



## Natura 2000 yng Nghymru: Ffeithiau a Ffigurau.

## Natura 2000 in Wales: Facts and Figures

Rhaglen Natura 2000 LIFE yng Nghymru  
LIFE Natura 2000 Programme for Wales



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## 1. Cyflwyniad

Mae rhwydwaith Natura 2000 (N2K) o safleoedd bywyd gwylt a warchodir gan Ewrop yn gonglfaen cadwraeth natur yng Nghymru ac ar draws Ewrop. Yng Nghymru mae Natura 2000 yn cynnwys 92 Ardal Cadwraeth Arbennig (ACA) a 20 Ardal Gwarchodaeth Arbennig (AGA) fel y'u dynodir dan Gyfarwyddbau Cynefinoedd ac Adar.

Mae'r adroddiad hwn yn rhoi trosolwg o Natura 2000 yng Nghymru ac yn cynnwys set o ystadegau, gan gynnwys nifer a maint y safleoedd a warchodir, eu lleoliad a chynefinoedd a rhywogaethau dynodedig. Mae hyn yn dangos y cyd-destun lle mae angen gwneud penderfyniadau rheoli allweddol.

Mae Rhaglen Natura LIFE 2000 yng Nghymru yn brosiect mawr a arweinir gan Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru (CNC) ac sy'n cael cefnogaeth ariannol Ewropeaidd LIFE+ Nature. Mae wedi cynhyrchu cynllun strategol i reoli ac adfer Natura 2000 yng Nghymru. Mae'r adroddiad yn disgrifio gwaith Rhaglen LIFE Natura 2000 a rôl CNC wrth oruchwylio gwaith rheoli a chynladwyedd Natura 2000 yng Nghymru.

Mae'r ddogfen hon yn rhoi gwybodaeth gefndirol i gefnogi adroddiadau eraill a gynhyrchwyd gan Raglen LIFE Natura 2000.

## 2. Introduction

The Natura 2000 (N2K) network of European protected wildlife sites is a cornerstone of nature conservation in Wales and across Europe. Natura 2000 in Wales is comprised of 92 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and 20 Special Protection Areas (SPAs) as designated under the Habitats and Birds Directives.

This report provides an overview of Natura 2000 in Wales and includes a set of statistics, including number and extent of the protected sites, location, designated habitats and species. This shows the context in which key management decisions need to be made.

The LIFE Natura 2000 Programme for Wales is a major project led by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and supported by European LIFE+ Nature funding. It has produced a strategic plan for the management and restoration of Natura 2000 in Wales. The report describes the work of the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme and the role of NRW in overseeing the management and long term sustainability of Natura 2000 in Wales.

This document provides background information to support other reports produced by the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme.

### 3. Natura 2000 in Wales

Natura 2000, the centrepiece of EU nature and biodiversity policy, is a European Union-wide network of nature protection areas established to assure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats.

In May 1992 European Union governments adopted the Habitats Directive<sup>1</sup> to protect the most seriously threatened habitats and species across Europe. This complemented the Birds Directive<sup>2</sup> adopted in 1979. The Birds Directive requires the establishment of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for birds. The Habitats Directive similarly requires Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) to be designated for other species, and for habitats. Together, SPAs and SACs make up the Natura 2000 series and comprise of nearly 28,000 sites. All EU Member States contribute to the network of sites in a Europe-wide partnership from the Canaries to Crete and from Sicily to Finnish Lapland.

### 4. Importance of Natura 2000

Natura 2000 sites play a key role in biodiversity conservation in Wales. Primarily they provided the highest level of legal protection for a wide range of designated, threatened species and habitats – see below for more details. However, this also provides protection for other wildlife which occurs alongside the protected features.

The protected sites act as a core stronghold where robust populations exist which can act as a reservoir to allow dispersal to the wider countryside. The N2K sites provide key stepping stones within the wider countryside or seascape promoting connectivity, and producing a local network of high biodiversity areas alongside Sites of Special Scientific Interest, local nature reserves, and high value landscape features.

Natura 2000 also delivers a wealth of benefits to the people of Wales. They are not, in most cases, nature reserves but living landscapes with farms, forestry enterprises or fisheries which contribute to the Welsh economy. They showcase nature at its best and are appreciated by millions of visitors every year, supporting the tourist industry and providing the opportunity for pleasure, relaxation and outdoor exercise which boosts health and wellbeing.

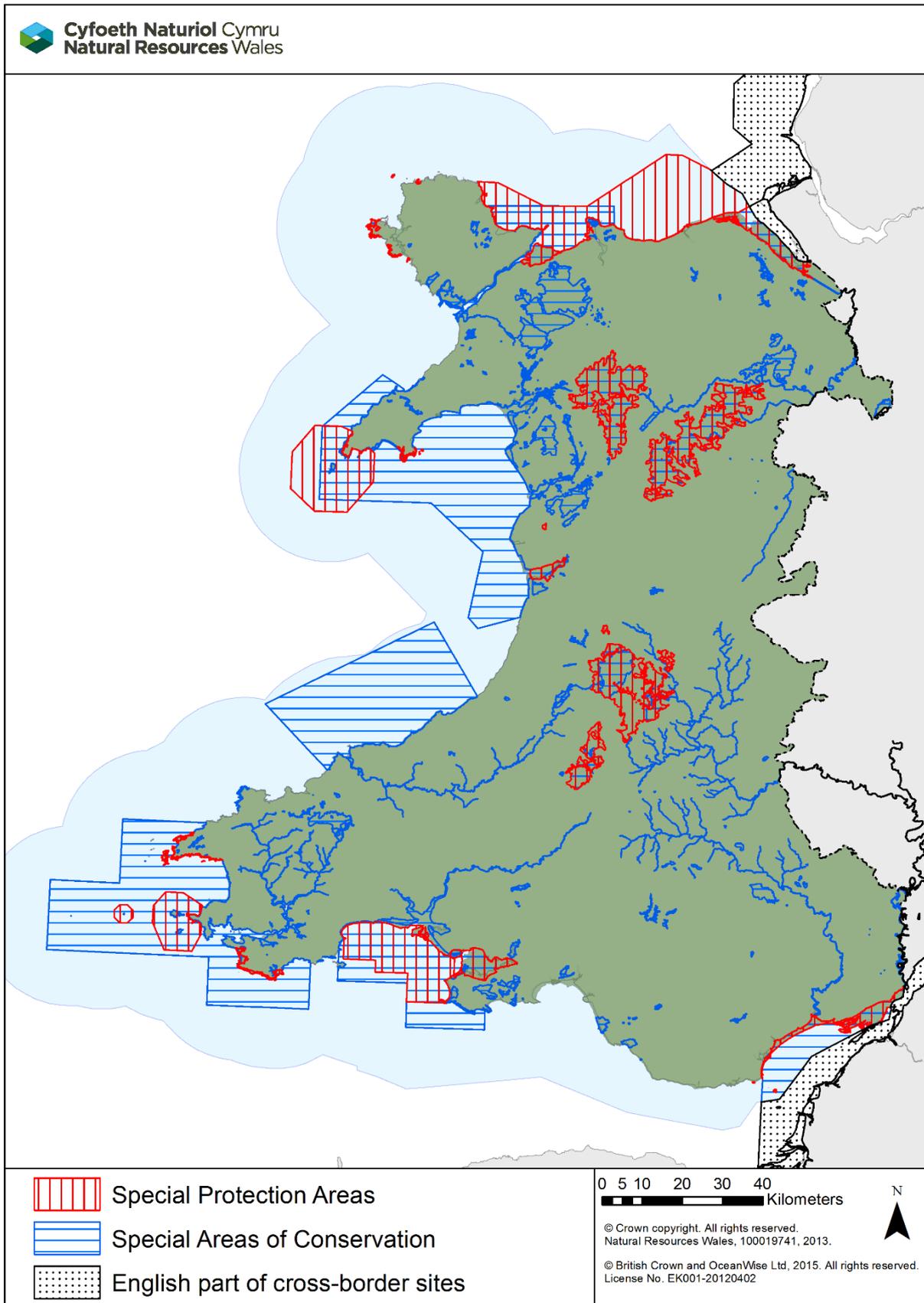
Many sites also provide essential life support services, such as carbon storage, ameliorating air and water pollution, and moderating coastal erosion and flooding. They also help supply sources of meat, fish, shellfish and drinking water. A full description of ecosystem services provided are shown in “Inventory of Ecosystem Services provided by Natura 2000 in Wales”.

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<sup>1</sup> Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora

<sup>2</sup> Directive 2009/147/EC (previously directive 79/409/EEC) on the conservation of wild birds

## 5. Location of Natura 2000 sites in Wales



## 6. LIFE Natura 2000 Programme

The LIFE Natura 2000 Programme for Wales which runs from September 2012 to September 2015, is led by Natural Resources Wales and supported by European LIFE+ Nature funding. It exists to produce a strategic plan for the management and restoration of all Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation in Wales.

The purpose is to enable Wales to make significant progress towards bringing Natura 2000 species and habitats into favourable condition and help meet its commitments under the European Habitats and Birds Directives.

The Programme also aims to provide a platform to seek funding for Natura 2000 related projects from all potential sources, and to integrate Natura 2000 funding into other financial instruments and policy areas.

Working with a wide range of partners and stakeholders, the Programme will determine required conservation management actions for the 2014-20 period, identify costs and priorities.

### Outputs

Outputs of the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme include:

- Evidence on issues and risks to Natura 2000 sites
- Appraisal of current management mechanisms
- Identification of potential new approaches and funding streams
- Prioritised Implementation Plans for all Natura 2000 sites
- Thematic plans for prominent issues affecting the Natura 2000 series in Wales
- Studies to resolve evidence gaps
- Improvement of the NRW Actions Database to hold and manage data created by the project

### Benefits of the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme

The LIFE Natura 2000 Programme has developed a strategic approach to managing Natura 2000 sites and features in Wales. It has considered the whole network (sites on land and at sea, freshwaters, uplands and lowlands) and identifies overall issues, requirements, costs and priorities. This will help decision-makers to plan management and restoration and allocate funds, time and other resources in a coherent, targeted manner.

The Programme has been developed with input from a wide range of organisations involved in Natura 2000 management. This enabled the pooling of expertise and the collective agreement of solutions as well as ensuring that the final programme is broadly supported, and in a state where it can be implemented as soon as possible.

The Programme calculates the cost of saving our key wildlife assets (on a local and national level) allowing more effective planning. It will also be used to help access millions

of pounds from existing and new grant schemes and other funding sources, and help ensure that Natura 2000 needs are recognised and supported by sources of financing which have not historically funded wildlife conservation. This has the potential to provide a boost to local economies as well as the environment by bringing new cash into Wales. The Programme will provide evidence to decision-makers (including grant-holders) of the value of Natura 2000 – not just in terms of wildlife, but what they can provide to the people of Wales. These include services like carbon storage, cleaner water, reduced flood risk, natural sea defences, green jobs, opportunities for local enterprise, better visitor attractions and more productive fisheries.

## 7. Organisations and systems

### 7.1 EU LIFE+ Nature

LIFE is the European Union's (EU) financial instrument supporting environmental and nature conservation projects throughout the EU. The general objective of LIFE is to contribute to the implementation, updating and development of EU environmental policy and legislation by co-financing pilot or demonstration projects with European added-value. Since 1992, LIFE has co-financed some 4,000 projects, contributing approximately €3.1 billion to the protection of the environment.

### 7.2 Natural Resources Wales

The purpose of Natural Resources Wales (NRW) is to ensure that the natural resources of Wales are sustainably maintained, enhanced and used, now and in the future. NRW is the principal adviser to the Welsh Government on the environment, enabling the sustainable development of Wales' natural resources for the benefit of people, the economy and wildlife.

NRW brings together the work of the Countryside Council for Wales, Environment Agency Wales and Forestry Commission Wales, as well as some functions of Welsh Government.

### 7.3 NRW Actions Database

The Actions Database is part of the NRW ISIS Special Sites Database, and can hold, analyse, report on and share information about actions required to address conservation issues on all designated sites in Wales. It is a collaborative tool which allows partner organisations to comment on, and update progress on actions.

Sites are divided into management units, usually based on land ownership, field boundaries, or other practical boundaries that relate to the way in which they are managed. Management units can vary enormously in size, from single fields in the lowlands to tens or hundreds of hectares in the uplands or out to sea.

Any issues or risks which are barriers to the species or habitat features present in the unit, reaching or maintaining favourable condition are recorded, and appropriate actions proposed to address them. Each action is made up of an issue, sub-issue, and a mechanism for addressing the issue, estimated cost, timetable and priority. It is assigned to a particular organisation to lead on the delivery of the action.

## 8. Legislation and policy relating to Natura 2000

### 8.1 Prioritised Action Framework (PAF)

The Prioritised Action Framework (PAF) is a planning tool required under Article 8 of the Habitats Directive which sets out how member states of the European Union propose to manage their Natura 2000 sites, and how these management activities are to be funded. This approach aims to facilitate the integration of these required actions into the various EU funding programmes, such as structural funds and Rural Development Programmes.

The first UK PAF and regional annexes were submitted to the European Commission in early 2013. Natural Resources Wales (NRW) has been commissioned by the Welsh Government to draft an updated Welsh section of the PAF. This will be undertaken by the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme.

### 8.2 Existing legislation

The protection for Natura 2000 sites is set out in the Habitats Directive and Birds Directive, that is:

- Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora
- Directive 2009/147/EC (previously directive 79/409/EEC) on the Conservation of Wild Birds

The key articles are shown below:

**Habitats Directive, Article 2(2):** “Measures taken pursuant to this Directive shall be designed to maintain or restore, at favourable conservation status, natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of Community interest.”

**Habitats Directive, Article 6(2):** “Member States shall take appropriate steps to avoid, in the special areas of conservation, the deterioration of natural habitats and the habitats of species as well as disturbance of the species for which the areas have been designated, in so far as such disturbance could be significant in relation to the objectives of this Directive.”

**Birds Directive, Article 4:** “In respect of the protection areas ...Member States shall take appropriate steps to avoid pollution or deterioration of habitats or any disturbances affecting the birds, in so far as these would be significant having regard to the objectives of this Article. Outside these protection areas, Member States shall also strive to avoid pollution or deterioration of habitats.”

In the UK these obligations are transposed by the **Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010** and subsequent amendment (commonly referred to as the Habitats Regulations), which apply in the terrestrial environment and in territorial waters out to 12 nautical miles. Proposals for new or revised plans and projects likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site require an appropriate assessment. Permission is not normally granted if the proposal will adversely affect the integrity of the site, unless there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest. Amendments to the

Regulations in 2012 introduced additional duties on appropriate and competent authorities in relation to wild bird habitat.

The **Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 2007** and subsequent amendments transpose the Directives in UK offshore waters.

The **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981** and **Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000** and subsequent amendments make provisions for the protection and management of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) which underpin all terrestrial and intertidal Natura 2000 sites. This legislation provides protection against operations likely to damage the special interest of the site caused by owners, occupiers or third parties.

Power to serve notices on owner/occupiers of SSSIs that undertake a damaging operation to the special interest of the site without consent. Third parties intentionally or recklessly causing damage may also be prosecuted. Byelaw-making powers prohibit anyone (mainly third parties) from undertaking specified activities in order to protect a site.

#### Other relevant legislation

- **Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006** – particularly Section 42 which requires the creation and enactment of measures relating to lists of habitats and species of principal importance in Wales.
- **Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2003** which transpose the **Water Framework Directive**.
- The **Marine Strategy Regulations 2010** transpose the **Marine Strategy Framework Directive** which aims to achieve Good Environmental Status (GES) of the EU's marine waters by 2020.
- **Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009** - provides the legal mechanism to help ensure clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas by putting in place a new system for improved management and protection of the marine and coastal environment, including for example, marine planning, marine conservation zones, marine licensing procedures and new fisheries management powers.

A key requirement of the act is the preparation and updating of **Wales National Marine Plan** which lays out the context of the ecosystem approach for Wales' marine area.

- **Town and Country Planning (Local Development Plan) (Wales) Regulations 2005**
- **Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975**
- **Conservation of Seals Act 1970**

## **Current contractual mechanisms**

Section 15 Countryside Act 1968 (as amended) enables NRW to enter into contractual management agreements with SSSI landowners or occupiers, whereby the owner/occupier agrees to manage the land according to defined management prescriptions in return for payment.

In addition, under Regulation 16 of the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) NRW may enter into management agreements with the owners or occupiers of land within or adjacent to Natura 2000 sites, for the purpose of managing that land for the benefit of Natura 2000 habitats and species.

Under Section 132 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (as amended), NRW can buy or lease land for a range of purposes, including for the establishment and management of nature reserves.

Article 28 (1) of EC Regulation 1305/2013 on rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) enables the Welsh Government to establish a voluntary scheme for agri-environment and climate measures as part of the Rural Development Plan, to provide payment to ensure natural resources are managed sustainably. In Wales the scheme is known as Glastir and is aimed at combating climate change; improving water management; and maintaining and enhancing biodiversity.

## **Protection of species**

The Habitats Regulations 2010 also protect animal and plant species that are listed on Annex IV of the Habitats Directive and that have a natural range in Great Britain. Such species are called 'European Protected Species' (EPS) under the Habitats Regulations. Many EPS are also designated features of N2K sites. It is an offence under the Habitats Regulations to, for example, capture, injure or kill a wild animal of an EPS or damage its breeding site or resting place. It is also an offence to, for example, pick, collect or uproot a wild plant of an EPS or sell or exchange such a plant. NRW may grant licences which allow certain activities, for specific purposes only, which would otherwise be offences under the legislation.

Possession and sale of EPS and UK protected species is illegal. NRW can grant licences for appropriate purposes.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), implements the Birds Directive and protects all wild birds, their nests and their eggs. Additional protection is given to rare birds listed on Schedule 1 of the 1981 Act from disturbance at their nests and from disturbance of their dependant young. NRW issues licences for specific purposes, such as scientific, conservation or safety purposes, so that legitimate work may be undertaken.

### 8.3 New developments in the legislative and policy framework

The Welsh Government is currently developing a more integrated approach to the management of natural resources in Wales based on a legislative framework for their sustainable management. This includes:

- **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** - aims to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. There are seven goals, including a 'resilient Wales' which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (e.g. climate change). The Act establishes Public Service Boards, which will prepare local well-being assessments.
- **Planning (Wales) Act 2015** - aims to create an efficient process to ensure the right development is located in the right place. Planning policy provides for a presumption in favour of sustainable development to ensure that decision-makers balance and integrate social, economic and environmental issues at the same time when taking decision on individual planning applications. The Act introduces the requirement for a National Development Framework, and the designation of strategic planning areas and strategic development plans.
- **Environment (Wales) Bill** which puts the ecosystem approach on a statutory basis, enshrining in law the key principles of building resilience, managing for multiple benefits, adaptive management, long termism, working from a firm evidence base, collaboration and co-operation, and working at the right scale.

The Bill introduces a number of mechanisms and tools to help achieve sustainable management of natural resources, and lays out a delivery framework through the publication and review of the National Natural Resources Policy and Nature Recovery Plan and Area Statements (see below.)

The Bill also introduces an enhanced biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty. It will apply to public authorities in Wales, requiring that they place biodiversity as an 'integral part of policy and decision making' and report upon actions taken to improve biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems as well as incorporating biodiversity into other areas of policy, strategy and initiatives.

The Bill also requires that NRW produce the State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR) which will report on the status of Wales' natural resources and track the progress being made towards sustainable management.

The Environment (Wales) Bill will introduce the following policies, plans and documents (subject to the Environment Bill receiving Royal Assent).

- **National Natural Resources Policy (NNRP)** – due to be published in spring 2017. The NNRP provides a framework for land-based natural resources policies and plans, setting out priorities and opportunities for sustainable management of natural resources at a national level, for a five year period. The NNRP will outline how this will provide benefits to society and the economy as well as the environment to support goals set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

- **Area Statements** – Priorities identified in the National Policy will be delivered at a local level through Areas Statements produced by NRW. The Statements will identify opportunities for different bodies to collaborate in the delivery of sustainable management of natural resources. Public Service Boards will be required to take account of Areas Statements in local well-being assessments.
- **Nature Recovery Plan for Wales** – will be the national biodiversity strategy and action plan for Wales. The ambition is to reverse the decline in biodiversity and ensure lasting benefits to society by building the resilience of ecosystems. The Nature Recovery Plan will be comprised of a strategic Position Statement, setting out biodiversity commitments, resource and policy, and clarify the relationship with other Welsh Government policies and programmes and the Aichi targets. An Action Plan, programming priority actions for reversing the loss of biodiversity and nature recovery, will form the delivery part of the NRP.

#### 8.4 Other policies and plans

Whilst all of the plans described below have a potential to influence the conservation, recovery and strengthening of the Natura 2000 network, the extent to which they do so varies considerably as they are not focussed solely on Natura 2000 sites.

- **Planning Policy Wales** – is the Welsh Government’s land use planning policy for Wales. Every local planning authority has a statutory duty to prepare a Local Development Plan, which guides development of the local area, within the framework set by national planning policy in Planning Policy Wales.
- **Shoreline Management Plans** - Revised Shoreline Management Plans (SMP2) for Wales were adopted in 2014, for the following areas:
  - North West England and North Wales
  - West of Wales
  - South Wales
  - Severn Estuary

SMP policy describes how a stretch of shoreline is most likely to be managed to address flood and/or erosion and indicates agreed management for given units; that is, no active intervention, hold the (existing defence) line, managed realignment or advance the line.

- **Welsh National Marine Plan (WNMP)** - The Welsh Government is responsible for Marine Planning in Wales and is developing a WNMP that covers Welsh inshore and offshore waters. The WNMP will take a 20 year outlook and will guide the sustainable management of marine activities. It will provide important information and guidance to those who wish to use or undertake development in the marine area and for decision makers.

- **Water Framework Directive River Basin Management Plans (RBMP) Cycle 2** – to be published December 2015 for the following catchments:
  - Western Wales
  - Dee
  - Severn
  
- **Woodlands for Wales** – the Welsh Government’s national forest strategy.
  
- **Climate Change Strategy for Wales** - Welsh Government’s climate change strategy, with includes a refresh statement and annual report
  
- **Code of Good Agricultural Practice for the Protection of Soil, Water and Air for Wales 2011** - Welsh Government
  
- **Welsh Wildlife Crime Strategy**, Wales Biodiversity Partnership
  
- **GB Framework Strategy for Invasive Non-native Species**

## 9. Natura 2000 statistics

### 9.1 Number and area of Natura 2000 sites in Wales<sup>3</sup>

There are 112 Natura 2000 sites in Wales comprised of 92 Special Areas of Conservation and 20 Special Protection Areas. SACs and SPAs are designated both on land and at sea. Seven SACs and three SPAs straddle the English/Welsh border, and are managed in part by English authorities.

SACs cover the larger area at around 629,000 ha, with SPAs accounting for 262,000 ha. However, in some cases the designated sites overlap, so the total area of Wales and its territorial waters covered Natura 2000 is around 718,000 hectares. Natura 2000 sites cover nearly 7% of land area<sup>4</sup> and nearly 36% of territorial waters<sup>5</sup>. See Table 1 below for more details.

For a full list of designated Natura 2000 sites see *LIFE N2K SAC and SPA Sites and Features Master September 2015* Excel spreadsheet.

**Table 1. Number and area of Natura 2000 sites in Wales**

Designation	No of sites in Wales	Area in Wales (ha)	Overlap (ha)	Combined coverage (excluding overlap) (ha)
SAC	92	628,557		
SPA	20	262,237		
SAC & SPA	112	890,794	172,851	717,943

'Terrestrial' or 'non-marine' sites refer to sites predominantly on land, including freshwater and coastal locations. 'Marine' sites refer to those comprised predominantly of sub-tidal or intertidal areas. They are generally large in extent.

Terrestrial SACs cover over 120,000 hectares which equates to nearly 6% of Wales land area. While the seven marine SACs that cover over half a million hectares which equates to 32% of territorial waters and nearly three quarters of the total area of SACs in Wales. Terrestrial SPAs cover nearly 80,000 ha which equates to nearly 4% of land area. Six major marine SPAs (some of which also cover some coastal land) cover over 180,000 hectares, which is equivalent to 12% of territorial waters.

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#### <sup>3</sup> Note on data and statistics:

All statistics in this document have been calculated from the best available information however there may be some inaccuracies and inconsistency due to the fact that mapping precision and base mapping used have varied over time and between designations.

All area calculations are based on Cartesian area so elevation has not been taken into account. Results have been also been rounded for ease of reporting. As a result the statistics quoted should be used as a general guide only. Please contact Natural Resources Wales if accurate figures are required.

<sup>4</sup> Wales land area: 2,122,449 ha

<sup>5</sup> Welsh territorial water is from Mean High Water to 12 nautical miles: 1,594,175 ha.

**Table 2. Marine and non-marine SACs and SPAs and Wales**

Type of site	Number	Area (ha)	% of total area of SAC/SPA in Wales
Terrestrial/non-marine SACs	85	121,828	19%
Marine SACs	7	506,729	81%
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>628,557</b>	<b>100%</b>
Terrestrial/non-marine SPAs	10	77,334	29%
Marine SPAs	10	184,903	71%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>262,237</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 9.2 Type of Natura 2000 sites in Wales

Natura 2000 sites in Wales are found in upland, lowland, and coastal and marine landscapes. The key types are as follows:

- Coastal and island sites (12 SACs, 7 SPAs) incorporating coastal cliffs, sand dunes, shingle, breeding seabirds. Examples include Castlemartin Coast, and Glannau Ynys Gybi.
- Marine and estuarine sites (7 SACs, 10 SPAs). Extensive marine sites with intertidal and subtidal habitats, marine mammals, saltmarsh, seabirds and wintering waders. Sites include Pen Llyn a'r Sarnau, and the Severn Estuary.
- Major river systems (8 SACs). Large linear sites supporting riverine habitat and Otter, White-clawed crayfish and fish species including Atlantic salmon. Examples include Afon Teifi and the River Wye.
- Uplands (8 SACs and 3 SPAs). Large, landscape-scale sites with blanket bog, heath, alpine and rocky habitats, lakes, wetland and raptors. Such as Eryri, Migneint-Arenig-Dduallt and Cadair Idris.
- Ancient woodland sites and bat sites (25 SACs) which together support seven types of woodland habitat, such as Western acidic oak woodland, and three species of bat. Examples of sites include Coedydd Nedd a Mellte, and Usk Bat Sites.
- Wetlands (11 SACs). Predominantly lowland sites with fens, mires and bogs and associated species such as Southern damselfly. For example, Cors Caron and Corsydd Môn.
- Standing water (10 SACs). Lowland lakes, canal, turlough and Great crested newt ponds, in places such as Llangorse Lake, and Johnstown Newt Sites.
- Grassland, habitat mosaic and Marsh fritillary sites (12 SACs). For example, Halkyn Mountain and Caeau Mynydd Mawr.

## 9.3 Special Area of Conservation statistics

### Geographic distribution

When analysed by area, 75% of the SAC series is in the sub-tidal environment, 5% in the intertidal zone, 6% in the lowlands and 14% in the uplands. (Of the terrestrial SAC series (excluding the seven marine sites) more than 70% of the total area is found in the uplands.)

**Table 3. Geographic distribution of SACs in Wales**

Environment	Definition	Area of SAC (ha)	Percentage of SAC series by area (%)
Upland	Land above upper limit of agricultural enclosure	90,080	14
Lowland	Land between the upper limit of agricultural enclosure and mean high water	36,868	6
Intertidal	Shoreline below mean high water mark and above mean low water mark	32,718	5
Subtidal	Open sea below mean low water mark	469,060	75
<b>Total</b>		<b>628,726</b>	

NB. This analysis is based on geographic location of designated land, not but type of site.

### Area of SACs

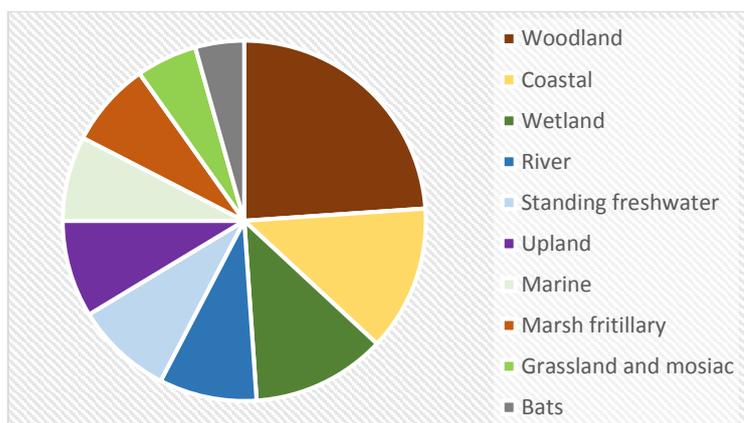
SACs can vary in size greatly. 28 of the 92 SAC in Wales are less than 100 ha in area. Lowland terrestrial sites are generally smaller than upland ones. The smallest site, wholly within Wales, is Dunraven Bay in the Vale of Glamorgan, at 6 ha. The largest terrestrial SAC in Wales is Berwyn a Mynyddoedd De Clwyd, a vast area of moorland which is 27,217 ha in size.

The marine SAC are, on average, significantly larger than terrestrial SAC. The largest marine SAC is Pen Llyn a'r Sarnau at 146,035 ha.

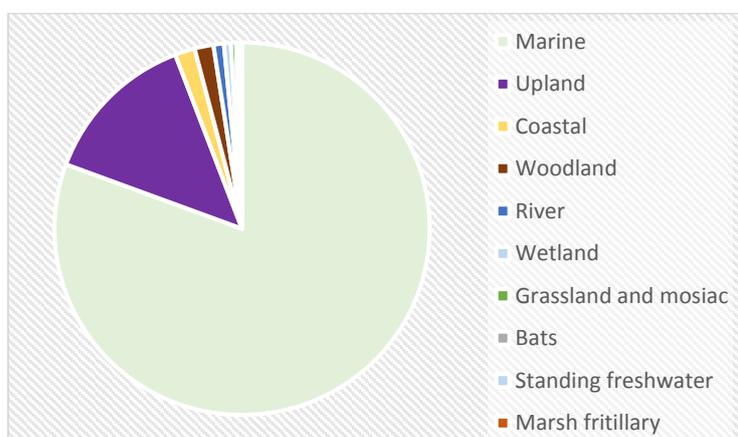
### Type of SACs

The SACs in Wales fall into one of ten broad types representing the ecosystem and dominant habitat and species features for which is the site was primarily designated. Other SAC features also occur within the sites. The types of site are shown below:

**Figure 1. Type of SAC by number**



**Figure 2. Type of SAC by area**



## 9.4 Special Protection Area statistics

### Geographic distribution

When analysed by area, 59% of the SPA series is in the sub-tidal environment, 8% in the intertidal zone, 5% in the lowlands and 28% in the uplands. Of the terrestrial SPA series (excluding the marine sites) 67% of the total area is found in the uplands.

**Table 4: Breakdown of SPA area by landscape type**

Environment	Definition	Area of SPA (ha)	Percentage of SPA series by area (%)
Upland	Land above upper limit of agricultural enclosure	72,674	28
Lowland	Land between the upper limit of agricultural enclosure and mean high water	14,545	5
Intertidal	Shoreline below mean high water mark and above mean low water mark	20,445	8
Subtidal	Open sea below mean low water mark	154,173	59
<b>Total</b>		<b>262,496</b>	<b>100</b>

This analysis is based on geographic location of designated land, not but type of site.

## Area of SPAs

SPA sites vary in size greatly. Four of the sites are less than 100 ha in area. The smallest SPA wholly within Wales is Ynys Seiriol / Puffin Island 31 ha. The largest terrestrial site is the Elenydd at 30,022 hectares.

The largest marine site is Liverpool Bay/Bae Lerpwl which is a cross-border site which is over 170,292 ha in total, of this 75,342 ha are wholly within Wales.

## Type of SPAs

The SPAs of Wales fall into two main categories - upland sites, primarily supporting breeding raptors, and coastal and marine sites supporting wintering waders, wildfowl and breeding sea birds. However these can be broken down into six types as shown below.

Figure 4. Type of SPA by number

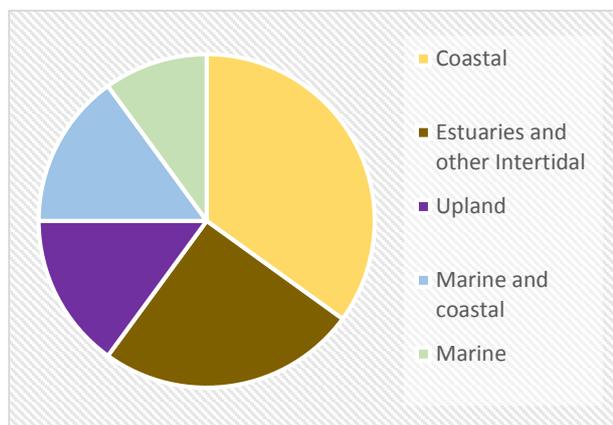
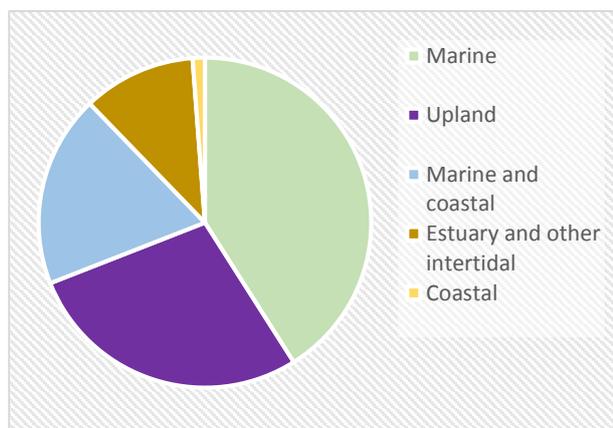


Figure 5. Type of SPA by area



## 10. Natura 2000 features in Wales

There are 123 designated Natura 2000 habitat and species features on the 112 sites in Wales, as follows:

- Habitats Directive Annex I habitats – 54 features
- Habitats Directive Annex II species (excluding birds) – 28 features
- Birds Directive Annex I and regularly occurring migratory species – 41 features

SAC features are broken down into 15 categories as shown in Table x below. For a full list of designated features see *LIFE N2K SAC and SPA Sites and Features Master September 2015* Excel spreadsheet.

**Table 5. Number and type of Natura 2000 features in Wales**

Feature grouping	Feature category	No of features	Total
SAC features: Annex I habitats	Coastal sand dunes	5	54
	Forests/woodland	7	
	Freshwater habitats	6	
	Marine, coastal and halophytic habitats	11	
	Natural and semi-natural grassland formations	7	
	Raised bogs and mires and fens	9	
	Rocky habitats and caves	6	
	Temperate heath and scrub	3	
SAC features: Annex II species	Higher plant species	5	28
	Invertebrate species: arthropods	3	
	Invertebrate species: molluscs	4	
	Lower plant species	2	
	Vertebrate species: amphibians	1	
	Vertebrate species: fish	7	
	Vertebrate species: mammals	6	
SPA features	Coastal (terrestrial coastline e.g. cliffs)	5	41
	Estuarine	21	
	Marine	8	
	Mixed coastal/estuarine/marine	3	
	Upland	4	
		<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>

There is a broad range of Annex I habitat features representing a wide variety of habitat types from uplands through to lowlands. Marine and coastal features are particularly well represented in Wales.

There are Annex II species features from all the main taxon groups, although mammals and fish are most frequent.

Bird features are primarily those from estuarine, coastal and marine habitats (90% of all the bird features). With the remained being species which inhabit upland areas.

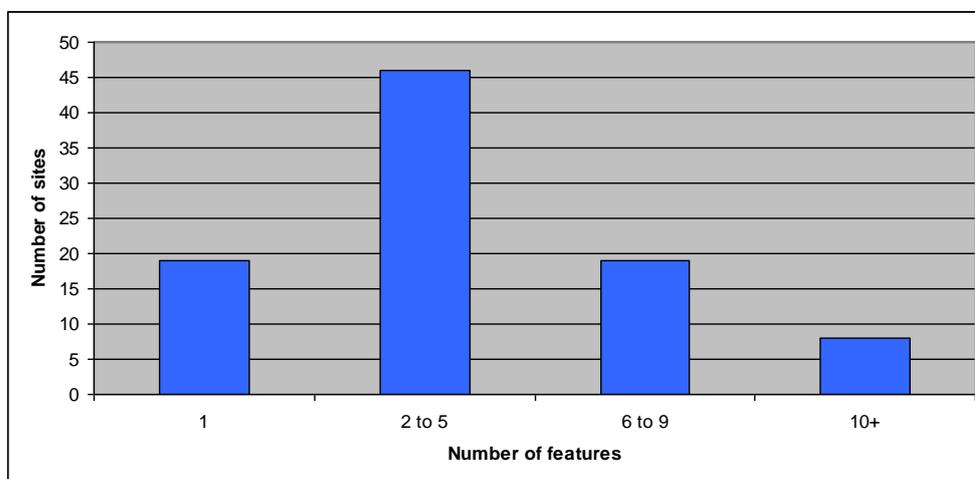
## 10.1 Features on SACs in Wales

Annex I and II of the Habitats Directive list a total of 189 habitat types and 788 species identified as requiring the designation of SACs.

Of these, 78 habitats are found in the UK with 54 occurring on Welsh SACs. 43 species are native to, and normally resident in, the UK with 28 of these occurring naturally in the SAC series in Wales.

On average SACs in Wales are designated for five features (three habitat features and two species features). However, there is considerable variation between sites: 20% of SAC have only one feature, whilst Eryri SAC has the most features with 19 (17 habitats and 2 species).

**Figure 5. Number of features on SACs in Wales**



A sub-set of the Annex I habitats and Annex II species are listed as priority features for conservation action as they are considered to be particularly vulnerable, in rapid decline and mainly, or exclusively, found within the EU. Of the 78 Annex I habitat types which are designated SAC features and which are known to occur in mainland UK, 23 are defined as priority habitats. Of these 13 are found in Wales. However, there are no priority species in Wales.

For certain habitats and species listed in Annexes I and II, the UK holds a particularly high proportion of the European resource. As a result, the UK has a special responsibility to protect them and to ensure that there is a sufficient quantity designated to maintain them at, or bring them into favourable condition.

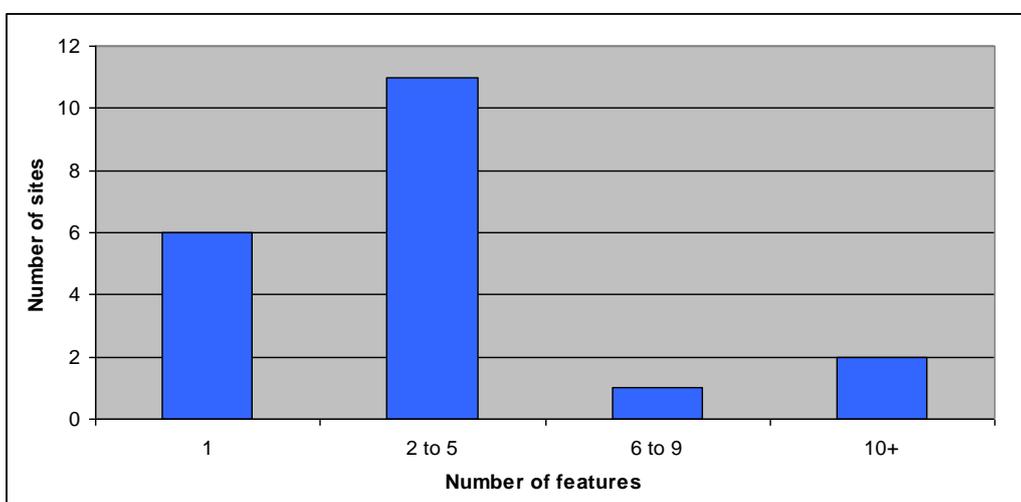
## 10.2 Features on SPAs in Wales

Special Protection Areas are designated for rare or vulnerable species (listed under Article 4.1 of Annex I of the Birds Directive), regularly occurring migratory species (Article 4.2 of Annex I) and for and for the protection of wetlands, especially wetlands of international importance.

Annex I of the Birds Directive lists a total of 193 species identified as requiring the designation of SPAs. Of these 39 occur on Welsh SPAs.

There is considerable variation in the number of features on SPAs in Wales: six sites are designated for only one feature, while The Dee Estuary has 16 qualifying features. On average there are two features per site.

**Figure 6. Number of features on SPAs in Wales**



## 11. Condition assessments

In Wales, to date, the condition of SAC features has been monitored on individual sites, as part of a 6-year rolling programme using the Common Standards Monitoring regime. This is a systematic approach which employs standardised methods in which the condition of a feature is assessed against a set of predefined attributes and associated targets linked to conservation objectives and laid out in the Core Management Plans.

The condition assessment records a feature on a site as one of the following:

- **Favourable:** the feature is in a healthy state and meets conservation objectives; this classification includes sub-classifications – Favourable maintained, Favourable recovered and Favourable unclassified.
- **Unfavourable recovering:** the conservation objectives for the feature are not currently met but the condition of the feature has improved since it was last assessed and it is expected that it will continue to do so, however, favourable condition may take many years to achieve.
- **Unfavourable:** the conservation objectives for the feature are not being met and there has been no improvement since the last assessment. It includes Unfavourable declining, Unfavourable no-change and Unfavourable unclassified.
- **Destroyed (partly or completely):** the feature is no longer present and there is no prospect of being able to restore it.

The first round of SAC condition assessments were carried out between January 2001 and December 2006. The second round of monitoring took place between 2007 and 2012 and the third round is currently underway and due to finish in 2018. The assessments inform the Habitats Directive UK Article 17 reporting.

There are up-to-date condition assessments (undertaken within the last two reporting periods) for the majority of terrestrial and freshwater Habitats Directive features. Assessments for marine features are older but are in the process of being updated based on evidence which has already been collected.

### 11.1 Condition of Annex I habitat features in Wales<sup>6</sup>

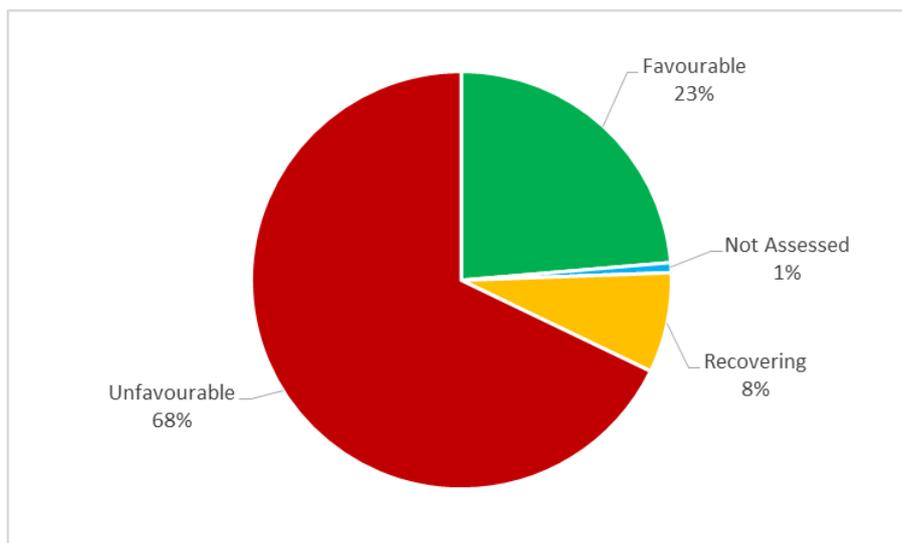
31% of habitat features (where they occur on N2K sites) are recorded as being in favourable or recovering condition. While the majority of caves, sea caves and reefs features are in favourable condition, less than 20% of occurrences of lowland heathland, grassland and wetland features within sites are currently in favourable condition.

However, it must be noted that due to the sometimes slow pace of ecological change, even where appropriate management measures are in place or restoration has occurred, it may take years or decades before the habitat responds and reaches favourable condition.

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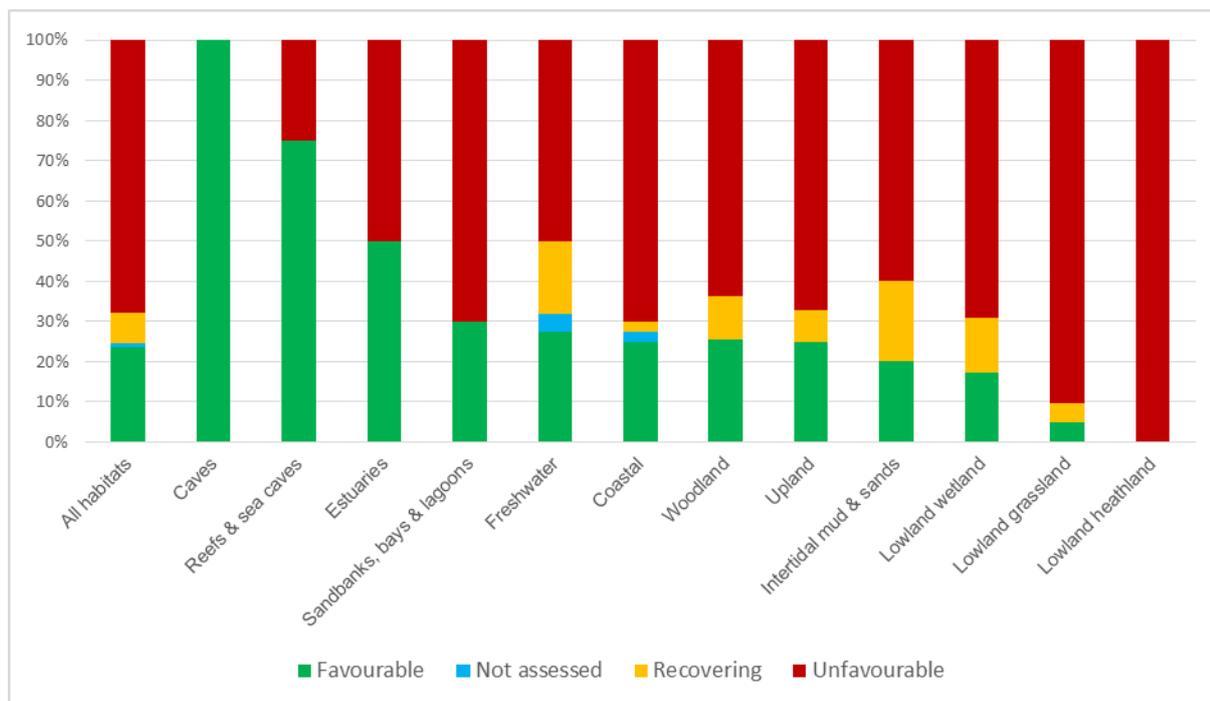
<sup>6</sup> Source: *Wales Environment Strategy (WES) Measure 025: Species and habitats in favourable, recovering or unfavourable conditions*, July 2013. Unpublished document, Countryside Council for Wales/Natural Resources Wales. Based on N2K Common Standards Monitoring data.

**Figure 7. Condition of Annex I habitat features on SACs in Wales**



NB. Figures relate to the number of instances on the feature on sites not to area of habitat.

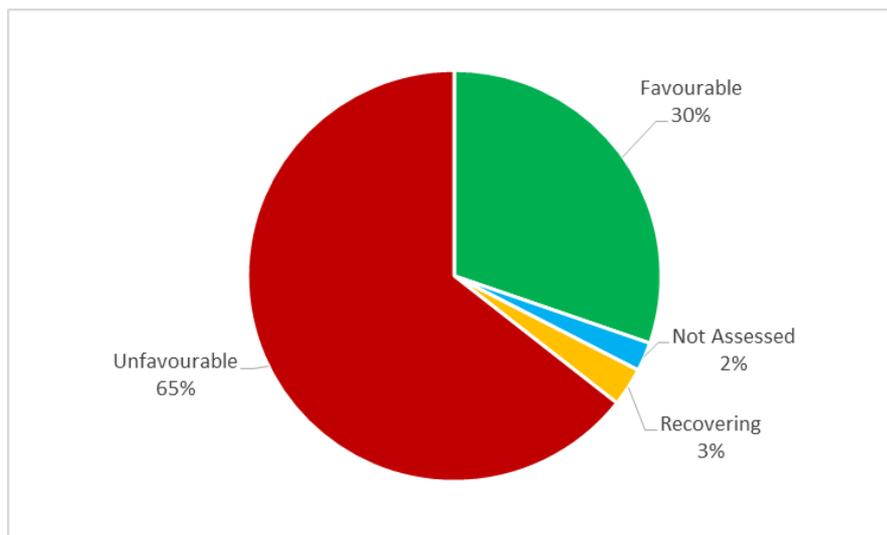
**Figure 8. Condition of Annex I habitats in Wales by habitat type**



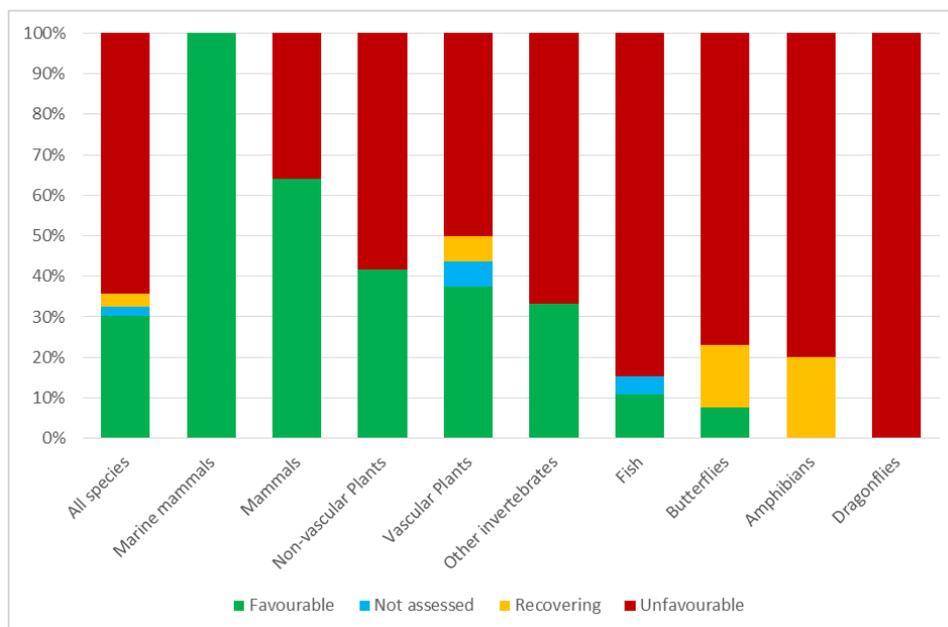
## 11.2 Condition of Annex II species features in Wales<sup>7</sup>

33% of Annex II species (where they occur on N2K sites) are recorded as being in favourable or recovering condition, but two thirds are in unfavourable condition. There is large variation between species groups. For example, while both species of marine mammal (Grey seal and Bottlenose dolphin) are in favourable condition on all sites where they are designated, fish species are only in favourable condition in 10% of occurrences on sites.

**Figure 9. Condition of Annex II species features on SACs in Wales**



**Figure 10. Condition of Annex II species features on SACs in Wales by taxon group**

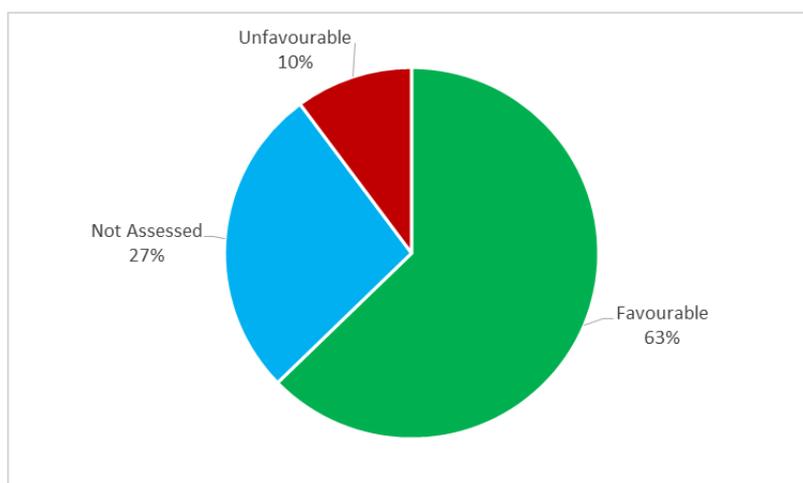


<sup>7</sup> Source: *Wales Environment Strategy (WES) Measure 025*: See footnote 6.

### 11.3 Condition of Annex II species features in Wales<sup>8</sup>

Condition assessments for the majority of birds date from 2004<sup>9</sup>. The majority of the bird features on SPAs are in favourable condition, however due to the age of the data, confidence in its accuracy is relatively low. The proportion of bird features assessed is significantly lower than for SAC features.

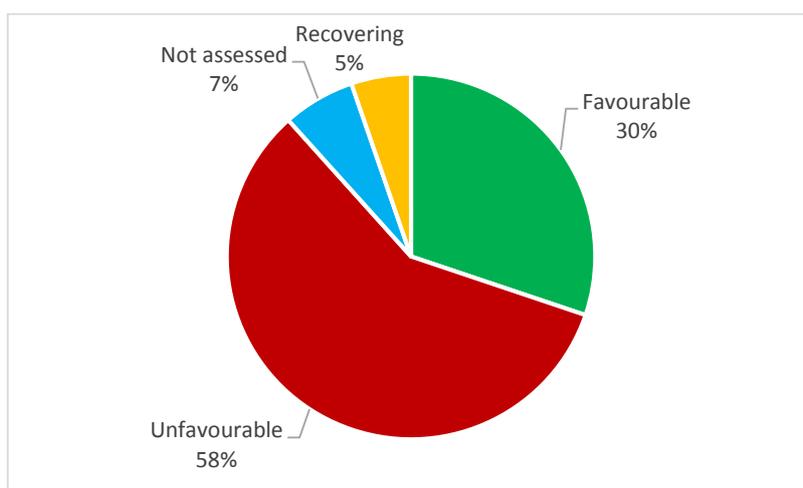
**Figure 11. Condition of Annex I and regularly occurring migratory bird features on SPAs in Wales**



### 11.4 Overall assessment of condition of Natura 2000 features in Wales

An overview of all features indicates that around one third are in favourable or recovering condition.

**Figure 12. Condition of all features on N2K sites in Wales**



<sup>8</sup> Source: *Wales Environment Strategy Measure 025*: See footnote 6.

<sup>9</sup> A.J. Young and R.I. Thorpe, *A preliminary assessment of the condition of bird features within Welsh Special Protection Areas*, Countryside Council for Wales, Environmental Monitoring Report No22.

## 12. Sites of Special Scientific Interest

98%, by area, of terrestrial and intertidal SAC are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, indicating that the species and habitats found there are of national importance (see table 8). 63% (163,958 ha) of SSSI, by area, are covered by SAC. SSSI designation is used as the primary means of providing and enforcing wide-ranging legal protection in the UK.

**Table 6: N2K sites underpinned by SSSI designation**

Designation	No. of N2K sites with SSSI designation (whole or part)	Total area of N2K site underpinned by SSSI (ha)	% of the total area of terrestrial N2K sites underpinned by SSSI (includes intertidal areas)
SAC	92	163,958	98%
SPA	20	102,493	>99%

*NB. SSSI designation can extend to a maximum of the lowest astronomical tide boundary; however this boundary is subject to some interpretation so these figures should be used as a guideline only.*

## 13. Owners and managers of Natura 2000 sites

Around 33 % of the area of terrestrial SAC are owned or managed (often under a lease or other agreement) by the conservation sector, that is, voluntary organisations and public bodies for which the protection of biodiversity and our natural heritage is a key objective.

**Table 7. Conservation and/or public sector bodies which own/manage areas of SAC in Wales**

Conservation/public sector organisation	Area of SAC owned/ managed (ha)	% of total SAC area	% of terrestrial & intertidal SAC area
National Trust	20,209	3	12
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)	11,679	2	7
Natural Resources Wales	11,180	2	9
Local Authorities - Local Nature Reserves and Country Parks	4,724	<1	3
Ministry of Defence	3,166	<1	2
Woodland Trust	1,177	<1	<1
Wildlife Trusts	826	<1	<1
<b>Total:</b>	<b>55,863</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>33</b>

*NB. The contents of this table is based only on readily available data. It may not be comprehensive and should be used as a guide only, not as a definitive statement.*

**Table 8. Conservation and/or public sector bodies which own/manage areas of SPA in Wales**

Conservation/public sector organisation	Area of SPA owned/managed (ha)	% of total SPA area	% of terrestrial & intertidal SPA area
National Trust	9,048	3	11
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)	12,566	5	15
Natural Resources Wales	6,216	2	8
Local Authorities - Local Nature Reserves and Country Parks	3,107	1	4
Ministry of Defence	885	<1	1
Woodland Trust	0	0	0
Wildlife Trusts	401	<1	<1
<b>Total</b>	<b>32,196</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>39</b>

*NB. The contents of this table is based only on readily available data. It may not be comprehensive and should be used as a guide only, not as a definitive statement.*