

# Site Improvement Plan

## East Devon Heaths

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)**

**UK9010121     East Devon Heaths SPA**

**UK0012602     East Devon Pebblebed Heaths SAC**

## Site description

The East Devon Pebblebed Heaths is the largest block of lowland heath in Devon, and it is internationally important for its Northern Atlantic wet heaths and extensive areas of lowland European dry heaths.

The diversity of heathland reflects the varied topography, geology, hydrology and water chemistry of the area, and supports associated plant and animal communities.

Among the 21 breeding dragonfly species recorded at the site is the southern damselfly *Coenagrion mercuriale*, an Annex II species. There is an important assemblage of birds, and breeding European nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* and Dartford warbler *Sylvia undata* afford the site SPA status.

## 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 scrub control	Pressure	A224(B) European nightjar, A302(B) Dartford Warbler, H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, H4030 European dry heaths, S1044 Southern damselfly	Reduce scrub levels	Devon Wildlife Trust, Natural England, RSPB, Clinton Devon Estates
2 Undergrazing	Pressure	A224(B) European nightjar, A302(B) Dartford Warbler, H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, H4030 European dry heaths, S1044 Southern damselfly	Secure agri-environment agreements or equivalent, to improve grazing levels	Devon Wildlife Trust, Natural England, RSPB, Clinton Devon Estates
3 Change in land management	Threat	A224(B) European nightjar, A302(B) Dartford Warbler, H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, H4030 European dry heaths, S1044 Southern damselfly	Promote the uptake of agri-environment schemes when changes in tenure occur	Natural England
4 Public Access/Disturbance	Pressure	A224(B) European nightjar, A302(B) Dartford Warbler, H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, H4030 European dry heaths, S1044 Southern damselfly	Develop a strategic management approach to reduce access related pressure	East Devon District Council, Exeter City Council, Natural England, Teignbridge District Council
5 Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition	Pressure	A224(B) European nightjar, A302(B) Dartford Warbler, H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, H4030 European dry heaths, S1044 Southern damselfly	Reduce and mitigate the impacts from atmospheric nitrogen deposition	Natural England, Other

6	Water Pollution	Threat	H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, S1044 Southern damselfly	Investigate the degree of diffuse pollution and, if appropriate tackle the causes of nutrient enrichment	Natural England, RSPB
7	Hydrological changes	Threat	H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, S1044 Southern damselfly	Investigate possible hydrology impacts, and where appropriate put mitigation measures in place	Natural England, Local partnership

## 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 scrub control

In some areas birch has been allowed to take a stronghold. This changes the physical structure of the heathland and produces shade and leaf litter which inhibit the germination and growth of heather species. In addition, water transpiration losses are higher under tree cover, potentially leading to drying out which in turn may encourage further scrub growth altering the overall character of the site.

<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>	Develop a site management plan for scrub for land managed by the RSPB	£1,500	2014-15	Non-Natural England funded site management plan	RSPB	RSPB	Natural England
<b>1B</b>	Develop a site management plan for scrub with Clinton Devon Estates	£1,500	2014-15	Non-Natural England funded site management plan	Clinton Devon Estates	Clinton Devon Estates	Natural England
<b>1C</b>	Develop a site management plan for scrub with Devon Wildlife Trust	£1,500	2014-15	Non-Natural England funded site management plan	Wildlife Trust	Devon Wildlife Trust	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>1D</b>	Control scrub via an enhanced capital works plan as part of an agri-environment scheme with the RSPB	£4,000	2017-22	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme (HLS)	Rural Development Programme (RDPE)	Natural England	RSPB
<b>1E</b>	Control scrub via an enhanced capital works plan as part of an agri-environment scheme with the Clinton Devon Estate	£25,000	2017-22	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme (HLS)	Rural Development Programme (RDPE)	Natural England	Clinton Devon Estates
<b>1F</b>	Control scrub via a capital works plan as part of an agri-environment scheme with Devon Wildlife Trust	£10,000	2015-21	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme (HLS)	Rural Development Programme (RDPE)	Natural England	Devon Wildlife Trust
<b>1G</b>	Control scrub via an agri-environment scheme with the owners/managers of other landholdings within the boundary of the site.	£83,000	2015-21	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme (HLS)	Rural Development Programme (RDPE)	Natural England	n/a

## 2 Undergrazing

Grazing is an essential component of the management to diversify the physical structure of the heathland habitats. Some areas are not being adequately grazed, resulting in structural homogeneity and lack of age diversity.

<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>	Ensure appropriate fencing and stocking levels are in place via an agri-environment scheme with the RSPB.	Not yet determined	2017	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme (HLS)	Rural Development Programme (RDPE)	Natural England	RSPB
<b>2B</b>	Ensure appropriate fencing and stocking levels are in place via an agri-environment scheme with the Clinton Devon Estates.	£150,000	2017	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme (HLS)	Rural Development Programme (RDPE)	Natural England	Clinton Devon Estates
<b>2C</b>	Ensure appropriate fencing and stocking levels are in place via an agri-environment scheme with the Devon Wildlife Trust.	Not yet determined	2017	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme (HLS)	Rural Development Programme (RDPE)	Natural England	Devon Wildlife Trust

<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>2D</b>	Secure appropriate management via agri-environment schemes with the owners/managers of other landholdings within the boundary of the site.	Not yet determined	2015-21	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme (HLS)	Rural Development Programme (RDPE)	Natural England	n/a

### 3 Change in land management

Most of the site is under positive conservation management, however management levels of have become reduced in some areas following changes in ownership. This could result in the habitat quality gradually declining if not addressed.

<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>	Promote agri-environment schemes to deliver positive conservation management with new owners as and when ownership/management changes occur.	Not yet determined	2015-21	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Common Agricultural Policy 2014-20 (New Environmental Land Management Scheme)	Rural Development Programme (RDPE)	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>	Consider regulation/enforcement action to deliver positive management where agri-environment schemes and negotiation fail to deliver.	Not yet determined	2015-21	Regulation: Compulsory Management Scheme/Notice	Rural Development Programme (RDPE)	Natural England	n/a

#### 4 Public Access/Disturbance

Erosion has occurred at several localised points as a result of training by Marines and public activity. In addition to loss of habitat this could be impacting water levels over a wider area due to the increased drainage effect of the eroded channels. Increasing recreational pressure associated with Exeter growth points (e.g. erosion effects and fire risk) requires a strategic approach. There is also anecdotal evidence that access patterns are influencing the distribution of Annex 1 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>4A</b>	Development of a site visitor and access management plan -with RSPB.	£20,000	2015	Non-Natural England funded site management plan	Developer Contributions Scheme (DCS)	Local partnership	East Devon District Council, Exeter City Council, Natural England, Teignbridge District 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>4B</b>	Development of a site visitor and access management plan with Clinton Devon Estates	£20,000	2015	Non-Natural England funded site management plan	Developer Contributions Scheme (DCS)	Local partnership	East Devon District Council, Exeter City Council, Natural England, Teignbridge District Council

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

Nitrogen deposition exceeds site relevant critical loads. Exceedance of threshold levels may affect heathland features by the transition of heather to grass dominance and the southern damselfly through changes to the vegetation mosaics.

<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>	Control, reduce and ameliorate atmospheric nitrogen impacts	Not yet determined	2014-20	Site Nitrogen Action Plan	Not yet determined	Natural England	Not yet determined



## 6 Water Pollution

Ecohydrological site accounts in support of the Wetland Framework for impact assessment on statutory sites in England and Wales written by Bryan Wheeler include accounts for Bicton and Aylesbeare Commons. The site account for Aylesbeare raises the possibility of nutrient enrichment from the arable fields to the north. If there is hydrological connectivity between these fields and the mire (surface or sub-surface) then there is a likely threat or pressure from this. Since this research was undertaken much of the land in question has been entered into an agri-environment scheme but some land remains outside agreement and therefore further investigation is considered appropriate.

<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>	Investigate the possibility of nutrient enrichment from agricultural fields to the north by examining if there is hydrological connectivity between these fields and the mire (surface or sub-surface).	£15,000	2015-17	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	RSPB	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>6B</b>	Target non agreement land identified of concern and investigate the potential for entry to agri - environment scheme agreements.	Not yet determined	2018-20	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme (HLS)	Rural Development Programme (RDPE)	Natural England	n/a

## 7 Hydrological changes

Localised severe erosion through access pressure and possibly water abstraction from local groundwater sources may be affecting the hydrology of the site however this requires investigation.

<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>	Investigate the potential impacts on hydrology of groundwater abstraction and localised recreational pressure particularly on the areas of wet heath and Mire.	£20,000	2018-20	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Natural England	Not yet determined

## Site details

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

### Qualifying features

#UK Special responsibility

<b>East Devon Heaths SPA</b>	A302(B) <i>Sylvia undata</i> : Dartford warbler
	A224(B) <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i> : European nightjar
<b>East Devon Pebblebed Heaths SAC</b>	H4030 European dry heaths
	S1044 <i>Coenagrion mercuriale</i> : Southern damselfly
	H4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i>

### Site location and links

#### East Devon Heaths SPA

Area (ha) <b>1119.94</b>	Grid reference <b>SY040867</b>	<a href="#">Map link</a>
Local Authorities	Devon	
Site Conservation Objectives	<a href="#">European Site Conservation Objectives for East Devon Heaths SPA</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>	

#### East Devon Pebblebed Heaths SAC

Area (ha) <b>1119.94</b>	Grid reference <b>SY040868</b>	<a href="#">Map link</a>
Local Authorities	Devon	
Site Conservation Objectives	<a href="#">European Site Conservation Objectives for East Devon Pebblebed Heaths 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.

### East Devon Heaths SPA

River basin	South West	<a href="#">South West RBMP</a>
WFD Management catchment	East Devon	
WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)	GB108045008980, GB108045009170	

### East Devon Pebblebed Heaths SAC

River basin	South West	<a href="#">South West RBMP</a>
WFD Management catchment	East Devon	
WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)	GB108045008980, GB108045009170	

## Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
East Devon Heaths SPA	East Devon Pebblebed Heaths SSSI
East Devon Pebblebed Heaths SAC	East Devon Pebblebed Heaths SSSI

  

National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
East Devon Heaths SPA	n/a
East Devon Pebblebed Heaths SAC	n/a

  

Ramsar	
East Devon Heaths SPA	n/a
East Devon Pebblebed Heaths SAC	n/a

  

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)	
East Devon Heaths SPA	East Devon Pebblebed Heaths SAC
East Devon Pebblebed Heaths SAC	East Devon Heaths SPA

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1.0	06/10/2014	

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

