

Site Improvement Plan

South Wight Maritime

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)

UK0030061 South Wight Maritime SAC

Site description

South Wight Maritime SAC is a naturally dynamic and diverse site on the south coast of the Isle of Wight. The west is dominated by exposed greensand bedrock and chalk cliffs and reefs while the eastern side is more sheltered with areas of sandstone and limestone. Large boulder reefs are found in the south around Ventnor and St Catherine's Point. The site's large range of habitats results in a high diversity of marine communities, some of which are found in only a handful of locations throughout England.

The chalk cliffs and reefs around The Needles, Freshwater Bay and Culver Cliff represent some of the best in Britain and erosion has resulted in the formation of a series of caves that host rare algal species restricted to this type of habitat.

The subtidal chalk reefs support diverse assemblages of red seaweeds and sponges. Bembridge in the east is considered a transition zone between warmer waters in the west and cooler waters to the east and several species such as maerl and peacocks tail seaweed are thought to be at their most easterly distribution here. Bembridge has extensive flat limestone ledges hosting large numbers of algal species and burrowing molluscs, and naturally occurring lagoons between the ledges provide shelter for seagrass meadows to develop.

In Sandown Bay, the chalk reefs are covered by thin veneers of sediment which provide the ideal habitat for black bream to nest and the site is also visited by larger species, with thresher sharks and leatherback turtle sightings in the deep waters off St Catherine's Point.

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	H1170 Reefs	Survey to establish a baseline and inform management	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Natural England
2 Inappropriate coastal management	Pressure/Threat	H1230 Vegetated sea cliffs	Consider reviewing the SAC boundary to include adjacent habitats	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Isle of Wight Council, Natural England
3 Public Access/Disturbance	Pressure	H1170 Reefs	Establish a baseline and reduce impacts through awareness raising	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Marine Management Organisation (MMO), Angling Trust(s), Royal Yachting Association (RYA), British Marine Federation
4 Physical modification	Threat	H1230 Vegetated sea cliffs	Review the Flood and Coastal Risk Management strategy	Isle of Wight Council, Natural England

5 Inappropriate coastal management	Pressure	H1230 Vegetated sea cliffs	Monitor changes in vegetation and consider management options	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Natural England
6 Physical modification	Pressure	H1230 Vegetated sea cliffs	Review evidence on legal status and impact of beach huts on natural processes	Isle of Wight Council, Natural England
7 Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine	Pressure	H1170 Reefs	Assess through Defra's revised approach to management of fisheries in European Marine Sites	Southern Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (IFCA)

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

There is evidence of a number of marine invasive non-native species (INNS) occurring within the Solent. These include the Carpet Sea Squirt (*Didemnum vexillum*) which can overgrow most hard substrata in the subtidal zone, including hard bodied sessile animals and plants, and poses a threat to SAC reef habitats if present.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
1A	Undertake a survey through the proposed Solent Aliens Project to investigate the presence and extent of high-risk invasive non-native species (INNS) within the SAC and to establish a baseline to inform future management.	£30,000	2016	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Natural England	Natural England	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust

2 Inappropriate coastal management

Areas of cliff habitat (H1230) in a number of SSSIs fall outside of the SAC boundary. Incorporation of these areas into the SAC boundary would enable a more coherent approach to site management and ensure the boundary is scientifically robust and that interest features are fully protected.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
2A	Survey and map using National Vegetation Classification (NVC) areas of SAC quality cliff habitat present within/adjacent to the Whitecliff Bay & Bembridge Ledges SSSI that is not presently SAC designated. Re-survey (using NVC) the existing SAC cliff habitats. This will provide evidence for considering an extension of notification.	£30,000	2015-17	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Natural England	Natural England	Isle of Wight 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	To determine if extent of SAC designation is adequate and appropriate (allowing dynamic hydrological, geomorphological and ecological process to be able to occur unhindered), within Compton Chine to Steephill Cove SSSI, Bonchurch Landslips SSSI, Bembridge Down SSSI, Compton Down SSSI, Headon Warren & West High Down SSSI and Whitecliff Bay to Bembridge Ledges SSSI, and beyond into adjacent undesignated habitat. Also assess against other qualifying interest features within the cliff habitat and supporting hinterland.	Not yet determined	2018-20	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Natural England	Natural England	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Isle of Wight Council

3 Public Access/Disturbance

There are potential impacts of recreational boat anchoring and landings upon subtidal reef and intertidal rocky shore habitats.

<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	Establish the type, location and extent of impacts from recreational boat anchoring and landing upon SAC features through stakeholder engagement.	Not yet determined	2014-15	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Natural England	Natural England	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Marine Management Organisation (MMO), Angling Trust(s), Royal Yachting Association (RYA), British Marine Federation

<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	If deemed necessary, raise awareness among recreational boat users of potential impacts of anchoring and landing upon designated features. For example through signage and educational materials.	£10,000	2016	Advice: Education & awareness raising	Local Authority, Natural England, Harbour Authority, Solent Forum, Wildlife Trust	Natural England	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Marine Management Organisation (MMO), Angling Trust(s), Royal Yachting Association (RYA), British Marine Federation

4 Physical modification

Potential measures to stabilise areas of SAC cliff habitat in the Compton Chine to Steephill Cove SSSI could impact upon habitat function.

<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	Review Flood & Coastal Risk Management strategies for South Wight to take account of findings of SAC features.	£1	2015-17	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	No funding required	Natural England	Isle of Wight Council

5 Inappropriate coastal management

Condition of vegetation communities is deteriorating as a result of fencing associated with rights-of-way prohibiting cliff edge grazing management from the landward side. Issue is combined with further observed changes in growth patterns, possibly resulting from climate change, causing a further deterioration in vegetation quality.

<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	Undertake a survey to establish the extent of the problem and provide a detailed baseline for monitoring changes in vegetation composition. There is also a need to consider sward management options.	£5000	2015-17	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Natural England	Natural England	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust

6 Physical modification

The presence of beach huts in areas of the Whitecliff Bay & Bembridge Ledges SSSI is reducing natural processes and the consequent diversity of SAC vegetation types.

<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	Review evidence on the extent to which beach huts and associated defences are reducing natural cliff fall processes and any resultant deterioration in vegetation quality. Review legal status of beach huts with local authority.	Not yet determined	2016-18	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Natural England	Isle of Wight Council	Natural England

7 Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine

The use of passive fishing gear (potting and netting) over reef habitats is identified as an 'amber risk' under Defra's revised approach to management of fisheries in EMSs. Where assessments indicate management is required, appropriate measures will be introduced by the Regulator by 2016. If management measures are established to protect the feature(s), on-going work will be required by the Regulator to ensure compliance and an appropriate level of reporting to ensure sites are well managed; and to enable Natural England to provide advice on the condition of features and potential condition threats.

<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	Where the assessments indicate management is required, introduce appropriate measures	Not yet determined	2016	Mechanism not identified / develop mechanism	n/a	Southern Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (IFCA)	n/a

Site details

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

Qualifying features

#UK Special responsibility

South Wight Maritime SAC	H8330 Submerged or partially submerged sea caves
	H1170 Reefs
	H1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts

Site location and links

South Wight Maritime SAC

Area (ha) **19862.71** Grid reference **SZ462771**

[Map link](#)

Local Authorities

Isle of Wight

Site Conservation Objectives

[South Wight Maritime SAC](#)

European Marine Site conservation advice

[Conservation Advice for European Marine Sites](#)

Regulation 33/35 Package

[Regulation 33/35 package link](#)

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 Wight Maritime SAC

<i>River basin</i>	South East	South East RBMP
<i>WFD Management catchment</i>	Isle of Wight	
<i>WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)</i>	GB107101005920, GB107101005940	

Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
South Wight Maritime SAC	Compton Chine to Steephill Cove SSSI Brading Marshes to St Helen's Ledges SSSI Compton Down SSSI Bonchurch Landslips SSSI Bembridge Down SSSI Whitecliff Bay & Bembridge Ledges SSSI Headon Warren & West High Down SSSI
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
South Wight Maritime SAC	n/a
Ramsar	
South Wight Maritime SAC	Solent & Southampton Water
Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)	
South Wight Maritime SAC	Solent & Southampton Water SPA

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1.0	06/10/2014	

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