individual restoration projects.
- Monitor the process as well as the outcomes.
- Recognise the likely timescales for different outcomes and monitor accordingly.
- Need to assess impacts of restoration on Annex II species, partly to reassure any sceptical audience.
- SNH may be monitoring or collating evidence of the biodiversity impacts of river restoration?
- A point was made about ‘uncertainty / complexity’ being an area of critical importance, especially for rivers. The environment is highly complex, and even more so when you consider people. This means you have to look at whole systems, and consider the connections and interactions between the many different drivers of change in river systems, both natural and human-induced, direct and indirect. We also need to work across scientific disciplines and develop capability to do this effectively.