

Site Improvement Plan

Mells Valley

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)

UK0012658 Mells Valley SAC

Site description

The Mells Valley SAC lies at the eastern end of the Mendip Hills in the County of Somerset. The site has three component sites: The Old Ironstone Works Mells, St. Dunstan's Well Catchment and Vallis Vale. The primary interest of the site is the maternity roost of Greater Horseshoe Bats *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum* originally located in the Old Ironstone Works Mells site. Subsidiary interests are caves not open to the public located on the other two sites and an area of limestone grassland on the St Dunstan's Well Catchment site. The caves are used as a hibernacula by some of the bats from the maternity roost.

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 Public Access/Disturbance	Threat	H8310 Caves not open to the public, S1304 Greater horseshoe bat	Improve site security	Natural England
2 Wildfire/ arson	Threat	S1304 Greater horseshoe bat	Remove flammable material and reduce fire risks	Natural England
3 Direct impact from third party	Pressure	S1304 Greater horseshoe bat	Maintain site security	Natural England
4 Undergrazing	Pressure	S1304 Greater horseshoe bat	Encourage the landowner to graze the limestone grassland	Natural England
5 Inappropriate designation boundary	Pressure	S1304 Greater horseshoe bat	Consider notification of the current maternity roost	Natural England
6 Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition	Pressure	H6210 Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone (important orchid sites)	Develop and implement Site Nitrogen Action Plan (if appropriate to site-specific circumstances)	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 Public Access/Disturbance

The Old Ironstone Works Mells is regularly accessed by the public and disturbance of the hibernaculum is a real threat. Access to the hibernaculum is relatively easy to achieve.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
1A	Construct and maintain an adequate security fence.	£5,000	2015-16	Conservation and Enhancement Scheme (CES)	Conservation and Enhancement Scheme (CES)	Natural England	n/a

2 Wildfire/ arson

Fires on the Old Ironstone Works site are a potential threat to hibernating bats in a derelict flume structure (a brick lined tunnel). This is a particular threat beneath the access point to the hibernaculum.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
2A	Construct and maintain an adequate security fence.	£5,000	2015-16	Conservation and Enhancement Scheme (CES)	Conservation and Enhancement Scheme (CES)	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>
2B	Remove potentially flammable material from the site. Liaise with landowner to reduce fire risks.	£500 per year	2015-16	Advice	Conservation and Enhancement Scheme (CES)	Natural England	n/a

3 Direct impact from third party

There is a significant problem with trespass vandalism and associated disturbance. There is a risk that bats occupying a cave on the site will be disturbed by unauthorised access.

<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	Maintain security grille and lock on cave entrance.	£250	2014 onwards	Advice	Conservation and Enhancement Scheme (CES)	Natural England	n/a

4 Undergrazing

The very small area of limestone grassland that exists on the St. Dunstons Well Catchment (<.5ha) is ungrazed and could remain so.

<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>
4A	Negotiate the return of the land to grazing management with the landowner.	£10,000	2015-16	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Common Agricultural Policy 2014-20 (New Environmental Land Management Scheme)	Rural Development Programme (RDPE)	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>
4B	Should negotiation fail, enforce grazing management on the site.	Not yet determined	2016-17	Enforcement	Natural England	Natural England	n/a

5 Inappropriate designation boundary

The bats used to occupy an old building on the site as a maternity roost at the time of notification. This building was burnt out in 1988 and the bat colony moved off the SAC. Planning permission was subsequently refused for the rebuilding of the roost building, therefore the maternity roost has relocated to alternative habitat outside of the SAC.

<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>
5A	Consider revision of the site boundary to include the current maternity roost.	Not yet determined	2017-18	Designation strategy: Notification Amendment	Natural England	Natural England	n/a

6 Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition

Nitrogen deposition exceeds site relevant critical loads.

<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>
6A	Control, reduce and ameliorate atmospheric nitrogen impacts.	Not yet determined	2014-20	Site Nitrogen Action Plan	Not yet determined	Natural England	Not yet determined

Site details

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

Qualifying features

#UK Special responsibility

Mells Valley SAC

S1304 *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*: Greater horseshoe bat

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

H8310 Caves not open to the public

Site location and links

Mells Valley SAC

Area (ha) **28.22** Grid reference **ST657476** [Map link](#)

Local Authorities Somerset

Site Conservation Objectives [European Site Conservation Objectives for Mells Valley 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.

Mells Valley SAC

River basin

[Severn RBMP](#)

WFD Management catchment

Bristol Avon & North Somerset Streams

WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)

n/a

Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
Mells Valley SAC	Vallis Vale SSSI Old Ironstone Works, Mells SSSI St Dunstan's Well Catchment SSSI
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
Mells Valley SAC	n/a
Ramsar	
Mells Valley SAC	n/a
Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)	
Mells Valley SAC	n/a

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1.0	13/03/2015	

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ipens2000

