

Site Improvement Plan

North Somerset & Mendip Bats

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)

UK0030052 North Somerset & Mendip Bats SAC

Site description

An archipelago site, centred on the Mendip Hills, of highly variable component sites including the largest area of ancient woodland in the former county of Avon, Cheddar Gorge and surrounding sites, as well as caves, mines and buildings in the surrounding areas. The SAC as a whole supports 3% of the UK population of Greater horseshoe bats and internationally significant populations of Lesser horseshoe bats. The site also contains internationally important ravine woodland and calcareous grassland interest as supporting features of the bats and also in their own right..

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 Undergrazing	Pressure/ Threat	H6210 Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone (important orchid sites)	Advice and grants to land owners and managers, research and public engagement	Avon Wildlife Trust, Bath and North East Somerset Council, Mendip District Council, Mendip Hills AONB, National Trust, Natural England, North Somerset District Council, Somerset County Council, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Bat Conservation Trust, Vincent Wildlife Trust, Highways authority, Local nature partnership, Longleat Estate
2 Planning Permission: general	Pressure/ Threat	S1303 Lesser horseshoe bat, S1304 Greater horseshoe bat	Planning guidance and advice	Avon Wildlife Trust, Bath and North East Somerset Council, Mendip District Council, Mendip Hills AONB, North Somerset District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset County Council, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Bat Conservation Trust, Vincent Wildlife Trust, Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Local nature partnership

3	Change to site conditions	Pressure/ Threat	S1303 Lesser horseshoe bat, S1304 Greater horseshoe bat	Investigate mine stability and stabilisation solutions	Natural England
4	Forestry and woodland management	Pressure	H9180 Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes	Control sycamore	Natural England
5	Disease	Threat	H9180 Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes, S1303 Lesser horseshoe bat	Monitor Ash dieback	Forestry Commission, Natural England
6	Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition	Pressure	H6210 Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone (important orchid sites), H9180 Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes, S1303 Lesser horseshoe bat, S1304 Greater horseshoe bat	Investigate potential atmospheric nitrogen impacts on the site	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 Undergrazing

Grazing of species rich grassland is inadequate in some areas due to a lack of infrastructure such as fencing. This impacts on both the grassland and foraging bats that rely on dung fauna as prey. Scrub encroachment is threatening the loss of species-rich limestone grassland communities. This is also the result of a reduction in grazing pressure.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
1A	Provide information and advice to land managers about appropriate management of calcareous grassland and foraging habitats for bats.	£100,000	2015-20	Advice: Education & awareness raising	Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Conservation and Enhancement Scheme (CES), Agri-environment scheme	Natural England	Avon Wildlife Trust, Bath and North East Somerset Council, Mendip District Council, Mendip Hills AONB, North Somerset District Council, Somerset County Council, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Bat Conservation Trust, Vincent Wildlife Trust, Local nature partnership

<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	Provide small-scale capital grants to land managers where Natural England grant schemes are not available.	£100,000	2015-20	Mechanism not identified / develop mechanism	Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Conservation and Enhancement Scheme (CES), Agri-environment scheme	Natural England	Avon Wildlife Trust, Bath and North East Somerset Council, Mendip District Council, Mendip Hills AONB, North Somerset District Council, Somerset County Council, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Bat Conservation Trust, Vincent Wildlife Trust, Local nature partnership

<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	Support and develop an adequate grazing regime on an unfenced site.	£100,000	2015-17	Mechanism not identified / develop mechanism	Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Conservation and Enhancement Scheme (CES), Agri-environment scheme	Natural England	National Trust, Highways authority, Longleat Estate

2 Planning Permission: general

Development on the land between the sites that make up the North Somerset and Mendip 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	Produce and promote advice and guidance on development control and strategic planning.	£20,000	2015-20	Advice	Natural England, Other stakeholder(s) contributions	Natural England	Avon Wildlife Trust, Bath and North East Somerset Council, Mendip District Council, Mendip Hills AONB, North Somerset District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset County Council, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Bat Conservation Trust, Vincent Wildlife Trust, Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Local nature partnership

3 Change to site conditions

Mine instability at the primary entrance which is unsupported due to rotten shoring. Unstable mines at risk of collapse may no longer be used by bats. Bats using the mines may be at risk from internal collapses or a full collapse of the entrance. Detailed monitoring of unstable sites cannot be carried 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>
3A	Investigate the stability of mine and cave systems, identify and implement options for stabilisation.	£50,000	2015-17	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Natural England	n/a

4 Forestry and woodland management

Excessive sycamore growth may be threatening the species composition of important ravine woodland.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
4A	Develop a woodland management strategy in light of the potential threat/ impact of ash dieback and agree the management required to achieve favourable condition.	Not yet determined	2016-19	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Common Agricultural Policy 2014-20 (New Environmental Land Management Scheme)	Rural Development Programme (RDPE)	Natural England	n/a

5 Disease

An outbreak of Ash dieback would impact on woodland within the North Somerset and Mendip Bats SAC as it includes areas of woodland with a high proportion of Ash. Ash trees are also used in the wider landscape by commuting bats within linear features and as feeding perches.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
5A	Consider employing a lead adviser to monitor the spread and impact of ash dieback in the local area according to national guidance, and develop a strategy to improve the resilience of the site to disease.	£100,000	2015 onwards	Advice	EU LIFE, European funding (Horizon 2020)	Forestry Commission	Natural England

6 Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition

Nitrogen deposition exceeds site-relevant critical loads.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
6A	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	2015-17	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Natural England	Not yet determined

Site details

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

Qualifying features

#UK Special responsibility

North Somerset & Mendip Bats SAC

S1303 *Rhinolophus hipposideros*: Lesser horseshoe bat

S1304 *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*: Greater horseshoe bat

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

H8310 Caves not open to the public

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

Site location and links

North Somerset & Mendip Bats SAC

Area (ha) **561.19** Grid reference **ST480544** [Map link](#)

Local Authorities Bath and North East Somerset; North Somerset; Somerset

Site Conservation Objectives [European Site Conservation Objectives for North Somerset & Mendip Bats 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 (RMBP) 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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River basin

[Severn RBMP](#)

WFD Management catchment

Bristol Avon & North Somerset Streams

WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)

GB109052021520

Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
North Somerset & Mendip Bats SAC	King's Wood & Urchin Wood SSSI Ebbor Gorge SSSI Compton Martin Ochre Mine SSSI Banwell Ochre Caves SSSI The Cheddar Complex SSSI Brockley Hall Stables SSSI Wookey Hole SSSI Banwell Caves SSSI
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
North Somerset & Mendip Bats SAC	n/a
Ramsar	
North Somerset & Mendip Bats SAC	n/a
Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)	
North Somerset & Mendip Bats SAC	n/a

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1.0	17/04/2015	

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ipens2000

