

# Site Improvement Plan

## Mendip Woodlands

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)**

**UK0030048 Mendip Woodlands SAC**

## Site description

The Mendip Woodlands SAC comprises four individual woods all located on the southern slope of the Mendip Hills in the county of Somerset. Three of the woods, Cheddar Wood, Ebbor Gorge and Rodney Stoke lie in the west of Mendip while Asham Wood lies in the east. Asham Wood and Ebbor Gorge are both associated with limestone gorges while Cheddar Wood and Rodney Stoke lie on the steep southern slope of the hills. Only one of the woods, Asham, has permanent streams running through it. All four woods are dominated by ash while both Cheddar Wood and Rodney Stoke have a high population of small-leafed lime. Notable species present include Purple gromwell *Lithospermum purpurocaeruleum*, Lily of the valley *Convallaria majalis* and Wild daffodil *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*. All the woodlands were managed by coppicing and are gradually reverting to high forest.

## 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 Vehicles: illicit	Threat	H9180 Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes	Improve site security through liaison and enforcement	Avon and Somerset Constabulary, Natural England, Landowner/occupier
2 Deer	Pressure/ Threat	H9180 Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes	Develop an adequate deer exclusion/management plan	Natural England, Landowner/occupier
3 Disease	Threat	H9180 Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes	Monitor and implement a bio-security plan for Chalara disease	Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), Forestry Commission, Natural England, Landowner/occupier
4 Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition	Pressure	H9180 Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes	Control and reduce the impacts of atmospheric nitrogen pollution	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 Vehicles: illicit

Asham Wood has a history of trespass by off road vehicles. This has resulted in serious damage to parts of the ride network and also to the woodland proper.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
1A	Liaise with site owners and encourage them to improve site security.	Staff time	2015-20	Advice	Staff time	Natural England	Landowner/occupier
1B	Enforcement to prevent future occurrences of trespassing on site	Not yet determined	2015-20	Enforcement: S34 Road Traffic Act/ S28p(6) Liaison With Natural England	Not yet determined	Avon and Somerset Constabulary	Natural England

### 2 Deer

Deer are having an adverse impact on almost all of the component woodlands through unsustainable grazing pressure. Ebbor Gorge (as a result of the high level of public access and the largely high forest structure) has no significant problem with deer damage. The remaining sites do have higher deer populations, making silvicultural management difficult unless regrowth from coppicing or regeneration is protected.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
2A	Liaise with the site owners and encourage them to adopt an adequate deer control policy,	Staff time	2015-20	Advice	Staff time	Natural England	Landowner/occupier

### 3 Disease

All of the Mendip woodlands component sites are dominated by ash and are seriously threatened by the spread of *Chalara fraxinea* disease from eastern England. Some stands in these woodlands are as much as 80% ash.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
<b>3A</b>	Monitor woodland for presence of <i>Chalara</i> disease.	Staff time	2015-20	Advice	Staff time	Natural England	Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), Landowner/occupier
Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
<b>3B</b>	Develop and implement a biosecurity plan to restrict spread of	Staff time	2015-20	Bio-security plan	Staff time	Natural England	Forestry Commission

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

Nitrogen deposition exceeds site relevant critical loads. Impacts of exceedance could be manifested in changes in ground vegetation but there are no noticeable effects on the site.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
<b>4A</b>	Control, reduce and ameliorate atmospheric nitrogen inputs.	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

**Mendip Woodlands SAC** H9180# *Tilio-Acerion* forests of slopes, screes and ravines

### Site location and links

#### Mendip Woodlands SAC

Area (ha) **253.92**      Grid reference **ST706454**      [Map link](#)

Local Authorities      Somerset

Site Conservation Objectives      [European Site Conservation Objectives for Mendip Woodlands 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.*

### **Mendip Woodlands SAC**

*River basin*

[Severn RBMP](#)

*WFD Management catchment*

Bristol Avon & North Somerset Streams

*WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)*

GB109053021990

## Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
<b>Mendip Woodlands SAC</b>	Ebbor Gorge SSSI
	Cheddar Wood SSSI
	Asham Wood SSSI
	Rodney Stoke SSSI
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
<b>Mendip Woodlands SAC</b>	Ebbor Gorge NNR
	Rodney Stoke NNR
Ramsar	
<b>Mendip Woodlands SAC</b>	n/a
Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)	
<b>Mendip Woodlands SAC</b>	n/a

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1.0	13/03/2015	

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

