

Site Improvement Plan

West Dorset Alder Woods

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)

UK0030299 West Dorset Alder Woods SAC

Site description

The West Dorset Alder Woods SAC comprises mixed ash-alder woods found along the sinuous valleys in West Dorset. They have developed along the headwaters of alkaline streams and seepages having their origin in the chalk downland and issuing from the underlying Upper Greensand at its junction with the Gault Clay.

The wetter woods or carr form transitions to drier oak-ash woodland as well as associated further transitions to base-rich fens, reedswamp, fen meadow and acid grassland.

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 Deer	Pressure/ Threat	H6410 Purple moor-grass meadows, H9190 Dry oak-dominated woodland, H91E0 Alder woodland on floodplains, S1065 Marsh fritillary butterfly	Improve the effectiveness of deer management	Forestry Commission, Natural England
2 Water Pollution	Pressure	H6410 Purple moor-grass meadows, H9190 Dry oak-dominated woodland, H91E0 Alder woodland on floodplains, S1065 Marsh fritillary butterfly	Assess sources and reduce levels of diffuse pollution	Environment Agency, Natural England
3 Forestry and woodland management	Pressure	H9190 Dry oak-dominated woodland, H91E0 Alder woodland on floodplains	Negotiate the felling/removal of non-native plantation stands	Forestry Commission, Natural England
4 Undergrazing	Threat	H6410 Purple moor-grass meadows, S1065 Marsh fritillary butterfly	Provide advice on grazing and agreement aftercare, plus support for necessary infrastructure.	Defra, Dorset Wildlife Trust, Natural England
5 Invasive species	Pressure/ Threat	H6410 Purple moor-grass meadows, H9190 Dry oak-dominated woodland, H91E0 Alder woodland on floodplains, S1065 Marsh fritillary butterfly	Eradicate Himalayan balsam	Dorset County Council, Natural England
6 Disease	Threat	H6410 Purple moor-grass meadows, H9190 Dry oak-dominated woodland, H91E0 Alder woodland on floodplains, S1065 Marsh fritillary butterfly	Monitor ash die-back	Defra, Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA), Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA)

7	Water abstraction	Threat	H9190 Dry oak-dominated woodland, H91E0 Alder woodland on floodplains	Assess if abstractions are affecting the site's features	Environment Agency, Natural England
8	Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition	Threat	H9190 Dry oak-dominated woodland, S1065 Marsh fritillary butterfly	Control, reduce and ameliorate atmospheric nitrogen impacts	Not yet determined
9	Habitat fragmentation	Pressure/ Threat	H6410 Purple moor-grass meadows, H9190 Dry oak-dominated woodland, H91E0 Alder woodland on floodplains, S1065 Marsh fritillary butterfly	Improve habitat connectivity and buffer component parts of the SAC	Natural England, Local partnership

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 Deer

Deer grazing is less than predictable impact which may affect tree and understorey development. Trampling is possibly having localised impact on interest features. The local Deer Initiative is addressing some of the issues in terms of population control but this is not currently quantified.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
1A	Review the effectiveness of current deer (management plan and strategy and results to date) and intensify and improve where necessary.	£50,000	2014-20	Invasive Control Plan: Invasive Species Control Programme	Natural England, Forestry Commission	Natural England	Forestry Commission

2 Water Pollution

Agricultural management occurs at relatively low intensity levels in the core SAC area but issues exist due to localised more intensive dairy units and the threat of nutrient enrichment affecting fen habitats due to runoff is potentially significant. Nutrient enrichment of the waters supplying the site's wet habitats is a concern and could impact the SAC features. The extent of the issue is not fully understood.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
2A	Monitor and assess the water quality of drains, water courses and other features supplying water to the SAC particularly a suspected lateral seepage of nitrogen enriched groundwater from greensand outcrops. groundtruthing required and small DWPP to cover areas not covered by CSF. To take in sounding farms and landuse and provide capital infrastructure.	£20,000	2014-20	Diffuse Water Pollution Plan	Environment Agency, Natural England, Water Framework Directive (WFD)	Natural England	Environment Agency

<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	Develop and implement a Diffuse Water Pollution Plan to target problem areas of the site's catchment with CSF, NELMS advice and other nutrient reduction measures.	Not yet determined	2014-20	Diffuse Water Pollution Plan	Environment Agency, Natural England, Rural Development Programme (RDPE), Water Framework Directive (WFD)	Natural England	n/a

3 Forestry and woodland management

In a few instances non-native plantation stands need removal and replacement by native woodland habitat.

<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	Secure agreement with landowners enabling removal of non-native plantation stands.	£25,000	2016-20	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Common Agricultural Policy 2014-20 (New Environmental Land Management Scheme)	Rural Development Programme (RDPE)	Natural England	Forestry Commission

4 Undergrazing

Undergrazing is a key threat in regard to maintaining more open diverse fen and damp fen meadow vegetation. Targeted and careful grazing schemes should be implemented where possible (as demonstrated at various sites within the SAC). Outbreaks of bovine TB in cattle and stock movement restrictions are sometimes a factor increasing the difficulty of attracting graziers to small sites. In addition there may be a need for appropriate farm infrastructure to facilitate and support conservation grazing and enable flexibility of management given variable seasonal climate conditions.

<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	Provide grazing advice to non agri-environment scheme agreement holders, and increased aftercare to HLS agreement holders.	Not yet determined	2014-20	Advice: Negotiation	Rural Development Programme (RDPE), Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)	Dorset Wildlife Trust	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>
4B	Consider development of a 'small site supplement' in TB affected areas as part of NELMS to ensure sufficient cattle graziers can be attracted to graze small and difficult land in the SAC	£150,000	2016-20	Mechanism not identified / develop mechanism	Rural Development Programme (RDPE)	Natural England	n/a
<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>
4C	To meet complex grazing needs support the provision of cattle and sheep infrastructure, handling systems, and lose houses for conservation grazing animals to enable resilience to more changeable seasonal climate conditions.	£400,000	2015-20	Mechanism not identified / develop mechanism	EU Life, Rural Development Programme (RDPE), Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)	Natural England	Defra

5 Invasive species

Himalayan balsam is present along the river corridors and is highly invasive.

<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	Instigate a catchment based coordinated and systematic annual control programme for Himalayan balsam.	£100,000	2014-20	Invasive Control Plan: Invasive Species Control Programme	Environment Agency, Water Framework Directive (WFD)	Dorset County Council	Natural England

6 Disease

Ash die-back could significantly affect the ash component of the wet woodland habitat. Outbreaks of bovine TB in local cattle could indirectly result in less grazing taking place.

<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	Monitor the occurrence of ash-die back in and around the site.	£30,000	2014-20	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Defra	Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA), Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA)

7 Water abstraction

Public and private abstractions from the top of the site's river catchments could be affecting the hydrology necessary for the SAC features.

<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	Assess whether or not the SAC features are affected by abstraction pressure	Not yet determined	2014-20	Restoring Sustainable Abstraction Programme: Abstraction Licence	Environment Agency, Water Framework Directive (WFD)	Environment Agency	Natural England

8 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>
8A	Control, reduce and ameliorate atmospheric nitrogen impacts	Not yet determined	2014-20	Site Nitrogen Action Plan	Not yet determined	Not yet determined	Not yet determined

9 Habitat fragmentation

The SAC comprises a number of geographically separate components. The ecological resilience of these individual parts of the SAC could be improved by creating effective habitat connections and buffers where this is feasible.

<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	Develop a strategy to improve ecological connectivity including through the deployment of the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, land acquisition by conservation bodies and where appropriate the designated site review.	£1,500,000	2015-25	Habitat creation / restoration strategy: Improvements to habitat connectivity	EU Life, Rural Development Programme (RDPE), Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Voluntary conservation organisation	Natural England	Local partnership

Site details

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

Qualifying features

#UK Special responsibility

West Dorset Alder Woods SAC

H6410 Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*)

H9190 Old acidophilous oak woods with *Quercus robur* on sandy plains

H91E0# Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*)

S1065 *Euphydryas* (*Eurodryas*, *Hypodryas*) *aurinia*: Marsh fritillary butterfly

S1166 *Triturus cristatus*: Great crested newt

Site location and links

West Dorset Alder Woods SAC

Area (ha) **329.29** Grid reference **SY538968** [Map link](#)

Local Authorities Dorset

Site Conservation Objectives [European Site Conservation Objectives for West Dorset Alder Woods 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.

West Dorset Alder Woods SAC

River basin

[South West RBMP](#)

WFD Management catchment

Dorset

WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)

GB108044009590, GB108044009610, GB108044009620, GB108044009800

Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
West Dorset Alder Woods SAC	Powerstock Common & Wytherston Farm SSSI Toller Porcorum SSSI Woolcombe SSSI Aunt Mary's Bottom SSSI Mapperton & Poorton Vales SSSI Frome St Quintin SSSI
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
West Dorset Alder Woods SAC	n/a
Ramsar	
West Dorset Alder Woods SAC	n/a
Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)	
West Dorset Alder Woods SAC	n/a

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1.0	25/11/2014	

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