

# Site Improvement Plan

## Portholme

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)**

**UK0030054 Portholme SAC**

## Site description

Portholme SAC holds grassland communities of the alluvial flood meadow type. Its sole qualifying interest feature consists of lowland hay meadows of the *Alopecurus pratensis*, *Sanguisorba officinalis* NVC community.

It is the largest surviving traditionally-managed meadow in the UK, with an area of 104ha of alluvial flood meadow, surrounded by channels of the River Ouse. Watercourses on the periphery of the site have populations of some uncommon invertebrates, including one dragonfly which is of a nationally restricted distribution. The grasslands also support a small population of fritillary *Fritillaria meleagris*.

## 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 Inappropriate water levels	Threat	H6510 Lowland hay meadows	Review the Water Level Management Plan (WLMP) and monitor flooding	Environment Agency, Natural England, London Anglers Association, Thomas Millar Charity (landowners)
2 Water Pollution	Threat	H6510 Lowland hay meadows	Review the Diffuse Water Pollution Plan and monitor phosphate / sediment levels	Environment Agency, Natural England, London Anglers Association, Thomas Millar Charity (landowners)

## 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 Inappropriate water levels

Portholme's MG4 grassland habitat community is very sensitive to prolonged flood events. Given the proximity to the River Ouse, periodic winter flooding is a naturally occurring event. However, there are concerns that the duration of flooding and phosphate/sediment levels in the flood water are having a detrimental effect upon the habitat. Works were implemented in 2010 to assist water movement from north east corner of the SAC. However, this has been followed by a series of very wet winters where excessive flooding is thought to have been detrimental to the flora.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
1A	Review the current (2002) Water Level Management Plan to assess how effective the 2010 work has been, and whether further work on/off site is required to better manage duration and timing of flood events.	£50,000	2015-17	Water Level Management Plan	Water Framework Directive (WFD)	Environment Agency	Natural England, London Anglers Association, Thomas Millar Charity (landowners)

### 2 Water Pollution

Portholme's MG4 grassland habitat community is very sensitive to input of nutrients. This encourages more competitive grasses and 'weeds' at the expense of rarer more desirable herbaceous species. High nutrient levels are arising from floodwaters from the River Ouse, having a detrimental effect upon the habitat.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
2A	Review and implement the Diffuse Water Pollution plan to tackle issue of nutrient inputs on the site from flood waters.	included in costs for action 1A	2015-17	Diffuse Water Pollution Plan	Water Framework Directive (WFD)	Environment Agency	Natural England, London Anglers Association, Thomas Millar Charity (landowners)

## Site details

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

### Qualifying features

#UK Special responsibility

#### Portholme SAC

H6510 Lowland hay meadows (*Alopecurus pratensis*, *Sanguisorba officinalis*)

### Site location and links

#### Portholme SAC

Area (ha) **91.93**

Grid reference **TL237708**

[Map link](#)

Local Authorities

Cambridgeshire

Site Conservation Objectives

[European Site Conservation Objectives for Portholme 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.*

### **Portholme SAC**

*River basin*

[Anglian RBMP](#)

*WFD Management catchment*

Upper and Bedford Ouse

*WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)*

n/a

## Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)		
Portholme SAC	Portholme SSSI	

  

National Nature Reserve (NNR)		
Portholme SAC	n/a	

  

Ramsar		
Portholme SAC	n/a	

  

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

  

Other relevant documents and links		
Portholme SAC		Diffuse Water Pollution Plan for Ouse Washes and Portholme (not yet online)

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1.0	23/12/14	

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

