

Site Improvement Plan

Isles of Scilly Complex

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)

UK0013694 **Isles of Scilly Complex SAC**

UK9020288 **Isles of Scilly SPA**

Site description

The Isles of Scilly lie 45 km off the south-western tip of Cornwall. Comprising over 200 low-lying islands and rocky outcrops they represent England's only oceanic archipelago. The waters around the islands have been designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) since 2000, protected for their internationally important species-rich, fragile and unusual subtidal biotopes including subtidal sandbanks and reefs. The SAC also extends to protect the intertidal sandflats at St Martin's Flats.

The islands and waters around them are also important for seals. Grey seals were added as a protected feature to the site in 2008. Shore dock, *Rumex rupestris*, one of Europe's most threatened vascular plants is also listed as a SAC feature.

The islands are also of international importance for breeding populations of storm petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* and lesser black-backed gull *Larus fuscus*, and the nesting areas of these seabirds are designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA). The area is also recognised for the international importance of its breeding seabird assemblage including nationally important numbers of European shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* and great black-backed gull *Larus marinus*.

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 Invasive species	Pressure/Threat	A014(B) Storm Petrel, A183(B) Lesser Black-backed Gull, Seabird assemblage	Assessment of feasibility of habitat restoration through rat eradication	Isles Of Scilly AONB, Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust, Natural England, RSPB, Duchy of Cornwall
2 Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine	Pressure/Threat	H1110 Subtidal sandbanks, H1170 Reefs, S1364 Grey seal	Introduction of appropriate management to minimise fisheries impacts	Isles of Scilly Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (IFCA)
3 Habitat fragmentation	Pressure/Threat	S1441 Shore dock	Monitoring to assess impacts of hydrological changes on shore dock	Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Plantlife
4 Public Access/Disturbance	Pressure/Threat	A014(B) Storm Petrel, A183(B) Lesser Black-backed Gull, S1364 Grey seal, Seabird assemblage	Reduce disturbance impacts to seals and seabirds by awareness-raising	Isles Of Scilly AONB, Council of the Isles of Scilly, Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust, Natural England
5 Public Access/Disturbance	Pressure/Threat	H1110 Subtidal sandbanks	Reduce impacts of mooring and anchoring on seagrass through awareness raising	Isles Of Scilly AONB, Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Duchy of Cornwall

6 Water Pollution	Pressure	H1110 Subtidal sandbanks, H1170 Reefs	Improve water quality by installation of appropriate sewage treatment systems	Defra, Council of the Isles of Scilly
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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 Invasive species

Rats are known to have very detrimental effects on breeding seabird populations and rat removal is seen as a prerequisite for the restoration of seabird colonies on islands. Brown rats *Rattus norvegicus* are present on some islands within the archipelago, but more recently have been removed from all uninhabited islands.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
1A	Continuation of rat eradication programme 2012-2016 (Isles of Scilly Seabird Recovery Project) for the islands, to be extended to the larger inhabited islands of Bryher, Tresco and St Martin's, all of which support important breeding seabird colonies. The programme is currently targeting St Agnes and Gugh. Assessment suggests that removal of rats from Bryher, St Martin's and Tresco is not feasible without these three islands being targeted together.	£1,000,000	2016-21	Invasive Control Plan: Invasive Species Control Programme	LIFE, Conservation Enhancement Scheme (CES)	Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust	Isles Of Scilly AONB, Natural England, RSPB, Duchy of Cornwall

2 Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine

Dredges (inc. Hydraulic), benthic trawls and seines are categorised as 'Red' for these interest features (and specifically the sub-features: Vertical rock; Subtidal rock and boulder communities; Subtidal faunal turf communities; Eelgrass bed communities) as part of Defra's revised approach to commercial fisheries management in EMSs. Fisheries around the Isles of Scilly are largely small-scale, local fisheries, but some fisheries activities still have the potential to impact on protected features. The Isles of Scilly IFCA have brought in a new Fishing Gear Permit Byelaw to control access of vessels using bottom towed gear in MPAs.

<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>
2A	For activities classified as Red (Dredges (inc. Hydraulic), Benthic trawls and seines) requisite mechanisms are being implemented by Isles of Scilly IFCA. Once management measures are established to protect the feature, on-going work will be required by the Regulator to ensure compliance and an appropriate level of reporting to ensure sites are well managed and to enable Natural England to provide advice on the condition of features and potential condition threats	Not yet determined	2014	Enforcement: Byelaws	Not yet determined	Isles of Scilly Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (IFCA)	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>
2B	For activities classified as Amber and Green, where assessments indicate management is required, appropriate measures will be introduced by the Regulator by 2016. If management measures are established to protect the feature(s), on-going work will be required by the Regulator to ensure compliance and an appropriate level of reporting to ensure sites are well managed and to enable Natural England to provide advice on the condition of features and potential condition threats.	Not yet determined	2016	Enforcement: Byelaws	Not yet determined	Isles of Scilly Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (IFCA)	n/a

3 Habitat fragmentation

Shore dock is thought to be present in just four locations throughout the Isles of Scilly. The species favours rocky or sandy beaches and the base of cliffs, most commonly found around slumping cliffs and streams entering beaches. It is reliant on a source of freshwater. Storm surges and sea level rise are known to be a threat to this feature through habitat loss, and hydrological changes could also potentially threaten the habitat of this species.

<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	Programme of Shore Dock monitoring (Section 41 species). Monitoring of all known populations is needed with periodic survey for new records. There is also a need to assess the impacts of coastal surges and hydrological changes.	£30,000	2014-19	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Natural England	Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust, Plantlife

4 Public Access/Disturbance

Grey seals can be sensitive to disturbance, particularly when breeding or moulting. A number of breeding seabirds are also particularly vulnerable to disturbance especially at, or close to their colonies.

<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	Develop marine codes of conduct and supporting material, including investigation of reporting and response mechanisms, for reduction of disturbance effects on grey seals and seabirds (from boat traffic/visitors).	£5,000	2015-20	Advice: Education & awareness raising	Not yet determined	Not yet determined	Isles Of Scilly AONB, Council of the Isles of Scilly, Isles of Scilly Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (IFCA), Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust, Natural England, RSPB

5 Public Access/Disturbance

Many recreational and commercial vessels use the waters around Scilly. Moorings are known to have the potential to negatively impact seagrass beds, causing scour around the site of the mooring. There is some evidence that moorings in some locations e.g. around Tresco, may be adversely affecting the coverage of the seagrass beds there. The scale of the impacts and potential for mitigation require further investigation. Anchoring (particularly of recreational vessels) potentially also impacts sensitive seagrass beds.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
5A	Initial investigation into year-round impacts of moorings and anchorages on seagrass beds. If necessary investigate appropriate mitigation, including development and promotion of codes of conduct on anchoring around the islands. Further funding may be required in the future dependent on the outcomes of initial research.	£10,000	2015-20	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Natural England	Isles Of Scilly AONB, Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust, Duchy of Cornwall

6 Water Pollution

Discharges of sewage and trade effluent (including suspended sediment inputs) directly into the SAC can cause local pollution and nutrient enrichment, in turn potentially leading to phytoplankton blooms and overgrowth of green algae. Reduced water quality can impact reef features by increasing turbidity, decreasing algal communities, or causing siltation or smothering.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
6A	Implementation of appropriate sewerage treatment for St Mary's (cost quoted is the upper limit of the cost estimate provided by the Council of the Isles of Scilly).	£10,000,000	2016	Mechanism not identified / develop mechanism	Not yet determined	Council of the Isles of Scilly	Defra, Duchy of Cornwall
6B	Installation of smaller treatment works throughout the archipelago.	Not yet determined	2020	Mechanism not identified / develop mechanism	Not yet determined	Council of the Isles of Scilly	Defra

Site details

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

Qualifying features

#UK Special responsibility

Isles of Scilly Complex SAC

H1110 Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time

H1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide

H1170 Reefs

S1364 *Halichoerus grypus*: Grey seal

S1441 *Rumex rupestris*: Shore dock

Isles of Scilly SPA

A014(B) *Hydrobates pelagicus*: European storm-petrel

Seabird assemblage

A183(B) *Larus fuscus*: Lesser black-backed gull

Site location and links

Isles of Scilly Complex SAC

Area (ha) **26850.95** Grid reference **SV883111** [Map link](#)

Local Authorities Cornwall; Isles of Scilly

Site Conservation Objectives [Isles of Scilly Complex SAC](#)

European Marine Site conservation advice [Conservation Advice for European Marine Sites](#)

Regulation 33/35 Package [Regulation 33/35 package link](#)

Marine Management Organisation site plan [n/a](#)

Isles of Scilly SPA

Area (ha) **401.64** Grid reference **SV884161** [Map link](#)

Local Authorities Isles of Scilly

Site Conservation Objectives [European Site Conservation Objectives for Isles of Scilly SPA](#)

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.

Isles of Scilly Complex SAC

River basin	South West	South West RBMP
WFD Management catchment	n/a	
WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)	n/a	

Isles of Scilly SPA

River basin	South West	South West RBMP
WFD Management catchment	n/a	
WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)	n/a	

Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Isles of Scilly Complex SAC

St Helen's SSSI
Eastern Isles SSSI
Norrard Rocks SSSI
Peninnis Head (St Mary's) SSSI
Pentle Bay, Merrick & Round Islands SSSI
Plains & Great Bay (St Martin's) SSSI
Samson SSSI
Tean SSSI
Western Rocks SSSI
White Island (off St Martin's) SSSI
Wingletang Down (St Agnes) SSSI
St Martin's Sedimentary Shore SSSI
Annet SSSI

Isles of Scilly SPA

Big Pool & Browarth Point (St Agnes) SSSI
St Helen's SSSI
Castle Down (Tresco) SSSI
Chapel Down (St Martin's) SSSI
Eastern Isles SSSI
Gugh SSSI
Norrard Rocks SSSI
Pentle Bay, Merrick & Round Islands SSSI
Samson SSSI
Shipman Head & Shipman Down (Bryher) SSSI
Tean SSSI
Western Rocks SSSI

White Island (off St Martin's) SSSI
Annet SSSI

National Nature Reserve (NNR)

Isles of Scilly Complex SAC

n/a

Isles of Scilly SPA

n/a

Ramsar

Isles of Scilly Complex SAC

Isles of Scilly

Isles of Scilly SPA

Isles of Scilly

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)

Isles of Scilly Complex SAC

Isles of Scilly SPA

Isles of Scilly SPA

Isles of Scilly Complex SAC

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1.0	03/10/2014	

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