

## Site Improvement Plan

# Wealden Heaths Woolmer Forest

Site Improvement Plans (SIPs) have been developed for each Natura 2000 site in England as part of the Improvement Programme for England's Natura 2000 sites (IPENS). Natura 2000 sites is the combined term for sites designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protected Areas (SPA). This work has been financially supported by LIFE, a financial instrument of the European Community.

The plan provides a high level overview of the issues (both current and predicted) affecting the condition of the Natura 2000 features on the site(s) and outlines the priority measures required to improve the condition of the features. It does not cover issues where remedial actions are already in place or ongoing management activities which are required for maintenance.

The SIP consists of three parts: a Summary table, which sets out the priority Issues and Measures; a detailed Actions table, which sets out who needs to do what, when and how much it is estimated to cost; and a set of tables containing contextual information and links.

Once this current programme ends, it is anticipated that Natural England and others, working with landowners and managers, will all play a role in delivering the priority measures to improve the condition of the features on these sites.

The SIPs are based on Natural England's current evidence and knowledge. The SIPs are not legal documents, they are live documents that will be updated to reflect changes in our evidence/knowledge and as actions get underway. The information in the SIPs will be used to update England's contribution to the UK's Prioritised Action Framework (PAF).

The SIPs are not formal consultation documents, but if you have any comments about the SIP or would like more information please email us at [IPENSLIFEProject@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:IPENSLIFEProject@naturalengland.org.uk), or contact Natural England's Responsible Officer for the site via our enquiry service 0300 060 3900, or [enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk)

### **This Site Improvement Plan covers the following Natura 2000 site(s)**

**UK9012132 Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA**

**UK0030304 Woolmer Forest SAC**

## Site description

This group of heathland sites comprises Woolmer Forest SAC and Wealden Heaths Phase 2 SPA, made up by 4 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). The qualifying features are dystrophic lakes, dry and wet heath, depressions on peat, Dartford warbler, nightjar and woodlark. The complex includes important military training land as well as popular recreational areas.

## Plan Summary

*This table shows the prioritised issues for the site(s), the features they affect, the proposed measures to address the issues and the delivery bodies whose involvement is required to deliver the measures. The list of delivery bodies will include those who have agreed to the actions as well as those where discussions over their role in delivering the actions is on-going.*

Priority & Issue	Pressure or Threat	Feature(s) affected	Measure	Delivery Bodies
1 Change in land management	Threat	A224(B) European nightjar, A246(B) Woodlark, A302(B) Dartford Warbler, H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, H4030 European dry heaths, H7140 Very wet mires often identified by an unstable `quaking` surface, H7150 Depressions on peat substrates	Implementation of appropriate management where grazing is not possible	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Hampshire County Council, Natural England, RSPB, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (ARCT)
2 Invasive species	Pressure	H3160 Acid peat-stained lakes and ponds	Investigation of impacts of Crassula and possible control measures	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)
3 Hydrological changes	Pressure	H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, H7140 Very wet mires often identified by an unstable `quaking` surface, H7150 Depressions on peat substrates	Implementation of mire restoration plans at Woolmer Forest	Environment Agency, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)
4 Feature location/ extent/ condition unknown	Pressure	A224(B) European nightjar, A246(B) Woodlark, A302(B) Dartford Warbler	Establishment of long-term monitoring strategy for Annex 1 birds	National Trust, Natural England, RSPB, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)
5 Public Access/Disturbance	Threat	A224(B) European nightjar, A246(B) Woodlark, A302(B) Dartford Warbler	Development of visitor access strategy	Local Authorities, National Trust, Natural England, South Downs National Park Authority, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)

6	Feature location/ extent/ condition unknown	Pressure	A224(B) European nightjar, A246(B) Woodlark, A302(B) Dartford Warbler, H3160 Acid peat-stained lakes and ponds, H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, H4030 European dry heaths, H7140 Very wet mires often identified by an unstable `quaking` surface	Provision of clear nature conservation objectives for Woolmer Forest	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, National Trust, Natural England, RSPB, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)
7	Military	Pressure	A224(B) European nightjar, A246(B) Woodlark, A302(B) Dartford Warbler, H3160 Acid peat-stained lakes and ponds, H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, H4030 European dry heaths, H7140 Very wet mires often identified by an unstable `quaking` surface	Preparation of integrated management plans for military training sites	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (ARCT)
8	Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition	Pressure	H3160 Acid peat-stained lakes and ponds, H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, H4030 European dry heaths, H7140 Very wet mires often identified by an unstable `quaking` surface, H7150 Depressions on peat substrates	Preparation of a Site Nitrogen Action Plan	Natural England
9	Wildfire/ arson	Pressure/ Threat	A224(B) European nightjar, A246(B) Woodlark, A302(B) Dartford Warbler, H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, H4030 European dry heaths, H7140 Very wet mires often identified by an unstable `quaking` surface	Prepare and implement wildfire management plans	Forest Services, Forestry Commission, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Hampshire County Council, Natural England, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service

## Issues and Actions

*This table outlines the prioritised issues that are currently impacting or threatening the condition of the features, and the outstanding actions required to address them. It also shows, where possible, the estimated cost of the action and the delivery bodies whose involvement will be required to implement the action. Lead delivery bodies will be responsible for coordinating the implementation of the action, but not necessarily funding it. Delivery partners will need to support the lead delivery body in implementing the action. In the process of developing the SIPs Natural England has approached the delivery bodies to seek agreement on the actions and their roles in delivering them, although in some cases these discussions have not yet been concluded. Other interested parties, including landowners and managers, will be involved as the detailed actions are agreed and delivered. Funding options are indicated as potential (but not necessarily agreed or secured) sources to fund the actions.*

### 1 Change in land management

Parts of the complex have suffered from management neglect in the past and there are ongoing management issues. Common issues are lack of structural diversity, bracken encroachment and scrub development. Grazing is not practical in parts of the complex but viable alternative means of management to meet objectives are not yet in place. Grazing may also be constrained in parts because of resistance to fencing of common land.

<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
<b>1A</b>	Improve habitat management which delivers effective heather management, scrub control and bracken control through facilitating appropriate management options and delivery mechanisms.	Not yet determined	2015	Major Landowner Group land ownership activities : Undertake Specific Management Works	Not yet determined	Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (ARCT)
<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
<b>1B</b>	Establish site-based partnerships to improve communication over management priorities and to advise and agree on annual work programmes.	Staff time	2014-15	Partnership agreement	Staff time	Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Hampshire County Council, Natural England, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (ARCT)

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
<b>1C</b>	Changes are required to existing Higher Level Stewardship agreements in order to fit with impending changes in use of military training areas.	Staff time	2014-15	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme (HLS)	Staff time	Natural England	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)
Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
<b>1D</b>	Investigate possible biomass to bioenergy use of material produced as a result of annual cutting of vegetation.	Staff time	2020	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Staff time	Natural England	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Hampshire County Council, RSPB, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)

## 2 Invasive species

Ponds and wetlands at Woolmer Forest are dominated by *Crassula helmsii*, adversely affecting habitat quality. Control is particularly difficult because of presence of rare amphibians. It is currently unclear to what extent the presence of *Crassula* is adversely affecting the dystrophic lake interest feature and indeed whether effective control is feasible.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
<b>2A</b>	Investigate ecological impacts of <i>Crassula helmsii</i> on the dystrophic pond and wet heath features and assessment of options for control.	Not yet determined	2015	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Natural England	Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (ARCT), Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)
Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
<b>2B</b>	Implement control measures to reduce dominance of <i>Crassula helmsii</i> , pending outcome of investigations. Any actions need to consider possible adverse impacts on natterjack toad and invertebrate populations.	Not yet determined	2017	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Natural England	Natural England	Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (ARCT), Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)

### 3 Hydrological changes

Parts of the wet heath and mire areas at Woolmer Forest are affected by the presence of drainage ditches. The full impact of these has not yet been assessed but it is likely that they are having adverse impacts.

<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
<b>3A</b>	Investigations to characterise the hydrological regime of mires at Woolmer Forest and the potential implications of reversing the effects of drainage.	£3,000	2015	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Natural England	Environment Agency, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)
<b>3B</b>	Preparation of habitat restoration plans for mires affected by drainage.	Not yet determined	2016	Habitat creation / restoration strategy: Habitat restoration	Not yet determined	Natural England	Environment Agency, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)
<b>3C</b>	Implement mire restoration plans at Woolmer Forest.	£10,000	2017	Habitat creation / restoration strategy: Habitat restoration	Not yet determined	Natural England	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)

### 4 Feature location/ extent/ condition unknown

There is only partial coverage of the SPA for monitoring of Annex 1 birds and those areas are reliant on volunteer recorders; there is a need for a more strategic, long-term approach to monitoring.

<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
<b>4A</b>	Establish structured long-term monitoring strategy for annex 1 birds across the complex, similar to Thames Basin Heaths SPA model.	Not yet determined	2017	Partnership agreement	Not yet determined	Natural England	National Trust, RSPB, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)

## 5 Public Access/Disturbance

Visitor access provision is not currently coordinated between sites or managed so as to reduce impacts on ground-nesting birds.

<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
<b>5A</b>	Development and implementation of a coordinated access strategy for the complex which provides a basis for effective management of recreational use	Not yet determined	2020	Partnership agreement	Not yet determined	Natural England	Chichester District Council, East Hampshire District Council, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Hampshire County Council, National Trust, South Downs National Park Authority, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)

## 6 Feature location/ extent/ condition unknown

Work is needed by Natural England to clarify the conservation objectives for designated features at Woolmer Forest, to improve the evidence base on the interest features, to identify where these occur, and to provide greater linkage between objectives and military training use.

<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
<b>6A</b>	Commission study to identify core areas utilised by annex 1 birds for breeding and feeding, and to identify priorities for habitat enhancement.	£3,000	2015-16	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Natural England	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, National Trust, RSPB, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)
<b>6B</b>	Provide clear advice on nature conservation objectives and habitat management priorities.	Not yet determined	2014-15	Advice	Not yet determined	Natural England	Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (ARCT)

## 7 Military

There is currently poor coordination between management for military training purposes and nature conservation management at Woolmer Forest and scope for significant gains with closer working between partners. The production of an integrated management plan is needed.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
7A	Preparation and implementation of integrated management plans for military training areas.	Not yet determined	2015-17	Non-Natural England funded site management plan	Not yet determined	Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (ARCT)

## 8 Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition

Nitrogen deposition exceeds the site-relevant critical load for ecosystem protection. The aerial pollution may be promoting changes in species composition of mires towards Molinia and sedge dominated systems rather than Sphagnum dominated; ponds may be losing characteristic aquatic plant assemblage partly because of increasing nutrient status. This most likely to be an issue at Woolmer Forest but could be a chronic problem at all sites in the complex.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
8A	Control, reduce and ameliorate atmospheric nitrogen impacts.	Not yet determined	2020	Site Nitrogen Action Plan	Not yet determined	Natural England	Not yet determined

## 9 Wildfire/ arson

Wildfire is a natural hazard identified in the National Risk Assessment / Register and Community Risk Registers. Wildfires in the south of England are likely to increase as identified in the Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA). Wildfires can be a serious risk to human life, residential and commercial property and critical national infrastructures, as well as being a high risk threat to reptile populations, invertebrates and plant diversity resulting in significant habitat loss for Annex 1 birds. Open heath is the predominant risk (dry and wet heath, peat habitats) as well as young coniferous woodland. Impacts can last for many years for example by the wholesale removal of all gorse and heather seedbank.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
9A	Completion of wildfire risk assessments for all sites and preparation and implementation of wildfire management plans.	Not yet determined	2020	Non-Natural England funded site management plan	n/a	Forest Services	Forestry Commission, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Hampshire County Council, National Trust, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service



<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
<b>9B</b>	Embed wildfire mitigation and adaptation into local authority Local Development Plan policies and community risk registers.	Not yet determined	2016	Advice	n/a	Forest Services	Chichester District Council, East Hampshire District Council, Hampshire County Council, Surrey County Council, West Sussex County Council, Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service , Surrey Fire and Rescue Service

## Site details

The tables in this section contain site-relevant contextual information and links

### Qualifying features

#UK Special responsibility

#### Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA

A224(B) *Caprimulgus europaeus*: European nightjar

A246(B) *Lullula arborea*: Woodlark

A302(B) *Sylvia undata*: Dartford warbler

#### Woolmer Forest SAC

H3160 Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds

H4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*

H4030 European dry heaths

H7140 Transition mires and quaking bogs

H7150 Depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion*

### Site location and links

#### Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA

Area (ha) **2053.83**      Grid reference **SU805326**      [Map link](#)

Local Authorities      Hampshire

Site Conservation Objectives      [European Site Conservation Objectives for Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA](#)

European Marine Site conservation advice      [n/a](#)

Regulation 33/35 Package      [n/a](#)

Marine Management Organisation site plan      [n/a](#)

## Woolmer Forest SAC

Area (ha) **666.68**      Grid reference **SU805325**

[Map link](#)

Local Authorities

Hampshire

Site Conservation Objectives

[European Site Conservation Objectives for Woolmer Forest SAC](#)

European Marine Site conservation advice

[n/a](#)

Regulation 33/35 Package

[n/a](#)

Marine Management Organisation site plan

[n/a](#)

## Water Framework Directive (WFD)

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) provides the main framework for managing the water environment throughout Europe. Under the WFD a management plan must be developed for each river basin district. The River Basin Management Plans (RBMP) include a summary of the measures needed for water dependent Natura 2000 sites to meet their conservation objectives. For the second round of RBMPs, SIPs are being used to capture the priorities and new measures required for water dependent habitats on Natura 2000 sites. SIP actions for non-water dependent sites/habitats do not form part of the RBMPs and associated consultation.

Additional information is provided on targets for flow and some water quality parameters, in order to meet the conservation objectives for certain Natura 2000 sites. The relevant targets are identified in the revised conservation objectives document (see link to PDF below).

These targets have been revised for a number of Natura 2000 rivers and lakes, following a review by the conservation agencies of Common Standards Monitoring Guidance. For rivers, this is done through local discussions between Natural England and Environment Agency staff. For lake sites, the only parameter where alignment of standards was reviewed was phosphorus and so this work was undertaken jointly at a national level.

The linked PDF documents include the proposed target values, and also set out an 'interim progress goal', that will need to be achieved by 2021. Where sufficient information is available the document also identifies a timescale for achievement of the longer-term target. For any sites where it has not been possible to agree specific targets, usually because further technical work is required, these will be indicated in the documents by an asterisk. For further information please see Part 2 of the River Basin Plan

### Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA

River basin	<a href="#">South East RBMP</a>
WFD Management catchment	Arun and Western Streams
WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)	GB106039017690, GB106039017750, GB30644464, GB30644482
Locally revised Conservation Objectives	
Additional information on locally revised Conservation Objectives	<a href="#">n/a</a>
EA/ NE agreed RBMP lake SAC targets	<a href="#">n/a</a>

### River Restoration Plan

Source of information on river restoration plans for SAC rivers where these are in place or planned, with links to documentation where this is available.

Webpage link: Restoring Designated Rivers	<a href="#">n/a</a>
River Restoration Plan document	<a href="#">n/a</a>
River basin	<a href="#">Thames RBMP</a>
WFD Management catchment	Wey

WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft) GB106039017690, GB106039017750, GB30644464, GB30644482

Locally revised Conservation Objectives

Additional information on locally revised Conservation Objectives [n/a](#)

EA/ NE agreed RBMP lake SAC targets [n/a](#)

### **River Restoration Plan**

Source of information on river restoration plans for SAC rivers where these are in place or planned, with links to documentation where this is available.

Webpage link: Restoring Designated Rivers [n/a](#)

River Restoration Plan document [n/a](#)

### **Woolmer Forest SAC**

River basin [Thames RBMP](#)

WFD Management catchment Wey

WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft) GB106039017690, GB30644464, GB30644482

Locally revised Conservation Objectives

Additional information on locally revised Conservation Objectives [n/a](#)

EA/ NE agreed RBMP lake SAC targets [Proposed total phosphorus targets for Lake Natura 2000 Protected Area Special Areas of Conservation for the updated river basin management plan consultation](#)

### **River Restoration Plan**

Source of information on river restoration plans for SAC rivers where these are in place or planned, with links to documentation where this is available.

Webpage link: Restoring Designated Rivers [n/a](#)

River Restoration Plan document [n/a](#)

## Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA	Woolmer Forest SSSI Bramshott & Ludshott Commons SSSI Broxhead & Kingsley Commons SSSI Devil's Punch Bowl SSSI
Woolmer Forest SAC	Woolmer Forest SSSI
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA	n/a
Woolmer Forest SAC	n/a
Ramsar	
Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA	n/a
Woolmer Forest SAC	n/a
Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)	
Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA	Woolmer Forest SAC
Woolmer Forest SAC	Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1.0	23/10/2014	

[www.naturalengland.org.uk/ipens2000](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ipens2000)

