

# Site Improvement Plan

## Walmore Common

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)**

**UK9007051    Walmore Common SPA**

## Site description

Walmore Common SPA is a low-lying basin in the Severn Vale adjacent to the River Severn, which is subject to extensive winter flooding and high, artificially maintained water levels in summer.

The site supports a range of unimproved and improved wet grasslands overlying a large area of peat and is of botanical and ornithological importance. There is also a large network of ditches that has an important hydrological function as well as supporting a diverse community of flora and fauna.

A large part of the catchment is used as a feeding and roosting site for nationally and internationally important numbers of Bewick's Swan (for which the site has been designated a SPA) and for regionally important numbers of other wintering waterfowl.

## 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	Water level management plan	Walmore Common Management Group, Lower Severn IDB
2 Changes in species distributions	Threat	A037(NB) Bewick's Swan	Research into Bewick's swan distribution	Natural England, RSPB, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, British Trust for Ornithology (BTO)
3 Change in land management	Threat	A037(NB) Bewick's Swan	Improve habitat connectivity	Natural England, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
4 Offsite habitat availability/ management	Pressure/ Threat	A037(NB) Bewick's Swan	Review designation boundaries to include critical grazing areas	Natural England
5 Public Access/Disturbance	Threat	A037(NB) Bewick's Swan	Access Strategy	Natural England
6 Energy production	Threat	A037(NB) Bewick's Swan	Appropriate ecological information available to inform development control	Developer, Forest Of Dean District Council

## 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

The swans will only visit the SPA if it is under flood conditions. The operating protocol for the tilting weir installed in 2011 needs to have regards for creating flood conditions in the winter months when required.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
<b>1A</b>	To draw up an operating protocol for the tilting weir installed in 2011.	Not yet determined	2013-14	Water Level Management Plan	Not yet determined	Lower Severn IDB	Natural England
<b>1B</b>	Install a solar power automation system to operate the weir, based on data from groundwater, ditch levels and rainwater measurements.	£10,000	2014-15	Flood Risk Maintenance Programme: Flood Risk Management - Operational Work	SSSI funding, Water Level Management Plan (WLMP) Programme	Lower Severn IDB	Walmore Common Management Group
<b>1C</b>	Install a rainwater gauge.	£250	2014-15	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme (HLS)	Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) capital works	Walmore Common Management Group	n/a

## 2 Changes in species distributions

It is thought, by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), that declining numbers are due to broad scale re-distribution of this species rather than to specific site problems. As numbers over-wintering on the nearby Severn Estuary SPA have remained stable, it is important to continue to protect all known sites for this species (only some of which are designated).

<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>	Research is required to establish if there is still a need to maintain outlying wetland sites such as Walmore Common. The Bewick's swans' population appear to have changed their wintering migration patterns across Europe as a result of improved habitat elsewhere, as well as climate change.	Not yet determined	2014-15	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Natural England	RSPB, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, British Trust for Ornithology (BTO)
<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>	Investigate changes in the way Bewick's swans use the Severn Vale as a result of habitat creation and enhancement.	£2,500	2015-16	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Natural England, Grant in aid	Natural England	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

## 3 Change in land management

Maintenance of suitable habitat is essential for the Bewick's Swan. Changes in management on neighbouring land may also have an adverse impact.

<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>	Undertake ecological monitoring and investigate the Bewick's swan population and its local dispersal and migration in order to suggest ways of improving habitat connectivity.	£1,000	2015-16	Habitat creation / restoration strategy: Improvements to habitat connectivity	Not yet determined	Natural England	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

#### 4 Offsite habitat availability/ management

It is necessary to include all regular feeding and roosting areas within a designated site in order to protect the resource for this species from adverse management or developments.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
4A	Review designation boundaries and the coverage of critical areas of grazing land used by the Bewick's swan. Consider amending the boundaries where appropriate	Not yet determined	2016-17	Designation strategy: Notification Amendment	Detailed Notification Review (DNR)	Natural England	n/a

#### 5 Public Access/Disturbance

Any disturbance to these birds while feeding or roosting is likely to have an adverse effect on the ability of this species to over-winter here.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
5A	Monitor and review the open access on Walmore Common to ensure there is no disturbance to Bewick's Swans in the winter months, especially when there is flooding.	£1,000	2015-16	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Natural England, Grant in aid	Natural England	n/a

#### 6 Energy production

The potential for developments such as wind turbines and solar panels to affect Bewick's Swans needs to be better understood and any sensitive areas identified. A turbine was to be located on the swans' descending flight path onto the SPA, and could have led to a possible risk of collision for flying swans in poor visibility. In addition there is common consensus that the swans use the River Severn for navigation between Slimbridge and Walmore however concerns have been expressed regarding the possibility of the solar panels causing confusion when they are flying between the two sites.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
6A	Ecological monitoring and investigation of the Bewick's Swan population and its local dispersal and migration with particular regard given to future developments such as wind turbines.	£2,500	2015-16	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Not yet determined	Developer, Forest Of Dean District Council

<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>6B</b>	Ecological monitoring and investigation of Bewick's swan population and its local dispersal and migration with particular regard given to future developments such as solar panels.	£2,500	2015-16	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Not yet determined	Developer, Forest Of Dean District Council

## Site details

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

### Qualifying features

#UK Special responsibility

**Walmore Common SPA**

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

### Site location and links

#### Walmore Common SPA

Area (ha) **52.85**

Grid reference **SO745150** [Map link](#)

Local Authorities

Gloucestershire

Site Conservation Objectives

[European Site Conservation Objectives for Walmore Common 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.*

### Walmore Common SPA

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



## Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
Walmore Common SPA	Walmore Common SSSI

National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
Walmore Common SPA	n/a

Ramsar	
Walmore Common SPA	Walmore Common

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

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1.0	13/11/14	

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



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