

# Site Improvement Plan

## Oxford Meadows

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)**

**UK0012845    Oxford Meadows SAC**

## Site description

Oxford Meadows is one of two SACs that represent lowland hay meadows (*Alopecurus pratensis*, *Sanguisorba officinalis*) in the Thames Valley. It includes vegetation communities that are perhaps unique in the world in reflecting the influence of long-term grazing and hay-cutting on lowland hay meadows. The site has benefited from the survival of traditional management, which has been undertaken for several centuries, and so exhibits good conservation of structure and function. The site is selected because Port Meadow is the larger of only two known sites in the UK for creeping marshwort *Apium repens*.

## 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 Hydrological changes | Pressure/Threat    | S1614 Creeping marshwort | Improve the knowledge and understanding of the hydrological conditions on the site | Environment Agency, Natural England, Network Rail, Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire Rare Flora Group |
| 2 Invasive species     | Threat             | S1614 Creeping marshwort | Eliminate/control the <i>Crassula</i> populations on the site                      | Natural England, Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire Rare Flora Group, Wolvercote Commons Committee     |

## 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 Hydrological changes

A recent survey (August 2014) indicates the *Apium repens* population in Port Meadow has significantly declined in size. It is considered that this change may be associated directly or indirectly with hydrological changes possibly deeper, more prolonged and frequent flood episodes. Adjustment of the water level management is proposed as a means to help mitigate for these changes.

| Action    | Action description  | Cost estimate      | Timescale | Mechanism   | Funding option                | Delivery lead body | Delivery partner(s)  |
|-----------|---|--------------------|-----------|---|-------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| <b>1A</b> | Improve the knowledge and understanding of the hydrological conditions required to sustain and restore the <i>Apium repens</i> population.  | Not yet determined | 2015-20   | Investigation / Research / Monitoring   | Natural England, Grant in aid | Local partnership  | Environment Agency, Natural England, Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire Rare Flora Group               |
| Action    | Action description  | Cost estimate      | Timescale | Mechanism   | Funding option                | Delivery lead body | Delivery partner(s)  |
| <b>1B</b> | Seek to manage favourable hydrological conditions in the low lying 'dip' in Port Meadow which is the key area for <i>Apium repens</i> . Undertake appropriate management of the channels and ditches linked to this area. | £10,000            | 2015-20   | Major Landowner Group land ownership activities : Undertake Specific Management Works | Not yet determined            | Local partnership  | Environment Agency, Natural England, Network Rail, Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire Rare Flora Group |

## 2 Invasive species

The interest features for Oxford Meadows SAC are MG4 grassland and *Apium repens*. The *Apium repens* only occurs on Port Meadow SSSI. The concern is that *Crassula* will spread to the lower areas on Port Meadow where the *Apium repens* occurs and that it will swamp it out.

| Action    | Action description   | Cost estimate      | Timescale | Mechanism   | Funding option     | Delivery lead body | Delivery partner(s)  |
|-----------|--|--------------------|-----------|---|--------------------|--------------------|--|
| <b>2A</b> | Prevent <i>Crassula</i> spreading to the lower areas of Port Meadow and affecting the rare <i>Apium repens</i> population by the implementation of appropriate control mechanisms - these need to be identified at the national level. | £10,000            | 2014-16   | Invasive Control Plan: Invasive Species Control Programme | Not yet determined | Local partnership  | Natural England, Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire Rare Flora Group, Wolvercote Commons Committee |
| Action    | Action description   | Cost estimate      | Timescale | Mechanism   | Funding option     | Delivery lead body | Delivery partner(s)  |
| <b>2B</b> | Increase the resilience of the rare <i>Apium repens</i> population to <i>Crassula</i> and other invasive species by considering SSSI notification for the introduced population at North Hinksey.                                      | Not yet determined | 2015      | Designation strategy: Notification Amendment              | Not yet determined | Natural England    | Oxfordshire Rare Flora Group   |

## Site details

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

### Qualifying features

#UK Special responsibility

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>Oxford Meadows SAC</b> | H6510 Lowland hay meadows ( <i>Alopecurus pratensis</i> , <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i> )<br>S1614 <i>Apium repens</i> : Creeping marshwort |
|---------------------------|--|

### Site location and links

#### Oxford Meadows SAC

|  |               |                |                 |  |
|--|---------------|----------------|-----------------|--|
| Area (ha)                                | <b>265.89</b> | Grid reference | <b>SP492090</b> | <a href="#">Map link</a>   |
| Local Authorities                        |               |                |                 | Oxfordshire  |
| Site Conservation Objectives             |               |                |                 | <a href="#">European Site Conservation Objectives for Oxford Meadows SAC</a> |
| European Marine Site conservation advice |               |                |                 | <a href="#">n/a</a>  |
| Regulation 33/35 Package                 |               |                |                 | <a href="#">n/a</a>  |
| Marine Management Organisation site plan |               |                |                 | <a href="#">n/a</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.*

### **Oxford Meadows SAC**

*River basin*

[Thames RBMP](#)

*WFD Management catchment*

Thame and South Chilterns

*WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)*

GB106039030334

## Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

| Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)                          |   |
|--|---|
| Oxford Meadows SAC   | Cassington Meadows SSSI<br>Wolvercote Meadows SSSI<br>Port Meadow with Wolvercote Common & Green SSSI<br>Pixey & Yarnton Meads SSSI |
| National Nature Reserve (NNR)  |   |
| Oxford Meadows SAC   | n/a   |
| Ramsar   |   |
| Oxford Meadows SAC   | n/a   |
| Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) |   |
| Oxford Meadows SAC   | n/a   |

| <i>Version</i> | <i>Date</i> | <i>Comment</i> |
|----------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1.0            | 20/11/2014  |                |

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

