

Site Improvement Plan

Lewes Downs

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)

UK0012832 Lewes Downs SAC

Site description

Lewes Downs is an isolated block of chalk grassland (CG2 and CG3), which forms part of the South Downs. The diversity of the habitats present, including unimproved species rich chalk grassland, is enhanced by the various aspects of the site, including south-facing slopes. Other habitats include areas of mixed scrub and semi-natural woodland.

The site supports a number of southern and oceanic species as well as nationally rare orchids including Early Spider Orchid *Ophrys sphegodes*, Burnt-tip Orchid *Orchis ustulata* and Musk Orchid *Herminium monorchis*. The colony of Burnt-tip Orchid is the largest in the UK.

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 Game management: pheasant rearing	Pressure	H6210 Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone (important orchid sites)	Improve the management of pheasant rearing land, to enhance grassland communities	Natural England, South Downs National Park Authority, Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT)
2 Undergrazing	Pressure	H6210 Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone (important orchid sites)	Improve grazing management	Natural England, Sussex Pony Grazing & Conservation Trust
3 Public Access/Disturbance	Pressure	H6210 Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone (important orchid sites)	Introduce measures to discourage public gatherings on sensitive grassland areas	Natural England
4 Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition	Pressure	H6210 Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone (important orchid sites)	Control, reduce and ameliorate 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 Game management: pheasant rearing

High numbers of pheasants can have adverse impacts on invertebrate communities, in particular, the larvae of important *Lepidoptera* species. This is particularly acute around areas with feeding bins; in this case, the woodland shaws. Inappropriate management of the grassland communities, in particular, undergrazing and allowing scrub to invade has negative impacts on the plant community. Such management can occur where the grassland community is being used for 'driving' birds to shoot.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
1A	Advice on improving grazing regimes and location of game management, to enhance chalk grassland and invertebrate communities.	Staff time	2016-26	Advice: Negotiation	Staff time	Natural England	South Downs National Park Authority, Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT)

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
1B	Where voluntary agreement is breached or incentives fail to improve game management, consider appropriate regulation options.	Not yet determined	2016-26	Enforcement	Not yet determined	Natural England	n/a

2 Undergrazing

The sward over much of Mt. Caburn tends to be uniform. A change to cattle or native pony grazing could help to improve this situation.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
2A	Introduce different livestock to encourage the growth of a more varied sward.	No cost	2015-25	National Nature Reserve (NNR) management plan	No funding required	Natural England	Sussex Pony Grazing & Conservation Trust

3 Public Access/Disturbance

Unconsented activities, including large-scale organised gatherings can create serious damage through trampling, particularly where these are concentrated in small areas of 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>
3A	Introduce 'soft approach' measures to discourage public gatherings and disturbance on sensitive chalk grassland areas.	Staff time	2015-25	National Nature Reserve (NNR) management plan	Natural England, Staff time	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	2015-20	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

Lewes Downs SAC

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

Site location and links

Lewes Downs SAC

Area (ha) **146.86** Grid reference **TQ441093** [Map link](#)

Local Authorities East Sussex

Site Conservation Objectives [European Site Conservation Objectives for Lewes Downs 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.

Lewes Downs SAC

River basin

[South East RBMP](#)

WFD Management catchment

Adur & Ouse

WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)

n/a

Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
Lewes Downs SAC	Lewes Downs SSSI

National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
Lewes Downs SAC	Lewes Downs (Mount Caburn) NNR

Ramsar	
Lewes Downs SAC	n/a

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)	
Lewes Downs SAC	n/a

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1.0	19/05/2015	

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ipens2000

