

Site Improvement Plan

Ashdown Forest

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)

UK0030080 Ashdown Forest SAC

UK9012181 Ashdown Forest SPA

Site description

Ashdown Forest SAC and SPA comprises one of the largest contiguous areas of dry and wet heath in South-east England.

The mosaic of dry heath, wet heath and woodland support Great crested newts, and birds of European importance: Nightjar and Dartford warbler.

Other features (not designated as part of the SPA or SAC) include Woodlark and Hobby, as well as important assemblages of beetles, dragonflies and butterflies including the nationally rare Silver-studded blue.

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 Change in land management	Pressure	H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, H4030 European dry heaths	Establish appropriate grazing by improving facilities and stocking	Conservators of Ashdown Forest, Natural England
2 Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition	Pressure	H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, H4030 European dry heaths	Control, reduce and ameliorate atmospheric nitrogen impacts	Not yet determined
3 Public Access/Disturbance	Threat	A224(B) European nightjar, A302(B) Dartford Warbler	Advice and education programme aimed at dog walkers	Conservators of Ashdown Forest, Natural England
4 Hydrological changes	Threat	H4010 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath	Hydrological and botanical survey and analysis is required	Conservators of Ashdown Forest, Natural England

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 Change in land management

Only one third of the heathland is currently grazed. Favourable condition requires a diverse vegetation structure and grazing, in combination with some mechanical management, can achieve this. The heathland would be improved by more cattle, less sheep and a few ponies. The ability to target animals to specific areas would also be beneficial to the heathland. The sheep will often tend to congregate close to the roads and their tight grazing has resulted in a grass dominated sward in these areas, with some areas further away from the roads only lightly grazed and dominated with *Molinia* tussocks.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
1A	Stakeholder dialogue with site users to extend grazing across the whole area.	£30,000	2014-16	Advice: Education & awareness raising	Not yet determined	Natural England	Conservators of Ashdown Forest

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
1B	Expand the evidence base to inform the specific grazing regimes needed on ecological grounds.	£30,000	2015-20	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Natural England	Conservators of Ashdown Forest

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
1C	Establish facilities to enable land managers (Conservators) to manage required stock levels. Animals can only graze heathland in summer due to lack of food for them in winter. Specialised animals are needed that are used to the poor conditions of the heath.	£500,000	2014-15	Mechanism not identified / develop mechanism	LIFE+	Natural England	Conservators of Ashdown Forest

<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	Build-up the herd/flock to required numbers.	£200,000	2015-16	Mechanism not identified / develop mechanism	Not yet determined	Natural England	Conservators of Ashdown Forest

2 Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition

Nitrogen deposition exceeds site relevant critical loads. Vegetation is becoming increasingly grass dominated where previously it was heather dominated.

<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	Control, reduce and ameliorate atmospheric nitrogen impacts.	Not yet determined	2014-20	Site Nitrogen Action Plan	Not yet determined	Not yet determined	Not yet determined

3 Public Access/Disturbance

There is potential for increased visitor pressure (in particular dogs off leads) to impact on breeding birds, particularly Nightjar which is a ground nesting bird, but also Dartford Warbler as it can nest low in the gorse. There is some work going on to reduce this pressure, which is currently funded by developers. Long-term monitoring is needed to establish impacts, alongside actions to mitigate the disturbance in partnership with the existing work.

<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	Establish and implement an advice and education programme for dog walkers, including leaflets and signage.	£50,000	2015-20	Advice	Not yet determined	Natural England	Conservators of Ashdown Forest

<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>
3B	Monitor the Nightjar and Dartford warbler populations. Information on key nesting areas will help managers to direct dog walkers to less sensitive areas (with fewer Nightjar).	£25,000	2015-20	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Natural England	Conservators of Ashdown Forest

4 Hydrological changes

The botanical diversity of the wet heath (and valley mire systems and bogs encompassed within it) has declined over the last few decades. We don't have sufficient information/evidence/survey to understand why this is the case. It is also suspected that *Rhynchospora alba* SAC habitat is present at Ashdown Forest, but the wet heath/bogs have declined in recent years and our current level of survey information/evidence is inadequate.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
4A	Undertake a hydrology/botanical survey of wet heath to enable understanding of botanical decline so that it can be understood how to better manage the wet areas, as well as identify the location of any <i>Rhynchospora alba</i> habitat.	£15,000	2015-16	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Not yet determined	Natural England	Conservators of Ashdown Forest

Site details

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

Qualifying features

#UK Special responsibility

Ashdown Forest SAC	H4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> H4030 European dry heaths S1166 <i>Triturus cristatus</i> : Great crested newt
Ashdown Forest SPA	A224(B) <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i> : European nightjar A302(B) <i>Sylvia undata</i> : Dartford warbler

Site location and links

Ashdown Forest SAC

Area (ha) 2729	Grid reference TQ451306	Map link
Local Authorities	East Sussex	
Site Conservation Objectives	European Site Conservation Objectives for Ashdown Forest SAC	
European Marine Site conservation advice	n/a	
Regulation 33/35 Package	n/a	
Marine Management Organisation site plan	n/a	

Ashdown Forest SPA

Area (ha) 3207.08	Grid reference TQ450313	Map link
Local Authorities	East Sussex	
Site Conservation Objectives	European Site Conservation Objectives for Ashdown Forest 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.

Ashdown Forest SAC

<i>River basin</i>	South East RBMP
<i>WFD Management catchment</i>	Adur & Ouse, Medway
<i>WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)</i>	GB106040018360, GB106040018370, GB107041012980

Ashdown Forest SPA

<i>River basin</i>	South East RBMP
<i>WFD Management catchment</i>	Adur & Ouse, Medway
<i>WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)</i>	GB106040018360, GB106040018370, GB107041012980

Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
Ashdown Forest SAC	Ashdown Forest SSSI
Ashdown Forest SPA	Ashdown Forest SSSI

National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
Ashdown Forest SAC	n/a
Ashdown Forest SPA	n/a

Ramsar	
Ashdown Forest SAC	n/a
Ashdown Forest SPA	n/a

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

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
0.4	24/11/2014	

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ipens2000

