

## Site Improvement Plan

# Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits

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)**

**UK9020296    Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA**

## Site description

Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA consists of a chain of exhausted sand and gravel pits extending for approximately 35km along the alluvial deposits of the River Nene in Northamptonshire. The pits form an extensive series of shallow and open waters which occur in association with a wide habitats including reedswamp, marsh, wet ditches, rough grassland and scattered woodland. The extensive open waters and associated habitats of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits collectively form one of the most important inland localities in England for waterbirds in the non-breeding period and regularly supports peak numbers of waterbird in excess of 20,000 individuals, including significant populations of bittern, golden plover and gadwall.

## 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 Public Access/Disturbance	Threat	A021(NB) Bittern, A051(NB) Gadwall, A140(NB) Golden Plover, Waterbird assemblage	Manage recreational impacts through access and habitat management and advice.	East Northamptonshire District Council, Natural England, Nene Valley NIA, Northampton Borough Council, Northamptonshire LEP, Northamptonshire County Council, RSPB, South Northamptonshire District Council, The Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs, Northants and Peterboro, Volunteers, Wellingborough Borough Council, British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire, River Nene Regional Park, Rockingham Forest Trust, West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit, North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit, Local nature partnership

2 Planning Permission: general	Threat	A021(NB) Bittern, A051(NB) Gadwall, A140(NB) Golden Plover, Waterbird assemblage	Provide clear guidance to developers and local planning officers	East Northamptonshire District Council, Natural England, Northampton Borough Council, Northamptonshire County Council, RSPB, South Northamptonshire District Council, Wellingborough Borough Council, West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit, North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit
3 Fisheries: Freshwater	Threat	A021(NB) Bittern, A051(NB) Gadwall, A140(NB) Golden Plover, Waterbird assemblage	Maintain and develop sustainable freshwater fisheries, by developing individual Fisheries Plans	Environment Agency, Natural England, Fisheries, Angling Trust(s)
4 Change in land management	Threat	A021(NB) Bittern, A051(NB) Gadwall, A140(NB) Golden Plover, Waterbird assemblage	Establish appropriate grazing and scrub management	Natural England, Landowner(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 Public Access/Disturbance

Disturbance from recreation (particularly walkers and dog owners) affects wintering birds by reducing the time available for feeding, and increasing energy expenditure when avoiding those sources of disturbance.

<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, agree and implement an Access Management Strategy for the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA.	Staff time	2014-20	Partnership agreement	Staff time	Natural England	East Northamptonshire District Council, Local Authority(ies), Nene Valley NIA, Northamptonshire LEP, RSPB, Wellingborough Borough Council, Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire, River Nene Regional Park, Local nature partnership
<b>1B</b>	Manage recreation disturbance at Northamptonshire Washlands.	Staff time	2014-20	Partnership agreement	Staff time	Natural England	RSPB, River Nene Regional Park, Nene NIA Partnership, Local nature partnership

<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>1C</b>	Undertake a survey of bird behaviour in relation to recreational disturbance on key lakes.	£40,000	2016-17	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Natural England	RSPB, Nene NIA Partnership, Local nature partnership

<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>	Undertake a survey of the lakes to understand the distribution of waterbirds within the SPA.	£40,000	2016-17	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Natural England	RSPB, Nene NIA Partnership, Local nature partnership

<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>1E</b>	Establish a Joint Strategic Partnership.	Staff time	2015-20	Partnership agreement	Staff time	Natural England	East Northamptonshire District Council, Northampton Borough Council, Northamptonshire County Council, RSPB, South Northamptonshire District Council, The Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs, Northants and Peterboro, Wellingborough Borough Council, Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire, River Nene Regional Park, Nene NIA Partnership, West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit, North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit
<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>1F</b>	Establish a wardening scheme within the SPA.	Staff time	2015-20	Partnership agreement	Staff time	Natural England	Nene Valley NIA, RSPB, The Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs, Northants and Peterboro, River Nene Regional Park, Rockingham Forest 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>1G</b>	Ensure complete coverage of WeBS counts across the SPA	Staff time	2014-20	Existing Local Project	Staff time	Natural England	n/a

## 2 Planning Permission: general

There continues to be an increase in built and recreational development within and around the SPA leading to loss and fragmentation of habitat, and increased disturbance. Seven local planning authorities are involved with decision making; policies can be inconsistent across the authorities or provide insufficient protection.

<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>	Develop a Supplementary Planning Document relating to the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA.	Staff time	2014-15	Advice	Staff time	Natural England	East Northamptonshire District Council, Northampton Borough Council, Northamptonshire County Council, RSPB, South Northamptonshire District Council, Wellingborough Borough Council, West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit, North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit

<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 a complete coverage of WeBS counts is maintained across the SPA.	Staff time	2015-20	Existing Local Project	Staff time	Natural England	n/a

### 3 Fisheries: Freshwater

An increasing number of lakes are being utilised as freshwater fisheries; overstocking of certain fish species can lead to declines in water quality and availability of food for waterbirds which feed on aquatic plants and invertebrates. The issuing of licences to control fish-eating birds can reduce the populations of species for which the site is important.

<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>	Develop fishery management plans for key fisheries within the SPA, focusing on those where a HRA will be needed as part of the new Live Fish Movement Scheme or licensing activities relating to cormorants.	Staff time	2014-16	Non-Natural England funded site management plan	Staff time	Natural England	Environment Agency, Fisheries, Angling Trust(s)
<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>	Ensure a complete coverage of WeBS counts is maintained across the SPA.	Staff time	2015-20	Existing Local Project	Staff time	Natural England	n/a

### 4 Change in land management

Continued habitat management is required to ensure the balance of short grassland, reedbed, fen and open water is maintained. For example: grazing or mowing is required to maintain short grassland required by wigeon and golden plover; scrub /tree control is required to control invasive scrub and willow to maintain open sightlines and access to waterbodies; scrub removal and water level management is required to maintain suitable habitats in reedbeds for wintering bittern. There remains a significant area which is not currently under appropriate management and where existing mechanisms are not proving effective.

<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>	Introduce grazing and scrub clearance to remaining unmanaged areas. Ensure management continues across the site and takes into account habitat changes as a result of climate change.	Not yet determined	2015-16	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Common Agricultural Policy 2014-20 (New Environmental Land Management Scheme)	Conservation Enhancement Scheme (CES), New Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMS)	Natural England	Landowner(s)



## Site details

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

### Qualifying features

#UK Special responsibility

<b>Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA</b>	A140(NB) <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> : European golden plover
	Waterbird assemblage
	A021(NB) <i>Botaurus stellaris</i> : Great bittern
	A051(NB) <i>Anas strepera</i> : Gadwall

### Site location and links

#### Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA

Area (ha) <b>1357.67</b>	Grid reference <b>SP966717</b>	<a href="#">Map link</a>
Local Authorities	Northamptonshire	
Site Conservation Objectives	<a href="#">European Site Conservation Objectives for Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits 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>	

## 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.*

### Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA

*River basin*

[Anglian RBMP](#)

*WFD Management catchment*

Nene

*WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)*

GB105032045060, GB105032045090, GB105032045140, GB105032045230, GB105032045330, GB105032050383, GB30537913

## Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA	Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SSSI

  

National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA	n/a

  

Ramsar	
Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA	Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits

  

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)	
Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA	n/a

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1.0	18/12/2014	

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

