

# Site Improvement Plan

## Cannock Chase

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)**

**UK0030107 Cannock Chase SAC**

## Site description

Cannock Chase is a large, diverse area of semi-natural vegetation comprising the most extensive area of lowland heathland in the Midlands with alder woodland, oak wood pasture and valley mires. It is home to breeding Nightjar, Woodlark, occasionally Dartford warbler and a diverse invertebrate fauna. The character of the vegetation is intermediate between the upland or northern heaths of England and Wales and those of southern counties.

Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation is also a Country Park and lies in the heart of Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Given its location it is a popular outdoor recreation destination and is subject to high visitor pressure. The Cannock Chase SAC Partnership has been set up to deliver robust access management measures to mitigate the negative effects of predicted future increases in recreational usage of the SAC. Current management of SAC land is targeted at restoring and strengthening the heathland vegetation mosaics.

## 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 Undergrazing	Pressure	H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, H4030 European dry heaths	Introduce grazing	Cannock Chase AONB, Forest Enterprise, Natural England, RSPB, Staffordshire County Council, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), CEMEX UK
2 Drainage	Pressure	H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath	Investigate the water supply to the wetland habitats in the Oldacre Valley, including the impact of the WW1 camp drainage system	Cannock Chase AONB, Environment Agency, Natural England, Staffordshire County Council, English Heritage
3 Hydrological changes	Pressure	H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath	Investigate the hydrology of the Sher Brook Valley and restore where possible	Environment Agency, Forest Enterprise, Natural England, Staffordshire County Council, UK Coal

4 Disease	Pressure	H4030 European dry heaths	Extend Phytophthora pseudosyringae monitoring to all Special Area of Conservation land to gather more data to aid understanding about the disease and long-term impacts	Defra, Forest Enterprise, Natural England, RSPB, Staffordshire County Council, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), University(ies), Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA), CEMEX UK
5 Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition	Pressure	H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, H4030 European dry heaths	Control, reduce and ameliorate atmospheric nitrogen impacts on the whole of Cannock Chase SAC	Not yet determined
6 Wildfire/ arson	Pressure	H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, H4030 European dry heaths	Update fire plans, review of the effectiveness of existing fire-breaks, and raise awareness with the public of the damage of accidental fires on heathland	Forest Enterprise, Natural England, RSPB, Staffordshire County Council, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service , CEMEX UK
7 Invasive species	Pressure	H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, H4030 European dry heaths	Continue to monitor and control Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)	Cannock Chase AONB, Forest Enterprise, Natural England, Staffordshire County Council, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), CEMEX UK

## 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 Undergrazing

Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation needs conservation grazing by appropriate animals to build on the restoration of the dry and wet heathland habitats and address a number of management issues. Grazing animals such as cattle will diversify the physical structure of the heathland habitats by creating habitat mosaics across the site that in turn will benefit the special fauna at Cannock Chase. The presence of the plant fungal disease *Phytophthora pseudosyringae* on bilberry has stalled the reintroduction of grazing to the main body of the Chase due to time and resources being diverted to controlling this little-known disease but also due to concerns that grazing would spread the disease around the site. After five years of disease monitoring and treatment, we have a better understanding of the disease and how it moves around County land. It is now time to use and build on this research, and to build on the grazing research already carried out, to devise a grazing plan for Cannock Chase that will pose no greater risk to spreading the disease than the risk posed by people, dogs and deer.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
1A	Develop a conservation grazing plan for Staffordshire County Council SAC land with built-in biosecurity to minimise spread of <i>Phytophthora pseudosyringae</i> . Carry out public consultation on the plan in line with Commons Act legislation.	£60,000	2015-18	Non-Natural England funded site management plan	Not yet determined	Natural England	Cannock Chase AONB, Staffordshire County Council
1B	Implement the conservation grazing plan on Staffordshire County Council SAC land with built-in biosecurity to minimise spread of <i>Phytophthora pseudosyringae</i> .	Not yet determined	2018-25	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Common Agricultural Policy 2014-20 (New Environmental Land Management Scheme)	Not yet determined	Natural England	Cannock Chase AONB, Staffordshire County Council

<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>1C</b>	Draw up and implement a conservation grazing plan for CEMEX SAC land. The RSPB will provide ongoing advisory and practical support for improved management and restoration of heathland in partnership with CEMEX at Cannock Chase.	Not yet determined	2015-20	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Common Agricultural Policy 2014-20 (New Environmental Land Management Scheme)	Not yet determined	Natural England	Cannock Chase AONB, RSPB, CEMEX UK
<b>1D</b>	Draw up and implement a conservation grazing plan for Forest Enterprise SAC land.	Not yet determined	2015-20	Major Landowner Group land ownership activities : Undertake Specific Management Works	Not yet determined	Natural England	Forest Enterprise
<b>1E</b>	Draw up and implement a conservation grazing plan for Ministry of Defence SAC land.	Not yet determined	2015-20	Major Landowner Group land ownership activities : Undertake Specific Management Works	Not yet determined	Natural England	Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)

## 2 Drainage

The water supply to the wetland habitats needs further investigation and there are artificial, historic drainage structures in the Oldacre Valley that need to be assessed to establish their impact on the wetland vegetation.

<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>2A</b>	Investigate the extent and features of the World War 1 camp drainage system in Oldacre Valley.	£25,000	2015-17	Conservation Enhancement Scheme (CES)	Not yet determined	Natural England	Cannock Chase AONB, Staffordshire County Council, English Heritage
<b>2B</b>	Investigate the water supply to the wetland habitats in the Oldacre Valley including the effects of the World War 1 camp drainage system.	£50,000	2015-18	Conservation Enhancement Scheme (CES)	Not yet determined	Natural England	Environment Agency, Staffordshire County Council, English Heritage
<b>2C</b>	Restore to as natural as possible a functioning wetland system(s) in the Oldacre Valley while conserving the historic World War 1 features.	£30,000	2019-20	Habitat creation / restoration strategy: Habitat restoration	Conservation Enhancement Scheme (CES)	Natural England	Cannock Chase AONB, Environment Agency, Staffordshire County Council, English Heritage

## 3 Hydrological changes

There has been a reduction in the extent of the valley mire and changes in the vegetation in the Sher Brook Valley which indicate a move towards a drier wetland vegetation. Investigations are needed into why this is happening and what can be done to rectify it.

<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>	Investigate the hydrology of the Sher Brook catchment to inform restoration options.	£50,000	2015-20	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Defra, EU Life, Natural England	Natural England	Environment Agency, Forest Enterprise, Staffordshire County Council, UK Coal

## 4 Disease

The fungal plant disease *Phytophthora pseudosyringae* is widespread on several parts of the main body of the Chase, affecting bilberry, a major part of the heathland vegetation. Monitoring of disease spread has so far focussed on County land but there is a need to understand if and how the disease is spreading on the other parts of the Special Area of Conservation.

The disease outbreak on Cannock Chase is the worst in the country and with 5 years-worth of disease monitoring and treatment data on County land available, there is an opportunity to build on this evidence base to understand the disease in greater detail, its long-term effects on the vegetation composition of the Special Area of Conservation and devise an effective control plan to stop the spread of the disease. The results of this research should be incorporated into all current and future management plans for the site.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
<b>4A</b>	Continue with annual monitoring and control of <i>Phytophthora pseudosyringae</i> on Staffordshire County Council SAC land.	£60,000	2014-20	Conservation Enhancement Scheme (CES)	Not yet determined	Natural England	Staffordshire County Council
<b>4B</b>	Investigate hotspots of <i>Phytophthora pseudosyringae</i> infection on Staffordshire County Council SAC land to devise solutions for reducing the level of infection in these areas and spread to others.	£25,000	2015-20	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Defra, EU Life, Natural England	Natural England	Defra, Staffordshire County Council, University(ies), Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA)
<b>4C</b>	Carry out monitoring of <i>Phytophthora pseudosyringae</i> on CEMEX SAC land to gather more data to aid understanding about the disease. The RSPB will provide ongoing advisory and practical support for improved management and restoration of heathland in partnership with CEMEX at Cannock Chase.	£12,000	2014-20	Conservation Enhancement Scheme (CES)	Not yet determined	Natural England	RSPB, CEMEX UK

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
4D	Carry out monitoring of <i>Phytophthora pseudosyringae</i> on Forest Enterprise SAC land to gather more data to aid understanding about the disease. Consider extending the monitoring to Forest Enterprise non-SAC land where bilberry is present to gather more data about how widespread the disease is across Cannock Chase.	£60,000	2014-20	Conservation Enhancement Scheme (CES)	Not yet determined	Natural England	Forest Enterprise
Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
4E	Carry out monitoring of <i>Phytophthora pseudosyringae</i> on Ministry of Defence SAC land to gather more data to aid understanding about the disease.	£1,500	2014-20	Conservation Enhancement Scheme (CES)	Not yet determined	Natural England	Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)

## 5 Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition

Nitrogen deposition on Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation currently exceeds the relevant critical loads for the site. Possible effects of this seen on the ground include an increase in bramble across the site and a shorter *Calluna vulgaris* lifecycle resulting in the plants ageing faster.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
5A	Control, reduce and ameliorate atmospheric nitrogen impacts on the whole of Cannock Chase SAC.	Not yet determined	2014-20	Site Nitrogen Action Plan	Not yet determined	Not yet determined	Not yet determined



## 6 Wildfire/ arson

Accidental and deliberate fires have caused massive damage to Cannock Chase over the decades. Ensuring that the existing fire break network is robust and restoration plans post-fire are in place will help areas recover quicker. Raising awareness with the public will reduce fires in the future.

<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>	Review the existing fire break network and post-fire restoration plan for Staffordshire County Council SAC land, ensuring fire breaks do not damage or intercept springs or other sensitive features.	No costs, done in-house	2014-15	Existing Local Project	No net cost	Staffordshire County Council	Natural England, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service
<b>6B</b>	Review the existing fire break network and post-fire restoration plan for CEMEX SAC land at Rugeley Heath, ensuring fire breaks do not intercept or damage springs or other sensitive features. The RSPB will provide ongoing advisory and practical support for improved management and restoration of heathland in partnership with CEMEX at Cannock Chase.	No costs, done in-house	2014-15	Mechanism not identified / develop mechanism	No net cost	CEMEX UK	Natural England, RSPB, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service
<b>6C</b>	Review the existing fire break network and post-fire restoration plan for Forest Enterprise SAC land, ensuring fire breaks do not intercept or damage springs or other sensitive features.	No costs, done in-house	2014-15	Mechanism not identified / develop mechanism	No net cost	Forest Enterprise	Staffordshire 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>6D</b>	Review the existing fire break network and post-fire restoration plan for Ministry of Defence SAC land, ensuring fire breaks do not intercept or damage springs or other sensitive features.	No costs, done in-house	2014-15	Mechanism not identified / develop mechanism	No net cost	Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)	Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service

## 7 Invasive species

A range of invasive species are present on the SAC and on surrounding land. Monitoring and controlling the spread of certain aggressive species is vital to prevent damage to the dry and wet heath communities. Raising awareness with neighbouring landowners about the damage such species can cause and how they can help prevent the risk of spread of invasive species is needed too.

<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>7A</b>	Monitor and control all non-native invasive species on Staffordshire County Council SAC land.	No costs, done in-house	2014-20	Invasive Control Plan: Invasive Species Control Programme	No net cost	Staffordshire County Council	Cannock Chase AONB, Natural England
<b>7B</b>	Monitor and control all non-native invasive species on CEMEX SAC land at Rugeley Heath. The RSPB will provide ongoing advisory and practical support for improved management and restoration of heathland in partnership with CEMEX at Cannock Chase.	No costs, done in-house	2014-20	Invasive Control Plan: Invasive Species Control Programme	No net cost	CEMEX UK	Cannock Chase AONB, Natural England
<b>7C</b>	Monitor and control all non-native invasive species on Forest Enterprise SAC land.	No costs, done in-house	2014-20	Invasive Control Plan: Invasive Species Control Programme	No net cost	Forest Enterprise	Cannock Chase AONB, Natural England

<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>7D</b>	Monitor and control all non-native invasive species on Ministry of Defence SAC land.	No costs, done in-house	2014-20	Invasive Control Plan: Invasive Species Control Programme	No net cost	Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)	Cannock Chase AONB, Natural England

## Site details

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

### Qualifying features

#UK Special responsibility

<b>Cannock Chase SAC</b>	H4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i>
	H4030 European dry heaths

### Site location and links

#### Cannock Chase SAC

Area (ha)	<b>1236.93</b>	Grid reference	<b>SJ982188</b>	<a href="#">Map link</a>
Local Authorities				Staffordshire
Site Conservation Objectives				<a href="#">European Site Conservation Objectives for Cannock Chase SAC</a>
European Marine Site conservation advice				<a href="#">n/a</a>
Regulation 33/35 Package				<a href="#">n/a</a>
Marine Management Organisation site plan				<a href="#">n/a</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.*

### **Cannock Chase SAC**

*River basin*

[Humber RBMP](#)

*WFD Management catchment*

Staffordshire Trent Valley

*WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)*

n/a

## Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
Cannock Chase SAC	Cannock Chase SSSI

National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
Cannock Chase SAC	n/a

Ramsar	
Cannock Chase SAC	n/a

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)	
Cannock Chase SAC	n/a

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1.0	17/10/14	

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