

# Site Improvement Plan

## North Downs Woodlands

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)**

**UK0030225 North Downs Woodlands SAC**

## Site description

This site consists of mature Beech forests and Yew woods on steep slopes. The stands lie within a mosaic of scrub and other woodland types and are the most easterly of the Beech woodland sites selected. Parts of the woods were affected by the storm of 1987. Small areas of unimproved chalk grassland are also present.

## 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	Pressure	H9130 Beech forests on neutral to rich soils, H91J0 Yew-dominated woodland	Work with landowners and PRow officers to secure access points.	Kent County Council, Natural England
2 Forestry and woodland management	Pressure	H9130 Beech forests on neutral to rich soils	Produce a management plan to address lack of Beech regeneration.	Forestry Commission, Natural England
3 Invasive species	Pressure	H9130 Beech forests on neutral to rich soils	Control Sycamore regeneration in Beech woodland.	Forestry Commission, Natural England
4 Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition	Pressure	H6210 Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone (important orchid sites), H9130 Beech forests on neutral to rich soils, H91J0 Yew-dominated woodland	Control, reduce and ameliorate atmospheric nitrogen impacts.	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 Public Access/Disturbance

Off-road vehicles as well as all-terrain bikes are having an impact on parts of the woodland. Vehicle damage is associated with vehicles coming off the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) into the woodland. All-terrain bikes favour Yew woodland where there is no understorey and the creation of tracks by bikes is eroding soil around the roots of Yews.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
1A	Work with landowners and Public Rights of Way (PRoW) officers to secure site access points.	Staff time	2015-20	Advice	Staff time	Natural England	Kent County Council

### 2 Forestry and woodland management

Beech regeneration is insufficient to retain canopy cover in the long term. In addition, Beech saplings are susceptible to squirrel damage.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
2A	Investigation of current level of Beech regeneration to inform a management plan either for potential restocking or encouraging natural regeneration.	£1,000	2015-20	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Common Agricultural Policy 2014-20 (New Environmental Land Management Scheme)	New Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMS)	Forestry Commission	Natural England

### 3 Invasive species

Invasive Sycamore has the potential to regenerate in woodland gaps reducing overall extent of SAC feature. This is more of an issue in Beech stands than in Yew woodland where Yew tends to eventually succeed in dominating the canopy.

<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>	Control Sycamore regeneration in Beech woodland.	£3,500	2015-20	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Common Agricultural Policy 2014-20 (New Environmental Land Management Scheme)	New Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMS)	Forestry Commission	Natural England

### 4 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>
<b>4A</b>	Control, reduce and ameliorate atmospheric nitrogen impacts.	Not yet determined	2015-20	Site Nitrogen Action Plan	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

<b>North Downs Woodlands SAC</b>	H6210# Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates ( <i>Festuco-Brometalia</i> )
	H9130 <i>Asperulo-Fagetum</i> beech forests
	H91J0# <i>Taxus baccata</i> woods of the British Isles

### Site location and links

#### North Downs Woodlands SAC

Area (ha)	<b>287.58</b>	Grid reference	<b>TQ674629</b>	<a href="#">Map link</a>
Local Authorities				Kent; Medway
Site Conservation Objectives				<a href="#">European Site Conservation Objectives for North Downs Woodlands SAC</a>
European Marine Site conservation advice				<a href="#">n/a</a>
Regulation 33/35 Package				<a href="#">n/a</a>
Marine Management Organisation site plan				<a href="#">n/a</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.*

### **North Downs Woodlands SAC**

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

## Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
North Downs Woodlands SAC	Halling to Trottiscliffe Escarpment SSSI Wouldham to Detling Escarpment SSSI
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
North Downs Woodlands SAC	n/a
Ramsar	
North Downs Woodlands SAC	n/a
Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)	
North Downs Woodlands SAC	n/a

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	22/12/2014	

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

