

Site Improvement Plan

Chilterns Beechwoods

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)

UK0012724 Chilterns Beechwoods SAC

Site description

The Chilterns Beechwoods SAC comprises nine separate sites scattered across the Chilterns.

There are three features of interest: semi-natural grasslands and scrubland on chalk; *Asperulo-Fagetum* beech woodland (for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the UK and lies in the centre of the habitat's UK range); and Stag beetle *Lucanus cervus*, for which the area is considered to support a significant presence. The rare coralroot *Cardamine bulbifera* is found in these woods.

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 Forestry and woodland management	Pressure/Threat	H9130 Beech forests on neutral to rich soils	Secure appropriate woodland management	Forestry Commission, Natural England, Landowner(s), Chilterns Woodland Project, Chilterns Conservation Board
2 Deer	Pressure/Threat	H9130 Beech forests on neutral to rich soils	Improve deer management	Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission, National Trust, Natural England, Landowner(s), Local deer group, Chilterns Woodland Project, Chilterns Conservation Board, members of redundant Chilterns deer management groups
3 Changes in species distributions	Threat	S1083 Stag beetle	Monitor stag beetle population	Forestry Commission, Natural England, Landowner(s), Chilterns Conservation Board, Local records centre(s)
4 Invasive species	Pressure/Threat	H9130 Beech forests on neutral to rich soils	Investigate the impacts of Grey squirrel	Forestry Commission, Natural England, Landowner(s), Chilterns Conservation Board

5 Disease	Threat	H9130 Beech forests on neutral to rich soils	Address box blight, and other diseases	Forestry Commission, Natural England, Chilterns Woodland Project, Chilterns Conservation Board
6 Public Access/Disturbance	Threat	S1083 Stag beetle	Reduce visitor impact on dead wood	Forestry Commission, National Trust, Natural England, Landowner(s), National Nature Reserve (NNR), Chilterns Woodland Project, Chilterns Conservation Board
7 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, S1083 Stag beetle	Establish a Site Nitrogen Action Plan	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 Forestry and woodland management

The local history of woodland management for beech timber has contributed towards a uniform age structure in some woods. With few gaps in the canopy, regeneration is restricted. To encourage regeneration and conservation of beech woodlands, restoration management is needed to diversify age and physical structure. Current and future threats of climate change are also likely to impact upon woodland regeneration and species composition.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
1A	In discussion with landowners and land managers, review RDPE agreements across the SAC to determine if more can be done to secure appropriate management. There are some parts of the SAC outside funded agreements in 2014.	Not yet determined	2014 onwards	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Common Agricultural Policy 2014-20 (New Environmental Land Management Scheme)	Rural Development Programme (RDPE)	Natural England	Forestry Commission, Landowner(s), Chilterns Woodland Project
1B	Increase resilience of the interest feature to climate change impacts by ensuring management of the habitat mosaic (woodland, scrub and grassland) creates and maintains structural and micro-climate heterogeneity across the SAC and removes or reduces other pressures.	Not yet determined	2015 onwards	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Common Agricultural Policy 2014-20 (New Environmental Land Management Scheme)	Rural Development Programme (RDPE)	Natural England	Forestry Commission, Landowner(s), Chilterns Woodland Project, Chilterns Conservation Board

2 Deer

Deer species across the Chilterns include fallow, roe and muntjac. Browsing by deer prevents or hinders natural regeneration of trees and ground flora. Without regeneration, diversity of woodland age and physical structure is declining and this is particularly acute where age distribution is already limited. Not all parts of the SAC are affected, however, in those that are, current control measures appear ineffective in managing the problem.

<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	In accordance with deer management plans and authoritative guidance, use a range of techniques including deer culling to remove unsustainable browsing pressure across the SAC. Seek to sustain deer management in the long-term i.e. developing a market for Chilterns venison and awareness-raising amongst the public in order to gain support for deer management.	Not yet determined	2014 onwards	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Common Agricultural Policy 2014-20 (New Environmental Land Management Scheme)	Rural Development Programme (RDPE), Business	Forestry Commission	Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission, National Trust, Landowner(s), Chilterns Woodland Project
<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	Establish communication and information sharing amongst neighbouring landowners regarding deer management and deer numbers. Use these networks to co-ordinate deer culling activities.	Not yet determined	2014 onwards	Advice: Other	Rural Development Programme (RDPE), Chilterns Conservation Board, LEADER (RDPE)	Natural England	Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission, National Trust, Landowner(s), Chilterns Woodland Project, Chilterns Conservation Board, members of redundant Chilterns deer management groups

<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>
2C	Establish exclosures across the SAC and monitor these exclosures. Adapt deer management practices in response to observations.	Not yet determined	2015 onwards	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Common Agricultural Policy 2014-20 (New Environmental Land Management Scheme)	Rural Development Programme (RDPE), Chilterns Conservation Board, LEADER (RDPE)	Natural England	Forestry Commission, National Trust, Landowner(s), Local deer group, Chilterns Woodland Project, Chilterns Conservation Board

<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>
2D	Produce a deer management plan for each SSSI and provide a copy to each landowner. Draw on authoritative guidance when developing these plans.	Not yet determined	2015 onwards	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Common Agricultural Policy 2014-20 (New Environmental Land Management Scheme)	Rural Development Programme (RDPE), Chilterns Conservation Board, LEADER (RDPE)	Forestry Commission	Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission, National Trust, Natural England, Landowner(s), Chilterns Woodland Project, Chilterns Conservation Board

3 Changes in species distributions

Fit-for-purpose species recording and data to allow monitoring of the stag beetle population is not currently in place, making it difficult to manage the population and its habitat appropriately.

<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 a baseline and determine trends for the stag beetle population across the SAC. Establish a monitoring programme. Use species data to inform management.	Not yet determined	2015 onwards	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Natural England	Natural England	Forestry Commission, Landowner(s), Chilterns Conservation Board, Local records centre(s)

4 Invasive species

Grey squirrels *Sciurus carolinensis* and edible dormouse *Glis glis* damage growing trees by bark stripping. Where natural regeneration is occurring the trees are attacked between the ages of 20 and 40 if not before. It is not known if this is impacting on tree health or regeneration but there may be a need for vigilance, and consider increased awareness of likely effects and signs of impacts. Control measures have resulted in little or no ecological change to date.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
4A	Explore options for control measures for grey squirrel and edible dormouse and implement control measures accordingly. Work with neighbours on a landscape scale to manage grey squirrel and edible dormouse.	Not yet determined	2014 onwards	Advice: Other	Not yet determined	Forestry Commission	Natural England, Landowner(s), Chilterns Conservation Board

5 Disease

Box blight has been observed at Ellesborough and Kimble Warrens SSSI which represent the rare habitat type of box-dominated woodland. Other diseases are possible.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
5A	Raise awareness amongst landowners about relevant diseases and appropriate management to prevent disease and address infections. Draw on existing best practice publications.	No cost	2015 onwards	Advice	Not yet determined	Natural England	Forestry Commission, Chilterns Woodland Project, Chilterns Conservation Board

6 Public Access/Disturbance

Removal of dead wood by the public is an issue on some parts of the SAC. This could impact in saproxylic invertebrate fauna. Also storm-damaged dead wood may be removed in the interests of health and safety, and tidiness.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
6A	Engage visitors in the nature conservation features of the SAC and how they are best conserved, (for example how deadwood needs to be left in- situ to provide habitat). Achieve this through rangers, interpretation/events and websites (integrated into existing activities or as new activities).	£2,000	2015 onwards	Advice: Education & awareness raising	Not yet determined	National Trust	Natural England, National Nature Reserve (NNR), Chilterns Woodland Project

<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>
6B	Raise awareness amongst landowners about appropriate deadwood management in order to conserve Stag beetle populations, including guidance about tree surgery and tree safety in publicly accessible areas. Draw on existing best practice publications.	£1,500	2015 onwards	Advice: Education & awareness raising	Not yet determined	Natural England	Forestry Commission, Landowner(s), Chilterns Woodland Project, Chilterns Conservation Board

7 Air Pollution: impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition

Atmospheric nitrogen deposition exceeds the critical loads for ecosystem protection. Some parts of the site are recorded as unfavourable (recovering), but impacts associated with nitrogen deposition are unclear.

<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>
7A	Prepare a Site Nitrogen Action Plan.	Not yet determined	2015 onwards	Site Nitrogen Action Plan	Not yet determined	Natural England	Not yet determined

<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>
7B	Implement actions arising from the Site Nitrogen Action Plan.	Not yet determined	2015 onwards	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

Chilterns Beechwoods SAC

S1083 *Lucanus cervus*: Stag beetle

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

H9130 *Asperulo-Fagetum* beech forests

Site location and links

Chilterns Beechwoods SAC

Area (ha) **1276.48** Grid reference **SP975134** [Map link](#)

Local Authorities Buckinghamshire; Hertfordshire; Oxfordshire; Windsor and Maidenhead

Site Conservation Objectives [European Site Conservation Objectives for Chilterns Beechwoods 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.

Chilterns Beechwoods SAC

River basin

[Thames RBMP](#)

WFD Management catchment

Colne, Lower Thames, Thame and South Chilterns

WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)

n/a

Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
Chilterns Beechwoods SAC	Naphill Common SSSI Bisham Woods SSSI Windsor Hill SSSI Tring Woodlands SSSI Hollowhill & Pullingshill Woods SSSI Ellesborough & Kimble Warrens SSSI Bradenham Woods, Park Wood & The Coppice SSSI Ashridge Commons & Woods SSSI Aston Rowant Woods SSSI
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
Chilterns Beechwoods SAC	n/a
Ramsar	
Chilterns Beechwoods SAC	n/a
Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)	
Chilterns Beechwoods SAC	n/a
Other relevant documents and links	
	The Management of Deer on National Trust Land, July 2009 Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2014 - 2019

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1.0	04/03/2015	

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ipens2000

