

# Site Improvement Plan

## Braunton Burrows

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)**

**UK0012570 Braunton Burrows SAC**

## Site description

This large site has one of the largest virtually intact dune sites in the UK and is representative of dunes with *Salix repens ssp. Argentea* in the south-west. It also contains a substantial area of mobile dune vegetation, including representative examples of most of the main variants found in the south-west of the UK. Transitions to dune slack and fixed dune are also a prominent feature of this site.

In addition the site supports a significant population of Petalwort, *Petalophyllum ralfsii*, as well as areas of mudflats and sandflats not covered by water at high tide.

## 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 Inappropriate coastal management	Pressure	H2120 Shifting dunes with marram	Restore naturalised coastal processes	Environment Agency, Natural England
2 Hydrological changes	Pressure/Threat	H2170 Dunes with creeping willow, H2190 Humid dune slacks, S1395 Petalwort	Improve the understanding of the site's eco-hydrology	Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH), Natural England, Plantlife
3 Inappropriate scrub control	Threat	H2120 Shifting dunes with marram, H2130 Dune grassland, H2170 Dunes with creeping willow, H2190 Humid dune slacks, S1395 Petalwort	Sustained control programme for sea buckthorn and other scrub	Natural England
4 Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition	Pressure/Threat	S1395 Petalwort	Reduce the impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition	Natural England, University(ies)
5 Agricultural management practices	Threat	H2120 Shifting dunes with marram, H2130 Dune grassland, H2170 Dunes with creeping willow, H2190 Humid dune slacks, S1395 Petalwort	Ensure appropriate grazing management	Natural England
6 Public Access/Disturbance	Threat	H2120 Shifting dunes with marram, H2130 Dune grassland, H2170 Dunes with creeping willow, H2190 Humid dune slacks, S1395 Petalwort	Better manage public use of the site	Natural England, University(ies)

## 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 Inappropriate coastal management

Rock armouring at Crow Point is impacting on the natural coastal processes and specifically on dune formation and sediment transportation.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
<b>1A</b>	Agree a joint EA/NE plan to reduce and negate the negative effects on the SAC of the rock armouring at Crow Point.	Not yet determined	2014	Shoreline Management Plan and Strategies	Not yet determined	Environment Agency	Natural England
<b>1B</b>	Implement (when agreed) the joint EA/NE plan to reduce/negate the negative effects on the SACs of the rock armouring at Crow Point.	£100,000	2015-20	Shoreline Management Plan and Strategies	Not yet determined	Not yet determined	Environment Agency, Natural England

### 2 Hydrological changes

Despite previous work undertaken on this topic there is uncertainty regarding the eco-hydrology of the dune slack areas and the most effective conservation management approach. There is a need to review existing information including on hydrological connectivity and pathways.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
<b>2A</b>	Re-create early-stage dune succession (scraping most likely). Seek to pilot scape creation with Plantlife and then roll out with the agreement of the landowner if successful.	£70,000	2014-15	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme (HLS)	Agri-environment scheme	Natural England	Plantlife

<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>2B</b>	Investigate the drivers of hydrological change and the impacts on SAC features. This needs to include an investigation of the ecology and drivers of change in humid dune slacks.	£15,000	2014-15	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Natural England	Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH)

### 3 Inappropriate scrub control

Sea buckthorn threatens the whole site via shading and soil enrichment effects. It is most problematical in the north. Whilst work to control it is underway there is uncertainty as to whether or not this will be sufficient to manage it and stop it spreading.

<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>	Eradicate sea buckthorn <i>Hippophae rhamnoides</i> by mechanical and chemical control and follow-up monitoring and treatment. Augment management activity supported via agri-environment funding and NE's Conservation Enhancement Scheme.	Not yet determined	2015-20	Invasive Control Plan: Invasive Species Control Programme	Grant in aid	Natural England	n/a

<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>3B</b>	Undertake scrub control. Funding is required for agri-environment capital works beyond 2016.	£50,000	2016-20	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme (HLS)	Agri-environment scheme	Natural England	n/a

#### 4 Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition

Nitrogen deposition exceeds site relevant critical loads and deposition may be impacting on lower plants such as Petalwort.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
4A	Control, reduce and ameliorate atmospheric nitrogen impacts.	Not yet determined	2014-20	Site Nitrogen Action Plan	Not yet determined	Natural England	University(ies)

#### 5 Agricultural management practices

Scrub encroachment including by willow, birch and privet is judged to be the main threat: i.e. if insufficient management occurs. However as well as management to remove scrub, appropriate grazing is necessary to help control and prevent its re-establishment.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
2A	Ensure appropriate grazing levels are achieved and maintained.	£100,000	2015-20	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme (HLS)	Agri-environment scheme	Natural England	n/a

#### 6 Public Access/Disturbance

Public use is heavy and may affect all SAC features. Highly popular with local dog-walkers and for general recreation the site receives significant use by tourists each summer. As a result there is localised erosion, occasional fires (accidental or deliberate), localised eutrophication and litter problems. There is a need to better understand the ecological effects of these on the SAC.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
6A	Investigate the effects of eutrophication (severity) caused by dog fouling on sand dunes, perhaps in conjunction with atmospheric nitrogen deposition.	£2,500	2016	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Natural England	University(ies)

## Site details

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

### Qualifying features

#UK Special responsibility

#### Braunton Burrows SAC

H1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide  
H2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* ("white dunes")  
H2130# Fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation ("grey dunes")  
H2170 Dunes with *Salix repens ssp argentea* (*Salicion arenariae*)  
H2190 Humid dune slacks  
S1395 *Petalophyllum ralfsii*: Petalwort

### Site location and links

#### Braunton Burrows SAC

Area (ha) **1346.64**      Grid reference **SS451348**      [Map link](#)

Local Authorities      Devon

Site Conservation Objectives      [European Site Conservation Objectives for Braunton Burrows 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.*

### **Braunton Burrows SAC**

*River basin*

[South West RBMP](#)

*WFD Management catchment*

North Devon

*WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)*

n/a

## Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
Braunton Burrows SAC	Taw-Torridge Estuaries SSSI Braunton Burrows SSSI
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
Braunton Burrows SAC	n/a
Ramsar	
Braunton Burrows SAC	n/a
Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)	
Braunton Burrows SAC	n/a



<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
v1.0	01/12/2014	

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



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