

Site Improvement Plan

Outer Thames Estuary

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)

UK9020309 Outer Thames Estuary SPA

Site description

The Outer Thames Estuary Special Protection Area was designated to protect the red-throated diver *Gavia stellata* population and its supporting habitats (subtidal sands) in favourable condition.

The main part of the site is the outer part of the estuary (east of a line north from Sheerness, Kent to Shoebury Ness, Essex); a separate area extending south along the coast of E Norfolk (from Caister-on-Sea) to Woodbridge, Suffolk and lying mainly within the 12 nautical mile zone, except for two small areas which extend slightly into the 12 nm zone offshore from about Lowestoft; and a third area lying slightly further north and partly within 12 nm, but also with a larger area extending well beyond the 12 nm zone).

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 Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine	Pressure	A001(NB) Red-throated diver	Introduce and enforce appropriate management as necessary	Defra, Eastern Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (IFCA), Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (IFCA), Marine Management Organisation (MMO)

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 Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine

Commercial fishing activities categorised as 'amber or green' under Defra's revised approach to commercial fisheries in European Marine Sites (EMS) require assessment and (where appropriate) management. This assessment will be undertaken by the Eastern IFCA and the Kent & Essex IFCA, and the Marine Management Organisation. For activities categorised as 'green', these assessments should take account of any in-combination effects of amber activities, and/or appropriate plans or projects, in the site.

The gear types being assessed are towed demersal gear and dredges, and suction dredges for cockles as well as static/passive fishing gear methods such as set gillnets and drift netting represent potentially the most serious direct risk from fishing activity to the birds themselves. Disturbance and displacement effects may arise from boat movements associated with fishing activities. Removal of fish and larger molluscs can have a significant impact on the structure and functioning of benthic communities. Entanglement in static fishing nets is an important cause of death for red-throated divers in the UK waters. Netting is widespread across the sandbanks but is seasonal and occurs primarily when the Red-throated diver population is not at its peak. The scale of by-catch within the site has been assessed by the Kent & Essex IFCA, and was not found to be problematic and so can be deemed to be low-risk.

<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>
1A	Where the assessments indicate management is required, introduce appropriate measures.	Not yet determined	2016 onwards	Regulation: Creation / amendment of byelaws	Not yet determined	Defra/ Eastern Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (EIFCA)/ Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (IFCA)	Marine Management Organisation (MMO)

<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>
1B	If management measures are established, ensure compliance with bye-law and/ or voluntary agreements, and provide an appropriate level of reporting to ensure sites are well managed and to enable Natural England to provide advice on the condition of features and potential condition threats.	Not yet determined	2016 onwards	Regulation: Creation / amendment of byelaws	Not yet determined	Defra/ Eastern Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (EIFCA)/ Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (IFCA)	Marine Management Organisation (MMO)

Site details

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

Qualifying features

#UK Special responsibility

Outer Thames Estuary SPA A001(NB) *Gavia stellata*: Red-throated Diver

Site location and links

Outer Thames Estuary SPA

Area (ha) **379268.14** Grid reference **51 54 58
N, 01 32
41 E** [Map link](#)

Local Authorities Canterbury; Great Yarmouth; Maldon; Rochford; Southend-on-Sea; Suffolk Coastal; Swale; Thanet; Waveney

Site Conservation Objectives [Outer Thames SPA](#)

European Marine Site conservation advice [Conservation Advice for European Marine Sites](#)

Regulation 33/35 Package [Regulation 33/35 package link](#)

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.

Outer Thames Estuary SPA

River basin

[Anglian RBMP](#)

[South East RBMP](#)

[Thames RBMP](#)

WFD Management catchment

East Suffolk

WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)

GB105035046251, GB105035046260, GB105035046270

Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
Outer Thames Estuary SPA	Leiston-Aldeburgh SSSI
	Alde-Ore Estuary SSSI
	Minsmere-Walberswick Heaths & Marshes SSSI
	Sheppey Cliffs and Foreshore SSSI
	Benfleet & Southend Marshes SSSI
	The Swale SSSI
	Thanet Coast SSSI
	Pakefield to Easton Bavents SSSI
	Great Yarmouth North Denes SSSI
	Foulness SSSI
	Dengie SSSI
	Corton Cliffs SSSI
Bawdsey Cliff SSSI	
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
Outer Thames Estuary SPA	Benacre NNR
	Dengie NNR
	Orfordness-Havergate NNR
	Suffolk Coast NNR
Ramsar	
Outer Thames Estuary SPA	Alde-Ore Estuary
	Benfleet and Southend Marshes
	Dengie (Mid Essex Coast Phase 1)
	Foulness (Mid Essex Coast Phase 5)
	Minsmere/Walberswick
	Thanet Coast & Sandwich Bay

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

Outer Thames Estuary SPA

- Benacre to Easton Bavents Lagoons SAC
- Minsmere to Walberswick Heaths & Marshes SAC
- Thanet Coast SAC
- Alde-Ore Estuary SPA
- Alde-Ore & Butley Estuaries SAC
- Dengie (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 1) SPA
- Benfleet and Southend Marshes SPA
- Margate and Long Sands SCI
- Haisborough, Hammond and Winterton cSAC
- Great Yarmouth North Denes SPA
- Essex Estuaries SAC
- Benacre to Easton Bavents SPA
- Foulness (Mid-Essex Coast Phase 5) SPA
- Minsmere-Walberswick SPA
- Thanet Coast & Sandwich Bay SPA
- The Swale SPA
- Orfordness-Shingle Street SAC

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1.0	18/05/2015	

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ipens2000

