

Site Improvement Plan

Mersey Estuary

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)

UK9005131 Mersey Estuary SPA

Site description

The Mersey Estuary is a large sheltered estuary and comprises an unusual configuration with a narrow mouth and wide shallow basin. It is composed of extensive intertidal mud and sandflats on the northern and southern shores of the estuary, distinct areas of rocky shore and areas of saltmarsh which are constantly eroding and accreting.

The saltmarsh areas are either firm sandy areas or are riddled with muddy creeks. The large areas of intertidal sand and mudflats are submerged at high tide, and exposed in the estuary at low tide providing an important feeding habitat for birds. The estuary also provides extensive roosting sites for large populations of waterbirds and is of major importance during the winter for duck and wader species and for supporting wader populations moving along the west coast of Britain during the spring and autumn migration periods.

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 Changes in species distributions	Pressure	A048(NB) Common shelduck, A052(NB) Eurasian teal, A054(NB) Pintail, A140(NB) Golden Plover, A149(NB) Dunlin, A156(NB) Black-tailed Godwit, A162(NB) Common redshank, Waterbird assemblage	Site-specific analysis to ascertain reasons for bird declines	Natural England, RSPB, British Trust for Ornithology (BTO)
2 Invasive species	Pressure/Threat	A048(NB) Common shelduck, A052(NB) Eurasian teal, A054(NB) Pintail	Explore management options for Canada geese and monitor for other invasive non-native species	Liverpool City Council, Natural England, RSPB
3 Public Access/Disturbance	Pressure	A054(NB) Pintail, A140(NB) Golden Plover, A156(NB) Black-tailed Godwit, A162(NB) Common redshank	Engage with the public to minimise disturbance	Halton Borough Council, Liverpool City Council, 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 Changes in species distributions

Recently commissioned reports indicate there have been large decreases in bird numbers on this SPA compared to local SPAs and regional trends. There is a need to investigate and understand reasons for these changes.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
1A	Investigate bird declines.	£30,000	2015-17	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Natural England	Natural England	RSPB, British Trust for Ornithology (BTO)

2 Invasive species

The population of Canada geese has significantly increased on the site introducing resource competition with some bird species e.g. via increased grazing and increased nutrient pressure. There is a threat from the spread and increase in density of invasive non-native species, such as Chinese mitten crab.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
2A	Investigate management options for Canada geese.	£10,000	2015-18	Invasive Control Plan: Invasive Species Control Programme	Natural England	Natural England	Liverpool City Council, RSPB
2B	Monitor the estuary for evidence of mitten crab, and investigate its potential impact on the site's features.	£20,000	2015-18	Invasive Control Plan: Invasive Species Control Programme	Natural England	Natural England	North Western Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (IFCA)

3 Public Access/Disturbance

Users of public footpaths immediately adjacent to the north shore of the site can cause disturbance to birds roosting and feeding at this location.

<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	Minimise disturbance by recreational users via signage, awareness raising and education.	£10,000	2016	Advice: Education & awareness raising	Natural England	Natural England	Halton Borough Council, Liverpool City Council

Site details

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

Qualifying features

#UK Special responsibility

Mersey Estuary SPA

A052(NB) *Anas crecca*: Eurasian teal

A048(NB) *Tadorna tadorna*: Common shelduck

A054(NB) *Anas acuta*: Northern pintail

A140(NB) *Pluvialis apricaria* : European golden plover

A156(NB) *Limosa limosa islandica*: Black-tailed godwit

A162(NB) *Tringa totanus*: Common redshank

A149(NB) *Calidris alpina alpina*: Dunlin

Site location and links

Mersey Estuary SPA

Area (ha) **5023.35** Grid reference **SJ451800** [Map link](#)

Local Authorities Cheshire; Halton; Liverpool; Wirral

Site Conservation Objectives [Mersey Estuary SPA](#)

European Marine Site conservation advice [Mersey Estuary SPA](#)

Regulation 33/35 Package [Regulation 33/35 package link](#)

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.

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<i>River basin</i>	North West	North West RBMP
<i>WFD Management catchment</i>	Mersey Estuary, Weaver/Gowy	
<i>WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)</i>	GB112068060330, GB112068060350	

Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
Mersey Estuary SPA	New Ferry SSSI Mersey Estuary SSSI
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
Mersey Estuary SPA	n/a
Ramsar	
Mersey Estuary SPA	Mersey Estuary
Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)	
Mersey Estuary SPA	n/a

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
0.3	15/10/2014	

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ipens2000

