

# Site Improvement Plan

## Prescombe Down

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](mailto: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](mailto:enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk)

**This Site Improvement Plan covers the following Natura 2000 site(s)**

**UK0012553 Prescombe Down SAC**

## Site description

Prescombe Down SAC is a botanically rich downland site comprising a deep forking coombe system situated on the upper chalk in south Wiltshire. It has a characteristic species-rich chalk grassland flora, with good numbers of Early gentian *Gentianella anglica* being found in warm, sheltered locations. The site supports a rich butterfly community including scarce species such as Marsh fritillary *Euphydryas aurini*. Scattered scrub with a variety of species and structure adds to the value of the site.

## 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 Changes in species distributions	Pressure	S1065 Marsh fritillary butterfly	Establish the population status and food plant availability through survey, and adapt management if appropriate	Natural England, Butterfly Conservation
2 Air Pollution: risk of atmospheric nitrogen deposition	Threat	S1065 Marsh fritillary butterfly	Investigate potential atmospheric nitrogen impacts and take action as appropriate	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 Changes in species distributions

It is not known if Marsh fritillary is still present on the site or was ever breeding there. Past records have been sporadic with numbers variable and the most recent confirmed record is from 1996. In recent years an NNR volunteer warden has visited two or three times annually and provided records of butterflies seen (not including Marsh fritillary) but there has been no formal survey. Currently the habitat is not ideal for Marsh fritillary - relatively short sward and few records of the foodplant (Devil's bit scabious).

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
<b>1A</b>	Establish the current population status of marsh fritillary on the SAC, and the potential for colonisation from nearby sites.	£2,000	2015-16	Species Recovery Programme	Natural England	Natural England	Wiltshire Butterfly Conservation
<b>1B</b>	Identify the extent of the marsh fritillary's foodplant (Devil's bit scabious) across the SAC.	£1,000	2015-16	Species Recovery Programme	Natural England	Natural England	n/a
<b>1C</b>	Adapt management in priority locations to improve habitat suitability.	£2,500	2016-20	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme (HLS)	Natural England	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>
<b>1D</b>	Investigate the appropriateness of reintroducing Marsh fritillary, based on site conditions and guidance from specialists.	Not yet determined	2016-17	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Natural England (Species Recovery Programme)	Natural England	Wiltshire Butterfly Conservation

## 2 Air Pollution: risk of atmospheric nitrogen deposition

Nitrogen deposition exceeds the site-relevant critical load for ecosystem protection and hence there is a risk of harmful effects, but the sensitive features are currently considered to be in favourable condition on the site. This matter requires further consideration.

<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>
<b>2A</b>	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	2014-17	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	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

#### Prescombe Down SAC

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

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

S1654 *Gentianella anglica*: Early gentian

### Site location and links

#### Prescombe Down SAC

Area (ha) **76.14**      Grid reference **ST986254**      [Map link](#)

Local Authorities      Wiltshire

Site Conservation Objectives      [European Site Conservation Objectives for Prescombe Down 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.*

### **Prescombe Down SAC**

<i>River basin</i>	<a href="#">South West RBMP</a>
<i>WFD Management catchment</i>	Hampshire Avon
<i>WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)</i>	n/a

## Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
Prescombe Down SAC	Prescombe Down SSSI

National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
Prescombe Down SAC	Prescombe Down NNR

Ramsar	
Prescombe Down SAC	n/a

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)	
Prescombe Down SAC	n/a

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1.0	29/04/2015	

[www.naturalengland.org.uk/ipens2000](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ipens2000)

