

Site Improvement Plan

Dartmoor

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, or contact Natural England's Responsible Officer for the site via our enquiry service 0300 060 3900, or enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk

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

UK0012929 Dartmoor SAC

Site description

Dartmoor SAC consists of three separate blocks of upland within the Dartmoor National Park. These three constituent upland blocks contain a diverse range of habitats including large scale mosaics of wet and dry heaths and the most southerly upland peat masses in the UK. These habitats support a range of bird and invertebrate species including Southern damselfly. There are small areas of upland oak woods which support rare bryophyte species.

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 Hydrological changes	Pressure/ Threat	H7130 Blanket bogs	Implement a blanket bog restoration programme	Dartmoor National Park Authority, Environment Agency, Natural England, South West Water Ltd, Duchy of Cornwall, Dartmoor Commoners Council, Forest of Dartmoor Commoners Association
2 Wildfire/ arson	Threat	H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, H7130 Blanket bogs	Extend the Forest Fire Plan to cover the whole SAC	Dartmoor National Park Authority, Natural England, Duchy of Cornwall, Dartmoor Commoners Council, Commons group(s)
3 Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition	Pressure	H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, H4030 European dry heaths, H7130 Blanket bogs, H91A0 Western acidic oak woodland, S1044 Southern damselfly, S1106 Atlantic salmon, S1355 Otter	Control, reduce and ameliorate atmospheric nitrogen impacts	Natural England
4 Water Pollution	Pressure/ Threat	H7130 Blanket bogs	Restore functioning hydrology to the blanket bog	Dartmoor National Park Authority, Environment Agency, South West Water Ltd, Duchy of Cornwall, Dartmoor Commoners Council, Forest of Dartmoor Commoners Association, West Country Rivers Trust

5	Overgrazing	Pressure/ Threat	H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, H4030 European dry heaths	Build on the success of Dartmoor Farming Futures, the Environmentally Sensitive Area scheme and the Higher Level Stewardship scheme, to establish appropriate grazing regimes across the whole SAC area	Natural England, Rural Payments Agency (RPA)
6	Undergrazing	Pressure	S1044 Southern damselfly	Improve grazing management at Southern damselfly breeding sites	Dartmoor National Park Authority, Natural England, Duchy of Cornwall, Dartmoor Commoners Council, Commons group(s)
7	Invasive species	Threat	H4030 European dry heaths	Research the impacts of Heather beetle outbreaks on heath	Dartmoor National Park Authority, Natural England, Dartmoor Commoners Council
8	Invasive species	Threat	H4030 European dry heaths	Research the spread of bracken into heath	Dartmoor National Park Authority, Environment Agency, Natural England
9	Change in land management	Threat	H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, H4030 European dry heaths, H7130 Blanket bogs	Target NELMS agreements on moorland commons, to enable appropriate grazing particularly by cattle	Dartmoor National Park Authority, Natural England, Duchy of Cornwall, Dartmoor Commoners Council, Commons group(s)
10	Disease	Threat	H91A0 Western acidic oak woodland	Monitor the spread of tree disease outbreaks, and take appropriate measures	Dartmoor National Park Authority, Natural England, Duchy of Cornwall, Dartmoor Commoners Council, Commons group(s)

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 Hydrological changes

Some areas of the blanket bog have old drainage networks and peat cuttings that have a negative impact on the conservation status of the habitat by reducing the height of the water table and drying out the bog. There are also surface channels present in the blanket bog that are the result of erosion processes initiated by past burning, military training, overgrazing, drainage, atmospheric pollution and peat cutting. These channels continue to erode the peat in some places threatening the hydrology of the remaining bog. In some areas older erosion channels have effectively drained the bog, leading to a drying out of the peat and consequently a change in the vegetation away from bog communities.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
1A	Through engagement with the local community, agree actions to improve the condition of blanket bog priority habitat including: blocking erosion gullies, drainage channels and rewetting old peat cuttings to raise the water table and maintain at a high level.	£10,000,000	2014-24	Partnership agreement	LIFE, Water company	Dartmoor National Park Authority	Environment Agency, Natural England, South West Water Ltd, Duchy of Cornwall, Dartmoor Commoners Council, Forest of Dartmoor Commoners Association

2 Wildfire/ arson

Wildfires can occur, leading to a degradation of the wetland habitats through damage to sensitive species such as Sphagnum moss.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
2A	Build on the success of the Forest Fire Plan which seeks to manage the risk of wildfire and reduce the extent of outbreaks by involving local farmers in the implementation of firefighting measures alongside the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service. Extend the coverage of the Forest Fire Plan which enables this joint action to all the Dartmoor Commons within and surrounding the SAC, to get the greatest protection.	Staff time	2014-19	Partnership agreement	Staff time	Natural England	Dartmoor National Park Authority, Duchy of Cornwall, Dartmoor Commoners Council, Commons group(s)

3 Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition

Nitrogen deposition exceeds site relevant critical loads.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
3A	Control, reduce and ameliorate atmospheric nitrogen impacts.	Not yet determined	2014-20	Site Nitrogen Action Plan	Not yet determined	Natural England	Not yet determined

4 Water Pollution

Acidification of upland streams and watercourses is a result of historic atmospheric pollution. Past management practices such as peat drainage, peat cutting, fire, overgrazing and military training have also contributed to damage to the blanket bog. Peat erosion and drying out then leads to the release of acidifying chemicals into watercourses and a subsequent decrease in pH in stream water.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
4A	Restore blanket bog hydrology, by blocking erosion gullies, drainage ditches and channels, and rewetting old peat cuttings.	£10,000,000	2014-24	Partnership agreement	LIFE, Water company	Local partnership	Dartmoor National Park Authority, Environment Agency, South West Water Ltd, Duchy of Cornwall, Dartmoor Commoners Council, Forest of Dartmoor Commoners Association, West Country Rivers Trust

5 Overgrazing

There are some areas of the SAC that have inappropriate stocking regimes, notably those that are not in Environmental Stewardship agreements. A small number of existing Higher Level Stewardship agreements have stocking calendars that are not appropriate for the delivery of SAC objectives and need to be reviewed/changed.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
5A	For new NELMS agreements, develop jointly agreed grazing regimes which are reviewed and evaluated regularly. Review and update existing HLS agreements to ensure that grazing regimes are appropriate.	Staff time	2015-17	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme (HLS)	Staff time	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>
5B	In the few cases where there is no voluntary agreement reduce stocking rates to appropriate levels through available mechanisms.	Staff time	2015-17	Regulation: SSSI Regulation	Staff time	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>
5C	In the few cases where there is no voluntary agreement reduce stocking rates to appropriate levels through available mechanisms.	Staff time	2015-17	Enforcement: Overgrazing Regs	Staff time	Rural Payments Agency (RPA)	Natural England

6 Undergrazing

Breeding sites for Southern damselfly, particularly at Moortown Bottom, are overgrown and require grazing management and targeted vegetation management to control 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>
6A	Improve grazing management, so that Southern damselfly breeding sites are grazed to produce ideal conditions for the species.	£150,000	2014-19	Advice: Negotiation	Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)	Dartmoor National Park Authority	Natural England, Duchy of Cornwall, Dartmoor Commoners Council, Commons group(s)

7 Invasive species

Heather beetle outbreaks over the last decade or so have led to losses of heather in some parts of the SAC. The losses have not been quantified and the extent of recovery is uncertain.

<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>
7A	Quantify the level of damage caused by recent outbreaks of Heather beetle, and implement remedial measures.	£20,000	2014-17	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Research project	Natural England	Dartmoor National Park Authority, Dartmoor Commoners Council, Commons group(s)

8 Invasive species

There is anecdotal evidence that bracken is spreading into areas of heathland habitat.

<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>
8A	Investigate the extent to which bracken is increasing to the detriment of SAC features.	£10,000	2014-16	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Natural England	Dartmoor National Park Authority, Environment Agency
8B	Draft a plan to deal with the expansion of bracken if it is found to be a problem for SAC features.	£5,000	2016-17	Invasive Control Plan: Invasive Species Control Programme	Not yet determined	Natural England	Dartmoor National Park Authority, Environment Agency
8C	Implement a bracken control programme.	£60,000	2017-20	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme (HLS)	Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) capital works	Natural England	Dartmoor National Park Authority, Environment Agency

9 Change in land management

There is loss of grazing due to declining farm income, declining numbers of farms and farmers, and increasing difficulties stocking the commons due to diseases such as bTB. Cattle grazing is necessary for habitat management and is particularly vulnerable to market forces and regulation.

<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>
9A	Target NELMS agreements on SAC-designated common land, and include agreed levels of cattle grazing and supporting payments in the management agreement.	£1,000,000	2014-20	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Common Agricultural Policy 2014-20 (New Environmental Land Management Scheme)	Rural Development Programme (RDPE), New Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMS)	Natural England	Dartmoor National Park Authority, Duchy of Cornwall, Dartmoor Commoners Council, Commons group(s)

10 Disease

There is the potential for an occurrence of a tree disease outbreak such as Acute Oak Decline or Oak Processionary Moth in the small, isolated area of Sessile oak woodland within the SAC.

<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>
10A	Monitor progress of tree diseases that may affect the SAC designated woodland. Identify appropriate preventative and/or remedial measures in readiness for implementation should an outbreak occur in the vicinity.	Staff time	2014-20	Bio-security plan: Other	Staff time	Natural England	Dartmoor National Park Authority, Duchy of Cornwall, Dartmoor Commoners Council, Commons group(s)

Site details

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

Qualifying features

#UK Special responsibility

Dartmoor SAC

H4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*

H4030 European dry heaths

H7130# Blanket bogs

H91A0 Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles

S1044 *Coenagrion mercuriale*: Southern damselfly

S1106 *Salmo salar*: Atlantic salmon

S1355 *Lutra lutra*: Otter

Site location and links

Dartmoor SAC

Area (ha) **23165.77** Grid reference **SX590864** [Map link](#)

Local Authorities Devon

Site Conservation Objectives [European Site Conservation Objectives for Dartmoor 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.

Dartmoor SAC

River basin

[South West RBMP](#)

WFD Management catchment

North Devon, South Devon, Tamar

WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)

GB108046004940, GB108046004941, GB108046005200, GB108046005220, GB108046005240, GB108046008320, GB108046008350, GB108046008380, GB108046008390, GB108046008400, GB108046008410, GB108046008420, GB108046008530, GB108046008580, GB108047003650, GB108047004050, GB108047007750, GB108047007870, GB108047007950, GB108050008080, GB108050008100, GB108050008250, GB30845945, GB30846284, GB30846305

Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
Dartmoor SAC	Dendles Wood SSSI Tor Royal Bog SSSI South Dartmoor SSSI Holne Woodlands SSSI Piles Copse SSSI North Dartmoor SSSI Wistman's Wood SSSI East Dartmoor SSSI
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
Dartmoor SAC	Black-a-Tor Copse NNR Dendles Wood NNR Wistman's Wood NNR
Ramsar	
Dartmoor SAC	n/a
Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)	
Dartmoor SAC	n/a

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1.0	04/11/2014	

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