

Site Improvement Plan

Martin Mere

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)

UK9005111 Martin Mere SPA

Site description

Martin Mere is low-lying wetland complex of open water, with seasonally flooded marsh and grassland habitats overlying deep peat. It occupies part of the site of the old Martin Mere which, prior to drainage was probably the largest lake in Lancashire.

The site is important for populations of wintering birds notably significant populations of Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus bewickii*, Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*, Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus* and Pintail *Anas acuta*. There is considerable movement of birds between Martin Mere and the nearby Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA.

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	Threat	A037(NB) Bewick's Swan, A038(NB) Whooper Swan, A040(NB) Pink-footed Goose, A052(NB) Eurasian teal, A054(NB) Pintail, Waterbird assemblage	Restore hydrology to reduce the impacts of drainage and peat shrinkage	Environment Agency, Natural England, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
2 Invasive species	Threat	A037(NB) Bewick's Swan, A038(NB) Whooper Swan, A040(NB) Pink-footed Goose, A052(NB) Eurasian teal, A054(NB) Pintail, Waterbird assemblage	Investigate the extent of, and control where appropriate, invasive non-native plants	Environment Agency, Natural England, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
3 Water Pollution	Threat	A037(NB) Bewick's Swan, A038(NB) Whooper Swan, A040(NB) Pink-footed Goose, A052(NB) Eurasian teal, A054(NB) Pintail, Waterbird assemblage	Control and reduce diffuse water pollution	Environment Agency, Natural England, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

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

Three hundred years of agricultural activity, land drainage and wind erosion have caused shrinkage of peat surrounding the site resulting in the site being significantly higher than adjacent land. Active management of water levels across the site through pumping and drainage is required. There is considerable pressure on the flood defences, and the embankments require constant maintenance to prevent breaches which would result in water draining from the site onto the lower surrounding land.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
1A	Review the Water Level Management Plan, and extend beyond the previous remit to include land surrounding the designated site.	No funding required	2014-15	Water Level Management Plan	Environment Agency, Natural England, Staff time	Environment Agency	Natural England, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
1B	Investigation into the benefits of establishing a hydrological protection or buffer zone around the site. Establish how far this would have to extend to provide benefits such as a more natural function of the hydrology.	£10,000	2014-18	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined, Staff time	Environment Agency	Natural England
Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
1C	Establish a hydrological protection/buffer zone.	Not yet determined	2025	Habitat creation / restoration strategy: Habitat restoration	Defra, EU Life, External funding	Natural England	Wildfowl and Wetlands 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>
1D	Establish a hydrological protection zone in the buffer zone.	Not yet determined	2025	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme (HLS)	Rural Development Programme (RDPE)	Natural England	Environment Agency
<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>
1E	Establish a hydrological protection/buffer zone.	Not yet determined	2025	Designation strategy (SSSI)	Natural England, Staff time	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>
1F	Maintain flood embankments around Martin Mere until a hydrological buffer zone can be developed. Establish the effects of the potential changes in management to the pumping stations across the catchment.	Not yet determined	2015-25	Flood Risk Maintenance Programme: Flood Risk Management - Capital/Improvement Schemes	Environment Agency	Environment Agency	n/a

2 Invasive species

Crassula helmsii is a non-native invasive plant species and is present within the wider Martin Mere nature reserve in field ditches and the large reedbed (these areas are adjacent to the SPA). This species has a tendency to spread quickly and may form dense smothering mats. It has the potential to affect other plant species and could prevent birds from feeding. It is currently unclear to what extent effective control is feasible, and how prevention of its spread into the site's pools and ditch system can be achieved as effective methods of elimination and control are currently absent. Himalayan Balsam is a non-native invasive plant and is present along the main water courses throughout the site and also in woodland close by. Control of this species needs to be undertaken at the source of the infestation as well as on the site to ensure it is effective.

<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	Develop an Invasive Species Management Plan to cover all non-native invasive plant species present on, or adjacent to the site and within the river catchment.	No funding required	2014-18	Invasive Control Plan: Invasive Species Control Programme	Environment Agency, Natural England, Staff time	Natural England	Environment Agency, Wildfowl and Wetlands 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>
2B	Monitor the effects of, and if appropriate control the <i>Crassula</i> population. Appropriate control methods need to be controlled at the national level and implemented via WFD-related mechanisms.	£100,000	2014-20	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Natural England	Environment Agency, Wildfowl and Wetlands 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>
2C	Control the Himalayan Balsam present along the main water courses throughout the site, in nearby woodland, and at the source of the infestation.	£10,000	2014-20	Invasive Control Plan: Invasive Species Control Programme	Not yet determined	Environment Agency	Natural England, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

3 Water Pollution

Diffuse water pollution from surrounding agricultural land and a local industrial estate is entering the watercourses and resulting in the eutrophication and degradation of supporting habitats within the site.

<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	Draw up a Diffuse Water Pollution Plan. Include advice to farmers, agri-environment, partnerships with industry - and deliver the actions within it.	Not yet determined	2014-18	Diffuse Water Pollution Plan	Not yet determined	Natural England	Environment Agency, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

Site details

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

Qualifying features

#UK Special responsibility

Martin Mere SPA

Waterbird assemblage

A054(NB) *Anas acuta*: Northern pintail

A038(NB) *Cygnus cygnus*: Whooper swan

A040(NB) *Anser brachyrhynchus*: Pink-footed goose

A037(NB) *Cygnus columbianus bewickii*: Bewick swan

A052(NB) *Anas crecca*: Eurasian teal

Site location and links

Martin Mere SPA

Area (ha) **119.89**

Grid reference **SD420145**

[Map link](#)

Local Authorities

Lancashire

Site Conservation Objectives

[European Site Conservation Objectives for Martin Mere 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.

Martin Mere SPA

<i>River basin</i>	North West	North West RBMP
<i>WFD Management catchment</i>	Alt/Crossens	
<i>WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)</i>	GB112070064880	

Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
Martin Mere SPA	Martin Mere, Burscough SSSI

National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
Martin Mere SPA	n/a

Ramsar	
Martin Mere SPA	Martin Mere

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

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1.0	07/10/2014	

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