

Site Improvement Plan

Castle Eden Dene

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)

UK0012768 Castle Eden Dene SAC

Site description

Castle Eden Dene represents the most extensive northerly native occurrence of Yew *Taxus baccata* woods in the UK. Extensive yew groves are found in association with Ash-Elm *Fraxinus-Ulmus* woodland and it is the only site selected for yew woodland on magnesian limestone in north-east England.

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	H91J0 Yew-dominated woodland	Investigate impact on yew woodland and remove/control invasive species	Natural England
2 Forestry and woodland management	Pressure/ Threat	H91J0 Yew-dominated woodland	Prioritise thinning/felling of conifers and non-native trees to benefit yew.	Natural England
3 Deer	Pressure/ Threat	H91J0 Yew-dominated woodland	Investigate the deer population and develop a control strategy	Local Authority(ies), Natural England, Local deer group, Consultant
4 Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition	Pressure	H91J0 Yew-dominated woodland	Control, reduce and ameliorate atmospheric nitrogen impacts. Implement site nitrogen action plan	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 Invasive species

Rhododendron and Himalayan balsam are fairly widespread in Castle Eden Dene, and other non-native species like Snowberry are also present and may be spreading. These suppress the native understorey vegetation and may suppress regeneration of saplings too. The extent of the issue within the yew compartments of the site needs to be assessed. Control of invasives is in the NNR management plan and is happening, but yew groves may need to be prioritised for action in the next NNR five year plan due in 2016.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
1A	Survey of the yew woodland specifically, to see if invasive species (Rhododendron, Himalayan Balsam and snowberry) are affecting these areas, and to what extent.	Staff time	2015-16	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Staff time	Natural England	n/a
1B	If invasive species are found to be affecting yew woodland, add specific actions for their control into the next 5yr NNR management plan due to start in 2016.	Staff time	2015-16	National Nature Reserve (NNR) management plan	Staff time	Natural England	n/a
1C	If invasive species are found to be affecting yew woodland, remove/control these species.	Staff time	2014 onwards	Major Landowner Group land ownership activities : Undertake Specific Management Works	Staff time	Natural England	n/a

2 Forestry and woodland management

Non-native conifers and other non-native species have been planted in the past, and where these form tall dense canopies they are thought to be shading out the yew and suppressing regeneration. Even where the other canopy trees are native, it would probably be beneficial to do some thinning and felling around the stands of yew where yew is being shaded out.

<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	Identify stands of conifers and non-native tree species which are shading out yew.	Staff time	2015-16	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Staff time	Natural England	n/a
2B	Target some thinning and removing of non-native trees/conifers specifically around stands of yew that are being shaded out and are not able to regenerate.	Staff time	2014 onwards	Major Landowner Group land ownership activities : Undertake Specific Management Works	Staff time	Natural England	n/a
2C	The current 5 yr NNR management plan expires at end March 2016 and a new plan will need to be drawn up - opportunity to include specific actions for thinning/felling around yew groves.	Staff time	2015-16	National Nature Reserve (NNR) management plan	Staff time	Natural England	n/a

3 Deer

Deer are known to be present and whilst the size of the population is unknown, evidence of browsed yew seedlings suggests they are having an impact on yew regeneration and may need to be controlled.

<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	Develop a study to investigate the impact of deer browsing on natural regeneration of yew. This study should provide robust evidence to inform a strategic approach to deer management.	£5,000	2015-16	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Natural England	Local Authority(ies), Local deer group, Consultant

<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>
3B	Install exclosures close to (but not under) existing yew groves across the SAC to exclude deer, and monitor. Adapt deer management practices in response to observations.	£4,000	2015	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Natural England (NNR running costs)	Natural England	n/a

4 Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition

Nitrogen deposition exceeds site relevant critical loads.

<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	Control, reduce and ameliorate atmospheric nitrogen impacts	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

Castle Eden Dene SAC

H91J0# *Taxus baccata* woods of the British Isles

Site location and links

Castle Eden Dene SAC

Area (ha) **194.4** Grid reference **NZ435397** [Map link](#)

Local Authorities Durham

Site Conservation Objectives [European Site Conservation Objectives for Castle Eden Dene 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.

Castle Eden Dene SAC

River basin	Northumbria RBMP
WFD Management catchment	Wear
WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)	GB103025075930

Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
Castle Eden Dene SAC	Castle Eden Dene SSSI

National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
Castle Eden Dene SAC	Castle Eden Dene NNR

Ramsar	
Castle Eden Dene SAC	n/a

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)	
Castle Eden Dene SAC	n/a

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1.0	15/12/2014	

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