

Site Improvement Plan

Witherslack Mosses

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)

UK0030302 Witherslack Mosses SAC

Site description

Witherslack Mosses (Meathop, Nichols and Foulshaw Mosses) are located in south Cumbria, on the northern coastal plain of Morecambe Bay. They are separate remnants of a formerly interconnected wetland, with Nichols and Meathop Mosses originally being part of the same peat body.

All have been affected by marginal peat-cutting and drainage of the surrounding land, whilst Foulshaw Moss was also used as a conifer plantation. Hydrological restoration, including lagg creation, is well advanced on Foulshaw and Meathop Mosses.

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 water levels	Pressure	H7110 Active raised bogs, H7120 Degraded raised bog	Raise the water table (optimum is usually water near the surface)	Environment Agency, Lake District National Park Authority, Natural England
2 Hydrological changes	Pressure	H7110 Active raised bogs, H7120 Degraded raised bog	Increase control within hydrologically important areas for the site	Environment Agency, Lake District National Park Authority, Natural England
3 Inappropriate scrub control	Pressure	H7110 Active raised bogs, H7120 Degraded raised bog	Remove trees where they have a hydrological effect, or where access is needed	Forestry Commission, Natural England
4 Invasive species	Pressure	H7110 Active raised bogs, H7120 Degraded raised bog	Eliminate rhododendron <i>Rhododendron ponticum</i> from the site	Natural England
5 Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition	Pressure	H7110 Active raised bogs, H7120 Degraded raised bog	Control, reduce and ameliorate atmospheric nitrogen impacts	Environment Agency

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 water levels

The water table is too low in unmanaged areas to support desired bog 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>
1A	Consider amending the SSSI which underpins the SAC designation, to include all land of hydrological importance to the bog within the SSSI boundary.	Not yet determined	2015-25	Designation strategy: Notification Amendment	Not yet determined	Natural England	n/a
1B	Secure favourable management on all land of importance to the bog.	Not yet determined	2015-25	Habitat creation / restoration strategy: Creation of new habitat	Not yet determined	Natural England	n/a
1C	Develop a mechanism for management of land with unknown ownership.	Not yet determined	2014	Mechanism not identified / develop mechanism	Not yet determined	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>
1D	Secure agri-environment agreements for bog restoration, so that on the bog, the water table is raised to the surface. Create marginal fen where this would help to support the bog hydrology.	£250,000	2015-25	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Common Agricultural Policy 2014-20 (New Environmental Land Management Scheme)	Not yet determined	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>
1E	Facilitate the uptake of agri-environment bog management options by addressing current issues with agreement holder cashflow concerns. Use such options to raise the water table to the surface on the bog and create marginal fen where this would help to support the bog hydrology.	Not yet determined	2014	Mechanism not identified / develop mechanism	Not yet determined	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>
1F	Secure planning permission to undertake bog restoration works. As a result the water table will be raised to the surface on the bog and marginal fen will be created where this would help to support the bog hydrology.	£5,070	2015-16	Regulation: Grant Appropriate Planning Permission	Not yet determined	To be agreed	Lake District National Park Authority, 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>
1G	Delivery partners to work together with the landowner to secure appropriate consents to facilitate an increase in water levels on the bog, and creation of marginal fen where this would help to support the bog hydrology.	Not yet determined	2015-16	Regulation: Flood Defence Consent	Not yet determined	Natural England	Environment Agency
<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>
1H	Facilitate formation of a landowners' group on Nichols Moss in order to use an agri-environment scheme to fund restoration. Liaison will be needed with other parties such as adjoining landowners, the public, users of rights of way and statutory bodies who need to give permissions for the works to proceed.	Not yet determined	2015	Partnership agreement: Other	Not yet determined	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>
1I	Increase the uptake of agri-environment schemes.	Not yet determined	2014	Regulation: Other - obtain appropriate permissions	Not yet determined	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>
1J	On the bog, raise the water table to the surface. Create marginal fen where this would help to support the bog hydrology.	£30,000	2016-17	Water Level Management Plan	Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) 2015-21	Natural England	Environment Agency

2 Hydrological changes

Ongoing changes in condition of peat and vegetation due to historic peat cutting and drainage. There is a time lag between degradation of the peat and vegetation response.

<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>
2A	Implement appropriate management in order to raise the water table to the surface of the bog. Whilst one mechanism is listed here, all mechanisms listed under 'Inappropriate Water Levels' are also relevant to 'Hydrological Changes' and are therefore not repeated.	Not yet determined	2015-25	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Common Agricultural Policy 2014-20 (New Environmental Land Management Scheme)	Not yet determined	Natural England	Environment Agency, Lake District National Park Authority

3 Inappropriate scrub control

Extensive tree colonisation increases effects of hydrological changes through positive feedback.

<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>
3A	Negotiate and secure agri-environment agreements to enable removal of trees and scrub where they are affecting hydrology or would impede access for machinery used in restoration works. Should be no need for ongoing control once water table has been restored.	£100,000	2015-25	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Common Agricultural Policy 2014-20 (New Environmental Land Management Scheme)	Natural England	Natural England	n/a
3B	Secure Felling Licence to remove trees and scrub where they are affecting hydrology or would impede access for machinery used in restoration works. Should be no need for ongoing control once water table has been restored.	Not yet determined	2015-17	Regulation: Felling Licence	Not yet determined	To be agreed	Forestry Commission

<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>
3C	Where required, secure permission through Forestry Regulations EIA to remove trees and scrub where they are affecting hydrology or would impede access for machinery used in restoration works.	Not yet determined	2015-17	Regulation: Other - obtain appropriate permissions	Not yet determined	To be agreed	Forestry Commission
<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>
3D	Further work is required on interaction of Forestry and Habitats Regulations: develop guidance to address the perceived legislative conflicts between fulfilling duties under the Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England & Wales) Regulations 1999 for European Protected Species and the Habitats Regulations.	Not yet determined	2014 onwards	Advice: Negotiation	Not yet determined	Natural England	Forestry Commission

4 Invasive species

Rhododendron (extensive on Nichols, present on others) is invasive and has increasing negative effects if not removed.

<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>
4A	Eliminate rhododendron <i>Rhododendron ponticum</i> from the site	£5,000	2015-25	Invasive Control Plan: Invasive Species Control Programme	Natural England	Natural England	n/a

5 Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition

Nitrogen deposition exceeds site critical loads, but any effects are currently masked by unfavourable hydrology/effects of management.

<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>
5A	Control, reduce and ameliorate atmospheric nitrogen impacts	Not yet determined	2014-2020	Site Nitrogen Action Plan	Not yet determined	Not yet determined	Not yet determined

Site details

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

Qualifying features

#UK Special responsibility

Witherslack Mosses SAC

H7110# Active raised bogs

H7120 Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration

Site location and links

Witherslack Mosses SAC

Area (ha) **486.53** Grid reference **SD457826** [Map link](#)

Local Authorities Cumbria

Site Conservation Objectives [European Site Conservation Objectives for Witherslack Mosses 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.

Witherslack Mosses SAC

<i>River basin</i>	North West	North West RBMP
<i>WFD Management catchment</i>	Kent/Leven	
<i>WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)</i>	n/a	

Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
Witherslack Mosses SAC	Foulshaw Moss SSSI
	Nichols Moss SSSI
	Meathop Moss SSSI
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
Witherslack Mosses SAC	n/a
Ramsar	
Witherslack Mosses SAC	n/a
Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)	
Witherslack Mosses SAC	n/a

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1.6	06/10/2014	

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