

Site Improvement Plan

Little Wittenham

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)

UK0030184 Little Wittenham SAC

Site description

One of the best-studied great crested newt sites in the UK, Little Wittenham comprises two main ponds set in a predominantly woodland context (broad-leaved and conifer woodland is present).

There are also areas of grassland, with sheep grazing and arable bordering the woodland to the south and west. The River Thames is just to the north of the site, and a hill fort to the south. Large numbers of great crested newts *Triturus cristatus* have been recorded in the two main ponds, and research has revealed that they range several hundred metres into the woodland blocks.

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 Invasive species	Pressure/Threat	S1166 Great crested newt	Remove fish from breeding ponds	Environment Agency, Earth Trust
2 Invasive species	Threat	S1166 Great crested newt	Construct further ponds in the SAC to provide additional fish-free breeding habitat	Environment Agency, Earth Trust
3 Public Access/Disturbance	Threat	S1166 Great crested newt	Conduct audits to determine the best locations for signed access routes, and construct new access routes	Natural England, South Oxfordshire District Council, Earth 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 Invasive species

Predation by fish inappropriately released into the ponds by members of the public, is seriously reducing the population of Great Crested Newts. The fish need to be completely eliminated. This is not possible using electro-fishing, because it fails to kill very small fish.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
1A	Drain down the existing ponds for 3 weeks when the Great crested newts are not present, electro-fish to remove larger fish, and then allow the ponds to dry out completely to kill all small fish.	£4,000	2014-16	Invasive Control Plan: Invasive Species Control Programme	Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), BIFFA award: landfill tax, Earth Trust fundraising, Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE)	Earth Trust	Environment Agency

2 Invasive species

There is a reduction in the Great crested newt population & breeding success due to existing fish in one of the main breeding ponds.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
2A	Construction of further ponds in SAC to provide additional fish-free breeding habitat for Great Crested Newts	£50,000	2014-17	Habitat creation / restoration strategy: Improvements to habitat connectivity	Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), BIFFA award: landfill tax, Earth Trust fundraising, Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE)	Earth Trust	Environment Agency

3 Public Access/Disturbance

There is an expected increase in visitor pressure with the expansion of nearby towns and villages.

<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	A study should be carried out, to understand how increased visitor pressure will affect the Great crested newt population and their habitats.	Not yet determined	2014-15	Mechanism not identified / develop mechanism	Developer, S106 Agreement	South Oxfordshire District Council	Natural England, Earth Trust

Site details

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

Qualifying features

#UK Special responsibility

Little Wittenham SAC S1166 *Triturus cristatus*: Great crested newt

Site location and links

Little Wittenham SAC

Area (ha)	68.76	Grid reference	SU572929	Map link
Local Authorities			Oxfordshire	
Site Conservation Objectives				European Site Conservation Objectives for Little Wittenham 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.

Little Wittenham SAC

River basin

Thames

[Thames RBMP](#)

WFD Management catchment

Thame and South Chilterns

WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)

n/a

Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
Little Wittenham SAC	Little Wittenham SSSI

National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
Little Wittenham SAC	n/a

Ramsar	
Little Wittenham SAC	n/a

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)	
Little Wittenham SAC	n/a

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

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ipens2000

