

Site Improvement Plan

Fens Pools

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)

UK0030150 Fens Pools SAC

Site description

Fens Pool is located in the heart of the Dudley urban area. It is an SAC for its assemblage of Great Crested Newts and a SSSI for open and standing water as well as Amphibian populations.

The Great Crested Newts are under constant pressure from activities including: fly tipping; off road vehicles; unlicensed grazing and under-management of areas including the pools, woodland and scrub areas.

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 Overgrazing	Pressure	S1166 Great crested newt	Develop a robust plan with stakeholders to remove horses	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, West Midlands Police
2 Inappropriate scrub control	Pressure	S1166 Great crested newt	Implement a scrub management plan	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Natural England
3 Disease	Threat	S1166 Great crested newt	Continue monitoring programme	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Natural England, Pensnett Wildlife Trust
4 Water Pollution	Threat	S1166 Great crested newt	Review Dudley MBC's policies on pollution	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, West Midlands Police
5 Habitat fragmentation	Threat	S1166 Great crested newt	Improve habitat connectivity	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and Black Country, Pensnett Wildlife Trust

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 Overgrazing

High illicit stocking with tethered horses especially during the summer months means that the grass sward is severely overgrazed. There are indications that this is having a detrimental impact on the frog and toad population due to reduced availability of invertebrate food prey on the overgrazed grasslands. There is concern that this will be impacting the great crested newt (GCN) population in a similar way. The grass sward in Jan 2014 was less than 2cm and causing sediment run off around the breeding pool areas. The lengthy process involved in removing from site illegally present horses means the avoidance of damage is difficult. Even when horses can be removed often more appear within a short time period.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
1A	Liase with Dudley MBC, Police and RSPCA to have the horses removed more promptly when they are grazing too near the known GCN breeding pools during the GCN breeding months, and during the closed grazing season over winter to reduce soil runoff and poaching.	Not yet determined	2014-25	Major Landowner Group land ownership activities : Undertake Specific Management Works	Local Authority, Landowner(s), Police	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council	West Midlands Police

2 Inappropriate scrub control

Scrub management around the pools has not been carried out in the last few years. In addition some pools have dried out and are getting smaller due to vegetation encroachment. Discussions have taken place between the owner/ occupier and Natural England to address the scrub management and pool restoration over the next 3 years but the resources required to implement this require confirmation.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
2A	Implement a 3 year rotation scrub management plan, whilst maintaining cleared areas.	£5,000	2014-17	Habitat creation / restoration strategy: Habitat restoration	Local Authority, Landowner(s)	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council	Natural England

3 Disease

Infected alpine newts identified in 2009 with Chytrid fungus may pose a risk to the great crested newt population (GCN), the effects of this disease is unknown. Surveys since 2009 haven't detected the fungus in smooth, alpine or crested newts. The numbers of GCN has remained constant since 2009 even though the alpine newt numbers have increased, indicating that the alpine newts are not out-competing the GCN for food and having a detrimental impact on the notified feature.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
3A	Monitor Alpine Newts for signs by disease through visual checks and swabs.	£10,000	2015	Invasive Control Plan: Invasive Species Control Programme	Local Authority, Natural England	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council	Natural England, Pensnett Wildlife Trust

4 Water Pollution

Off road vehicles/burnt out vehicles pose a pollution threat to the GCN when the abandonment affects the breeding pools for the GCN. The local authority are now more proactive in removing the vehicles as soon as possible and have improved procedures and times scales for doing so.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
4A	Review Dudley MBC's policy on removing burnt out vehicles from the site, and what methods of pollution control are in place when fuel spillages occur from such incidents.	Not yet determined	2014	Major Landowner Group land ownership activities : Other	Local Authority, Landowner(s), Police	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council	West Midlands Police

5 Habitat fragmentation

Fens Pools is partially isolated as a result of its location with in a large urban area. The connectivity / genetic interchange with other great crested newt populations is believed to be low or non-existent. There is a need to improve the habitat linkages for the great crested newts by improving habitat corridors to other suitable sites in the local area, such as Barrow Hill SSSI and Saltwells LNR.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
5A	Investigate improvements to habitat connectivity to other suitable sites in the local area, such as Barrow Hill SSSI and Buckpool LNR.	Not yet determined	2014-20	Habitat creation / restoration strategy: Improvements to habitat connectivity	Local Authority, Landowner(s)	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council	The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and Black Country, Pensnett Wildlife Trust

Site details

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

Qualifying features

#UK Special responsibility

Fens Pools SAC S1166 *Triturus cristatus*: Great crested newt

Site location and links

Fens Pools SAC

Area (ha) **20.4** Grid reference **SO920888** [Map link](#)

Local Authorities Dudley

Site Conservation Objectives [European Site Conservation Objectives for Fens Pools 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.

Fens Pools SAC

<i>River basin</i>	Severn	Severn RBMP
<i>WFD Management catchment</i>	Severn Middle Worcestershire	
<i>WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)</i>	GB30937599, n/a	

Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
Fens Pools SAC	Fens Pools SSSI

National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
Fens Pools SAC	n/a

Ramsar	
Fens Pools SAC	n/a

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)	
Fens Pools SAC	n/a

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1.0	07/10/2014	

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