

# Site Improvement Plan

## Pewsey Downs

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)**

**UK0012552    Pewsey Downs SAC**

## Site description

Pewsey Downs SAC lies on the southern edge of the Marlborough Downs and consists of species-rich chalk grassland rich in orchids such as Burnt-tip orchid *Neotinea ustulata*, Frog orchid *Coeloglossum viride*, and Autumn's lady's tresses *Spiranthes spiralis*.

Pewsey Downs is also designated for its significant population of early gentian *Gentianella anglica*, an endemic species which is confined to chalk grasslands in southern England. Other important species include: Devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis* (the preferred food plant of the Marsh fritillary butterfly, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) feature) as well as round-headed rampion *Phyteuma orbiculare*; saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*, chalk milkwort *Polygala calcarea* and bastard toadflax *Thesium humifusum*.

## 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 Habitat fragmentation	Pressure/Threat	H6210 Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone (important orchid sites), S1654 Early gentian	Landscape-scale delivery, to conserve chalk grassland habitat	National Trust, Natural England, North Wessex Downs AONB, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, Butterfly Conservation
2 Inappropriate grazing	Pressure	H6210 Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone (important orchid sites), S1654 Early gentian	Ensure appropriate grazing and weed control	Natural England, Volunteers, Butterfly Conservation, National Nature Reserve (NNR)
3 Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition	Pressure	H6210 Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone (important orchid sites), S1654 Early gentian	Control, reduce and ameliorate atmospheric nitrogen impacts	Natural England

## 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 Habitat fragmentation

The creation and restoration of additional species-rich chalk grassland adjacent to the site is required to help sustain viable grazing management and increase the resilience of the SAC calcareous grassland habitat to climate change.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
1A	Connect, restore and create new chalk grassland habitat, and ensure appropriate management to secure its long term viability.	£100,000- £200,000	2015-20	Habitat creation / restoration strategy: Habitat restoration	LIFE, Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Agri- environment scheme	Local partnership	National Trust, North Wessex Downs AONB, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, Butterfly Conservation

### 2 Inappropriate grazing

Farmers wish to use sheep grazing to control ragwort. In the past this has led to overgrazing in winter/ spring. Sheep grazing in spring would threaten early gentian and would be detrimental to the semi-natural dry grassland orchid site.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
2A	Monitor grazing levels and provide ongoing advice to graziers on appropriate grazing and weed control.	Staff time	2015-20	Advice	Natural England, Staff time, Volunteering	Natural England	Volunteers, Butterfly Conservation, National Nature Reserve (NNR)

<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>	Ensure the continued provision of appropriate funding and advice to support grazing and weed control.	£25,000 per year	2017-20	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Common Agricultural Policy 2014-20 (New Environmental Land Management Scheme)	Rural Development Programme (RDPE)	Natural England	Butterfly Conservation

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

Nitrogen deposition exceeds site-relevant critical loads. Increased nitrogen deposition could cause the increasing dominance of tall, coarse grasses (such as upright brome or Tor-grass) and a decrease in overall botanical diversity. Consequently it would impact upon the sward structure required by associated butterfly and gentian species. Early gentian *Gentianella anglica* is an annual plant, occurring in calcareous grassland and mainly on steep, south-facing slopes on bare ground, or in thin turf that is kept open by a combination of rabbit or sheep-grazing, or by trampling by livestock. In dense turf it becomes shaded out and is unable to compete with other more vigorous species.

<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>	Control, reduce and ameliorate atmospheric nitrogen impacts.	Not yet determined	2015-20	Site Nitrogen Action Plan	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

#### Pewsey Downs SAC

S1654 *Gentianella anglica*: Early gentian

H6210# Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*)

### Site location and links

#### Pewsey Downs SAC

Area (ha) **153.87**

Grid reference **SU106637** [Map link](#)

Local Authorities

Wiltshire

Site Conservation Objectives

[European Site Conservation Objectives for Pewsey Downs 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.*

### **Pewsey Downs SAC**

*River basin*

[South West RBMP](#)

*WFD Management catchment*

Hampshire Avon, Kennet

*WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)*

n/a

## Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
Pewsey Downs SAC	Pewsey Downs SSSI

National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
Pewsey Downs SAC	Pewsey Downs NNR

Ramsar	
Pewsey Downs SAC	n/a

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)	
Pewsey Downs SAC	n/a

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1.0	18/02/2015	

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

