



Ar ôl LIFE Cynllun Cadwraeth Natura 2000

Natura 2000 After-LIFE Conservation Plan

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



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1. Cefndir a Hanes y Prosiect / Background and Project History

Cefndir

Prosiect o bwys dan arweiniad Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru, a ariannwyd gan gronfa Natura LIFE+ yr Undeb Ewropeaidd, oedd Rhaglen Natura 2000 LIFE ar gyfer Cymru. Gan weithio gydag arbenigwyr a rhanddeiliaid eraill, mae'r sialensiau hollbwysig sy'n wynebu Natura 2000 a'r camau gweithredu sy'n angenrheidiol i ymdrin â hwy wedi'u pennu, eu blaenoriaethau a'u costio, ac mae cyfleoedd ariannu wedi'u canfod.

Mae'r gwaith dadansoddi a wnaed yn ystod oes y rhaglen wedi'i ddefnyddio i lunio adolygiad cynhwysfawr o'r Fframwaith Gweithredu â Blaenoriaeth, sef offeryn cynllunio sy'n pennu sut y mae aelod-wladwriaethau'r Undeb Ewropeaidd yn bwriadu rheoli eu safleoedd Natura 2000 a sut y bydd y gweithgareddau rheoli hyn yn cael eu hariannu.

Mae'r ddogfen hon, Cynllun Cadwraeth 'After-LIFE' Rhaglen Natura 2000 ar gyfer Cymru, yn pennu sut y gellir gweithredu a chyflwyno Fframwaith Gweithredu â Blaenoriaeth Cymru ar gyfer adfer y safleoedd hyn i gyflwr ffafriol. Mae'n tynnu sylw at gydweithio rhwng Llywodraeth Cymru, Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru a phartneriaid allweddol eraill.

Mae'r cynllun yn cadarnhau'r dulliau y bydd y Fframwaith Gweithredu â Blaenoriaeth yn cael ei ddefnyddio i ddylanwadu ar bolisiau a chynlluniau perthnasol, rhaglenni ariannu, a chyflawni ar lawr gwlad; y ffordd y bydd y gwaith monitro, adolygu ac adrodd yn cael ei wneud; gan gadarnhau'r drefn lywodraethu gyffredinol ar gyfer hyn yng nghyd-destun y Cynllun Adfer Natur.

Bydd Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru yn chwarae rhan arweiniol, ond nid unigryw, wrth gyflawni hyn. Bydd ei gyfraniad at gyflwyno'r camau â blaenoriaeth hyn yn cael ei gyflawni trwy integreiddio gweithgareddau ar draws ei raglenni gwaith, gweithio gyda, a galluogi, eraill trwy gyfrwng partneriaeth, ariannu prosiectau a chytundebau rheoli.

Rhaid cael dull cydweithredol o roi'r rhaglen ar waith, ac rydym yn cydnabod rôl deddfwriaethau newydd a Chynllun Adfer Natur Cymru lle y pennir y cyd-destun polisi sy'n ategu'r dasg o gyflawni'r gwaith hwn. Bydd unrhyw gyflawni'n cael ei siapio gan ofynion Deddf Amgylchedd (Cymru) a'r Ddeddf Llesiant Cenedlaethau'r Dyfodol (Cymru).

Background

The LIFE Natura 2000 Programme for Wales was a major project led by Natural Resources Wales and funded by the European Union scheme LIFE+ Nature fund. Working with specialists and other stakeholders the key challenges facing Natura 2000 and the actions required to address them have been identified, prioritised and costed and funding opportunities have been identified.

The analysis undertaken during the lifetime of the programme has been used to undertake a comprehensive revision of the Prioritised Action Framework (PAF), a planning tool 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 document, the Natura 2000 Programme for Wales After-LIFE Conservation Plan, sets out how the Prioritised Action Framework for Wales can be operationalised and delivered to restore these sites to favourable condition. It highlights collaborative working between Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales, and other key partners.

The plan confirms the mechanisms by which the PAF will be used to influence relevant policies and plans, funding programmes, and on the ground delivery; the way in which monitoring, review and reporting will occur; and confirms the overall governance for this in the context of the Nature Recovery Plan.

Natural Resources Wales will play a leading, but not exclusive, role in delivery. Its contribution to the delivery of these priority measures will be achieved by integrating activity across its programmes of work, working with, and enabling, others through partnership, project funding and management agreements.

A collaborative approach to the programme is required and we recognise the role of new legislation and the Nature Recovery Plan for Wales which sets the policy context supporting the delivery of this work. The delivery will be shaped by the requirements of the Environment (Wales) Act and the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

Project history - Development of a programme for the management and restoration of Natura 2000 in Wales

The LIFE Natura 2000 Programme for Wales, which was a major project running from 2012 to 2015, has developed a strategic forward plan which sets out the requirements for the management and restoration of the Natura 2000 network species, habitats and sites in Wales. Led by Natural Resources Wales, the project was funded by the European Union scheme LIFE+ Nature fund.

Working with specialists and other stakeholders the Programme determined the key challenges facing Natura 2000 and identified the actions required to address them. The actions, for the period to 2020 and beyond, have been prioritised and costed, and funding opportunities identified.

The purpose was 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 aimed 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.

The key outputs from the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme were:

- Prioritised Improvement Plans for all 92 Special Areas of Conservation and 20 Special Protection Areas in Wales
- Eleven Thematic Action Plans
- Five Cross-cutting Action Plan
- An updated Wales chapter of the UK Prioritised Action Framework (PAF)

Nature Recovery Plan – EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020

The Nature Recovery Plan for Wales is a Welsh Government strategy which sets out how Wales will address the Convention on Biological Diversity's Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and the associated Aichi Biodiversity Targets, as well as the EU Biodiversity Strategy targets. It is the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Wales.

The Welsh Government Nature Recovery Plan sets out Wales' ambition to reverse the decline in biodiversity and ensure lasting benefits to society by building the resilience of our ecosystems, and how in partnership this can be achieved.

The plan consists of three parts:

- **Part 1: The Strategy for Nature** setting out the Welsh Government's commitment to biodiversity in Wales, the issues that need to be addressed, and objectives for action. It sets out how the current and proposed action, particularly through the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and through the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources, will contribute to reversing the loss of biodiversity in Wales.
- **Part 2: The Action Plan**
- **Part 3: The Nature Recovery Framework**, showing the governance structure for the Nature Recovery Plan, and the roles and responsibilities of everybody involved in the delivery of action for biodiversity in Wales. It also outlines the support and accountability measures in place to ensure delivery.

In particular the Nature Recovery Plan contains the following objective:

Objective 2: 'Safeguard species and habitats of principal importance and improve their management', which recognises the important role played by Natura 2000 sites and other sites designated for safeguarding species and habitats.

Objective 3: (Increase the resilience of our natural environment by restoring degraded habitats and habitat creation) and **Objective 4:** (Tackle key pressures on species and habitats) are also relevant to the delivery of the Prioritised Action Framework.

New legislation in Wales – integrating the requirements of Natura 2000

The Environment (Wales) Act, together with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and the Planning (Wales) Act, will significantly change the way natural resources in Wales are managed.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. It places a number of new duties on public bodies in Wales. Of relevance to the future restoration and management of Natura 2000 sites is the goal to have a ‘resilient’ Wales - a nation 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 (for example, climate change). It places a duty on Welsh public bodies to consider this goal regardless of their remit alongside the six other goals.

Central to the Environment (Wales) Act is the need to care for our natural resources in a joined up way that provides multiple benefits for people and nature, now and into the future – integrated natural resource management.

The Act gives Natural Resources Wales a number of specific roles including a requirement to:

- assess the state of Wales’ natural resources and report on them every five years in a State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR); and
- develop Area Statements outlining issues and opportunities for natural use and enhancement of natural resources at a local level.

Welsh Government sets the policy context in the interim Natural Resources Policy Statement which highlights the better management and use of designated sites is as a ‘priority area for action’. This policy statement is a precursor to the first statutory policy which will be published in spring 2017. It is recognised that Natura 2000 sites have a critical role in increasing resilient and diverse ecosystems that deliver economic, social and environmental benefits within and beyond specific sites. The priority actions identified within the Natura 2000 programme will form part of the body of evidence to support an area approach to the integrated management of natural resources.

2. Natura 2000 Programme outputs

Prioritised Action Framework

The Prioritised Action Framework (PAF) is a planning tool 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. The purpose of the PAF is to help member states prioritise the actions needed to restore these sites to favourable condition and define the funding required. Natural Resources Wales has used the outcomes of LIFE Natura 2000 Programme to update the Wales chapters of the UK PAF on behalf of Welsh Government.

The PAF has identified priority ecosystems found within the Natura 2000 network in Wales as follows:

- Terrestrial/freshwater** - Peatlands – lowland and upland
Sand dunes
Rivers
Woodlands
- Marine** - Lagoons and associated vegetated shingle
Estuaries and saltmarsh

The key outputs from the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme which were essential to planning the delivery of the updated PAF are:

- Prioritised Improvement Plans for Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas
- Thematic Action Plans and Cross-cutting Action Plans

These are described in more detail below.

Prioritised Improvement Plans (PIP) and future implementation

The LIFE Natura 2000 Programme collected the data to generate PIPs for all Natura 2000 sites in Wales. Each PIP:

- summarises the key issues and risks (pressures and threats) affecting the designated features;
- summarises the priority actions which are needed to address them until 2020; and
- indicates costs, responsible organisations and potential funding sources.

Each PIP is relevant to (and supplements) the conservation objectives for Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas (which are published in Natura 2000 Core Management Plans and Regulation 35 advice documents). The PIPs are

'live' documents which are drawn from the Natural Resources Wales Actions Database, allowing any new data or change of priorities to be quickly represented.

Natural Resources Wales Actions Database

The Actions Database is a collaborative planning tool which holds and manages data on actions for Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas. Actions include the relevant issue/risk to be addressed, a mechanism, activity, responsible organisation, priority, cost and timetable for delivery. Importantly, it allows key stakeholders to contribute to the development of actions and report on progress. Data for all Natura 2000 sites has been updated and expanded as part of the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme.

The Actions Database can be used to analyse pressures, threats and mechanisms to give an overview of the actions needed, create baselines for meeting targets, assess resource needs, analyse issues across Wales, and more easily integrate the actions with other programmes of work.

Thematic Action Plans – implementing strategic thematic actions

The LIFE Natura 2000 Programme has produced 11 Thematic Action Plans, each of which detail priority strategic actions to address major issues and risks which have been identified as having an adverse impact on Natura 2000 features across the network:

- Access and recreation
- Air pollution: Nitrogen deposition
- Climate change and habitat fragmentation
- Diffuse water pollution
- Flood and coastal erosion risk management
- Grazing and livestock management
- Non-native invasive species and pathogens
- Man-made changes to hydraulic conditions
- Marine fisheries
- Marine litter
- Woodland management

Cross-cutting actions against all themes

The following aspects cut across all themes and for ease of reference have been collated into a single document:

- **Communication and education** – which relates to public awareness raising and training of practitioners, farmers and landowners and site users.
- **Finance and funding** – facilitating better access to funds for Natura 2000.

- **Legislation and policy** – supporting the development and delivery of new legislation and policy and the modification of existing legislation, policy and schemes.
- **Integration** – of Natura 2000 needs into other sectors such as flood defence, forestry, agriculture and tourism.
- **Investigations** – which relates to addressing investigation and evidence gap actions in a strategic matter and sourcing new funding.

3. Integrating Natura 2000 across other programmes of work in Natural Resources Wales

Natural Resources Wales is using the outputs of the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme to support the following:

Annual work planning and budgeting

Natural Resource Management Teams in Operations Directorate will prepare a plan for Natural Resources Wales actions on Natura 2000 sites each financial year, utilising the Natura 2000 data on relative priorities. Budgets are allocated on an annual basis. Longer term planning and commitments can only be made if funding scenarios over a longer time period are made available.

Management Agreement strategy

Natural Resources Wales has a number of powers to enter into management agreements for the management of land, which are used to support the conservation management of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) which underpin Natura 2000 sites on land.

The prioritised approach developed by the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme will now support the prioritisation of management agreement work. Agreements on Natura 2000 sites will take priority over other SSSIs. All new and renewed agreements must address a management agreement action logged in the Actions Database.

Competitive grant funding scheme

Natural Resources Wales launched a competitive grant scheme in July 2015 for projects led by third sector organisations and local authorities. Proposals to address the following priority issues and risks (pressures and threats) on Natura 2000 sites were invited:

- Adverse effects from access and recreation
- Habitat loss and fragmentation
- Invasive species
- Marine litter
- Inadequate/inappropriate management of woodlands

Funding for the scheme is based around the aim of Natural Resource Management, to sustainably manage our natural resources in a way, and at a rate that can maintain and enhance the resilience of our ecosystems, meeting the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. There is a focus on Natura 2000 sites in Wales. At the same time, Natural Resources Wales seeks to integrate this conservation work with the achievement of other social and economic benefits highlighted as important in Natural Resources Wales's Corporate Plan.

Programme of Measures - Water Framework Directive River Basin Management Plans

The River Basin Management Plan programme of measures must include any measures necessary to achieve compliance with standards and objectives for Natura 2000 sites listed in the register of protected areas as far as their ecological status is concerned.

The outputs of the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme (i.e. PIPs, Thematic Action Plans) have been used to identify the programme of national measures and the specific action Natural Resources Wales will take during the second cycle of river basin planning. A method was developed to identify high priority actions relevant to the Water Framework Directive for review by operational leads, in order to identify underway and planned actions, those with funding for the second cycle (2015-21). The information is published on [Water Watch Wales](#).

Updating Natura 2000 Standard Data forms

In December 2015 Natural Resources Wales updated the Natura 2000 site Standard Data Forms as required by the European Commission. The data within the PIPs has been used to inform this work with regards to identifying Section 4.3 'Threats, Pressures and Activities'.

After-LIFE Conservation Plan for LIFE 07 NAT UK 000948 Anglesey and Llŷn Fens

The Prioritised Implementation Plan for the Anglesey and Llŷn Fens Special Area of Conservation forms the After-LIFE Conservation Plan for the Natural Resources Wales project LIFE 07 NAT UK 000948 Anglesey and Llŷn Fens. This allows for integration between the two projects and further integrates the work into Natural Resources Wales' work programme.

4. Marine Natura 2000

The marine Natura 2000 sites (European Marine Sites (EMS)) in Wales form the core components of the wider network of marine protected areas in Wales. For EMSs, Natural Resources Wales Conservation Officers and EMS Officers (with input from other stakeholders and partners) have prioritised issues and risks against site features and actions identified and updated based on current evidence and knowledge. Actions for EMSs are most commonly recorded at the site level, however some actions are allocated to management unit level where specific issues / risks are more spatially focused.

This information is being used as the basis for the development of a strategic work programme focussing on key issues and risks to deliver improvements in feature conditions across EMSs.

The work programme will be informed by the principles of Integrated Natural Resource Management and will focus on the long term and integration, and be prepared and implemented through collaboration and engagement. This will ensure that we deliver a more joined up approach to the management of our marine N2K sites and more effective management, contributing to a well-managed network of MPAs in Wales, management of marine industries, delivery of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the Wales National Marine Plan.

Some specific work areas have already been identified from the LIFE Natura 2000 marine outputs, and it is envisaged that these individual elements can be progressed in parallel with the development of the wider work programme:

- Assessing Welsh Fisheries Activities Project: collaborative project between Natural Resources Wales and Welsh Government. This project which will address a number of site-level and strategic actions under Marine Fisheries.
- Review of unregulated activities targeting marine living resources: It is envisaged that this project will address site-level and strategic actions under both the Marine Fisheries, and Access and Recreation issue / risk categories, and examine impacts of unregulated activities (e.g. commercial and recreation bait collection) on Natura 2000 habitats and species.

5. Funding strategy

The funding strategy to implement the PAF includes:

- Funding under the Welsh Rural Development Programme, for Glastir;
- Natural Resources Wales management agreements;
- Funding for partners under the Welsh Governments' Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate grants programme;
- Funding for partners under Natural Resources Wales' competitive grants scheme;
- Funding achieved under the European Commission's LIFE programme.

Approach to EU LIFE programme

At a UK level, both Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales are members of the UK LIFE Working Group which inputs to the development of the LIFE Regulation and associated funding programme in its 7-year cycle, and monitors UK project involvement with the Programme.

In Wales, Welsh Government chairs a Welsh LIFE Working Group which includes Welsh Government representation from Land, Nature and Forestry Division, Climate Change and Natural Resource Policy and WEFO, as well as Natural Resources Wales' Strategic Funding Team and Protected Sites Team, and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC).

Welsh Government has contracted the JNCC to provide additional support for the environment sector in Wales. A Wales LIFE Forum has been established, bringing together Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales, JNCC and the major Non-Governmental Organisations and Local Authorities, to try to develop a coordinated approach to LIFE funding. The inaugural forum was held on 25 November 2015 in Cardiff.

The complexities of LIFE applications have constrained many potential applicants from applying due to lack of expertise and/or available match funding. To address these constraints, Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales have funded and organised workshops and training courses for potential Welsh applicants such as Local Authorities and third sector organisations.

Potential applicants can access the data on actions and measures required within the Prioritised Improvement Plans, Thematic Action Plans and the latest PAF for Wales, to help them develop appropriate project actions.

Outline plans for LIFE funding bids in Wales:

Natural Resources Wales and Welsh Government are aware of several potential LIFE projects which are planned for implementation partly or wholly in Wales.

One project was submitted in 2015:

- Fenn's Whixall, Bettisfield, Wem and Cadney Mosses SAC is an active lowland raised bog which spans the border of England and Wales. An application for LIFE funding has been submitted by Natural England for restoration of approximately 890 ha of the Natura 2000 site, to achieve a more sustainable, resilient, and better functioning active lowland raised bog. The SAC faces a range of issues as outlined in the Prioritised Improvement Plan (PIP) developed as part of the LIFE Natura 2000 project. Natural England is the lead partner, with Natural Resources Wales and Shropshire Wildlife Trust as partners.

Other projects in the planning stage include:

- An Integrated Project (IP) for work on peatland to be submitted in 2016. IPs are large scale projects designed to implement EU Directives and influence domestic policy and legislation to support the necessary work. All regions of the UK are involved in this IP which, in Wales, is being taken forward by the Climate Change Division of Welsh Government and the Natural Resources Wales peatland specialist.
- The Welsh Government has requested that Natural Resources Wales develop proposals for peatland projects in Wales to complement the UK IP peatland project.
- Natural Resources Wales are working with Natural England to develop a LIFE bid for sand dune restoration on SACs in England and Wales.
- A project to address issues in the Western Atlantic Oakwoods of Scotland and Wales is to be submitted in 2016 by Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and other partners.
- RSPB and other partners are developing a project to address issues on the North Wales Moors SAC.

Several other projects were proposed at the inaugural meeting of the Wales LIFE Forum (above). These projects were proposed by several of the organisations attending the Forum and all would involve partnerships comprising two or more of the attendees.

It is intended that the Wales LIFE Forum will provide an opportunity for potential applicants to work together in developing projects which will maximise the benefits to the environment and effective administration whilst minimising potential duplication and competition. The sharing of project ideas at an early stage with a variety of organisations should optimise the quality and success rate of LIFE applications in Wales.

6. Monitoring and reporting

Monitoring of outcomes (condition of Natura 2000 features)

Natural Resources Wales will continue to undertake Common Standards Monitoring of Habitats Directive Annex I and II habitats and species to update condition assessments. This will be used, along with other information, for the Article 17 reporting (due in 2018) and the Article 12 reporting (due in 2017).

The State of Natural Resources Report (SONaRR) required under the Environment (Wales) Act will also report on key environmental indicators.

Monitoring of progress delivering actions/measures

As actions are underway or completed, these will be logged as such in the Natural Resources Wales Actions Database. Progress is reported on an annual basis. New actions will be logged on an ongoing basis.

Outputs delivered by Natural Resources Wales under the organisation's corporate and business plan are also reported upon via the corporate 'dashboard'.

The Welsh Government Nature Recovery Plan will include performance indicators in response to EU biodiversity targets.

Updating of the Prioritised Action Framework

Refreshment: The aspiration is to refresh the PAF every three years. The next refreshment would be completed by 2018, in time to inform the development of the 2020-27 round of EU funding Programmes. The refreshment is not intended to be resource-intensive, and will involve:

- Assessment of progress on delivering actions/measures;
- Updating of PIPs, Thematic Action Plans and Cross-cutting Plans (e.g. addition of new actions where available, re-assessment of action priorities in cases where high priority actions have already been completed), and amending the PAF to this effect;
- Updating factual elements of the PAF relating to, for example, legislative and policy changes, condition assessment of features etc.

Full revision: The aspiration is to fully revise the PAF every six years. The next full review would be due to be completed by 2021. This would be compatible with the timetable for the completion of the Third Cycle of the Water Framework Directive River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) cycle (also due in 2021).

It is recommended that the PAF full revision and RBMP is integrated as far as possible, to avoid duplication of work and maximise efficiencies and synergies.

The full review will include:

- Assessment of progress on achieving measures laid out in PAF;

- Full review and updating of PIPs and Thematic Action Plans and Cross-cutting Plans
- Evaluation of funding sources actually achieved vs. planned;
- Review of format and content (whether they are user friendly and fit-for-purpose);
- Appraisal of level of integration of the PAF into operational plans and business plans.

7. Evidence gaps strategy

The LIFE Natura 2000 Programme produced evidence gaps reports as part of the project outputs. A number of other areas for possible future work have subsequently been identified, and these will be considered, along with the Thematic Action Plan proposals, Wales Biodiversity Partnership Evidence Gap project, by the Natural Resources Wales Biodiversity Board and the Nature Recovery Plan Objective 2 Group.

Recommended priority evidence gap projects:

- Investigate non-financial constraints which are hindering progress to reaching favourable condition on Natura 2000 sites.
- Develop work undertaken by LIFE Natura 2000 Programme on the ecosystem services of Natura 2000 features. Improve evidence base, and improve work to assess the scale of service provided. Appraise financial value of service provided.
- Using existing (or new data sources) create an index of vulnerability for features taking account of nitrogen vulnerability, fragmentation, urgency of conservation action, replace ability, fragility etc.

8. Future Governance

Welsh Government, working with Natural Resources Wales, will establish a mechanism to ensure ongoing governance and oversight of Natura 2000 matters in Wales, to drive the delivery of the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme and consider Natura 2000 needs in the light of the wider policy and legislative context. The role will be taken by a new group of key stakeholders which is being set up to take forward the objectives of the Nature Recovery Plan, specifically Objective 2, 'Safeguard species and habitats of principal importance and improve their management'.

Wales Biodiversity Strategy Board – coordinates and receives reports from the groups set up to manage the work under each of the Nature Recovery Plan objectives.

Nature Recovery Plan Objective 2 Group - responsible for driving forward and overseeing the delivery of the PAF (including TAPs, PIPs and Cross-cutting Action Plans) by all stakeholders, reporting to Wales Biodiversity Strategy Board and having close links especially to the Nature Recovery Plan objective 4 group (tackling key negative factors).

These groups will take forward and implement where possible the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme outputs: Prioritised Action Framework and Thematic Action Plans to target, restore and improve management of the Natura 2000 sites. (Action 2.3.1).

The Nature Recovery Plan Objective 2 Group will include members from Welsh Government, (Nature Conservation, Marine and Agriculture Departments), Natural Resources Wales, the voluntary sector, utilities, local authorities, agriculture and fisheries representatives and user groups.

Natural Resources Wales Biodiversity Board – will oversee Nature Resources Wales’ implementation of the PAF, sending reports to Nature Recovery Plan Objective 2 Group, and coordinating the work inside Natural Resources Wales of:

- **Natural Resources Wales Protected Sites Team** – Responsibility for taking forward the coordination of the implementation of the Natura 2000 Programme has been handed on to the Protected Sites Team in Natural Resources Wales. This team coordinates the programme of action for nationally important sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) and internationally important sites (Natura 2000, Ramsar, Biogenetic and Biogenic).
- **Operational Coordinators Group** – Operational Directorates lead on detailed planning, local stakeholder engagement and implementation of actions on sites.
- **Thematic Action Plan lead officers**
- **PAF/Natura 2000 related Natural Resources Wales communications and engagement work**
- **Task and finish groups** which will be established as required.

Natural Resources Wales Marine Programme Board – oversees the Natural Resources Wales’ implementation of marine priorities arising from the Natura 2000 Programme and coordinates the work in Natural Resources Wales of:

- Task and finish groups which are established as required;
- Marine Thematic Action Plan lead officers;
- Feed into marine elements of the PAF/Natura 2000 related Natural Resources Wales communications and engagement work.

Natural Resources Wales Corporate Planning

Targets to meet Natura 2000 objectives will be included in Natural Resources Wales corporate planning documents, i.e. the Corporate Plan, Business Plan and Directorate Delivery Plans.

Natural Resources Wales governance of Thematic Action Plans

A lead team within Natural Resources Wales has been identified for each Thematic Plan. The role of the lead officer within the team will be to track progress of the identified actions, see resources and opportunities to take actions forward, and to report progress to the Natural Resources Wales Biodiversity Board. The Biodiversity Board Chair will take overall responsibility for tracking progress with implementation. Thematic Action Plan lead teams are listed in Annex 3.

Summary of role of the Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales

Welsh Government:

- Set policy context
- Provide statutory guidance in relation to Environment (Wales) Act duties
- Provide Natural Resources Wales with remit letter from Minister
- Provide Local Authority grants, and core and project specific grants to partners
- Chair Wales Biodiversity Strategy Board
- Provide administrative support for NRP objective working groups
- Coordinate Wales-level report to European Commission

Natural Resources Wales:

- Advisor to Welsh Government, industry and the wider public and voluntary sector
- Communicator about issues relating to the environment and its natural resources
- Regulator: protecting people and the environment including marine, forest and waste industries, and prosecuting those who breach regulations
- Statutory consultee: to some 9,000 planning applications a year
- Manager/Operator: managing seven per cent of Wales' land area including woodlands, National Nature Reserves, water and flood defences, and operating our visitor centres, recreation facilities, hatcheries and a laboratory
- Partner, Educator and Enabler: key collaborator with the public, private and voluntary sectors, providing grant aid, and helping a wide range of people use the environment as a learning resource; acting as a catalyst for others' work
- Evidence gatherer: monitoring our environment, commissioning and undertaking research, developing our knowledge, and being a public records body

Annex 1: Summary of key After-LIFE actions

These actions comprise the detailed work programme for implementation of the Prioritised Action Framework (reporting to the Nature Recovery Plan objective 2 group).

Action no.	Action description	Timescale	Proposed lead body	Others involved (proposed)
Governance				
1.	Establish Nature Recovery Plan Objective 2 Group (taking role of Natura 2000 steering group) to steer implementation of LIFE Natura 2000 Programme outputs.	2016	Welsh Government, Nature Conservation and Biodiversity Branch Natural Resources Wales	Nature Recovery Plan Objective 2 Group members Wales Biodiversity Partnership
2.	Establish Natural Resources Wales Biodiversity Board to direct implementation in Natural Resources Wales and link to Nature Recovery Plan Objective 2 Group.	2016	Natural Resources Wales	Welsh Government
3.	Marine Programme Board will steer implementation of marine Thematic Actions and marine site Prioritised Improvement Plans.	2016 - ongoing	Natural Resources Wales	Welsh Government Stakeholders
Natural Resource Management – integrating Prioritised Action Framework, Thematic Action Plans, Cross-cutting Plans and Prioritised Improvement Plans				
4.	Integrate priorities established in the PAF and National Natural Resources Policy from Welsh Government into Area Statements.	2016 - ongoing	Natural Resources Wales	Welsh Government
5.	Develop a consistent process for integrating Prioritised Improvement Plan priorities and actions into Area Statements.	2016 - ongoing	Natural Resources Wales Ecosystems Planning and Partnership Teams, Natural	

			Resource Management Teams and Protected Sites Team	
6.	Incorporate information on ecosystems services delivered by Natura 2000 sites and features into the ecosystem appraisal carried out as part of developing Area Statements.	2016 – ongoing	Natural Resources Wales Ecosystems Planning and Partnership Teams	
7.	Involve partners identified in Thematic Action Plans and PIPs in stakeholder consultations for Area Statements.	2016 – ongoing	Natural Resources Wales Ecosystems Planning and Partnership Teams	Public Bodies Public Service Boards Stakeholders
8.	Use appropriate prioritisation tools from the LIFE project to help develop priorities and buy-in with stakeholders for Area Statements.	2016 - ongoing	Natural Resources Wales	Stakeholders
9.	Integrate Natura 2000 actions and priorities with those for the Water Framework Directive, and oversee delivery via the River Basin Management Plans.	Ongoing	Natural Resources Wales	
10.	Translate actions identified in the Prioritised Improvement Plans into delivery plans/operations day job for Natural Resource Management teams.	Ongoing	Natural Resources Wales Ecosystems Planning and Partnership Teams, Natural Resource Management Teams	
11.	Integrate Natura 2000 actions and priorities into Shoreline Management Plans.	Ongoing	Natural Resources Wales	
12.	Continue review/prepare Forest Resource Plans with an emphasis on integrating Natura 2000 needs in the plans and delivering on these actions as a priority.	Ongoing	Natural Resources Wales National Forest Planning Team	

13.	Natural Resources Wales-managed land holdings – periodically Review National Nature Reserve management plans to ensure continued prioritisation of Natura 2000 actions.	Ongoing	Natural Resources Wales Designated and Recreational Sites Planning Team, Ecosystems Planning and Partnerships, North Operations Directorate	
14.	Integrate into Great Britain non-native species strategy delivery in Wales.	2016-ongoing	Welsh Government Natural Resources Wales	Stakeholders
Implementing the Prioritised Action Framework, Thematic Action Plans and Prioritised Improvement Plans				
15.	Coordinate and drive the delivery of the PIPs and strategic actions in the Thematic Action Plans and Cross-cutting Action Plans within Natural Resources Wales and by external partners.	2016 - ongoing	Natural Resources Wales Biodiversity Board, Operations Directorate, Protected Sites Team	Key stakeholders
16.	Natural Resources Wales-managed land holdings –implement actions from National Nature Reserve management plans, demonstrating best practice.	ongoing	Natural Resources Wales Designated and Recreational Sites Planning Team, Ecosystems Planning and Partnerships, North Operations Directorate	Natural Resources Wales
Funding				
17.	Develop coordinated approach to LIFE funding through Welsh LIFE Forum.	Ongoing	Welsh Government	Natural Resources Wales JNCC Non-governmental organisations
18.	Welsh LIFE working group to evaluate the options for diversifying funding sources in order to	2016-20	Welsh Government	

	address the anticipated Wales Natura 2000 funding gap.			
19.	Ensure agri-environment scheme Glastir supports achievement of Natura 2000 priorities.	Ongoing	Welsh Government	
20.	Implementation of Welsh Government Sustainable Management Scheme (Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 (WGRC)).	2014 -20	Welsh Government	
21.	Implement strategic approach to Natural Resources Wales management agreement prioritisation.	Ongoing	Natural Resources Wales Operations Directorates	
22.	Support Natura 2000 priorities through competitive grant aid support.	2015 - 2017	Natural Resources Wales Strategic Funding Team and Operations Directorates	
23.	Oversee and coordinate the delivery of actions 1 and 2 in the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme Cross-cutting Action Plan for Financing.	2016 - ongoing	Natural Resources Wales Strategic Funding Team	Welsh Government
24.	Ensure all external bids relevant to Natura 2000 sites take account of Prioritised Improvement Plan actions.	2016 - ongoing	Natural Resources Wales Strategic Funding Team	
Communications				
25.	Refresh stakeholder analysis.	2016	Natural Resources Wales	Nature Recovery Plan Objective 2 Group
26.	Incorporate the communication and engagement actions which are described in the Programme (i.e. PIPS, Thematic and Cross-cutting Action Plans) into operational work plans.	2016 - 2020	Natural Resources Wales	

IT tools and data management				
27.	Review and refresh Actions Database data at least annually.	2016 - ongoing	Natural Resources Wales Natural Resource Management Teams	Key stakeholders
28.	Extract reports from the Actions Database for planning, budgeting, evaluation and progress reporting.	2016-ongoing	Natural Resources Wales Protected Sites Team	
29.	Provide Actions Database support and training.	2016 - ongoing	Natural Resources Wales Protected Sites Team	
30.	Provide support for external users of the Actions Database, to ensure data is current and relevant information is readily available. Including a programme of training.	2016 - ongoing	Natural Resources Wales Natural Resource Management Teams, Ecosystems Planning and Partnerships Group, Protected Sites Team	Key stakeholders
31.	Complete the transformation of the Actions Database onto new data platform, ensuring all developments and data produced by the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme are included without loss of functionality.	2017	Natural Resource Wales Transformation and Information Communications Technology Departments, Protected Sites Team	
32.	Investigate GIS tool to support interpretation of the services offered by Natura 2000 features and sites e.g. http://www.lucitools.org/	2016-17	Natural Resource Wales Integrated Natural Resource Management Team, Protected Sites Team	
33.	Explore opportunities to combine the River Basin Catchment Planning Management Database (CPS) and Actions Database to produce and integrated tool.	2016	Natural Resource Wales Transformation and Information Communications Technology Departments, Protected Sites Team,	

			Water Framework Directive Team	
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Annex 2: Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

A SWOT analysis has been undertaken to inform the implementation of the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>Existing partnerships between environmental non-governmental organisations, sectors (e.g. farming unions), Natural Resources Wales and Welsh Government through the Wales Biodiversity Partnership and Wales Biodiversity Strategy Board.</p> <p>Database (Natural Resources Wales Actions Database) available to facilitate dialogue, planning and reporting progress, as well as providing enhanced data manipulation tools.</p> <p>Prioritised Improvement Plans available for every Natura 2000 site.</p> <p>Strategic actions in Thematic Action Plans and Cross-cutting Action Plans developed through collaborative approach and supported across Natural Resources Wales and by external stakeholders.</p> <p>Costings of establishing favourable management of Natura 2000 sites in Wales available</p> <p>Set of key reports e.g. Natura 2000 Funding in Wales report and New solutions for Natura 2000 in Wales which can inform and guide the development of new management and financing mechanisms.</p>	<p>Limited capacity (staff resources within Natural Resources Wales and other stakeholders) to drive the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme forward at the pace we would wish, coordinate effort and monitor progress. Also to maintain level of awareness and communication on Natura 2000.</p> <p>Time and workload pressures on existing staff could make it difficult to release resources to write future bids for external funding.</p> <p>Lack of understanding that costings associated with PIPs etc. only address new actions required, not ongoing “maintenance”</p> <p>Staff capacity and resource pressure may mean that the Action Database is not kept up to date with relevant issues and risks.</p>

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>Nature Recovery Plan - development of Action Plan, and establishment of new groups to support development.</p> <p>New legislation – Well Being of Future Generations Act and Environment Act.</p> <p>Natural Resource Management Planning and Area Statements.</p> <p>Welsh Government support for facilitation of LIFE funding initiatives.</p> <p>Agreement to incorporate the Programme into operational plans.</p> <p>Opportunity to incorporate the Programme into the next Natural Resources Wales Corporate Plan.</p> <p>Marine priorities arising from the Natura 2000 Programme are being developed into a work plan that will be overseen by Natural Resources Wales’ Marine Programme.</p> <p>Thematic Actions Plans and PIPs provide opportunities to engage and communicate conservation requirements with new partner organisations and integrate actions into other programmes of work.</p> <p>Although the LIFE funded project has ended some of the project staff have been re-employed in other roles in Natural Resources Wales. Their relevant skills and knowledge can be</p>	<p>Austerity and reductions in public funding resulting in funding gap.</p> <p>Match funding not being available to support future external funding bids. Plus other structural problems such as not being able to commit funds over the required number of years.</p> <p>Variable levels of engagement/understanding in future; lack of time to do training and promotion which is now required</p> <p>Transition of Actions Database to new IT platform in 201 - need to ensure existing functionality retained, and enhanced.</p>

<p>drawn upon, and knowledge of Natura 2000 priorities can influence their new teams and contacts.</p> <p>Formation of Natural Resource Management Teams in Natural Resources Wales Operational Directorates, which will facilitate the integration of skills and knowledge in Natural Resources Wales.</p>	
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Annex 3: Natural Resources Wales – Thematic Action Plan leads

Thematic Plan	Lead Knowledge Strategy and Planning team within Natural Resources Wales
Access and recreation management	Access and Recreation Team
Air pollution: Nitrogen deposition	Business Regulation and Economics Group
Climate change and habitat fragmentation	Biodiversity Team
Diffuse water pollution	Water Framework Directive Team
Flood and coastal erosion risk management	Evidence Analysis Group
Grazing and livestock management	Land Management Group
Non-native invasive species and pathogens	Biodiversity Team, Evidence Analysis Group
Man-made changes to hydraulic conditions	Water Framework Directive Team
Marine litter	Marine Strategic Planning Energy and Advice Team
Marine fisheries	Marine Strategic Planning Energy and Advice Team,
Woodland management	Biodiversity Team, Sustainable Forest Management Team, Natural Resources Department

Annex 4: Stakeholder communications – engagement plan

Following the completion of the project the implementation of the programme will continue to require the engagement of all relevant stakeholders. The aim of the project's communications and advocacy strategy was to achieve full and genuine engagement to stakeholders to become involved, express their views, comment and consult on the outputs, help steer and influence the results and work together to devise effective solutions. They have been involved throughout.

Stakeholder Analysis There will be a review and refreshment of the original stakeholder analysis which was carried out at the commencement of the project. This will be taken forward with key stakeholders on the Nature Recovery Plan for Wales Objective 2 group.

Stakeholders have been categorised as follows:

CORE PARTNER

High level of involvement at all stages of the programme; their information, views and approval is essential to success. Will help set priorities and direction. They work closely with Natura 2000 sites and have a good understanding of strategic conservation issues in Wales. Willing and able to invest time. Involve in:

- All relevant workshops and events
- Individual meetings
- Awareness activities, e.g. newsletter

SIGNIFICANT INVOLVEMENT

They have a strong interest in Natura 2000 sites. General support for the programme is essential but they are unlikely to be involved in all technical detail and debate; instead focussing on certain areas of interest. Involve in:

- Some workshops, where relevant issues are being discussed.
- Inception and final events
- Questionnaires, etc
- Awareness activities

SOME INVOLVEMENT

Involvement may be only for a specific part of the programme actions, e.g. when addressing a specific issue or site. They have a general interest in Natura 2000 sites but are less central to the process. Unlikely to be willing or able to invest much time in the project. Involve in:

- Some workshops, where relevant issues are being discussed.

- Individual meetings/other communication
- Questionnaires, etc
- Awareness activities

KEEP INFORMED

Need to be aware of the programme and its progress but not likely to provide significant input. Involve in:

- Awareness activities

The key messages for the delivery of the programme are:

- Your organisation can play a key role in delivering the prioritised programme of action for Natura sites across Wales for the period to 2020.
- We want your organisation to be supportive of and feel ownership of the Programme and Action Plans.
- We want your organisation to be ready and willing to implement the proposals in the Action Plans and Programme as soon as possible.
- You can contribute resources, information, evidence, expertise and opinions which will help deliver the Action Plans and Programme.
- We would like to work in partnership with your organisation to implement the Action Plans and seek resources to do so.

Information

The following information will be shared:

- Information regarding exactly what information is available (i.e. Prioritised Improvement Plans, Thematic Action Plans, data on sites, issues risks, habitats and species, and actions)
- What information stakeholders can contribute to the process (what, when, why, where, how).
- Full current available technical information that relates to any given Action.

All project reports and links to videos will continue to be available on the Natural Resources Wales [web site](#).

The Natural Resources Wales Protected Sites Team will lead in ensuring that the outputs of the project continue to be available and respond to requests for information.

Social media

The LIFE Natura 2000 Programme Facebook page will continue to be maintained and updated for at least two years. The Twitter account will continue to be used to promote successes and good news stories and, link to relevant reports.

Annex 5 – Natural Resources Wales Actions Database planning, tracking and reporting achievement

Prioritised Improvement Plans are created by running a report which draws information from the Natural Resources Wales Actions Database. The database is a collaborative tool, accessible over the web to key stakeholders to use the data for conservation management purposes. It has been in use since 2008 and is embedded into the operational management of the organisation. The Actions have been updated and expanded by Natural Resources Wales Conservation Officers (facilitated by the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme) in association with stakeholders and partners, based on current evidence and knowledge. Actions are usually recorded at a detailed management unit level but also, where appropriate, at a whole site level.

The individual actions are:

- Prioritised
- Costed – based on standard cost tables or previous similar works carried out.
- SMART i.e. specific, measureable, achievable, realistic and timetabled.
- Sufficiently detailed to provide the basis for a practitioner to plan a work programme or initiate a funding bid.
- Allocated to an organisation to lead.
- Linked to the relevant issue/risk and a Natura 2000 features.

The database can be queried to provide information in the format required by users, for example, total number of actions and costs for a particular organisation or species.

The Protected Sites Team in Natural Resources Wales coordinates the identification and delivery of actions to address outstanding issues and risks on all protected sites in Wales, working with Natural Resources Wales conservation officers, specialists and external partners.

Each year, Natural Resources Wales conservation officers and external partners identify those actions within the Actions Database which will be addressed in that year.

The Actions Database, currently on a bespoke Oracle platform, is due to be transferred to a new platform to ensure that it meets the corporate business needs of Natural Resources Wales. This is currently timetabled to commence in 2017.