

Site Improvement Plan

South Hams

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)

UK0012650 South Hams SAC

Site description

The South Hams SAC is comprised of several but separate component SSSIs. The South Hams SAC in south-west England is thought to hold the largest population of Greater horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum* in the UK, and is the only one containing more than 1,000 adult bats. It contains the largest known maternity roost in the UK and possibly Europe. The site contains both maternity and hibernation sites. Many of the roosts are within caves not open to the public.

The SAC is important for its extensive limestone grassland, some areas on the plateau support European dry heath characteristic of acid soil. The limestone headland cliffs of Torbay supports calcareous grassland and scrubland facies. The site is exceptional in that it supports a number of rare and scarce vascular plants typical of the oceanic southern temperate and Mediterranean-Atlantic elements of the British flora. The SAC also supports areas of *Tilio-Acerion* ravine forest which is woodland containing ash, wych elm and small leaved lime and field maple.

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 Change in land management	Pressure	S1304 Greater horseshoe bat	Advice and grants to farmers, research and public engagement	Blackdown Hills AONB, Devon Wildlife Trust, East Devon AONB, Natural England, North Devon AONB, South Devon AONB, Tamar Valley AONB, Bat Conservation Trust, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (South-West), Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust, Vincent Wildlife Trust
2 Planning Permission: general	Threat	S1304 Greater horseshoe bat	Planning guidance and advice; SAC and SSSI notification review	Dartmoor National Park Authority, Devon County Council, Natural England, South Hams District Council, Teignbridge District Council, Torbay Borough Council, Bat Conservation Trust, Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust, Vincent Wildlife Trust

3	Physical modification	Pressure/ Threat	S1304 Greater horseshoe bat	Investigate cumulative impacts of rubbish encroachment on Greater horseshoe bats	Natural England
4	Inappropriate vegetation management	Threat	S1304 Greater horseshoe bat	Ensure routine maintenance and monitoring of roost entrances	Natural England, Bat Conservation Trust
5	Public Access/Disturbance	Pressure/ Threat	H8310 Caves not open to the public, S1304 Greater horseshoe bat	Investigate the potential impacts of, and mitigation for, public disturbance	Devon County Council, Natural England
6	Forestry and woodland management	Pressure	H9180 Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes	Prepare and implement a woodland management plan	Natural England
7	Public Access/Disturbance	Pressure	H6210 Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone (important orchid sites), S1304 Greater horseshoe bat	Investigate the potential impacts on calcareous grassland of dogs and erosion	Natural England
8	Inappropriate scrub control	Threat	H1230 Vegetated sea cliffs, H4030 European dry heaths, H6210 Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone (important orchid sites)	Control scrub on calcareous grassland	Torbay Borough Council, Bat Conservation Trust, Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust
9	Air Pollution: risk of atmospheric nitrogen deposition	Pressure/ Threat	H1230 Vegetated sea cliffs, H4030 European dry heaths, H6210 Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone (important orchid sites), H9180 Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes, S1304 Greater horseshoe bat	Investigate potential atmospheric nitrogen impacts	Not yet determined

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 Change in land management

Changes in pasture or grazing management may reduce the value of the habitat for foraging by Greater horseshoe bats. Changes to hedgerow management may also reduce their value to the bats.

<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>
1A	Provide information to landowners/managers about appropriate management of foraging habitats for bats.	£200,000	2015-20	Existing Local Project	Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Local partnership	Devon Wildlife Trust	Blackdown Hills AONB, Devon County Council, East Devon AONB, Natural England, North Devon AONB, South Devon AONB, Tamar Valley AONB, Bat Conservation Trust, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (South-West), Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust, Vincent Wildlife 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>
1B	Promote the importance of bat conservation to the general public.	£200,000	2015-20	Existing Local Project	Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Local partnership	Devon Wildlife Trust	Blackdown Hills AONB, Devon County Council, East Devon AONB, Natural England, North Devon AONB, South Devon AONB, Tamar Valley AONB, Bat Conservation Trust, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (South-West), Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust, Vincent Wildlife 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>
1C	Provide small-scale capital grants to landowner/managers where Natural England grant schemes are not available.	£70,000	2015-20	Existing Local Project	Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Local partnership	Devon Wildlife Trust	Blackdown Hills AONB, Devon County Council, East Devon AONB, Natural England, North Devon AONB, South Devon AONB, Tamar Valley AONB, Bat Conservation Trust, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (South-West), Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust, Vincent Wildlife 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>
1D	Research the availability and use of suitable habitat by Greater horseshoe bats.	£500,000	2015-20	Existing Local Project	Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Local partnership	Devon Wildlife Trust	Blackdown Hills AONB, Devon County Council, East Devon AONB, Natural England, North Devon AONB, South Devon AONB, Tamar Valley AONB, Bat Conservation Trust, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (South-West), Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust, Vincent Wildlife Trust

2 Planning Permission: general

Development on the land between the five SSSIs that make up the South Hams SAC could have an impact on bats through loss of foraging habitat, loss of minor roost sites, and disruption of flightpaths (the latter particularly through light pollution). The issue is generally handled through the planning process by the local planning authorities with advice from Natural England.

<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>
2A	Refine and promote advice and guidance on development control and strategic planning.	£50,000	2015-20	Advice	Natural England, Other stakeholder(s) contributions	Natural England	Dartmoor National Park Authority, Devon County Council, South Hams District Council, Teignbridge District Council, Torbay Borough Council

<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>
2B	Explore the opportunity to undertake a review of the South Hams SAC boundary.	Not yet determined	2015-20	Designation strategy: Other	Staff time	Natural England	Vincent Wildlife 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>
2C	Investigate re-notifying Berry Head to Sharkham Point SSSI to include the Greater horseshoe bats as a notified feature.	Not yet determined	2015-20	Designation strategy: Notification Amendment	Staff time	Natural England	Bat Conservation Trust, Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust

3 Physical modification

The infilled rubbish tip at the old entrance of Bakers Pit is causing the temperature and humidity to rise. Rubbish is leaching into the cave entrance and could have an adverse effect on the hibernating bat roosts for Greater horseshoe bats. However, this particular part of the site is not the major roost and the issue has therefore been assigned a relatively low priority.

<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	Determine the potential impact of rubbish encroachment within Bakers Pit by monitoring of temperature and humidity within the site and other possible emissions over a period of time.	£10,000	2015-20	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Natural England	Natural England

4 Inappropriate vegetation management

There is a need to put a maintenance programme in place and to identify resources to manage vegetation around the entrances and to maintain the grilles and gates on some sites.

<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>
4A	Agree a programme of maintenance for all entrances to bat roosts, including grilles and vegetation.	£10,000	2016	Conservation Enhancement Scheme (CES)	Natural England	Natural England	Bat Conservation Trust

5 Public Access/Disturbance

Roost sites are protected, where necessary by grilles to control access. Activities of climbers and general recreational use nearby could potentially cause 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>
5A	Identify where public recreation may be causing disturbance, and develop a plan of mitigation.	£5,000	2016	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Natural England	Natural England	Devon County Council

6 Forestry and woodland management

There is a need to manage the woodland to create conditions favourable to lichens. This might include measures such as ivy removal, woodland thinning, and grazing. A management plan will consider the best methods for the site.

<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>
6A	Agree and implement a woodland management plan for the site.	Funds secured within existing HLS agreement	2015	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme (HLS)	Higher Level Stewardship (HLS)	Natural England	n/a

7 Public Access/Disturbance

The intensive use of the grasslands of the Berry Head SSSI by thousands of walkers each year is reducing the sward height so that flowering is unlikely - in places the sward is worn away to bare ground. Many of the walkers are accompanied by dogs whose urine and faeces may alter the nutrient balance in the soil that supports the grassland.

<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>
7A	Investigate the effects of erosion and eutrophication by walkers and dogs on the calcareous grasslands of Berry Head.	Not yet determined	2017	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Staff time	Natural England	n/a

8 Inappropriate scrub control

In the absence of grazing, scrub species (blackthorn, European gorse, etc) naturally colonise open habitats and eliminate small flowering plants through shade and changes to the soil.

<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>
8A	Implement the management agreement for the control of scrub on Berry Head calcareous grasslands and coastal slopes	Not yet determined	2014-20	Partnership agreement	Developer	Local partnership	Torbay Borough Council, Bat Conservation Trust, Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust

9 Air Pollution: risk of atmospheric nitrogen deposition

The SAC habitats are naturally low in nutrients and are therefore susceptible to eutrophication. Nitrogen deposition exceeds the site-relevant critical load for ecosystem protection and hence there is a risk of harmful effects, but the sensitive features are currently considered to be in favourable condition on the site. This requires further investigation.

<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>
9A	Further investigate potential atmospheric nitrogen impacts on the site based on application of guidance from Chief Scientist Group Nitrogen Task and Finish Group	Not yet determined	2014-17	Site Nitrogen Action Plan	Not yet determined	Not yet determined	Not yet determined

Site details

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

Qualifying features

#UK Special responsibility

South Hams SAC

H8310 Caves not open to the public

H6210# Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*)

H4030 European dry heaths

H1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts

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

S1304 *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*: Greater horseshoe bat

Site location and links

South Hams SAC

Area (ha) **129.53**

Grid reference **SX942565**

[Map link](#)

Local Authorities

Dartmoor National Park Authority; Devon County Council; South Hams District Council; Teignbridge Borough Council; Torbay Borough Council

Site Conservation Objectives

[European Site Conservation Objectives for South Hams 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.

South Hams SAC

<i>River basin</i>	South West	South West RBMP
<i>WFD Management catchment</i>	South Devon	
<i>WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)</i>	GB108046008350, GB108046008480	

Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
South Hams SAC	Bulkamore Iron Mine SSSI Chudleigh Caves & Woods SSSI Buckfastleigh Caves SSSI Berry Head to Sharkham Point SSSI Haytor & Smallacombe Iron Mines SSSI
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
South Hams SAC	Berry Head NNR
Ramsar	
South Hams SAC	n/a
Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)	
South Hams SAC	n/a

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

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