

The status and environmental controls of the SAC Ranunculus community of the River Itchen

Overall Objective Provide a cost effective and scientifically robust basis by which to manage the SAC designated Ranunculus community, and allow its status to be improved where it is shown to be unfavourable. The time scale for this information is six years in order to meet the requirements of CAMS and the River Itchen WLMP.

Objective 1

Gain a significantly improved understanding of the environmental factors that affect the Ranunculus community (specifically including flow, water level, water chemistry, shading and substrate composition). Model the links between environmental variables and the status of the Ranunculus community.

Objective 2

Provide ecologically relevant and defensible flow, velocity and water level targets for the River Itchen, in order to allow the effective management of the SAC through application of the Habitats Regulations. The project, and resulting targets, will be essential to the effective production of robust CAMS and WLMP strategies.

Objective 3

Provide ecologically relevant and defensible water quality targets, for example nutrient targets, to maintain or enhance the status of the Ranunculus community. Water quality information from the project will guide the effective regulation of discharges in the Itchen and other chalk rivers locally.

Objective 4

Provide clear and concise information on the physical habitat requirements of the Ranunculus community (specifically relating to shading, water depth, velocity and substrate composition). Guide river management and any necessary restoration projects.

Objective 5

Devise, field-test and produce a scientifically robust and repeatable monitoring protocol for the SAC designated Ranunculus community to facilitate future monitoring and condition reporting.

Objective 6

Fulfil Hampshire Area commitments within 'Making it happen' and 'Create a better place' by 'playing a lead role in the Hants and IoW Biodiversity Partnership', and substantially contributing towards 'research and development into Ranunculus'.

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