

## Site Improvement Plan

# Mole Gap to Reigate Escarpment

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)**

**UK0012804 Mole Gap to Reigate Escarpment SAC**

## Site description

This site contains the largest part of the North Downs in Surrey, which includes a range of outstanding wildlife habitats such as broad-leaved woodland, chalk grassland, chalk scrub and heathland. These form a landscape scale mosaic which support a wide diversity of characteristic plants and animals, of which many are local or rare; especially orchid species, great crested newts, insect species and Bechsteins bats.

The Mole Gap is one of the classic geomorphological localities in south-east England, long noted for its variety of landforms which include periglacial debris fans, river cliffs and swallow holes.

## 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 Disease	Pressure/ Threat	H5110 Natural box scrub	Establish additional bio-security measures where needed	Forestry Commission, National Trust, Natural England, Surrey County Council, Surrey Hills AONB, Surrey Wildlife Trust, Landowner(s), Surrey Botanical Society
2 Inappropriate scrub control	Pressure	H6210 Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone (important orchid sites)	Implement a programme of scrub clearance	National Trust, Natural England, Surrey Wildlife Trust, Lower Mole Countryside Project
3 Change in land management	Threat	H6210 Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone (important orchid sites)	Establish active management of chalk grasslands	Forestry Commission, National Trust, Natural England, Surrey County Council, Surrey Hills AONB, Surrey Wildlife Trust, Landowner(s)
4 Public Access/Disturbance	Threat	H6210 Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone (important orchid sites), S1166 Great crested newt, S1323 Bechstein`s bat	Protect sensitive locations from disturbance impacts	National Trust, Natural England, Surrey County Council, Surrey Hills AONB, Surrey Wildlife Trust, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (ARCT), Surrey Bat Group, Surrey Amphibian and Reptile Group

5 Air Pollution: risk of atmospheric nitrogen deposition	Threat	H4030 European dry heaths, H5110 Natural box scrub, H6210 Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone (important orchid sites), H9130 Beech forests on neutral to rich soils, H91J0 Yew-dominated woodland, S1323 Bechstein`s bat	Further investigate the impacts of nitrogen deposition	Natural England, Surrey Wildlife Trust, Surrey Botanical Society
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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 Disease

Box blight has been recorded on the site and has been shown to be spreading and affecting the SAC feature 'stable box scrub on steep chalk slopes'. This is the only native site for this feature.

<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>1A</b>	Assess the extent of box blight, and investigate the causes of Yew tree deaths.	£3,000	2014-15	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Natural England	National Trust, Surrey Hills AONB
<b>1B</b>	Start discussion around biosecurity and potential exclusion zones, and a biosecurity plan if relevant.	£300	2015-16	Bio-security plan	Not yet determined	Natural England	National Trust, Surrey County Council, Surrey Hills AONB, Surrey Wildlife Trust
<b>1C</b>	Set up a working group to look at the future of Box, and have a strategic overview of Box in the SAC	Not yet determined	2015-20	Existing Local Project	Not yet determined	Local partnership	Forestry Commission, National Trust, Surrey County Council, Surrey Wildlife Trust, Landowner(s), Surrey Botanical Society

## 2 Inappropriate scrub control

Scrub is encroaching onto the chalk grassland. This can quite quickly shade out more delicate and rare plant species found on the chalk slopes, and any associated insect species are also therefore negatively impacted on.

<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>	Agree and implement a programme of scrub clearance to reverse the effects of encroachment on calcareous grassland.	£6,000	2015-20	Existing Local Project	BIFFA	Natural England	Sussex Wildlife Trust, Landowner(s), Lower Mole Countryside Project
<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>2B</b>	Identify future threats from scrub invasion, following a condition assesment programme	Staff time	2015-16	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Natural England	Natural England	National Trust, Surrey Wildlife Trust

## 3 Change in land management

To maintain a species-rich sward and its associated insects and other invertebrates, chalk grasslands require active management - some parts of the site do not have appropriate active management. Without it the grassland will rapidly become dominated by rank grasses, such as Tor-grass. Together with the build up of dead plant matter, less vigorous species will be suppressed and the diversity of the site will decrease. Eventually, the site will scrub over. Traditionally, management is achieved by grazing. The timing will vary both between and within sites, according to local conditions and specific species requirements.

<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>3A</b>	Explore the possibilities of a landscape-scale grazing project to target areas as yet ungrazed.	Staff time	2015-20	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Natural England	Natural England	National Trust, Surrey County Council, Surrey Hills AONB, Surrey Wildlife Trust, Landowner(s)

<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>3B</b>	Introduce appropriate landscape-scale grazing on the site.	£10,000	2015-20	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Common Agricultural Policy 2014-20 (New Environmental Land Management Scheme)	New Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMS)	Natural England	National Trust, Surrey County Council, Surrey Hills AONB, Surrey Wildlife Trust, Landowner(s)
<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>3C</b>	Establish woodland management across the landscape with objectives to meet favourable condition in all woodland plans and subsequent funding streams.	£10,000	2015-20	Non-Natural England funded site management plan	New Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMS), England Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS)	Local partnership	Forestry Commission, Natural England, Surrey County Council, Surrey Wildlife Trust

#### 4 Public Access/Disturbance

As a beautiful place to visit, this area of Surrey is heavily populated. Increasing pressure by increased numbers of visitors on protected sites and disturbance on the species which live here can become damaging. Trampling of orchid-rich grasslands, repetitive disturbance to Great crested newt breeding ponds, and spread of disease (such as box blight) are examples.

<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>4A</b>	Assess the scale of impact on key habitats due to public access pressure across the SAC.	Staff time	2015-16	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Natural England	Natural England	National Trust, Surrey County Council, Surrey Hills AONB, Surrey Wildlife Trust

<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>4B</b>	Ensure the main Bechstein's bat hibernacula are secure.	£400	2015	Existing Local Project	Not yet determined	National Trust	Surrey Wildlife Trust, Surrey Bat Group
<b>4C</b>	Assess the extent of disturbance to ponds with known populations of Great crested newts, and devise a plan to exclude disturbance from in at least half of each disturbed pond.	£1,000	2015-16	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Conservation Enhancement Scheme (CES)	Natural England	National Trust, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (ARCT), Surrey Amphibian and Reptile Group
<b>4D</b>	Plan to build five new ponds in rarely visited parts of the site, for the benefit of Great crested newts.	£10,000	2015-20	Habitat creation / restoration strategy: Creation of new habitat	BIFFA	Natural England	National Trust, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (ARCT), Surrey Amphibian and Reptile Group
<b>4E</b>	Secure improvements to Bechstein's bat hibernacula, and habitat connectivity.	£1,000	2016-20	Habitat creation / restoration strategy: Improvements to habitat connectivity	Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)	Surrey Wildlife Trust	Surrey Bat Group

## 5 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 requires further investigation.

<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>5A</b>	Further investigate potential atmospheric nitrogen impacts on the site, based on the application of guidance from the Chief Scientist's Group Nitrogen Task and Finish Group.	Not yet determined	2014-17	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Natural England	Not yet determined
<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>5B</b>	Monitor the indicators of increased nitrogen (N) deposition, such as increased vigorous grass growth, increase in Tor-grass and other grasses, and a decrease in orchid species through the use of fixed point quadrat surveys over 5 years.	£3,000	2015-20	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Natural England	National Trust, Surrey Wildlife Trust, Surrey Botanical Society

## Site details

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

### Qualifying features

#UK Special responsibility

#### Mole Gap to Reigate Escarpment SAC

H4030 European dry heaths

H9130 *Asperulo-Fagetum* beech forests

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

H5110 Stable xerothermophilous formations with *Buxus sempervirens* on rock slopes (*Berberidion pp*)

H91J0# *Taxus baccata* woods of the British Isles

S1166 *Triturus cristatus*: Great crested newt

S1323 *Myotis bechsteinii*: Bechstein`s bat

### Site location and links

#### Mole Gap to Reigate Escarpment SAC

Area (ha) **887.68**      Grid reference **TQ199533**      [Map link](#)

Local Authorities      Surrey

Site Conservation Objectives      [European Site Conservation Objectives for Mole Gap to Reigate Escarpment 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.*

### **Mole Gap to Reigate Escarpment SAC**

<i>River basin</i>	Thames	<a href="#">Thames RBMP</a>
<i>WFD Management catchment</i>	London	
<i>WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)</i>	n/a	

## Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
Mole Gap to Reigate Escarpment SAC	Mole Gap to Reigate Escarpment SSSI

National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
Mole Gap to Reigate Escarpment SAC	n/a

Ramsar	
Mole Gap to Reigate Escarpment SAC	n/a

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)	
Mole Gap to Reigate Escarpment SAC	n/a

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1.0	09/10/2014	

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

