

Site Improvement Plan

Castle Hill

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)

UK0012836 Castle Hill SAC

Site description

This chalk grassland consists of a mosaic of calcareous semi-natural dry grasslands, notably CG2 *Festuca ovina* – *Avenula pratensis* grassland, CG3 *Bromus erectus* grassland and CG4 *Brachypodium pinnatum* grassland. Castle Hill's important assemblage of rare and scarce species includes early spider-orchid *Ophrys sphegodes* and burnt orchid *Orchis ustulata*. The colony of early spider-orchid is one of the largest in the UK. The site also supports a colony of Early gentian *Gentianella angelica*.

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 Undergrazing	Threat	H6210 Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone (important orchid sites), S1654 Early gentian	Improve grazing with appropriate stock contained within under grazed areas	Natural England, South Downs National Park Authority
2 Fertiliser use	Threat	H6210 Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone (important orchid sites), S1654 Early gentian	Provide incentives to encourage neighbouring farmers to have permanent pasture	Natural England, South Downs National Park Authority
3 Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition	Pressure	H6210 Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone (important orchid sites), S1654 Early gentian	Control and reduce impacts of atmospheric nitrogen deposition	Not yet determined

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 Undergrazing

There is insufficient cattle grazing in parts of the site leading to encroachment by gorse and coarser grasses, such as Tor grass, which can shade out the important chalk grassland plants, including orchids and early gentian.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
1A	Arrange sufficient grazing in undergrazed areas. Choose suitable stock for coarser grasses and contain in selected areas with fencing, and combine with scrub management.	£20,000	2015-25	National Nature Reserve (NNR) management plan	Rural Development Programme (RDPE)	Natural England	South Downs National Park Authority

2 Fertiliser use

Management of land bordering the SAC: All of the arable parcels surrounding the site which slope down to the SAC boundary, when cultivated, pose potential threats through erosion and leaching/run-off. This could lead to loss of species diversity due to soil enrichment.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
2A	Target and promote to neighbouring landowners the uptake of Countryside Stewardship, to ensure adjoining land is managed under permanent pasture.	Not yet determined	2016-26	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Common Agricultural Policy 2014-20 (New Environmental Land Management Scheme)	Rural Development Programme (RDPE)	Natural England	South Downs National Park Authority

3 Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition

Nitrogen deposition exceeds site relevant critical loads. The effects of this could cause: an increase in tall grasses, decline in diversity, increased mineralisation, surface acidification or N leaching.

<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	Control, reduce and ameliorate atmospheric nitrogen impacts.	Not yet determined	2015-20	Site Nitrogen Action Plan	Not yet determined	Not yet determined	Not yet determined

Site details

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

Qualifying features

#UK Special responsibility

Castle Hill SAC	H6210# Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) S1654 <i>Gentianella anglica</i> : Early gentian
------------------------	---

Site location and links

Castle Hill SAC

Area (ha) **114.68** Grid reference **TQ372066** [Map link](#)

Local Authorities Brighton and Hove; East Sussex

Site Conservation Objectives [European Site Conservation Objectives for Castle Hill 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.

Castle Hill SAC

River basin

[South East RBMP](#)

WFD Management catchment

Adur & Ouse

WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)

n/a

Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
Castle Hill SAC	Castle Hill SSSI

National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
Castle Hill SAC	Castle Hill NNR

Ramsar	
Castle Hill SAC	n/a

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

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1.0	15/05/2015	

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ipens2000

