



LIFE Project Number
LIFE11 NAT/UK/000385

FINAL Report
Covering the project activities from **01/09/2012 to 30/09/2015**

Reporting Date
29/2/2016

LIFE+ PROJECT NAME or Acronym
N2K Wales
LIFE Natura 2000 Programme for Wales

Project Data

Project location	Maes y Ffynnon, Penrhosgarnedd, Bangor, Gwynedd
Project start date:	01/09/2012
Project end date:	31/12/2014 Extension date: 30/09/2015
Total Project duration (in months)	37 months (including Extension of 9 months)
Total budget	€ 1,330,276
Total eligible budget	€ 1,330,276
EU contribution:	€ 665,138
(%) of total costs	50%
(%) of eligible costs	50%

Beneficiary Data

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2. Executive summary

The LIFE Natura 2000 Programme for Wales (LIFE N2K Wales) was a project led by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and supported by European LIFE Nature funding, which ran from September 2012 to September 2015. In November 2014 the project was granted a 9 month extension to the original project completion date of 31 December 2014.

The objective was to produce a strategic plan for the management and restoration of all Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation in Wales. 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.

Working with a wide range of partners and stakeholders, the Programme determined the required conservation management actions for the 2014-20 period, identified costs and priorities and provided a basis for obtaining increased levels of funding from all possible sources.

Administration and management

NRW is the primary environmental agency for Wales sponsored by the Welsh Government. It came into being on 1 April 2013, taking over the responsibilities of the original coordinating beneficiary, the Countryside Council for Wales. NRW also took over the functions of Forestry Commission Wales, devolved functions of Environment Agency Wales and some functions carried out within Welsh Government. A modification request to change the project beneficiary to NRW was completed.

LIFE N2K Wales had a maximum of eight dedicated members of staff including the Programme Manager. The work of the project was governed by the Project Management Group which met on average every three weeks and the Programme Board which met twice a year. In addition to providing oversight and steer to the project the governance groups gave significant technical input and acted as the first level of consultation with internal stakeholders.

Electronic and paper-based administrative and financial procedures and records were maintained by the project and NRW, within the corporate framework and systems of NRW, ensuring compliance with best practice standards.

Delivery of technical actions

Actions within the information gathering phase of the project were completed successfully. Some areas proved challenging with work taking longer than predicted, however, a solid baseline of data was established to inform the final Programme. Published studies include appraisals of pressures and threats, management mechanisms, new mechanisms and funding sources.

The detailed methodology for the main phase of project delivery was developed and consulted upon. This led to the production of a series of prioritised action plans outlining actions required to address pressures and threats affecting the Natura 2000 series in Wales which will make significant progress towards favourable condition of the species and habitat features. These plans included 112 detailed, costed Natura 2000 site action plans (Prioritised Improvement Plans). 11 Thematic Action Plans and 5 Cross-cutting Action Plans for the Natura 2000 network. A summarised programme (the updated Wales chapters of the UK's Prioritised Action Framework) was also delivered by the end of the project. All plans were presented within a framework of prioritisation. Total costs for Wales have been calculated.

These core outputs were supported by the delivery of a set of 21 studies and inventories to provide baseline information and address evidence gaps to support the development of the programme. The primary study was an appraisal of existing and new funding opportunities, which provides a roadmap for exploring future sources of finance for Natura 2000. Also of note was the inventory of ecosystem services provided by Natura 2000 features and sites, and a study of innovative management mechanisms.

A major investment was also made in the development of a supporting IT tool which allows data collected by the project to be stored securely, queried, analysed and used to populate the PIPs automatically with current data. LIFE N2K Wales chose to work with an existing corporate system which is embedded in the day-to-day work of Natural Resource Wales Conservation Officers and other staff, updated on an ongoing basis and used by external partners.

Delivery of dissemination actions

The project has delivered a successful programme of stakeholder events backed up by numerous additional presentations and meetings. Events have been well attended, generally received enthusiastically and stakeholders have contributed valuable material and expertise. Most notably were two major inception events, a series of evidence gathering workshops, thematic workshops, and three closure events. A total of 26 events, workshops and training courses (relating to project outputs and identified in the LIFE Output Indicator table) were hosted by LIFE N2K Wales with over 500 attendees. However, project staff also organised additional informal workshops and contributed to numerous meetings, external events and conferences. (Over 100 other events, reaching over 1800 stakeholders as itemised in the Stakeholder Engagement List in Annex 63).

Web pages and three notice boards were put in place. Newsletters have been produced on a regular basis throughout the project as a valuable means of communication with both internal and external stakeholders. They were mailed to around 520 individuals as well as being published on the website and social media.

A series of articles were published including in Farming Wales magazine, Biodiversity News, and Natur Cymru the primary nature conservation journal in Wales.

A number of media events were also attended, for example, the team represented the LIFE N2K Wales at the Royal Welsh Show in July 2014 and made annual contributions to the Wales Biodiversity Partnership conference.

The project has produced a series of 11 unique short videos (with an English and Welsh version of each) which highlight the value of Natura 2000 in Wales to the public. A strong social media presence has been established, using, for example, Facebook and Twitter.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that awareness of Natura 2000 and its management and restoration needs, and its priority within the Welsh context has risen significantly amongst practitioners and decision-makers during the life of the project.

Financial report

Overall, the programme has been delivered just under budget. Total spend including overheads stands at €1,266,661 against a budget of €1,330,276, therefore the programme is underspent by

a total of €63,615. Although the project was able to address the underspend on salaries, which was reported in the progress report, the project managed several contracts in-house which contributed to an underspend in the External Assistance category, particularly on the evidence gaps contracts (Action A.9).

Evaluation of implementation and benefits

The project has delivered a major step forward to the planning process for effective management of Natura 2000 in Wales. The action plans produced by LIFE N2K Wales complement existing core management plans to provide focus and clarity for conservation managers and decision-makers. While actions had been identified before, this LIFE funding enabled earlier work to be extensively revised, expanded and updated, and be made accessible and easy to understand (via the PIP reports). Importantly, for the first time in Wales, actions were systematically prioritised (at appropriate levels and scales) enabling key decisions to be made to target scarce resources where the need is greatest. Setting of priorities can be contentious but the project was successful in reaching a broad consensus on the approach. Parts of the approach taken in Wales has been used to inform prioritisation work elsewhere in the UK. Also for the first time, actions were costed (generally at a detailed and relatively accurate scale) which allows for much improved planning, and identification of funding gaps, and greatly facilitates the preparation of funding bids of all types.

Rather than focusing on broad objectives, or just high level or theoretical actions, the Programme has sought to develop actions which are specific (very often quite detailed), measurable, achievable, realistic and timetabled, with identified bodies to lead on delivery. In many cases, in PIPs, actions and costs have been established by reference to specific landholdings or other management units. While this was time consuming and challenging work, it has resulted in a programme which can be directly and immediately used to plan work on the ground.

Many stakeholders have demonstrated that they are very supportive of the work of the project and seek to see the programme of work delivered, albeit within a climate of decreasing economic resources. There was an appetite externally to see developments in the area of Natura 2000 management and restoration, particularly the consideration of new innovative mechanisms and approaches.

The establishment of NRW (taking on the responsibilities of the Countryside Council for Wales, Environment Agency Wales and Forestry Commission Wales) presented a major change to the working environment of the project at a crucial stage. The period of change and uncertainty and the establishment of new systems has placed a significant number of additional requirements on the project which had a cumulative effect on the delivery timetable. However, the inception of NRW, opened up many new opportunities for integrating Natura 2000 needs within the water and forestry sectors and the organisation is actively working to transfer appropriate actions identified in the Programme into operational plans.

There are many synergies with the aims of the new legislative framework now in place in Wales (such as the Environment (Wales) Bill) and the Programme will facilitate the delivery of new natural resource management plans and strategies such as the Welsh Governments Nature Recovery Plan. A new approach to sustainable natural resources management is currently being developed and the resulting Area Statements will provide a tool for effectively integrating Natura 2000 needs alongside a wide range of other socio-economic and environmental drivers.

LIFE N2K Wales has also made progress in highlighting the ecosystem services and other benefits to the people of Wales provided by Natura 2000 habitats, species and sites, although much more could still be done in this area.

3. Introduction

Overall and specific objectives

The aim of the project was to create a strategic, prioritised, costed programme to inform essential management and restoration measures on all of Wales' Natura 2000 sites. A key aim of the Programme was to establish priorities for the period 2014-20 and provide signposting for prioritisation of actions thereafter. The Programme sought to enable significant progress to be made towards achieving favourable condition of designated N2K habitats and species and help Wales to meet its commitments under the European Habitats and Birds Directives. The Programme also aimed to provide the primary and substantive basis for the review and upgrade of the Wales chapters of the UK's Prioritised Action Framework.

An early objective was to gather evidence on issues and risks to Natura 2000, appraised current management mechanisms and identified potential new approaches. Costed and prioritised action plans for sites, and thematic pressures and threats were produced.

The project reviewed current funding arrangements and identified and evaluated potential new funding sources. It provides 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 project used various methods of communication to ensure adequate consultation and dissemination of results. An IT tool was developed to ensure that the project results could be easily accessed and updated. Engagement with stakeholders from public, private and voluntary sectors was an important part of the project and will ensure that implementation of measures identified by the programme can take place as soon as possible.

Sites targeted

LIFE N2K Wales is a strategic programme which targeted all 112 Natura 2000 sites in Wales, that is:

- 92 SACs, covering 628,557 ha on land and sea.
- 20 SPAs, covering 172,188 ha.

Features targeted

All 122 Natura 2000 features in Wales are targeted:

- 39 Annex I and regularly occurring migratory species SPA bird features.
- 54 Annex I SAC habitat features.
- 29 Annex II SAC species features.

Main conservation issues and threats being addressed

LIFE N2K Wales identified key issues (pressures) and risks (threats) for all Natura 2000 species and habitat features as part of its outputs. The dominant issues being addressed are as follows:

- Access and recreation management
- Air pollution
- Climate change
- Diffuse water pollution

- Flood and coastal erosion risk management
- Grazing and livestock management
- Habitat fragmentation
- Non-native invasive species and pathogens
- Man-made changes to hydraulic conditions
- Marine litter
- Marine fisheries
- Woodland management

Socio-economic context

Natura 2000 sites account for a significant area of Wales – 8.5% of the land area and 35% of territorial waters. Most sites are not nature reserves, rather they are used primarily for agriculture, forestry, fishing, tourism and recreation and other purposes, and many livelihoods depend upon activities within Natura 2000 sites. On land the majority of sites are either common land or privately owned. Many economic activities are compatible with the conservation objectives of the sites but where there is the need for modification or restriction to prevent damage or deterioration of the features, there may be economic impacts. However, increasingly the economic value of Natura 2000 sites and features is being recognised in terms of ecosystem services that they deliver.

Expected longer term results

The longer term aim of the LIFE N2K Wales is to make significant progress towards favourable condition of all Natura features on Natura 2000 sites in Wales by 2020, and maintain features already in favourable condition.

4. Administrative part

4.1 Description of the management system

Project Phases

The project can be divided into the following phases:

- Phase 1: Establishment of project: September 2012 – February 2013.
- Phase 2: Gathering of initial evidence base and developing approach and procedures: March 2013 – December 2013.
- Phase 3: Delivery of main outputs (Prioritised Improvement Plans, and implementing evidence gaps and other contracts). January 2014 - May 2015.
- Phase 4: Consultation phase and compiling summary of Programme June 2015 - August 2015.
- Phase 5: Completion phase. Signing off, publication and dissemination of outputs. Final report and submission to LIFE. September 2015 - February 2016.

There is a degree of overlap between these phases. The project actions are shown below, along with appropriate phase. Some actions occur in all phases.

No	Action	Phase
A.1	Establish the project team	1
A.2	Gather evidence on issues and risks to N2K sites and features	2
A.3	Appraise current management mechanisms	2
A.4	Identify potential new management approaches and mechanisms	2
A.5	Review current funding arrangements for N2K management and identify and evaluate potential new funding mechanisms (with contractor)	3
A.6	Prepare N2K Action Plans, to achieve conservation objectives/maintain or improve conservation status of features; covering sites, and themes	3
A.7	Develop “N2K Management and Restoration Programme for Wales”, giving strategic prioritisation and basis for future funding applications	4
A.8	Review lessons learnt	5
A.9	Address key evidence gaps (with contractors)	3
A.10	Develop and implement a communication and advocacy strategy for the project	1
A.11	Produce a functionally flexible IT tool to support the N2K Programme	3
F.3	Produce After-LIFE Conservation Plan (as part of final report)	5

Public awareness and dissemination of results

Action	Action	Phase
E.1	Prepare a public awareness and dissemination strategy	1
E.2	Create and maintain a project website and create You Tube videos	All
E.3	Bulletins and briefings (leaflets, newsletters and layman’s report)	All
E.4	Press and media	All

E.5	Notice board	1
F.2	Networking and information exchange	All

Project operation and monitoring

Action	Action	Phase
F.1	Project management	All

Planning

LIFE N2K Wales maintained the following processes/documentation to ensure the project was planned and managed effectively:

- Project Initiation Document
- Issues and Risks Register
- Highlight reports
- Project Gantt charts
- Output tracking reports
- List of project outputs including publications
- Work plans for Action i.e. objectives, approach and procedure, activities, timeline, constraints etc.
- Team staff meetings which were held every two to three weeks.
- Monthly budget monitoring and re-profiling.
- Lessons learnt log

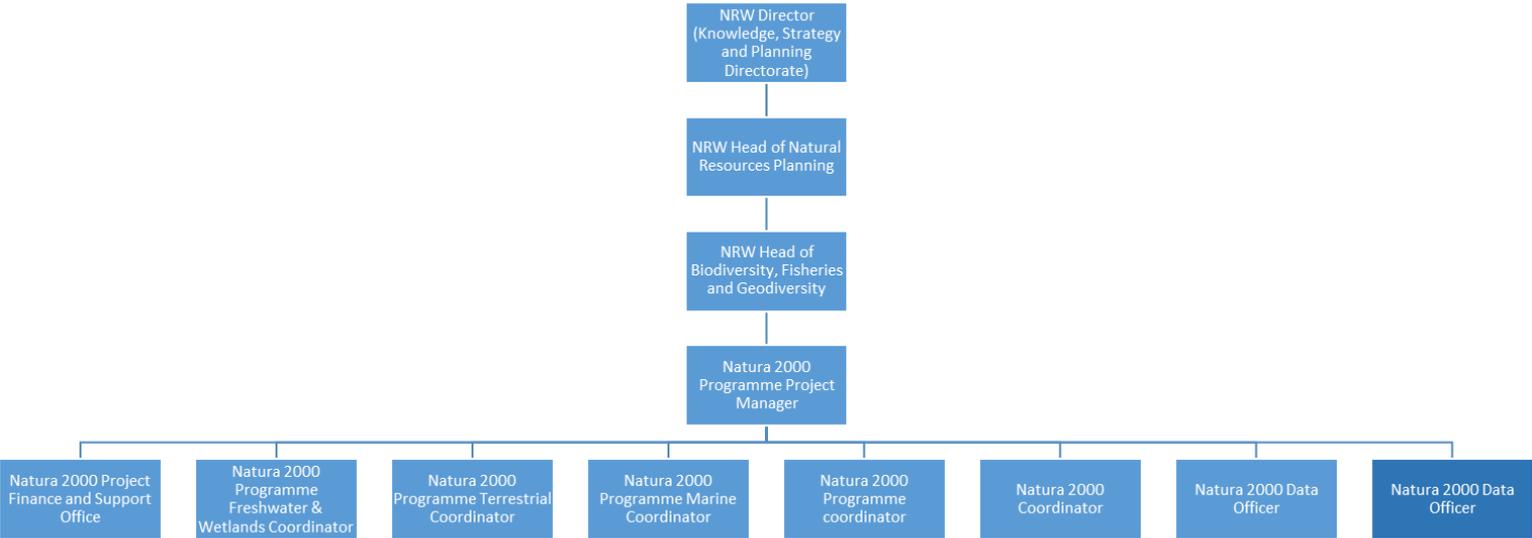
Beneficiaries

The coordinating beneficiary was originally the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and is now Natural Resources Wales (NRW). There are no associated beneficiaries, however, the project collaborates with relevant external partners.

The coordinating beneficiary changed from Countryside Council for Wales, to Natural Resources Wales (NRW) in April 2013. This was the subject of a change request. See ‘Amendments to grant agreement’ section below for more information. As the new coordinating beneficiary, NRW continued to support LIFE N2K Wales and provide a robust administrative, management and governance structure.

Project organisation and coordination

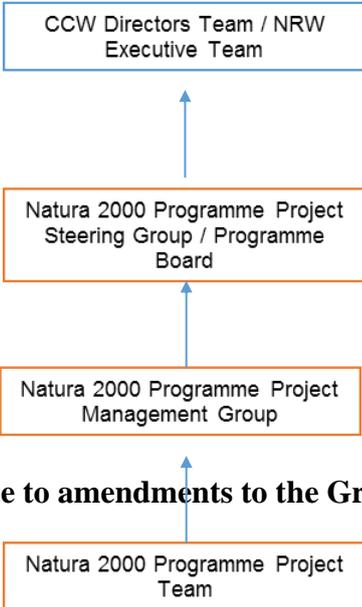
Organogram - Project team and line management structure



Project governance

LIFE N2K Wales has benefited from a governance structure which advised and supports the project. The Programme Board takes overall responsibility for the project within NRW and provides a higher level of governance to steer the project, monitor risks and help resolve any outstanding problems. Membership was comprised of senior NRW officers and representatives from Welsh Government. The membership of the Board was revised during the project to reflect the new organisational structure of NRW. The Board met approximately twice yearly on average, but more frequently as final outputs were being signed off.

The Project Management Group (PMG) provided technical advice and support to the team, direction on technical level, and the first line of consultation and communication with internal stakeholders within NRW. The group members were comprised of NRW staff with expertise in protected sites management, with representatives of marine sites and regional operational staff. The group met every three weeks on average. A small sub-group of the PMG met on an as-needed basis to provide a steer on administrative, project management, financial and communication matters.



Description of changes due to amendments to the Grant Agreement

Amendment to the Grant Agreement 1

On 1 April 2013 the Countryside Council for Wales ceased to exist and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) came into being, taking over its responsibilities. NRW also took over the functions of Forestry Commission Wales, devolved functions of Environment Agency Wales and some functions carried out within Welsh Government.

The Grant Agreement was modified in order to change the name of the coordinating beneficiary. The modification request received the final signature on 23 January 2014.

Amendment to the Grant Agreement 2

On the 22 September 2014, LIFE N2K Wales submitted a modification request to the Commission to extend the project term for nine months to 30 September 2015, in order to account for delays due to unforeseen exceptional circumstances and to ensure that all remaining outputs were delivered. The project also requested a modification to the project budget, transferring funds between categories. This request was accepted by the Commission in a letter dated 3 November 2014.

Reports delivered

LIFE N2K Wales has submitted the following administrative reports since the start of the project:

Inception Report:	31/05/13
Mid-term Report:	31/03/14
Progress Report:	10/03/14

Extension of the project

LIFE N2K Wales project applied for, and was granted, an extension of nine months from 1 January 2015 to 30 September 2015.

4.2 Evaluation of the management system

The management system was generally effective and the project well managed. The two tier governance structure worked well, each group fulfilling a different and valuable role. The Project Management Group required a relatively high level of input from the LIFE N2K Wales team in terms of secretariat support and investment of time as options are discussed and debated by those representing different parts of the business. However given that the project was developing new approaches their expertise in testing and developing these approaches was invaluable. Furthermore given that the work of LIFE N2K Wales was so interlinked to many existing core roles of NRW it was vital to obtain input, consent and support before proceeding.

The lack of formal partners has not been a problem. The responsibilities of the most likely partner at the time of preparing the agreement, Environment Agency Wales, are now incorporated within NRW anyway. Whilst other partners have not made direct financial contribution to LIFE N2K Wales, they have generally been willing to be involved and invest staff time attending workshops and contributing to the development of plans.

Communication with the Commission and Monitoring team

LIFE N2K Wales team members have attended PAF/Natura 2000 Programme events in Brussels on 3 October 2013, 5 November 2013 and 24 March 2015.

LIFE N2K Wales has hosted three Missions with monitor Neil Wilkie, on 15 January 2013, 21 January 2014 and also 26 September 2014 (also including the EC) and 22 September 2015. There has also been communication in the intervening period including project updates via

newsletter, invitations to events, informing the monitor of minor changes, questions and queries.

Following the modification request in September 2014, the LIFE N2K Wales was requested by the Commission to provide an updated version of the Prioritised Action Framework for Wales with the Final Report.

Responses to points raised in EC letters to LIFE N2K Wales are included in Annex 1.

4.3 Specific project actions

A report of specific project Actions which relate to the project administration and management are described below:

4.3.1 Action A.1: Establish the project team

Outputs required under the Grant Agreement/LIFE Output Indicators:

Target as in Grant Agreement	Achievement	LIFE indicators	Evidence
Effective project team in place	Delivered	n/a	Table 1

Staffing structure

There were eight members of the project team who worked exclusively for the LIFE N2K Wales project. The team was located in the NRW Biodiversity, Fisheries and Geodiversity Group (BFG) in the Knowledge, Strategy & Planning Department. The team members reported to the Programme Manager, whilst the Programme Manager reported to the BFG Group Head. The Programme Manager, Kathryn Hewitt, began in July 2012 with the remainder of the team selected through a competitive recruitment process. Successful candidates (a mix of internally and externally recruited staff), starting between November 2012 and January 2014.

Four team members have remained with the project throughout its duration. Three team members left the project and the posts were refilled, by competitive recruitment.

LIFE N2K Wales has been able to recruit staff with the necessary levels of skills and experience. Staff training and appraisal was carried out in line with NRW procedure.

Table 1: Details of the project team

Post title	Name	Notes
N2K Programme Manager		

N2K Programme Project Finance & Support Officer	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
N2K Programme Freshwater & Wetlands Coordinator	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
N2K Programme Terrestrial Coordinator	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
N2K Programme Marine Coordinator	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
N2K Programme Coordinator (initially Species Coordinator, later general Coordinator)	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
N2K Programme Data Manager > N2K Coordinator	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
N2K Data Officer	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Timetable: The initial recruitment was completed on the due date of 31 December 2012. The data officer was recruited on 1 December 2014. Replacement staff were recruited from August 2014 through to April 2015. Staff contracts were extended in November 2014 to account for the project extension and again for one month in August 2015.

Modifications to action: There was a significant underspend in the salary budget at the time of the mid-term report, therefore LIFE N2K Wales recruited an additional full-time Data Officer to carry out management and inputting of the data collected as part of the Programme (an area of work which was underestimated in the original application).

Staff contracts were extended in November 2014 to account for the project extension. Finally a budget underspend in other areas allowed project staff to be extended for an additional month from end August 2015 to end September 2015, to allow outputs to be finalised.

Problem and drawbacks: Some timetabling of staff start dates as laid out in the project application were not feasible given that spend against project budget is not permitted before the start date, and the time taken to recruit and appoint. Time was also not programmed in for orientation and training.

The project structure would have functioned more effectively with a senior technical lead to provide a lead to the coordinators of the same grade. See the Lessons Learnt Report for more information.

Four team members moved to other posts before the end of their contracts, as shown above. Significant time was lost to periods of sickness and a serious accident.

Complementary action: NRW invested significant amounts of non-project staff time supporting and guiding the project and helping to deliver outputs.

Continuation of action: Staff within NRW Special Sites Programme will continue to oversee and coordinate the delivery of the Programme.

4.3.2 Action F.1: Project management

Outputs required under the Grant Agreement/LIFE Output Indicators:

Target as in Grant Agreement	Achievement	LIFE indicators	Evidence
Programme Board and Project Management Group operational	Delivered	n/a	Project Governance section p.11
Project reports and payment requests	Delivered: Inception Report Mid-term Report Progress Report Final Report	n/a	Previously submitted to LIFE
Purchase of 7 laptops	Delivered	n/a	Annex 90 (k)

In the establishment phase project management systems and documentation were put in place as shown in section 4.1. Governance groups were established and ran throughout the project.

Electronic and paper-based administrative and record keeping systems were established and maintained by the project, within the corporate framework and systems of NRW, ensuring compliance with best practice standards. Including paper and electronic filing systems.

Financial procedures, monitoring and documentation were also established and maintained. These were also in line with corporate standard and procedures. A separate project bank account was opened to receive all LIFE payments. All invoices and transactions relating to the project are coded to a unique cost centre on the corporate accounting system (e-financials). This unique cost code was used to compile the transaction list. Original invoices are kept in a filing system by the project administrator within the LIFE N2K Wales office in Bangor. All invoices were assigned with a unique reference number which is also recorded in the transaction list which enables the original invoices to be quickly and easily traced.

Seven laptops and associated equipment e.g. docking station, screen and keyboards were purchased as described in the project agreement. Two offices were also set up in NRW buildings (Plas Penrhos in Bangor and Mold).

Administration relating to LIFE was also carried out throughout the project. This included the preparation and submission of four reports (Inception, Mid-term, Progress and Final reports) payment requests and the hosting of Mission visits. Two change requests (including an extension proposal) were prepared and submitted.

Timetable: The first programme board was held in September 2012 as timetabled. The inception, mid-term and progress reports were submitted as timetabled and shown on page 12 above.

Modifications to action: Additional equipment was purchased during the project, namely as projector and video/still camera. These are itemised in Annex 1: Responses to points raised in EC letters.

Problem and drawbacks: The inception of NRW and subsequent change of senior staff, meant that the membership of the Programme Board had to be reviewed and new members recruited.

Complementary action: None.

Continuation of action: The Programme Board continued for 5 months following the project completion date. The responsibilities of the Programme Board will fall within the governance of the new NRW Biodiversity Board.

5. Technical part

5.1 Technical progress

The aim of the project was to create a strategic, prioritised, costed programme to inform essential management and restoration measures on Wales’ Natura 2000 sites. The programme has established priorities for the period 2014-20 and provides signposting for prioritisation of actions thereafter. The programme will enable significant progress to be made towards achieving favourable condition of designated N2K habitats and species and help Wales to meet its commitments under the European Habitats and Birds Directives.

The project has gathered evidence on issues and risks to Natura 2000 sites, appraised current management mechanisms and identified potential new approaches. Costed action plans for sites, and themes have been produced.

The project has reviewed current funding arrangements and identified and evaluated potential new funding sources. It has provided 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 project has used various methods of communication to ensure adequate consultation and dissemination of results. An IT tool has been developed to ensure that the project results can be easily accessed and updated. Engagement with stakeholders from public, private and voluntary sectors has been an important part of the project and will ensure that implementation of measures identified by the programme can take place as soon as possible.

The timetable is shown on the Programme Gantt Chart in Annex 2.

5.1.1 Action A.2: Gather evidence on issues and risks

Outputs required under the Grant Agreement/LIFE Output Indicators:

Target as in Grant Agreement	Achievement	LIFE indicators	Evidence
------------------------------	-------------	-----------------	----------

4 workshops (30 attendees each)	Delivered 4 workshops	4 events in '0-25 participants local/regional' category	Table 2. Image Evidence Annex 3
1 report	Delivered, 1 report	1 inventory/study	Annex 4
1 matrix of data	Delivered, 1 set of matrices	1 inventory/study	Annex 5

Activities:

- Developed a work plan for this action, and appraised data sources.
- Sourced and processed data on issues and risks (pressures and threats) from NRW Actions Database, and incorporated key data from other sources to produce inventory of issues and risks affecting N2K features.
- Consulted with NRW Conservation Officers to validate data.
- Analysed data to establish dominant issues and risks by occurrence for each feature and feature type and theme (e.g. terrestrial, marine, birds etc.).
- Planned and delivered half-day sessions to identify stakeholders views on main issues and risks for ecosystems, in four events held around Wales, as per table below.
- Produced report on Issues and Risks.

Table 2: A2 workshops

Date	Location	Workshops	Total Attendees
6 June 2013	Cardigan Guildhall	Terrestrial Marine Freshwater & Wetlands	18
7 June 2013	Cardiff City Hall	Terrestrial Marine Freshwater & Wetlands	24
10 June 2013	Shrewsbury Gateway Centre	SPA (Birds)	15
12 June 2013	Llandudno Junction, Conwy Business Centre	Terrestrial Marine Freshwater & Wetlands	20
Total			77

Timetable: This action was due to start on 1 September 2012 but did not begin until November 2012. It was due to be finished in January 2013 but the final report and inventories were completed in May 2014, with the fully consulted version being published in January 2015.

Modifications to action: The Grant Agreement planned for only one, one-day workshop per theme; however, for the terrestrial, marine and freshwater and wetlands theme, this was changed to three half-day workshops, in different locations around Wales. This was done in order to ensure good attendance from a range of stakeholders and to pick up on regional issues.

Problem and drawbacks: This Action took longer to deliver than originally planned. In part, this was due to timetabling issues – it was not realistic to deliver significant progress

on this Action before the team was in place or before the project launch and inception events.

The main data source for Action A.2 (the NRW Actions Database) required considerably more reworking and validation due to its volume, complexity and quality than originally envisaged. Data needed to be matched to Natura 2000 features manually and validated and in some cases there was insufficient data so supplementary data sources were needed. Although this work took more time than planned, the work helped to improve the baseline dataset which helped with the production of site action plans (Action A.6).

The decision to hold workshops in three different regional locations, rather than at a single location took more time to organise and run than originally planned but it is considered that the benefits made this investment worthwhile. Attendance at the workshops was good with a higher level of contribution from stakeholders than expected.

Continuation of action: The developments to the Actions Database which LIFE N2K Wales has undertaken (see Action A.11) will allow the analysis on issues and risks to be re-run easily without the need for reworking in the future. The content of the database continues to be improved as part of Action A.6 which should address the shortcomings in the data.

5.1.2 Action A.3: Appraise current management mechanisms

Outputs required under the Grant Agreement/LIFE Output Indicators:

Target as in Grant Agreement	Achievement	LIFE indicators	Evidence
4 workshops (30 attendees each)	Delivered 4 workshops	4 events in '0-25 participants local/regional' category	Table 3. Image Evidence Annex 3
1 report	Delivered, 1 report	1 inventory/study	Annex 6
1 inventory	Delivered, 1 inventory	1 inventory/study	Annex 7

Activities

- Developed plan to deliver action.
- Planned and delivered half-day session for stakeholders looking at available mechanisms and their limitations at the events described below.
- Compiled all material from workshops.
- Analysis of data compiled and validated as part of Action A.2 to derive information on the range and number of management mechanisms used to deliver planned actions. Actions Database queried and data processed to derive information on mechanisms for actions already completed.
- Completed inventory of current management mechanisms used to deliver completed and planned actions to address issues.
- Completed analysis of current mechanisms used, including assessment of suitability and effectiveness using additional data, literature review and interviews with relevant NRW specialists and practitioners.
- Completed full technical report.

- Produced summary report.

Table 3: A3 workshops

Date	Location	Workshops	Total Attendees
6 June 2013	Cardigan Guildhall	Terrestrial Marine Freshwater & Wetlands	18
7 June 2013	Cardiff City Hall	Terrestrial Marine Freshwater & Wetlands	24
10 June 2013	Shrewsbury Gateway Centre	SPA (Birds)	15
12 June 2013	Llandudno Junction, Conwy Business Centre	Terrestrial Marine Freshwater & Wetlands	20
Total			77

Timetable: This action was due to begin on 1 December 2012 and be completed by 31 March 2012. Delays in Action A.2 delayed the start date until 1 April 2013. The final report and inventory were completed in May 2014, with the fully consulted version being published in January 2015.

Modifications to action: Rather than running separate Action A.3 workshops as described in the LIFE agreement, it was considered more appropriate run a joint event with A.2 workshops in the morning and A.3 workshops in the afternoon. This decision was taken following stakeholder feedback that they have insufficient time to attend numerous workshops and to travel repeatedly.

Problem and drawbacks: As for Action A.2.

5.1.3 Action A.4: Identify new management mechanisms

Outputs required under the Grant Agreement/LIFE Output Indicators:

Target as in Grant Agreement	Achievement	LIFE indicators	Evidence
4 workshops (30 attendees each)	Delivered 3 workshops	2 events in '0-25 participants local/regional' category, 1 event in '25-75 participants local/regional' category	Table 3. Image Evidence Annex 3
1 report	Delivered, 1 report	1 inventory/study	Annex 8
1 inventory	Delivered, 1 inventory	1 inventory/study	Annex 9

Activities

- Carried out literature review of new management mechanisms. Organised and hosted three workshop events to identify new mechanisms and discuss advantages and disadvantages with stakeholders.

- Compiled an inventory of new management mechanisms.
- Produced report.

Table 3. A.4 workshops

Date	Location	Attendees
16 September 2013	Wales Biodiversity Partnership Conference, Bangor University	7
27 September 2013	Europe's Special Places Conference Cardiff Millennium Stadium (in association with Welsh Government, NRW and EC DG Environment)	55
12 September 2013	Relevant Authorities Group meeting, Aberystwyth	14
Total		76

Timetable: This action was due to begin on 1 April 2013. Delays in Action A.2 delayed this action. The timetable was revised in the Inception report to start work on 1 June 2013 and delivered by 31 October 2013. Work began on 1 June 2013. The final report and inventory were completed in May 2014, with the fully consulted version being published in January 2015.

Modifications to action: The Grant Agreement stated that there would be four workshops, however, the coverage of stakeholders obtained with the three events organised was felt to be adequate.

The improvements to existing mechanisms element of this work has been included in the inventory and report for Action A.3, rather than in Action A.4. This presented the material in a more logical sequence.

Problem and drawbacks: The start of the Action was held up by earlier delays in Actions A.2 and A.3. As with the earlier workshops, there was considerable enthusiasm amongst delegates to discuss this subject area and more contributions were received than expected, which took significant amounts of time to transcribe and analyse, delaying progress against the timeline, but producing more useful results.

Complementary action: The decision was made to work in association with existing initiatives to deliver the workshops. On 16 September LIFE N2K Wales ran workshop as part of the Wales Biodiversity Partnership Conference. On 27 September the project hosted the second day of the Europe's Special Places Conference i.e. the UK element of the Financing Natura 2000 workshops. The aim was to maximise delegate numbers (since many would already be attending the other event), attract a more senior level of delegates and draw out any synergies and mutually relevant messages from the different events. The Europe's Special Places Conference was particularly successful in this regard.

Care was taken to ensure that the LIFE N2K Wales workshops had separate deliverables, budget and expenses to avoid any risk of double funding.

Continuation of action: The work of Action A.4 can be set in a wider context of new approaches to natural resource management and the promotion of the ecosystem approach

currently being developed by the Welsh Government, and a new legislative framework for the environment.

5.1.4 Action A.5: Appraisal of funding mechanisms

Outputs required under the Grant Agreement/LIFE Output Indicators:

Target as in Grant Agreement	Achievement	LIFE indicators	Evidence
1 report	Delivered, 1 report 1 inventory	2 inventories/studies	Annex 10 Annex 11

Activities:

The contract to appraise funding mechanisms for Natura 2000 has been delivered to a high standard. The report has been shared with Welsh Government. Key actions and recommendations have been incorporated into the relevant PIPs, Thematic Action Plans and PAF.

The work involved the following:

- Initially the work was scoped and planned.
- Identification of contractors for a competitive tender process.
- Preparation of specification for this contract.
- Undertake procurement process. The contract was let to ICF International.
- Management and oversight of contractors.
- Draft report was circulated within NRW and to WG for comments.
- Production of final report and annexes.

Timetable: This action was due to begin on 1 April 2013, however, it was deferred to 1 June 2013 following the Inception Report. The specification was due to be complete by 31 July 2013 and the report complete by 31 January 2014. In practice, work, began in earnest in February 2014, with the contract being let in August 2014. The report and inventory were finalised in April 2015.

Modifications to action: None.

Problem and drawbacks: The start of this action was delayed due to the over-run of work on earlier actions. It was important to fully collate the analysis of Actions A.3 and A.4 as this would feed into A.5. However, once started the contract ran smoothly with good results.

Complementary action/Continuation of action: A number of workshops run by Welsh Government in partnership with NRW have taken place during the lifetime of the project to raise awareness of LIFE and provide information and lessons learned on running LIFE projects to potential bidders. LIFE N2K Wales has contributed to these events. The Welsh Government has also established a new LIFE forum to coordinate, share information and support for potential LIFE bids in Wales.

5.1.5 Action A.6: Action Plans

Outputs required under the Grant Agreement/LIFE Output Indicators:

Target as in Grant Agreement	Achievement	LIFE indicators	Evidence
Standard template for action plans	Delivered, 1 template	n/a	Annex 13a-h
Series of action plans	Delivered 112 site action plans (PIPs and SIPs) 11 thematic action plans (TAPs) 5 cross-cutting action plans	128 action plans	Annex 12 (list of sites with plans and html links to SIPs) Annex 13a-e (examples of PIPs) Annex 14a-h (example of SIPs) Annex 15-25 (TAPs) Annex 26 (Cross-cutting plans)
8 meetings (10 people per meeting)	Delivered 8 meetings (workshops)	7 events in '0-25 participants local/regional' category, 1 event in '25-75 participants local/regional' category	Table 5 Image Evidence Annex 3

Prioritised Improvement Plans (Site based Action Plans)

Activities

Action plans have been completed for all 112 sites. For most sites the plans are Prioritised Improvement Plans (PIPs) which are produced automatically from live data in the NRW Actions Database. The plans can be viewed online or saved as a PDF.

For the 10 cross-border sites with England Site Improvement Plans (SIPs) were produced jointly with the IPENS project, following the IPENS template. Data for the Welsh part of the site was also input into the NRW Actions Database.

The process of creation of the PIPs is shown below. The process for the SIPs was essentially the same, (only differing in minor ways), although additional cross-border liaison and consultation was required.

- Prepared procedure for producing PIPs, including approach to consultation and engagement of stakeholders.
- Developed format/template for data (which was subsequently developed in the Actions Database and output as the PIP report).
- Developed method for prioritising actions (by issue) at a site level (see Approach to Prioritisation).
- Trialled approach with pilot sites, including one terrestrial and one marine.
- Developed an approach to costing actions (see Action A.9 outputs 7 and 8).
- Developed timetable for delivery.
- Prepared guidance documents for conservation officers.

- Developed procedure for working with and integration of data from Marine Management Schemes.
- Carried out communications including a series of liaison meetings with Team Leaders and other relevant parties (e.g. European Marine Site Officers).
- Established system for tracking progress over 112 sites.
- Preparation of funding source statements based on ICL funding Report, and establishing links to PIPs.
- Regular liaison with River Basin Management Plan programme to contribute to consultation of second cycle and provide data to identify programme of measures for protected sites.
- Liaison with IPENS re. cross-border sites.

All PIPs have been developed through the following stages:

- Face-to-face meetings with NRW Conservation Officers (and in some cases other partners, such as reserve managers) to identify key issues and risks, priorities and necessary management and restoration actions to 2020.
- Collation of additional data and finalisation of actions by LIFE N2K Coordinator.
- Calculation of costs for identified actions.
- Engagement with relevant NRW specialists, and external partners responsible for actions or organisations with a significant landholding on the site (excluding private landowners).
- Incorporation of feedback from stakeholders, and final approval from Conservation Officers.
- Inputting of data into Actions Database.
- Production of PIPs. PIPs have been made available to other stakeholders on request.

Costings have been generated for 74% of PIP actions. This has been challenging and time consuming work but has yielded good results.

The PIPs include:

- Information on status of features.
- List of issues and risks impacting the site.
- Matrix showing priority of impact of issues/risks on features (which relates to priority of actions).
- Link to actions on specific management units.
- Information on funding sources, derived from the A.5 report.
- Costs of actions, including total costs for the site.
- Responsible organisations.

Where two or more Natura 2000 sites overlap substantially, the process described above was carried out once, considering issues from both designations. Combined or separate PIPs can be generated from the Actions Database.

Timetable: This action was due to start on 1 February 2013 but began one month late. The template was due to be completed on 31 March 2013, but was completed on 30 January 2014. LIFE N2K Wales started gathering the data for Action Plans in January 2014. Site actions plans (PIPs) were completed on 30 September 2015.

Modifications to action: None.

Problem and drawbacks: A significant amount of time has been invested by LIFE N2K Wales into formulating and consulting on the procedure for producing the PIPs, the nature of new data to be collected and the format of the PIP template. Importantly this includes a new procedure for prioritising conservation actions on sites. The work also was closely linked to the development of the IT tool. Given the number of internal stakeholders who have an interest in these matters, and the fact that the marine sites require a somewhat different approach to non-marine sites, a significant amount of consultation and reiteration was required.

This slowed progress towards collating data for the PIPs however, buy-in and support from internal partners is key to the success of the project and investment in planning and consultation at the earlier stages was felt to be essential.

There were delays due to staff leaving and the time taken to re-recruit replacements.

The work to cost actions has also proved to be time consuming and in places challenging, however in general, costs have been successfully collated. In some areas, there are still gaps, e.g. costs for marine actions and for actions relating to changes to policy and legislation.

Complementary action: There is a programme being run by colleagues in NRW to review Core Management Plans for N2K sites in Wales. This work will complement and help inform the development of the PIPs.

The preparation and consultation of Water Framework Directive River Basin Management Plans (second cycle) was being undertaken by NRW to a similar timetable to the LIFE N2K Wales project. LIFE N2K Wales liaised closely with relevant colleagues throughout the project to ensure that mutual benefits and any cross-compatible data was used to support both efforts. There has been considerable interest in the PIPs by some RBMP consultees such as the water companies, to help inform their contribution RBMP consultation and project staff attended consultation events. PIP data and Thematic Action Plan data was used to develop the Programme of Measures.

Continuation of action: The PIPs are designed to be generated as a report from the NRW corporate Actions Database. The future maintenance and updating of this database is part of the ongoing role of permanent staff. Therefore, the PIPs can be produced with minimal effort when required in the future beyond the life the LIFE N2K Wales.

The PIPs are ‘living documents’ which are drawn from the NRW Actions Database. Data can be updated at any time as actions are completed or new ones are identified and the PIPs can be subsequently re-run at any to reflect these changes. Further feedback from stakeholders can be incorporated by the LIFE N2K team or by Conservation Officers. The updating of PIPs will become the responsibility of Conservation Officers following the end of the LIFE N2K Wales project.

PIPs will be made available to other interested parties under licence via the NRW Special Sites Programme. They will not be published online due to the fact that they frequently contain sensitive information.

Action A.6 Action Plans – Thematic Plans

Activities

Eleven Thematic Action Plans have been produced for each of the dominant, priority issues and risks which have impacts across the Natura 2000 network in Wales. Initial development work was undertaken to establish the approach and methodology for creating the Thematic Action Plans and to identify the themes to be addressed which was approved by Project Management Group and Programme Board based on major themes identified in A.2, as shown below.

Table 4: Thematic Action Plans

Plan title	Notes	Evidence
Access and recreation		Annex 15
Air pollution: Nitrogen deposition		Annex 16
Climate change and habitat fragmentation	Covers two priority pressures/threats	Annex 17
Diffuse water pollution		Annex 18
Flood and coastal erosion risk management		Annex 19
Grazing and livestock management		Annex 20
Man-made changes to hydraulic conditions		Annex 21
Marine fisheries		Annex 22
Marine litter		Annex 23
Non-native invasive species and pathogens		Annex 24
Woodland management		Annex 25

Each plan has been produced in the following way:

- Develop approach/procedure for developing Thematic Action Plans, and workshops including audience, content, format, timetable etc.
- Source data from Actions Database to inform the plans and workshops.
- Workshop(s) were held with relevant specialists in the field; in some cases these were internal (NRW) only and in others they involved both internal and external attendees.
- Each workshop focused on identifying current mechanisms used to address the issue, and new strategic actions which are required by 2020.
- The output of the workshops was used to draw together a list of thematic actions.
- A small group of key specialists validated and refined the results.
- The list of thematic actions was made available at final workshops (A.10) and on request to any interested party for further comment.
- The key specialists and LIFE N2K coordinator incorporated these as appropriate and prepared the content of the report which provides further information and background.
- Carry out external consultation on prepared actions.

The events have been well attended and positively received by stakeholders.

The summary of workshops is shown below:

Table 5: Thematic Action Plan workshops

Event	Internal / External	Date	Location	Thematic Plans covered	Attendees
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Marine Thematic Action Plan Workshop	NRW internal	16/10/2014	Bangor	Invasive species (marine) Flood & coastal erosion risk management Marine litter Marine fisheries	16
Rivers Thematic Action Plan Workshop	NRW internal	12/02/2015	Aberystwyth	Diffuse water pollution Man-made changes to hydraulic conditions Invasive non-natives (freshwater)	28
Woodland Management Thematic Action Plan Workshop	NRW/Welsh Government	02/03/2015	Aberystwyth	Woodland management Grazing & livestock farming Invasive non-natives	11
Wetland Thematic Action Plan Workshop	Internal/ External	22/04/2015	Aberystwyth	Man-made changes to hydraulic conditions Grazing & livestock farming; Invasive species (wetland) Diffuse pollution	11
Grazing and Livestock Farming Thematic Action Plan Workshop	NRW/Welsh Government	11/06/2015	Shrewsbury	Grazing & livestock farming	10
Climate Change Thematic Action Plan Workshop	Internal/ External	29/06/2015	Shrewsbury	Climate change; Habitat fragmentation	9
Access and Recreation Thematic Action Plan Workshop	Internal/ External - National Access Forum	07/07/2015	Welshpool	Access & recreation	22
Lakes Thematic Action Plan Workshop	Internal/ External invited (only internal attended)	08/07/2015	Aberystwyth	Diffuse pollution Man-made changes to hydraulic conditions	6
Total					113

Cross-cutting Action Plans

A further five plans have been produced to collate key messages which have been identified from the Thematic Action Plans and PIPs. They include:

- Communication and education
- Finance and funding
- Legislation and policy
- Integration of Natura 2000 into other sectors
- Investigations and evidence gaps

All plans are included in a single document (Annex 26).

Timetable: Thematic Action Plans started in October 2014 with workshops running through to July 2015. Plans were completed by October 2015.

Modifications to action: Climate change and habitat fragmentation plans were incorporated into a single document.

5.1.6 Action A.7: Develop Programme

Outputs required under the Grant Agreement/LIFE Output Indicators:

Target as in Grant Agreement	Achievement	LIFE indicators	Evidence
1 Programme/updated version of Welsh PAF	Delivered, 1 Natura 2000 programme/PAF	1 plan of project measures	Annex 27
2 meetings (with 10 attendees)	Delivered	1 events in '0-25 participants local/regional' category	Annex 63. Stakeholder engagement log

Activities:

The final Programme will be presented in the form of the Welsh element of the UK Prioritised Action Framework (PAF).

The content of the PAF is based on a distillation of the outputs of the Thematic Action Plans, Cross-cutting Action Plans and PIPs – focusing on that which has been identified as high and medium priority.

A report and exports from the Actions Database have been developed to extract relevant data to inform the Programme.

Stages of work involved in developing the PAF are as follows:

- Developed the format and approach to collating and summarising the data on identified actions into a concise and prioritised Programme. This has been carried out in consultation with the PMG and Welsh Government.
- Developed overall approach to prioritisation.
- Compiled and summarised results of other project Actions (A.2 to A.9), including policy recommendations and actions.
- Consultation on draft PAF within Welsh Government and NRW, and comments incorporated.
- Approval of PAF through NRW governance process.
- Liaison with other UK agencies has begun to ensure consistency of format and approach and share experience.
- Extracted data from Actions Database to inform the PAF.
- Liaised with those responsible for creation of Welsh version of PAF within Welsh Government, NRW, Defra and JNCC.
- Submitted PAF to the NRW Protected Areas Committee for approval (as sub-group of the NRW Board), and as part of this process a paper on the PAF was tabled to the NRW Board.

- NRW staff attended meetings of the UK Interagency Funding Group to facilitate liaison with the UK agencies responsible for the other country elements of the UK PAF, to ensure consistency of format and approach and share experiences.
- Submitted to Welsh Government for sign-off by Minister for Natural Resources.
- Forwarded to DEFRA for submission to European Commission.
- Submitted to European Commission.

Prioritisation: Initial scoping work was carried out and an initial workshop with the Project Management Group was held.

The overall approach to prioritisation has been laid out, the supporting ‘tools’ have been completed. Highlight priorities have also been established.

Table 6: Natura 2000 prioritisation tools

Tool name	Level	Description
Tool 1: Major issues and risks for the Natura 2000 series	Wales level	A list of issues and risks having a major adverse impact on species/habitat features across the Natura 2000 series. Identified from NRW Actions Database and stakeholders.
Tool 2: Natura 2000 Feature Needs Analysis	Wales level	A multi-criteria decision analysis, which identifies features with the most prominent conservation needs and drivers.
Tool 3: Matrix of prioritised issues/risks and actions for sites	Site level	A multi-criteria decision analysis, which identifies features with the most prominent conservation needs and drivers.

The Natura 2000 Approach to Prioritisation document and multi-criteria decision analysis are detailed in the under section 5.1.8 Action A.9 Evidence Gaps.

The MCDA (Tool 2) was carried out under A.9 output 5 (Table7). A workshop was carried out with 19 NRW species and habitat specialists to provide input into the Feature Needs Analysis process. Sessions were run within the Project Closure Events (see section 5.2.1.Action A.10) to enable stakeholders to discuss the prioritisation exercise and results. In addition a series of meetings was held to engage stakeholders in the development of the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme – See stakeholder engagement log.

Timetable: This action was due to begin on 1 July 2014, however, initial work on prioritisation began early in December 2013. The draft Programme (the PAF) was complete in October 2015, the final draft was complete in December 2015 and the PAF was signed off by the Welsh Government Minister for Natural Resources in February 2016.

Modifications to action: In a letter dated 16 December 2014 LIFE requested that the submission of the PAF for Wales would be part of the agreement of the extension of LIFE N2K Wales. The PAF document is being submitted as the ‘Programme’.

Problem and drawbacks: None.

Continuation of action: NRW is working to include the Programme into operational plans for the organisation. Further detail is provided in the After-LIFE Conservation Plan.

5.1.7 Action A.8: Review lessons learned

Outputs required under the Grant Agreement/LIFE Output Indicators:

Target as in Grant Agreement	Achievement	LIFE indicators	Evidence
1 lessons learnt report	Delivered, 1 report	1 inventory/study	Annex 28

Activities: A Lessons Learnt log was maintained throughout the project. The log and the risk register formed the basis of the lessons learnt report.

Timetable: This action was due to start in 1 January 2014, but began early in April 2013. The final report was due on 31 December 2014 but was delivered in December 2015.

Modifications to action: None.

Problem and drawbacks: None.

Continuation of action: The report has been submitted to the NRW external funding team, which collates lessons learned from all internally led projects.

5.1.8 Action A.9: Address key evidence gaps

Outputs required under the Grant Agreement/LIFE Output Indicators:

Target as in Grant Agreement	Achievement	LIFE indicators	Evidence
10 contracts	Delivered 11 contracts or internal work tasks (Reports and inventories)	11 inventories/studies	Table 7 below. Annexes 29 to 48
1 summary report	Delivered 1 report	1 inventory/studies	Annex 49

Activities:

A log of identified evidence gaps was created. Evidence gaps have been sourced from workshop attendees (particularly Inception Events, A.2 & A.3 events where specific sessions were held), team members and other individual NRW staff members. This is included in the summary report *Evidence Gaps Relating the Natura 2000 in Wales*.

The log of evidence gaps was analysed to identify those evidence gaps where LIFE N2K Wales could most effectively deliver work to using its budget to support the development of the LIFE N2K Programme. Those areas which could be addressed as part of PIPs or Thematic Action Plans were also identified.

11 evidence gaps activities delivered as part of the LIFE N2K Wales project are shown below, along with the summary report. The nature of the final output is described the Output and Evidence column. The work has been undertaken via contracts let through the NRW procurement process to external consultants or by team members or temporary agency staff working within the team.

Table 7: Evidence gap outputs

	Evidence gap activities	Delivered by	Output and Evidence
1	Natura 2000 in Wales: Facts and Figures Report	Temporary agency worker	Report – Annex 29
2	Natura 2000 in Wales: Inventory of Spatial Data for Features	Temporary agency worker	Summary report – Annex 30 Inventory – Annex 31
3	Inventory of Ecosystem Services Provided by Natura 2000 in Wales	Consultant- Land Use Consultants	Summary report – Annex 32 Inventory – Annex 33
4	Calculating the Economic Values of the Ecosystem Services Provided by Natura 2000 Features and Sites in Wales – feasibility study	Consultant- Land Use Consultants	Report – Annex 34
5	Natura 2000 Feature Multi-criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA) Report – Conservation Needs Analysis	Consultant – ADAS	Report – Annex 35 MCDA matrices for: Habitats – Annex 36 Species – Annex 37 Birds – Annex 38
6	Climate Change Vulnerability of Marine Natura 2000 Features	N2K team and NRW staff	Workshop Report – Annex 39 Analysis – Annex 40
7	An Approach for Costing Investigation Actions for Marine Natura 2000 sites in Wales	Consultant – Marine EcoSol	Report – Annex 41 Inventory (cannot publish due to commercial confidentiality) – Annex 42
8	Natura 2000 in Wales: Costings for Terrestrial Actions	N2K team	Report – Annex 43
9	Assessing and Addressing Atmospheric Nitrogen Impacts on Natura 2000 Sites in Wales (AAANIS).	Consultant – CEH	Report – Annex 44 Appendix 1 – Annex 45 Appendix 2 – Annex 46
10	Identification of Aquatic (highly water dependent) Features	N2K team and NRW staff	Report – Annex 47
11	LIFE Natura 2000 Programme for Wales: Approach to Prioritisation	N2K team	Report – Annex 48
Summary report	Evidence Gaps Relating to Natura 2000 in Wales	N2K team	Report – Annex 49

Timetable: This action was due to start on 1 September 2012; however, began in February 2013. All reports were received from contractors by September 2015.

Modifications to action: Earlier reports proposed three other evidence gap contracts, which have not been delivered. These were:

- a) Appraisal of non-financial constraints to delivering favourable condition of N2K features. This contract could not be delivered due to lack of staff resources to support the contract.

- b) Update condition assessment of features on sites for birds and marine features. This output is being undertaken by NRW officers outside the control of the LIFE N2K (and without LIFE N2K funding). Progress on the marine features is underway but will not be completed by the end of the project. However, this is not funded by the LIFE N2K Wales Programme.
- c) Multi-criteria Decision Analysis to produce Wales-wide prioritisation of N2K sites. The completed MCDA contract produced the information needed, so the contract was no longer required.

Evidence gaps (a) and (b) above will be highlighted in the After LIFE plan as important future requirements.

Problem and drawbacks: The specification and management of contracts to external contractors proved to be quite resource intensive in some cases. Some contractors performed very well, whereas others needed significant support.

Continuation of action: The Wales Biodiversity Partnership (WBP) has created an evidence gap register for Wales to facilitate help prioritise work and facilitate access to grant aid and researchers. The LIFE N2K Wales inventory of evidence gaps has been submitted to the WBP so that those which are not dealt with as part of the project can be included on the register.

5.1.9 Action A.11: Develop IT Tool

Outputs required under the Grant Agreement/LIFE Output Indicators:

Target as in Grant Agreement	Achievement	LIFE indicators	Evidence
IT tool	Delivered 1 IT tool	n/a	Table 8 Annexes 13 and 50 to 55
6 visits to test tool	Delivered, tool tested (No visits required)	n/a	
2 events to demonstrate tool, 10 attendees	Delivered, 2 events	2 training activities – 22 people trained	Table 8 Image Evidence Annex 3

Activities:

LIFE N2K Wales delivered a significant development of the NRW Actions Database to hold and manage the new data collected by the project and produce a range of reports and information to support the outputs of the project.

All phases have been completed, fully implemented and made available to all users in the live version of the database. The phases of development are described below:

Table 8. IT tool development phases and training

Work area	Purpose	Evidence
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Phase 1	Create a direct link between feature and issue/action.	Technical documentation: Development of the NRW Actions Database and its Reporting Capabilities (This includes screen shots of the database): Annex 50
Phase 2a	Enable ‘risks’ to be added as a separate item in database & issues and risks to be input at a site level.	
Phase 2b	Add new fields to hold extra data required by the Programme.	
Phase 3a	Create standard report for PIPs, including appended unit report, site prioritisation matrix and funding source information sheet. Available to all internal users via the Database and HTML. External users can gain access to PIPs on request, following the issue of a data licence.	PIPs: Annex 13
Phase 3b	Create report with statistics to inform the PAF.	Report to inform the PAF: Annex 51
Phase 3c	Create other standard queries and reports as required by users, i.e. Site Action Export (all actions for a site in Excel format) and All data export (allowing queries by feature, issue, mechanism, organisation etc.).	Compressed Site Report: Annex 52 All Data Export: Annex 53
Phase 4	Make PIPs available to external partners via ‘extranet’.	Not achieved.
6 visits to test tool		Testing complete. No visits required
2 events to demonstrate tool, 10 attendees	24 September 2015 webinar – 12 attendees 29 September 2015 webinar – 10 attendees	Image Evidence: Annex 3 SSP Actions Database user guide: Annex 54 Training video: Annex 55

The process for undertaking the IT tool development is outlined below:



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A user guide and instructional video have been created and a technical report for the future maintenance of the tools has also been produced by the contractor.

Two webinar training events were given on 24 and 29 September 2015 to train Conservation Officers on how to use the new functionality developed by the LIFE N2K Wales.

Associated data management and inputting

Alongside the work to develop the IT tool in terms of technical structure and functionality, LIFE N2K Wales validated and populated data held in the database. This included the following:

- Updating, validating and improving reference lists (drop down lists, reporting lists) held within Actions Database e.g. list of features and categories e.g. whether Habitats Directive Priority, Water dependent features.
- Inputting of specific datasets currently not available in the database, e.g. SAC monitoring condition assessments, climate change vulnerability assessments.
- Updating references to legacy organisations to 'NRW'.
- Develop and test data inputting procedure and guidance for PIP.

All data generated for the PIPs was input into the live version Actions Database by the LIFE N2K Wales team, since December 2014. This included creating links between N2K features and issues/actions, archiving out-of-date actions, updating existing actions and inputting new ones. This included inputting priorities and costings. The data was amended following data received e.g. from partners via consultation process.

Rather than recruit a temporary agency worker, LIFE N2KWales extended the contract of the Data Officer carrying out maternity cover. Underspend in other areas allowed the contract to be extended for an additional 5 months.

A range of bespoke queries have been derived from the Actions Database to provide data to enable the completion of the Thematic Action Plans and the PAF.

Given the scale and ongoing nature of the task it will be inevitable that additional inputting will be required in the future to address queries and new information.

Timetable: This action was due to start on 1 October 2012 but actually began on 21 November (when the Data Manager started work). It was due to be completed by the end of December 2013 but was completed at end September 2015.

Modifications to action: Rather than carrying out the work as a single contract (as described in the Grant Agreement), LIFE N2K Wales broke it into four phases. This was done to help managing some of the significant risks associated with the project and building in time to properly specify and consult on the each part of the development as it progressed, rather than upfront. The approach also allows an iterative, consultative approach to the development.

Originally, the data inputting was planned to be done by the Conservation Officers (as the maintenance of data in the Actions Database is their responsibility), however, it was later considered that they would not be able to complete the work within the specified timeline. A project underspend provided capacity to recruit a Data Officer as an alternative means of delivering the data inputting. This also helped ensure accuracy and consistency of inputting.

Problem and drawbacks: NRW plan to transfer the data and functionality of the Actions Database and the Extranet to an improved replacement system, however, this is not expected to be rolled out for a year or more. This issue will be logged in the After-LIFE plan.

Because of the inception of NRW is in the relatively early stages of the development, the work has been taking place within an environment of change and uncertainty. No comprehensive NRW IT strategy is currently in place to direct our choice of system or approach. The development also had to be agreed through a new corporate approval process, which had not been timetabled into the original plan and this delayed progress by several weeks.

Several options for the IT development were available. Significant time was invested in the scoping and decision-making process early in 2013 to determine which IT solution would be most appropriate. This delayed progress, however, this was felt to be a worthwhile investment as a hasty and inappropriate decision at this stage would have had long term negative ramifications.

The decision to opt for the corporate database was based on the desire to build on a system for the management of protected sites, which was already embedded in the core work of internal staff and partners. This integrated the work of the LIFE N2K Wales and helped assure its sustainability beyond the life of the project. However, modifying this existing system was more complex and time consuming than building a bespoke system specifically to meet the needs of LIFE N2K Wales. This delayed progress but we believe that overall this approach was the most worthwhile.

In this reporting period the established contractual arrangement (call-off framework) was terminated by NRW earlier than expected, due to procurement rule constraints. It was therefore necessary to set up a new contractual arrangement (separate open tender contracts).

This delayed progress and absorbed staff time, however, the new arrangements worked well and enabled access to the contractor until the end of the project.

Continuation of action: As described above the use of the NRW corporate system meant that the database structure and data within it would be maintained as part of normal corporate procedures beyond the life of this project. Should a new database or platform be adopted by NRW in the future, the LIFE N2K Wales data and developments will be transferred along with existing data.

5.1.10 Action F.3: After-LIFE Conservation Plan

Outputs required under the Grant Agreement/LIFE Output Indicators:

Target as in Grant Agreement	Achievement	LIFE indicators	Evidence
After-LIFE Conservation Plan	Delivered	n/a	Annex 56

The After-LIFE Plan has been produced which describes how the LIFE N2K Programme and PAF will be implemented by NRW and other partners.

During the Results Workshops attendees were given the opportunity to contribute to the After LIFE Plan via a questionnaire.

A workshop was held at the Wales Biodiversity Partnership Conference in September 2015 in partnership with Welsh Government to explore opportunities to develop applications to the LIFE fund (21 attendees).

A number of meetings have also been held regarding plans to implement the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme, specifically in relation to:

- The NRW Competitive Fund for partners which has a budget of £1.2 million over two years for projects to deliver actions on the N2K network.
- Using the outputs of the project to identify Water Framework Directive River Basin Management Plan Programme of Measures and NRW operational plans for N2K in Wales.

The After-LIFE Plan has been approved by the LIFE N2K Wales Programme Board (which includes representatives from the Welsh Government) and has been shared with the NRW Executive Team.

Timetable: This action was due to be started and finished within March 2015. In practice work began in July 2015 and was completed by February 2016.

Modifications to action: None.

Problem and drawbacks: It has taken time to identify and clarify the specific role of the After LIFE Plan given that the Natura 2000 Programme for Wales is in itself a forward plan of action. The After-LIFE Plan does not seek to be a summary of the Programme (that is the purpose of the PAF), rather it describes *how* the Programme will be delivered in the future. It is important

that readers understand this difference and read the PAF and After-LIFE Plan together, rather than in isolation.

5.2 Dissemination actions

Objectives

The objectives of the dissemination plans were to seek to raise awareness of the project amongst key audiences, namely partners, internal and external stakeholders. The key aim was to ensure that those stakeholders who are in a position to influence the various actions and outputs and the successful implementation of the LIFE N2K Programme are aware of the project and supportive of its aims. In particular, this applies to those responsible for delivering actions to addresses issues or risks on sites. It also includes decision-makers and those responsible for the allocation of funds.

LIFE N2K Wales also sought to communicate with a wider audience of those not directly involved with the project but with an interest in Natura 2000 in Wales, such as landowners, farmers, fishermen, conservationists and the interested public. The aim is to raise awareness and value of N2K in general, the need for management and restoration and the requirement for increased/better targeting of funds.

Dissemination: overview per activity

5.2.1 Action A.10: Prepare and implement Communication and Advocacy Strategy

Outputs required under the Grant Agreement/LIFE Output Indicators:

Target as in Grant Agreement	Achievement	LIFE indicators	Evidence
Produce communication and advocacy strategy	Delivered 1 strategy	n/a	Annex 60
2 inception events	Delivered 2 events	2 events in '25-75 participants local/regional' category	Table 9 Image Evidence: Annex 3
Materials for different audiences (info sheets etc.)	Delivered: 2 information sheets Social media output	2 other publications	Full info sheet: Annex 61 Short info sheet: Annex 62 https://www.facebook.com/LIFEN2K . www.twitter.com/LNatura2000
1 stock take seminar	Delivered 1 seminar	1 event in '0-25 participants local/regional' category	Table 9 Image Evidence: Annex 3
1 project closure meeting	Delivered 3 meetings delivered	1 event in '0-25 participants local/regional' category 2 events in '25-75 participants local/regional' category	Table 9 Image Evidence: Annex 3
14 stakeholder meetings	Delivered	These meetings have not been recorded in the LIFE indicators.	Annex 63. Stakeholder engagement log

Activities:

Communication and Advocacy Strategy

The Strategy was prepared, in consultation with CCW communication experts and Project Management Group. Approved and adopted by the Programme Board on 11 December 2012. The Strategy included a Stakeholder Analysis. Over 300 stakeholders identified and categorised. Incorporates a mailing/contact list which was updated on a regular basis.

Inception Events

The team planned and delivered two major Inception Events in early February 2013, one in Bangor (north Wales) and another in Merthyr Tydfil (south Wales) to ensure stakeholders from across the country were able to attend. In total 87 delegates from a variety of organisations attended. See Table 9 below. Feedback from the events was positive. The aim of the events was to introduce the project to stakeholders and encourage ongoing involvement in Programme development. Delegates were asked their views on key issues for the Programme through workshop sessions, feedback sheets and posters. The Inception Event report was submitted as Annex 3 in the Inception Report.

Materials for Different Audiences

Information Sheets: Information sheets were produced (as shown below), to provide information about the project to meet the needs of different stakeholders. They are available as electronic or printed versions, and produced in both Welsh and English.

- a) Project summary information sheet (9 sides). Submitted as Annex 8 of Inception Report and as Annex 61 of this report.
- b) Brief information sheet (2 sides). Submitted as Annex 9 of Inception Report and as Annex 62 of this report.

Social Media: The LIFE N2K Wales Facebook page was launched in September 2014 to facilitate communication with external stakeholders, circulate reports and newsletters and to promote the YouTube videos. To date the page has a total of 81 “likes” and has generated 4753 video views.

A Twitter account was launched in October 2015 to promote the films and reports, this has proved to be useful way of reaching interested stakeholders and organisations. To date the twitter account has 106 followers.

Posts to the Twitter page have been retweeted a total of 73 times. It is not possible to quantify how many users the posts have reached as Twitter does not have this functionality. However, some of the LIFE N2K Wales account followers have a strong Twitter presence with thousands of followers of their own (see below) which greatly increases the potential reach of LIFE N2K Wales tweets.

Table 8a. Significant twitter followers

Account	Followers
TeamforNature UK	54.3k
EU Regional Policy	51.1k
Wales Coast Path	14k
EU Environment	17.4k

EU Maritime & Fish	13.5k
Bat Conservation Trust	30.8k
British Butterflies	16.2k

The Facebook and Twitter pages have been, and will continue to be maintained following the end of the project, particularly on days which promote Natura 2000 and habitats. Such as “Natura 2000 day” or “World Wetlands day”.

Internally, the project has had articles placed on the NRW intranet, and is also able to communicate via the LIFE N2K Yammer page (the internal social-network style communication tool).

Stock Take Seminar

The Stock Take seminar was delivered on 23 June 2014, and was attended by 13 individuals. The seminar was carried out in association with the Outcome 21 group, a group under the umbrella of the Wales Biodiversity Partnership, responsible for matters relating to protected sites. The group includes many of the key stakeholders and additional attendees were invited. The event focused on updating attendees on progress, and seeking feedback and input on the PIPs and the engagement process.

Project closure meetings

Rather than a single final project closure meeting, a series of three Results Workshops were held in July and August 2015 and were attended by external stakeholders. See Table 9 below. The aim was to enable a greater level of stakeholder engagement and feedback than would be possible at a single closure meeting. At the all-day workshops the LIFE N2K team presented the outcomes of the project, and there was the opportunity to discuss prioritisation, the content of the Thematic Action Plans and Cross-cutting Plans and contribute to the After-LIFE plan.

Programme of stakeholder meetings

The project team attended and/or give presentations at various internal and external meetings, conferences and events throughout the project to communicate the purpose and progress of the LIFE N2K Programme and seek engagement and feedback, provide updates on progress, answer queries and receive information. In total 61 meetings or sets of meeting were attended with a total of around 830 attendees. These are itemised in the Stakeholder Engagement Log.

Other aspects of the Strategy were delivered as part of individual Actions and will be reported as part of those Actions.

Table 9. Action A.10 events

Event	Location	Date	Attendees
Inception event	Countryside Council for Wales for Wales office Maes Y Ffynnon, Bangor	6 February 2013	43
Inception event	Garwnant Visitor Centre, Forestry Commission Wales, Merthyr Tydfil	8 February 2013	44
Stock-take seminar	Aberystwyth	23 June 2014	13
Project closure meeting (Welsh Government only)	Cardiff	27 July 2015	14
Project closure meeting	Bangor	19 August 2015	34
Project closure meeting	Merthyr Tydfil	25 August 2015	36
Total			184

Timetable: The action began on 1 September 2012 in line with the agreed timetable.

- Strategy and stakeholder analysis: Completed on time by 30 November 2012.
- Liaison meetings: Ongoing – no specified timetable.
- Inception Events: Delivered in the first week of February 2013, one week behind schedule.
- Information Sheets: No timetable was specified but this was finalised by 5 February 2013.
- Stocktake seminar: Delivered in June 2014, two months behind original schedule.
- Closure meeting: Delivered in July and August 2015.
- Facebook page: Set up in September 2014 – no specified timetable.
- Twitter account: Set up in October 2015 – no specified timetable.

Modifications to action: See above.

Problem and drawbacks: The number of stakeholder organisations and the lack of up-to-date contact details meant that the preparation of the stakeholder analysis took longer than planned. The delivery of two major, relatively high-profile launch events was a significant undertaking, especially as the team had only recently started in post, which resulted in other actions being delayed.

Complementary activities: A summary of the project was presented to the NRW Environment Sub-Group, Protected Area Committee and NRW Board.

5.2.2 Action E.1: Prepare Public Awareness and Dissemination Strategy

Outputs required under the Grant Agreement/LIFE Output Indicators:

Target as in Grant Agreement	Achievement	LIFE indicators	Evidence
Public awareness and dissemination strategy	Delivered 1 strategy	n/a	Annex 60

Activities:

The Public Awareness and Dissemination Strategy was prepared by the Programme Manager in consultation with CCW communication experts and the Project Management Group. It was approved by the Programme Board on 19 September 2012.

The Strategy sets the framework for the delivery of all the project dissemination outputs e.g. web pages, leaflet. A Gantt chart showing timelines was prepared as part of the strategy. Implementation plans were also produced for each output required under the Public Awareness and Dissemination Strategy.

The detail and outputs of the Strategy are reported under the relevant individual Actions E.2 to E.5 i.e. sections 5.2.3 to 5.3.6 below.

Timetable: This action began on time on 1 September 2012, and the Strategy was delivered on time by 30 September 2012.

Modifications to action: None.

Problem and drawbacks: Because of commitments relating to the creation of NRW, the level of input from corporate communications staff was less than planned and corporate communications management and procedures changed. This created extra work for the LIFE N2K Wales team and slowed progress delivering output for a time.

Complementary action: The LIFE Anglesey and Llyn Fens project (also led by NRW) hosted their final conference which was well attended and raised awareness of management of Natura 2000 sites in North Wales.

5.2.3 Action E.2: Create and maintain project web pages

Outputs required under the Grant Agreement/LIFE Output Indicators:

Target as in Grant Agreement	Achievement	LIFE indicators	Evidence
Create website	Delivered: 5 pages	1428: average number of visitors per month	www.naturalresources.wales/LIFEN2K
Update website (5 occasions)	Delivered 10 updates	n/a	
Complete 20 YouTube videos	Delivered 22 videos	Film produced: 22	Table 10 http://www.naturalresources.wales/about-us/our-projects/life-n2k-wales/life-n2k-films/

Activities:

Web pages

LIFE N2K Wales bilingual web pages were established at the start of the project and have updated regularly throughout the project. The web pages give the following:

- Introduction to the project
- Latest news
- Project reports and publications
- Natura 2000 films
- Frequently asked questions
- Links to the European Commission LIFE website and to other LIFE projects.

Newsletters and technical reports were posted as soon as they were completed.

Initially four pages were made available on the CCW web site. It was felt that pages within the corporate website would be more appropriate than a stand-alone website for the LIFE N2K Wales project because that would better reflect the integrated nature of the project (i.e. building on existing work and working closely with other initiatives and partners). There is also a great deal of material already published on the corporate site, such as Natura 2000 management plans and official maps and documents, which is relevant to the project and should be easily accessible.

Following the inception of NRW a new website was launched replacing the CCW site, so it was necessary to transfer information to a new set of pages with new branding. This provided a better profile to the LIFE N2K Wales pages.

The NRW website was relaunched on a new platform in April 2015, which allowed LIFE N2K Wales team members to control and administer content directly and in turn enabled speedier and more regular updates. The LIFE N2K Wales (LIFE Natura 2000 Programme) now has five pages.

YouTube Videos

The tendering process to obtain a contractor to prepare and produce the YouTube videos commenced in early 2015 and Ibex Films were chosen as the successful contractor in March 2015.

22 YouTube videos have been completed. There are 11 unique videos; but in each case there is a Welsh and English version. The videos are available on line from the NRW LIFE N2K web pages (www.naturalresources.wales/LIFEN2K), on the LIFE N2K Facebook page (www.facebook.com/LIFEN2K) and on the NRW YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/user/NatResWales>). They have been extensively promoted on social media.

Latest statistics are as follows:

YouTube video views: 1,449

Facebook video views: 4,753

The process involved the following

- Scoping workshop
- Drawing up of project plan and identification of themes for each video
- Competitive selection of contractors and letting of contract
- Preparation of fact sheets for each subject area
- Agreement of script
- Feedback on each video
- Posting videos on LIFE N2K Wales web pages
- Promotion of videos via social media.

The following videos have been produced:

Table 10: Natura 2000 in Wales videos

Ancient Woodlands	Beautiful Rivers and Lakes	Dynamic Dunes
Fascinating Wetlands	Rocky Coastlines	Spectacular Uplands
Vibrant Seas	Special Estuaries	Focus on Bats
Focus on Great Crested Newts	Focus on Marsh Fritillary	

Timetable: The web pages were timetabled for delivery by 31 December 2012. They were delivered by 31 January 2013. NRW pages were available by 4 October 2013.

Modifications to action: None.

Problem and drawbacks: Early feedback from the LIFE unit indicated that the pages were satisfactory but were not sufficiently well linked/easy to find from the CCW home page. A link to the LIFE pages was also absent. The launch and development of the new NRW website in spring/summer of 2013, created a hiatus when it was not possible for LIFE N2K Wales to make the recommended changes or update pages. However, by October 2013 this issue was resolved, and a new set of pages was launched along with a more direct link from the home page.

Complementary action: A major web-based N2K resource is maintained online by colleagues in NRW including official maps and documents and management plans/management schemes for all sites. Please see the NRW web site at <http://www.naturalresources.wales/conservation-biodiversity-and-wildlife/find-protected-areas-of-land-and-seas/designated-sites-search/?lang=en>

Continuation of action: Material created by LIFE N2K Wales will continue to be hosted by the NRW website beyond the life of the project.

5.2.4 Action E.3: Bulletins and briefings

Outputs required under the Grant Agreement/LIFE Output Indicators:

Target as in Grant Agreement	Achievement	LIFE indicators	Evidence
Project leaflet	Delivered, 1 leaflet (2 versions)	1 leaflet, 400 copies of original, 1000 copies of revised. 2 languages	Table 11 Annex 64 and 65
List of Frequently Asked Questions	Delivered, 1 FAQ list	1 other publication (FAQ list) 200 copies, 2 languages	Table 11 Annex 66
Standard PowerPoint presentations	Delivered, 1 standard template	n/a	Table 11 Annex 67
Newsletter (6 editions)	Delivered 6 editions	Other publications (newsletters): 6. 100 copies each, 2 languages	Table 11 Annex 68 to 73
Layman's report (1 electronic, 500 hard copies)	Delivered 1 report	1 layman's report; 500 copies, 2 languages	Table 11 Annex 74

Activities:

The communication materials listed below have been completed. They provide information about the project in a range of formats to meet the needs of different stakeholders. They are available as electronic or printed versions, and a produced in both Welsh and English. The leaflet and information sheets have been well used, being made available at the Inception Events and other meetings with stakeholders.

In particular there have been a series of six newsletters. Each newsletter is emailed directly to our list of c.520 internal and external stakeholders, published on our website and also circulated on the project's Facebook page. The newsletters were also displayed in the offices and circulated at workshops and events.

The layman's report (Summary report) was written, designed and printed. Copies have been circulated to partners and an electronic copy is available on the LIFE N2K web pages.

Table 11. Action E.3 Outputs

Output	Notes	Evidence
Project leaflet x 2	Two versions produced due to change of Coordinating Beneficiary. Copies printed commercially to ensure high quality. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial leaflet – printed and electronic version (available from the LIFE N2K Wales web pages). Leaflet was designed in-house at no cost to the project. 400 copies were printed commercially. 	Initial leaflet: Annex 64 Revised leaflet: Annex 65

	<p>The leaflet was submitted in Annex 6 of the Inception Report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised leaflet – All copies of the first leaflet were used and a reprint was required. Details were changed following the inception of NRW (e.g. website address, contact details, logos and names). In-house design was not available due to other priorities, so the leaflet was redesigned and 1000 copies were printed externally. 	
List of Frequently Asked Questions	Published on web pages and as printed copy. Used at events and is available on the web pages.	Annex 66
Standard PowerPoint presentation	Standard format and introductory text has been prepared. Submitted as Annex 10 of Inception Report and as Annex 13 of this report.	Annex 67
Newsletter 1	Completed and circulated by email to all on the stakeholder contact list (approx. 500). Also published on webpages. 100 hard copies printed for circulation in offices and events.	Annex 68
Newsletter 2	Completed and circulated by email on 10 October 2013. Also published on webpages. 100 hard copies printed for circulation in offices and events.	Annex 69
Newsletter 3	Completed and circulated by email and social media on 17 June 2014. Also published on webpages. 100 hard copies were printed for circulation in offices and events.	Annex 70
Newsletter 4	Completed and circulated by email & social media on 2 December 2014. Also published on webpages. 100 hard copies printed for circulation in offices and events.	Annex 71
Newsletter 5	Completed and circulated by email & social media on 7 August 2015. Also published on webpages. 100 hard copies printed for circulation in offices and events.	Annex 72
Newsletter 6	Completed and circulated by email & social media on 26 January 2016. Also published on webpages. 100 hard copies printed for circulation in offices and events.	Annex 73
Summary report (Layman's report)	Published on webpages and circulated by social media on the 22 October 2015. 500 copies professionally printed.	Annex 74

Timetable:

- The leaflet and FAQ sheet were due by the end of November 2012; they were delivered by the end of January 2013.
- Newsletter 1 was due by 28 February 2012 and was delivered by 21 May 2012.
- Newsletter 2 was due on 30 September 2013 and was delivered 10 October 2013.
- Newsletter 3 was due on 31 December 2013 and was delivered 17 June 2014.
- Newsletter 4 was due on 30 May 2014 and was delivered 2 December 2014.
- Newsletter 5 was due on 30 November 2014 and was delivered 7 August 2015

- Newsletter 6 was delivered on 26 January 2016 (not timetabled).
- The Layman’s report (Summary report) was due on 31 December 2014 and was delivered 26 October 2016.

Modifications to action: The Grant Agreement included no costs for leaflet production, as the intention was that it would be designed in-house and printed using office printers. In fact, costs have been incurred for two professional print-runs – to save time and to produce a better quality product. The use of an external company to redesign the leaflet was also a modification. There was a requirement to update details following the creation of NRW and the in-house design facility was no longer available.

Problem and drawbacks: The transition from CCW to NRW meant that some documents such as the project leaflet has to be republished to account for changes to logos, contact details, web addresses etc. All documents needed changes to logos and acknowledgements. Having to make changes to communication materials due to the inception NRW has created unplanned additional work for LIFE N2K Wales. Inability to access internal design support and the introduction of new approval procedures for communication materials delayed progress.

5.2.5 Action E.4: Press and media

Outputs required under the Grant Agreement/LIFE Output Indicators:

Target as in Grant Agreement	Achievement	LIFE indicators	Evidence
Publicity launch	Delivered as email launch	n/a	Table 12 Annex 75
3 feature articles	Delivered, 3 feature articles	3 specialised press articles	Table 12 Annex 76 to 78
2 media releases (one to be replaced by 6 mini-articles)	Delivered: 1 media release 6 mini-articles	1 press release 6 specialised press articles	Table 12 Annex 79
Attendance at media events (4 trips)	Attended 7 events	Exhibitions etc. attended – 7	Table 12

Activities:

Publicity launch

The project was launched to around 350 external stakeholders and all CCW staff via email, informing them about the aims and objectives of the project and inviting them to the Inception Events. All emails were bilingual. The launch can be considered a success as no negative publicity was generated and there was a good response to the invitation to the inception event, indicating that the material was well received. Invitation emails were submitted in Annex 12 of the Inception Report.

Articles and media releases

LIFE N2K Wales has published a series of articles in various magazines, newsletters and journals, for example, in Farming Wales, the National Farming Union's monthly magazine (Farming Wales) and Natur Cymru magazine.

Other publicity activities

LIFE N2K Wales hosted an event at the Royal Welsh Show on 21 July 2014 at the NRW stand. The Royal Welsh Show had 237,694 attendees over the three days, therefore this represented an excellent opportunity to publicise the Natura 2000 and work of the project to the public, the farming community senior decision-makers (e.g. politicians, senior Welsh Government staff, NRW Board members etc.). Following the First Minister's introduction, the Programme Manager gave a presentation, accompanied by an audio/visual of slides from Natura 2000 sites. Team members were present throughout the day to answer questions, the noticeboard was on show, and project leaflet and newsletters were available to the public.

The press and media outputs are itemised below:

Table 12. Action E.4 outputs

Requirement	Output	Evidence
Publicity launch	Email to 350 stakeholders	Annex 75
Feature article 1	Feature article in Natur Cymru magazine, September 2013	Annex 76 Circulation: 3000
Feature article 2	Feature article in Farming Wales: National Farming Union's monthly magazine in September 2014	Annex 77 Circulation: 50,000 NFU members
Feature article 3	Feature article in Natur Cymru magazine, November 2015	Annex 78 Circulation: 3000
Press release	Issued October 2015	Annex 79
Mini-article 1	Article in Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs Biodiversity News	Annex 80 Circulation: 1505
Mini-article 2	Article in Water Framework Directive Newsletter to external partners	Annex 81 Circulation: c. 600
Mini-article 3	Article in Cyfoeth, NRW newsletter to external partners	Annex 82 Circulation: 550
Mini-article 4	Article in Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs Biodiversity News	Annex 83 Circulation: 1505
Mini-article 5	Joint Nature Conservation Committee web article	Annex 84
Mini-article 6	Article in Welsh Government Natural Resources Monthly Bulletin	Annex 85
Attendance at media events	Presentation and stall at Wales Biodiversity Partnership Conference 18-19 September 2013	Image evidence: Annex 3

Attendance at media events	Welsh Government Assembly Members NRW briefing 1st Oct 2013– display board	Image evidence: Annex 3
Attendance at media events	Celebration of Natura 2000 day by NRW staff “waving their butterfly wings”. This was publicised on the NRW intranet page and via the project Facebook page	Image evidence: Annex 3
Attendance at media events	Presence at Royal Welsh Show including presentation, July 2014	Image evidence: Annex 3
Attendance at media events	Stall at Wales Biodiversity Conference 2014	Image evidence: Annex 3
Attendance at media events	Presentation and stall at Wales Biodiversity Conference, September 2015	Image evidence: Annex 3
Attendance at media events	NRW video film showing, and social media exposure for videos, September 2015	Image evidence: Annex 3

Timetable: The project launch was due on 30 November 2012 and was completed by mid-January 2013, six weeks behind schedule for the reasons described above.

- Article 1 was due to be published by the end of March 2013 it was published in October 2013. Article 2 was due to be published by 31 March 2014, and was published in September 2014.
- Article 3 was due to be published by 31 December 2014 and was published in November 2015.
- Press release – published October 2015.
- Mini article 1 – published July 2103.
- Mini article 2 – published January 2016.
- Mini article 3 – published November 2015.
- Mini article 4 – published November 2015.
- Mini article 5 – published January 2016.
- Mini article 6 – published February 2016.

Modifications to action: The LIFE agreement states that the launch would be by press release. However, this was modified to an email launch following adverse press publicity in previous months related to proposed marine conservation zones. Around 400 emails were sent to key individuals in stakeholder organisations, and in some cases made a verbal approach was also made in advance. This process took much longer than a press release but avoided misunderstandings about the project and there was no negative publicity.

In the letter from LIFE dated 16 December 2014, it was agreed to replace one media release with a series of 6 mini-articles.

Problem and drawbacks: Publicity for launch event as described in ‘Modifications to action’ above.

It has also been difficult to produce publicity material during Phase 2 of the project since work has focussed on creating baseline information and the project has not yet reached a stage where the results are ready to be freely disseminated. Any delays to dissemination outputs should be recovered in the later Phases of the project when the focus will be on collating findings to share with partners and a wider audience.

5.2.6 Action E.5: Notice board

Outputs required under the Grant Agreement/LIFE Output Indicators:

Target as in Grant Agreement	Achievement	LIFE indicators	Evidence
1 notice board	Delivered 3 boards/banners placed in main NRW offices which are open to the public	3 project notice boards	Image evidence: Annex 3

Activities: Three professionally designed and produced notice boards were produced and placed in the main NRW offices in Bangor, Aberystwyth and Cardiff (Ty Cambria) during the project.

The notice boards were in the form of pull-up banners. They were produced bilingually in Welsh and English. All offices are open to the public. All notice boards were accompanied by leaflet dispensers to supply LIFE N2K Wales leaflets and newsletters. All notice boards were branded with the LIFE and N2K logos. The banners were used extensively at events, workshops and conferences.

In the first year of the project an interim board was produced by the LIFE N2K Wales team for display in the CCW HQ offices in Maes y Ffynnon Bangor. The professionally designed boards were produced following the formation of NRW, when updated logos and graphics were available.

Timetable: This action was due to start by 1 January 2013 and be completed by 31 January 2013. It was completed by 9 May 2013. The revised notice boards for the new organisation, Natural Resources Wales, were delivered in early January 2014.

Modifications to action: The Grant Agreement specified that only one notice board was required. However, following the inception of NRW, it was felt that it was necessary to ensure visibility in the three main NRW offices across Wales. The additional cost was minimal.

Problem and drawbacks: The initial notice board was created by the LIFE N2K Wales team, because corporate support was not available due the imminent inception of NRW. Following the formation of NRW it was necessary to rebrand the notice board, and the opportunity was taken to upgrade the quality of the product using a commercial designer. This has resulted in an over spend on the original budget but has produced a superior product which has resulted in positive feedback.

5.2.7 Action F.2: Networking and information exchange

Outputs required under the Grant Agreement/LIFE Output Indicators:

Target as in Grant Agreement	Achievement	LIFE indicators	Evidence
3 networking meetings and trips	Delivered	n/a	Annex 63. Stakeholder engagement log

Activities:

Throughout the project LIFE N2K Wales team members have attended and contributed to events, workshops and conferences, such as workshops, meetings or conferences for the purposes of networking and information gathering and sharing with others carrying out similar work. In some cases, team members have given presentations to disseminate lessons learnt during the LIFE N2K Wales project.

A full record of events attended is shown in the Stakeholder Engagement Log.

In particular, key events included attendance at LIFE information and platform events as shown below:

- LIFE Coordination Meeting in Brussels on 3 October 2012 on “New projects for management planning of Natura 2000 and PAFs”
- LIFE Kick-off meeting in London 2012
- LIFE Climate Change Platform Meeting in Norwich
- LIFE PAF platform meeting in Brussels on 5 November 2013
- LIFE PAF platform meeting in Brussels in March 2015
- LIFE Proposal Writing Workshop Day in London

Efforts were made to liaise closely with IPENS, the sister project in England:

- IPENS (N2K Programme for England) launch event
- Various IPENS workshops and team meetings and liaison meetings
- IPENS final conference in May 2015

LIFE N2K Wales also sought to keep in touch with other European funded projects in Wales:

- NRW’s EU day 9 May 2013
- Welsh LIFE Information Day in Cardiff
- Anglesey and Llyn Fens LIFE project 9-10 October 2013 – display board
- Fish Map Môn European Fisheries Fund Project 10 December 2013

Wherever possible, the LIFE N2K Wales banner was used and leaflets and other material made available.

NB. These do not include any events where the primary purpose was to liaise with Welsh stakeholders to achieve the specific aims of the project (these are reported under Action A.10).

Timetable: There are no deadlines for this action.

Modifications to action: None.

Problem and drawbacks: Greater liaison with overseas N2K Programme/PAF projects would have been desirable, and opportunities were available but time limitations meant that this was not possible.

5.3 Evaluation of project implementation

Methodology

The creation of a costed and prioritised programme for the management and restoration of Natura 2000 was an innovative initiative, therefore there was no established model or methodology available to follow. The method and approach has therefore been developed by the LIFE N2K Wales progressively throughout the project.

The initial technical phase concentrated on the creation, collation and assessment of baseline information to inform the later action planning stages of the Programme. In most cases a dual methodology was adopted to collating information. Firstly quantitative data was sourced and analysed from corporate datasets and elsewhere (such as Habitats Directive Article 17 reporting). The NRW Actions Database was a key (extensive and detailed) data source which was relied upon heavily for Action A2 and A3.

Secondly, qualitative data from stakeholders via workshops was sourced and analysed. The stakeholder workshops also generated a great number of contributions, which reflected the high degree of expertise of many participants, positive level of engagement and, in some subject areas, notable enthusiasm. This material gave a broader perspective, helped to verify the quantitative data and identify any neglected issues. The two approaches supported one another effectively to provide a robust analysis.

However, the methodology also brought a number of challenges. Both the database and stakeholder data proved to be more extensive and complex than originally envisaged and bringing the two contrasting data types together to produce a single output was also difficult. Issues connected to the data such as variable quality, need for reworking, and different formats created significant challenges for the LIFE N2K Wales to collate, analyse and distil key messages in a form which can easily be digested by stakeholders. Organising and running the workshops was also labour intensive. Analysis at a coarser level of detail may have been more cost-effective and given similar headline results.

LIFE N2K Wales sought to consider Natura 2000 sites and features in Wales as a single coherent series or network, so a key part of the methodology has been to deal with all sites in the same way. However, it has been standard practice for marine SACs, terrestrial SACs and SPAs to be managed separately, so data format and quality and management approach tended to differ. Rationalising these differences to create a common output has involved a significant investment of time and effort by the project, including consultation with relevant internal staff.

LIFE N2K Wales has sought to integrate the work of the project and its outputs (particularly the IT tool) into existing corporate systems and procedures and the day-job of colleagues, rather than produce stand-alone outputs. The aim is to ensure that the work will have longevity beyond the life of the project and improvements will be absorbed into the workings of the organisation and partners, rather than becoming forgotten with time. However, this approach is more time consuming as it requires a high level of consultation and involvement from relevant colleagues. It has also involved the decision to utilise and redevelop an existing IT system (corporate database) built with different aims, which is more complex and involved than setting up a new bespoke system.

LIFE N2K Wales took the decision to produce site action plans (Prioritised Improvement Plans) for all sites which address actions at a quite detailed management unit level, rather than just at a site level. This was due primarily to ensure integration with existing systems, however it was also more useful and accessible for practitioners and allowed costings to be calculated on a

realistic basis. However, it resulted in a heavy workload and was more time consuming than a coarser-scale site level or generic approach, and involved the subsequent need to collate data and analysis a mass of detailed data to produce the final all-Wales results.

LIFE N2K Wales sourced strategic actions for Thematic Action Plans, using groups of sector specialists in a workshop format to share their knowledge of required actions. This proved a successful approach, albeit time consuming. The process could have been improved by the inclusion of specialists from the third sector, users, farming and industry. Although significant levels of consultation were carried out on the results, additional time to broaden consultation to less-engaged partners would have been desirable.

The LIFE N2K Wales' methodology included the prioritisation of actions at both site level and all Wales level as a core objective. Prioritisation was carried out within a structured framework (e.g. using criteria and matrices) to provide a robust, auditable methodology, aid objective decision-making and promote consistency. For the Wales level prioritisation, published datasets were used as the source data. Criteria for prioritisation were based on conservation needs and legal drivers only (to establish areas of greatest need), rather than on practical or pragmatic factors such as 'easy-wins', available funding sources, existing work streams or political factors. Limiting criteria in this way, made the prioritisation process manageable and achievable and meant that the logic was transparent and relatively easy to understand. The criteria will also be stable over time, so the process could also be repeated to update priorities in future years.

The development of the prioritisation approach and structure was time consuming and the process required considerable time in terms of discussion and consultation, especially as the act of prioritisation can be contentious. LIFE N2K Wales developed tools to aid decision-making for prioritisation, rather than issuing definitive lists of priorities and this approach was key to gaining acceptance.

Comparison of results against objectives

The results against objectives are shown in Section 5 under the headings Outputs required under the Grant Agreement/LIFE Output Indicators.

All outputs as described in the Grant Agreement have been achieved, except in minor instances as described in Section 5, where minor modifications have been made or the action was no longer relevant/appropriate. As well as individual outputs, the wider objectives of the project have been met, for example, producing an overarching programme for the management and restoration of Natura 2000 in Wales; obtaining a high level of sign-up from relevant stakeholders and establishing conservation priorities.

All project outputs are available and visible, however, longer term overarching aims and outcomes (i.e. significant progress of Natura 2000 features towards favourable condition) will not be realised for some years.

Project amendments

There have been no major modifications to the outputs of the project other than the relatively minor variations described in Section 5.

The change of the coordinating beneficiary from CCW to NRW at a relatively early and crucial stage of the project resulted in a change to the corporate working environment and had an impact on the project. However, the merger of the three environmental bodies (CCW, Environment Agency Wales and Forestry Commission Wales) to form NRW opened up many opportunities for integrated working with the water resources and forestry sectors and helped

coordinated delivery with other compatible European initiatives (most notably the Water Framework Directive). It did, however, also result in some unplanned challenges for the project. For example, change of senior management, introduction of new corporate procedures and systems and reduced corporate support for communication and other activities because of other priority work streams. There has been a need to invest additional time and effort by the LIFE N2K Wales team in a number of areas to ensure the agreed outputs were delivered and this resulted (in part) in the modification to extend the project until 30 September 2015.

The extension was essential to the project and allowed outputs to be completed fully and with full consultation. No additional budget was required.

Effectiveness of dissemination

Judging by the number of stakeholders attending LIFE N2K Wales events and receiving newsletters (around 500) the dissemination activities have been effective. However, because of the largely administrative nature of the project, (with no practical outputs in the field) there has been limited interest for the general public and therefore, a restricted scope for press releases to the mainstream media (the focus has been on the specialist media). The majority of the media and dissemination work was carried out in the latter stages of the project when key messages emerged.

5.4 Analysis of long-term benefits

1. Environmental benefits

a. Direct and indirect quantitative environmental benefits:

As LIFE N2K Wales was a project aimed at strategic planning for Natura 2000, no immediate impact on the status of targeted species and habitats was expected by the end of the project. However, the Natura 2000 Programme for Wales/PAF will deliver significant improvements to the condition of Natura 2000 features on sites in Wales where they are currently in unfavourable condition (and the maintenance of the condition of features if they are in favourable condition) in the future as actions are delivered over the years to 2020 (and beyond).

The Programme will facilitate better and more focused delivery of actions, with the most urgent and high priority actions being addressed first. The ability to identify and package costed actions will make applications to funding sources easier. Additional actions which previously were not considered have also been logged. Together this will stimulate an increased level of activity to address unresolved pressures and threats to the Natura 2000 species and habitats in Wales and increase the rate of progress towards favourable condition.

LIFE N2K has also stimulated progress with regard to integration across different sectors and legislative frameworks with Wales, and exploring common approaches, most notably with the Water Framework Directive.

Detail of how the Programme actions will be delivered in Wales is laid out in the After-LIFE Conservation Plan. Progress towards addressing pressures and threats and completion of identified actions can be monitored using the NRW Actions Database. Condition of features is monitored as part of NRW's Common Standards Monitoring programme.

LIFE N2K Wales outputs will help meet other obligations of the Habitats Directive directly - in particular, the completion of the updated Wales chapters of the UK's PAF (Member States are required to submit a PAF under Article 8) and the action plans (alongside existing Core Management Plans) will help meet the requirements to establish necessary conservation measures corresponding to ecological requirements as required by Article 6.

b. Relevance for environmentally significant issues or policy areas

The Natura 2000 Programme is key to delivering the objectives of the Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (Habitats Directive) and Directive 2009/147/EC (previously directive 79/409/EEC) on the conservation of wild birds (Birds Directive).

The Programme supports the Nature Recovery Plan for Wales, which is the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Wales. The Nature Recovery Plan 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.

2. Long-term benefits and sustainability

a. Long-term / qualitative environmental benefits

Detail of how the Programme actions will be delivered in Wales is laid out in the After LIFE Conservation Plan.

LIFE N2K Wales has identified costs of managing and restoring Natura 2000 and potential funding sources, for individual sites, and features and across the network. Potential and actual sources of funding to deliver actions, and gaps in funding provision have also been identified, with the aim of increasing the level of financing received by Natura 2000 in Wales. If successful, this will bring increased investment to areas with Natura 2000 sites, some of which are in deprived areas. Lack of funding is a key barrier to delivering management and restoration of Natura 2000, therefore, realising increased levels of funding would improve the outlook of features.

b. Long-term / qualitative economic benefits

Implementation of a greater number of actions to address pressures and threats to Natura 2000 has the potential to stimulate local economic growth through the employment of contractors and providing opportunities for local business to exploit, e.g. marketing of produce from Natura 2000 sites. Management and restoration of Natura 2000 sites will also help to maintain the high quality environment on which much of the Welsh recreation and tourism industry is dependent.

The main cost savings and other economic benefits will largely derive from the integration and harmonisation of aims and objectives of publicly funded initiatives from different sectors, so that they are compatible with the needs of Natura 2000 and produce multiple socio-economic benefits.

c. Long-term / qualitative social benefits

Improved conservation management of Natura 2000 is often consistent with traditional farming practices and smaller-scale family farming systems. Therefore, measures to manage and restore Natura 2000 can provide financial and practical support and improve the sustainability of such farms and related rural communities.

Many Natura 2000 sites in Wales are heavily used for outdoor exercise, relaxation and enjoyment by residents and visitors which have significant health benefits. Public sector site managers generally take a positive approach to visitor management, enabling and where appropriate promoting, public access and a positive visitor experience, whilst addressing any adverse effects on features. Many sites within the private sector have access to Natura 2000 sites via Public Rights of Way and Open Access land.

Natura 2000 sites are also commonly used as education and training resources for school and higher education establishment and training schemes.

The ecosystem services provided by Natura 2000 sites and features can have positive impacts upon human health and wellbeing. For example, amelioration of water and air borne pollution, flood and erosion protection, drinking water provision and carbon sequestration.

d. Continuation of the project actions by the beneficiary or by other stakeholder

An objective of the project is to embed the prioritised programmatic approach to the management of Welsh Natura 2000 into the working practices of relevant stakeholders. As described previously technical developments and procedures have been designed to be compatible with existing corporate systems, and these can be adopted by existing staff as part of their long-term responsibilities.

The IT tool was developed specifically to allow Action Plans to be produced automatically from the database. This means that they can be re-run with updated data whenever needed without the need for additional work.

Work is underway to transfer relevant priority actions identified in the Programme into the operational plans of NRW to ensure continuation of delivery. The actions are being or will be integrated into other strategic plans, for example the River Basin Management Plans for Wales and Area Statements.

Specifically the Special Sites Programme (SSP), which coordinates the delivery of actions to achieve favourable condition on all protected sites in Wales, continues to operate as part of the permanent work of NRW. Targets are set each year for each Operational region for the delivery of actions identified in the Actions Database and these are reported upon on a regular basis. The SSP also liaises with all of the major external partners responsible for actions in relation to progress achieving actions.

The rolling programme to reviewing and updating Core Management Plans for all Natura 2000 sites is ongoing, the PIPs will help inform this process.

3. Replicability, demonstration, transferability, cooperation

The Programme approach taken by LIFE N2K Wales can be replicated in any other region or Member State within the EU to assist with the creation or revision of the PAFs and to

aid the prioritised delivery and funding of management and restoration actions on Natura 2000 sites.

4. Best practice lessons

LIFE N2K Wales built upon best practice already in place within NRW.

Best practice lessons learned as part of LIFE N2K Wales can be summarised as follows:

- Use a dedicated relational database to support the Programme, which is (or could be) integral to work practice.
- Produce site plans which can be updated automatically from the database so that the content can be refreshed as needed (so that the plans do not become out of date).
- Prioritise using a structured and criteria led approach. Prioritise in a way which is achievable, understandable, repeatable and not overly complex.
- Develop prioritisation tools rather than definitive rules.
- Develop a range of prioritisation tools (rather than just one) to meet the needs of those working at different scales (e.g. site level, national level) and on different subjects (e.g. features, pressures/threats, mechanisms, geographic regions).
- Where possible identify actions at a level of detail which will allow practitioners to ‘pick them up and use them’ without having to undertake extensive further planning and investigation.
- Aim for SMART actions.
- Work with Conservation Officers (or equivalent) with a professional knowledge of the sites in question to deliver site plans. A personal one-to-one approach from the project coordinator was used to source good quality data on time.
- Identification of funding barriers and opportunities is a core element of the work. Engage with internal and external stakeholders as much as possible throughout the whole process.
- Integrate with similar and related planning programmes (e.g. River Basin Management Planning) and strategies as much as possible. Align timetables and outputs if possible.
- Plan continuation and After-LIFE actions from an early stage in the project.
- Engaging with the existing or emerging legislative and policy context. Ecosystem services and other socio-economic benefits of Natura 2000 sites and features should be included as a core element of the project – e.g. researching or highlighting these services.

5. Innovation and demonstration value

LIFE N2K Wales was one of the first tranche of N2K Programmes/PAF related projects in Europe and as such can act as a demonstration.

The project will help address the lack of coordination and coherence in the use and uptake of EU co-funding at the national level as identified in the Assessment of the Natura 2000 Co-Financing Arrangements of the EU financing Instrument report.

6. Long term indicators of the project success

Indicators of success include the following:

- Status of Natura 2000 features on sites as determined by Common Standards Monitoring carried out by NRW on a 6 yearly cycle.
- Number of actions to address issues completed year on year, as determined by NRW Actions Database.
- Level of funds committed.

6. Comments on the financial report

LIFE Natura 2000 Programme for Wales

Contract number : LIFE 11 NAT/UK/000385

1 September 2012 – 30 September 2015

6.1 Introduction

The expenditure summary tables within this report show the project expenditure in Euros incurred over the 37 months the project was implemented from 1 September 2012 to 30 September 2015. The Statement of Expenditure and Income form in Annex 87 gives a fully itemised account of this expenditure.

Conversion of expenditure

The following exchange rates were applied from the first working day of the year in which the expenditure was paid:

Year	Exchange rate
2012	0.835
2013	0.820
2014	0.850
2015	0.780
2016	0.740

VAT recovery

Prior to April 2013, the project beneficiary was the Countryside Council for Wales. This organisation was unable to reclaim VAT (please see auditors report in Annex 88) therefore prior to April 2013, VAT is included in eligible costs.

In April 2013, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) took over the responsibilities of the original coordinating beneficiary, the Countryside Council for Wales. NRW also took over the functions of Forestry Commission Wales, devolved functions of Environment Agency Wales and some functions carried out within Welsh Government.

Under the new body, the organisation was eligible to reclaim VAT and therefore, costs following the 1 April 2013 are charged to the project excluding VAT.

6.2. Summary of costs incurred

PROJECT COSTS INCURRED €			
Cost category	Budget according to the grant agreement	Costs incurred within the project duration	%
1. Personnel	894,843	903,866	101%
2. Travel	24,156	24,005	99.4%
3. External assistance	299,539	241,405	80.6%
4. Durables: total <u>non-depreciated</u> cost			
- <i>Infrastructure sub-total</i>			
- <i>Equipment sub-total</i>	11,253	9,830	87.4%
- <i>Prototypes sub-total</i>			
5. Consumables			
6. Other costs	13,458	4,690	34.8%
7. Overheads	87,027	82,865	95.2%
TOTAL	1,330,276	1,266,661	95.2%

6.3 Financial review by category

6.3.1 Personnel

Spend: €903,866

Budget: €894,843

Spend on personnel totalled €903,866 against a budget of €894,843 and therefore a slight overspend was incurred. The budget was based on the majority of staff contracts finishing in August 2015, however the project extended the contracts of the majority of staff to September 2015, and also recruited a data officer in order to finalise key project outputs.

6.3.2 Travel

Spend: €24,005

Budget: €24,156

Spend on travel totalled €24,005 against a budget of €24,156 giving a slight underspend against budget. No unexpected travel occurred and spend was in line with the budget.

All travel was conducted by project personnel with the exception of the following item:

Date of invoice	Invoice number	Date of payment	Name	Purpose	Location (from / to)	Action	Description	Amount
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

In this instance, the train travel for Colette Price was charged to the project. Colette Price is the Senior External Funding officer for the organisation and also sits on both the Project Management Group and the Project Steering Group. In the above travel claim, Ms Price accompanied Kathryn Hewitt to the LIFE Kick off meeting in London as the Project Coordinators had yet to be recruited to the project.

Mileage claim system

Personnel are discouraged from using their own cars to travel. Personnel are encouraged to use a “travel decision tree” before travelling to ascertain if the travel is essential and are required to use either public transport or use a pool car. If a pool car is used this cost is borne by the organisation and not recharged to the project. On one occasion a member of the project team had to use her own car and this cost was charged to the project. Private mileage is reimbursed at 45 pence per mile travelled.

Seq n°	Year	Date of invoice	Invoice number	Name(s) of person(s) traveling	Purpose of the travel and duration	Location (from/to)	Action	Description of the cost item	Invoiced amount in national currency without VAT	Exchange rate	Invoiced amount in € without VAT (J/L)
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

6.3.3 External Assistance

Spend: €241,405

Budget: €299,539

A large percentage of the underspend on External assistance derives from Action A09 – Evidence Gaps, as the programme managed several contracts in-house at no cost to the project. As shown in Table 7 of the 11 contracts commissioned, 5 were delivered in house.

6.3.4 Durable goods: Equipment

Spend: €9,830

Budget: €11,253

The laptops, which made up the majority of the budget for equipment were purchased under budget. The purchase of a second noticeboard was unexpected, however this was necessary following the merger of the three organisations into one body as the contact details and the web site had changed. Also, the new noticeboards are of higher quality and make more of a visually engaging impact.

Although not foreseen in the original budget, the purchase of the projector and the camcorder were useful to the project. The projector facilitated communication in meetings and the camcorder enabled the team to gain footage and photos for the project.

6.3.5 Other costs

Spend: €4,690

Budget: €13,458

Although the project leaflet had to be reprinted following the inception of Natural Resources Wales, the cost was much lower than expected.

6.3.6 Overheads

The overheads are an indirect cost and have been calculated as per the guidance in the Common Provisions at 7% of direct project costs.

6.3.7 Project income

The project has not received any income, with the exception of interest on payments from LIFE which totalled €941.99.

6.4 Summary of costs per action

The Summary of costs per action can also be found in Excel format in Annex 89.
Figures are in Euros.

Action no	Short name of action	1. Personnel	2. Travel	3. External Assistance	4.a Infrastructure	4.b Equipment	4.c Prototype	5. Purchase or lease of land	6. Consumables	7. Other costs	TOTAL
A01	Establish the project team			8,899							8,899
A02	Gather evidence on issues and risks to Natura 2000 sites and features		967	1,800							2,767
A03	Appraise of current management mechanisms		676	1,802							2,478
A04	Identify potential new management approaches and mechanisms		2,550	3,356							5,906
A05	Review current funding arrangements and identify and evaluate potential new funding mechanisms			54,809							54,809
A06	Prepare Natura 2000 Action plans		10,684	3,758							14,442
A07	Develop programme			127							127
A08	Review of lessons learned										
A09	Address key evidence gaps			64,359							64,359
A10	Develop and implement a communication and advocacy strategy		2,608	3,179							5,787
A11	Produce a functionally flexible IT tool to support the Natura 2000 programme		23	78,663							78,687
E01	Prepare a public awareness and dissemination strategy										
E02	Create and maintain a project web site			16,588							16,588
E03	Bulletins and briefings									4,690	4,690
E04	Press and media		52								52
E05	Noticeboard					1,365					1,365
F01	Project management		389	4,064		8,465					12,919
F02	Networking and information exchange		6,055								6,055
F03	Produce After-LIFE Conservation Plan										
All		903,866									903,866
Overheads											82,866
TOTAL		903,866	24,005	241,405		9,830				4,690	1,266,661

6.5. Accounting system

Details of the accounting system

With effect from 1 December 2014 Natural Resources Wales (NRW) implemented a new Finance and HR Enterprise Reporting Planning (ERP) system based on Agresso Business World, this ERP is badged internally as MyNRW. The system replaced the legacy Finance and HR systems. With the exception of nominal changes our Banking arrangements are largely unchanged.

The organisation is based on a hierarchical Cost Centre structure and the Chart of Accounts together with Project Codes is used to categorise expenditure to the relevant code. Capital Accounting is covered through a discrete account set and use of the Fixed Asset Ledger.

Management & Financial reports are available for Budget / Project Managers as necessary.

For the financial year FY13/14 NRW's Annual Accounts were produced from a consolidation of the legacy systems with FY14/15 having been generated from financial information within MyNRW.

Our latest Annual Accounts as audited by the Wales Audit Office can be found [here](#).

Controls in place to capture project expenditure

All requisitions and orders are generated by the project finance officer, the order is raised against the project specific cost code and project code. The supplier is given both an order number and the project reference number to quote on the invoice. The invoice is then sent directly to the project finance officer, who then checks that the project reference is included on the invoice. If the project reference number is present then the original copy of the invoice is kept by the project and a stamped, certified copy is then sent to the payments team for payment. If the project reference number is missing then the supplier is asked for an amended invoice to include the project reference number.

Monthly, a spreadsheet report of all transactions against the project specific cost code is sent to the project finance officer. The project finance officer then cross references each transaction against the invoices / travel expenses / receipt to ensure that the transaction relates to the project and assigns each transaction a unique reference number which is written on the original invoice and filed sequentially. Each transaction is also categorised by category (personnel / travel / external assistance / other). This information is kept in a master spreadsheet which contains details of each transaction, details of where the evidence is kept in the file and the information required for the claim.

Following a monitoring visit on 26 September 2014, which included an examination of project documentation by the desk officer, it was confirmed in a letter dated 16 December 2014 that the project could benefit from the exception to keep timesheets introduced in the common provisions of 2012. All staff assigned to the project worked on the project full time and therefore all their staff costs were chargeable to the project. This is evidenced by the fact that all staff contracts stated that staff were assigned full time to the project. Please also see in Annex 90(k) accounting evidence that the personnel costs of the project staff were attributed to the specific cost code relating to the LIFE N2K project.

6.6 Partnership arrangements

No partnership agreements were made.

6.7. Auditor's report/declaration

An independent auditor for the project was selected by competitive tender on 29 April 2014. Three competitive tenders were received and the successful tender, Salisbury & Co was selected on the basis of value for money and quality of bid.

Olivia Beckett, Corporate Manager from Salisbury's & Co visited the project on 13 January 2015. The audit was carried out in accordance to the guidelines in the common Provisions. The auditor's report is enclosed under Annex 87.

7. Annexes

7.1 Administrative annexes

List of administrative annexes

Annex	Action	Report/Output name	USB	Bound
1	-	Responses to points raised in EC letters		Appended to Final Report
2	-	Gantt chart	√	√
3	-	Image evidence – Word/hard copy	√	√
3	-	Image evidence - JPEGs	√	N/A
91		Final outcome indicator tables		

7.2 Technical annexes

Keywords and abbreviations

NRW: Natural Resources Wales

CCW: Countryside Council for Wales

PMG: LIFE N2K Wales Project Management Group

WBP: Welsh Biodiversity Partnership

List of technical annexes

Annex	Action	Report/Output name	USB	Bound
4	A2	Challenges facing Natura 2000 habitats and species in Wales - Report	√	Previously submitted
5	A2	Challenges facing Natura 2000 habitats and species in Wales – Set of inventories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory A: List of ecological themes, habitat types and their associated Natura 2000 features • Inventory B: Standard lists of issues and sub-issues and risks used in the Actions Database 2013 • Inventory C: Example of a completed issue analysis table at feature level • Inventory D: Summary Tables showing issues associated with each feature type from the analysis of the Natural Resources Wales’s Actions Database • Inventory E: Summary tables showing risks associated with each ecological theme • Inventory F: Stakeholder Workshop Analysis and Summary • Inventory G: Prominent Issues as determined by workshop delegates 	√	Previously submitted
6	A3	Addressing the challenges on Natura 2000 sites in Wales - Report	√	Previously submitted
7	A3	Addressing the challenges on Natura 2000 sites in Wales - Inventory	√	Previously submitted
8	A4	New solutions for Natura 2000 in Wales - Report	√	Previously submitted

Annex	Action	Report/Output name	USB	Bound
9	A4	New solutions for Natura 2000 in Wales - Inventory	√	Previously submitted
10	A5	Natura 2000 funding in Wales - Report	√	Previously submitted
11	A5	Natura 2000 funding in Wales - Inventory	√	Previously submitted
A6 Site Action plans				
12	A6	List of site action plans - (Prioritised Improvement Plans (PIPs) and Site Improvement Plans (SIPs))	√	√
13	A6	5 examples of PIPs of different types as print out/pdf	√	√
13 (a)	A6	Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau /Lleyn Peninsula and the Sarnau	√	√
13 (b)	A6	Cors Caron	√	√
13 (c)	A6	Afon Eden - Cors Goch Trawsfynydd	√	√
13 (d)	A6	Carmarthen Bay Dunes/ Twyni Bae Caerfyrddin	√	√
13 (e)	A6	Aberbargoed Grasslands	√	√
14	A6	All SIPs as print out, URL, electronic copy	√	√
14 (a)	A6	Liverpool Bay / Bae Lerpwl	√	√
14 (b)	A6	Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites / Safleoedd Ystlumod Dyffryn Gwy a Fforest y Ddena	√	√
14 (c)	A6	River Wye / Afon Gwy	√	√
14 (d)	A6	Fenn's, Whixall, Bettisfield, Wem and Cadney Mosses	√	√
14 (e)	A6	Wye Valley Woodlands / Coetiroedd Dyffryn Gwy	√	√
14 (f)	A6	Dee Estuary / Aber Dyfrdwy	√	√
14 (g)	A6	Severn Estuary / Môr Hafren	√	√
14 (h)	A6	River Dee and Bala Lake / Afon Dyfrdwy a Llyn Tegid	√	√
A6 Thematic Action Plans				
15	A6	Access and recreation	√	√
16	A6	Air pollution: Nitrogen deposition	√	√
17	A6	Climate change and habitat fragmentation	√	√
18	A6	Diffuse water pollution	√	√
19	A6	Flood and coastal erosion risk management	√	√
20	A6	Grazing and livestock management	√	√
21	A6	Man-made changes to hydraulic conditions	√	√
22	A6	Marine fisheries	√	√
23	A6	Marine litter	√	√
24	A6	Non-native invasive species and pathogens	√	√
25	A6	Woodland management	√	√
26	A6	Cross-cutting action plans	√	√
A7 and A8				
27	A7	Updated version of Welsh element of the UK Prioritised Action Framework (PAF)	√	√

Annex	Action	Report/Output name	USB	Bound
28	A8	Lessons learnt report	√	√
A9 Evidence gap studies				
29		Natura 2000 in Wales: Facts and figures report	√	√
29a		SPA and SAC Master Spreadsheet	√	√
30	A9	Inventory of Spatial Data for Features Summary Report	√	√
31	A9	Inventory of Spatial Data for Features - Inventory	√	√
32	A9	Inventory of ecosystem services provided by Natura 2000 in Wales - Summary report	√	√
33	A9	Inventory of ecosystem services provided by Natura 2000 in Wales - Inventory	√	√
34	A9	Calculating the economic values of the ecosystem services provided by Natura 2000 features and sites in Wales – feasibility study	√	√
35	A9	Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA) for Natura 2000 Features in Wales – Conservation Needs Assessment – Summary report	√	√
36	A9	Natura 2000 MCDA for Habitats: Matrices	√	√
37	A9	Natura 2000 MCDA for Species: Matrices	√	√
38	A9	Natura 2000 MCDA for Birds: Matrices	√	√
39	A9	Climate Change Vulnerability of Marine Natura 2000 Features – Summary report	√	√
40	A9	Climate Change Vulnerability of Marine Natura 2000 Features Analysis	√	√
41	A9	An approach for costing investigation actions for Marine Natura 2000 sites in Wales - Report	√	√
42	A9	An approach for costing investigation actions for Marine Natura 2000 sites in Wales - Inventory	√	√
43	A9	Natura 2000 in Wales: Costings for Terrestrial Actions	√	√
44	A9	Assessing and Addressing Atmospheric Nitrogen Impacts on Natura 2000 Sites in Wales (AAANIS)	√	√
45	A9	AAANIS Appendix 1	√	√
46	A9	AAANIS Appendix 2	√	√
47	A9	Identification of aquatic (highly water dependent) features	√	√
48	A9	LIFE Natura 2000 Programme for Wales approach to prioritisation	√	√
49	A9	Evidence gaps summary report: Evidence Gaps Relating to Natura 2000 in Wales	√	√
A11 IT Tool				
50	A11	Technical documentation: Development of the NRW Actions Database and its Reporting Capabilities	√	√
51	A11	Report to inform the PAF	√	√
52	A11	Compressed site report – Afon Eden	√	√
53	A11	All data export	√	Sample

Annex	Action	Report/Output name	USB	Bound
54	A11	SSP Actions Database user guide	√	√
55	A11	Training video	√ on separate USB	N/A
Other				
56	F3	After-LIFE Conservation plan	√	√
57-59		No annexes		

7.3 Dissemination annexes

7.3.1 Layman's report

The Layman's report (Summary report) is shown in Annex 74.

7.3.2 Other dissemination annexes

Annex	Action	Report/Output name	USB	Bound
60	A10	Communication and Advocacy strategy	√	Previously submitted
61	A10	Full project information sheets (9 page document)	√	Previously submitted
62	A10	Brief project information sheet (2 page document)	√	Previously submitted
63	A10	Evidence of events - Stakeholder engagement list	√	√
x	E2	Natura 2000 in Wales videos (on website and USB)	√ on separate USB	N/A
64	E3	Leaflet (first version)	√	Previously submitted
65	E3	Leaflet (second version)	√	Previously submitted
66	E3	List of FAQs	√	Previously submitted
67	E3	Standard PowerPoint presentation	√	√
68	E3	Newsletter 1	√	Previously submitted
69	E3	Newsletter 2	√	Previously submitted
70	E3	Newsletter 3	√	Previously submitted
71	E3	Newsletter 4	√	Previously submitted
72	E3	Newsletter 5	√	√
73	E3	Newsletter 6	√	√
74	E3	Layman's report	√	√
75	E4	Email launch	√	Previously submitted

76	E4	Article 1 – Natur Cymru	√	Previously submitted
77	E4	Article 2 – Farming Wales	√	Previously submitted
78	E4	Article 3 – Natur Cymru	√	√
79	E4	Press release	√	√
80	E4	Mini article 1 – Biodiversity News	√	Previously submitted
81	E4	Mini article 2 – Water Framework Directive newsletter	√	√
82	E4	Mini-article 3 – Cyfoeth	√	√
83	E4	Mini-article 4 – Biodiversity News	√	√
84	E4	Mini-article 5 - JNCC	√	√
85	E4	Mini-article 6 – Welsh Government Natural Resources newsletter	√	√
86	E5	Noticeboard	√	N/A

7.4 Financial report and annexes

Annex	Action	Report/Output name	USB	Bound
87		Standard statement of expenditure (Financial Report/ Financial Statement of the Individual Beneficiary) (Excel spreadsheet) Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheet 1 – Standard Payment Request • Sheet 2 – Beneficiary’s Certificate for Nature Projects • Sheet 3 – Individual Cost Statement • Sheet 10 – Consolidated Cost Statement 	√	√
88		Audit report	√	√
89		Summary of costs per action (Excel version)	√	√
90		Evidence requested by LIFE (letters)		
90(a)		VAT status of CCW – report by David Ormisher VAT consultant	√	√
90(b)		Detailed calculation of annual personnel costs	√	√
90(c)		Agresso payslips	√	√
90(d)		Northgate payslips	√	√
90(e)		Payslips and P60	√	√
90(f)		JK contract	√	√
90(g)		KH letter of secondment	√	√
90(h)		National Insurance	√	√
90(i)		Pensions	√	√
90(j)		Accounting evidence of attributing to costcode	√	√
90(k)		Quantification of items purchased	√	√

7.5 Final table of indicators

Please see Annex 91.

Annex 1: Responses to points from European Commission letters (Supporting documents requested in previous letters from the Commission)

Letter dated 30 June 2015

From Anne Burrill, Ref: ENV.E3 LB/TS/sp Ares (2015) 2736888

The letter raised a number of technical issues. These have been addressed as shown below.

Point 1: General issues

All paper outputs will be fully bound with the submission of the Final Report.

Point 2: Natura 2000 Funding in Wales Report

The Funding Report was submitted to Welsh Government following completion. The report and its contents were highlighted in the three closure meetings held during the summer of 2015. See the presentation shown in Annex 67. The report was published on the LIFE N2K Wales web pages, and described in editions of the newsletter and the Layman's report (Summary report). Availability of the Funding Report was also tweeted on twitter and posted on Facebook.

Point 3: Socio-economic and ecosystem services of Natura 2000 report

The ecosystem services report has been publicised and promoted as described in Point 2 above. A GIS tool to support the ecosystem services inventory was originally proposed as a useful addition to enable easy use of the inventory, however, financial and time resources meant that it was impossible to deliver this in the lifetime of the project. The desirability of this tool has been noted in the After LIFE Plan.

Point 4. Magazine articles.

All articles have been linked to or uploaded to the project website.

Point 5. After LIFE Plan

The After LIFE Conservation Plan is attached as an annex to the Final Report (Annex 56). It represents a description of how the PAF/Natura 2000 Programme for Wales will be delivered, and will be linked to the PAF.

Point 6. Steering Group/Programme Board continuation

The Communications and Advocacy Plan is included in Annex 60 of the After LIFE Plan. The work of the LIFE N2K Wales Programme Board is being taken forward by the new NRW Biodiversity Board. The commitments for the review and update of PIPs and the continuation of evidence gap work are described in the After LIFE Plan.

Point 7. Potential funding bids

Potential LIFE bids in Wales are described in the After-LIFE Conservation Plan.

Letter dated 16 December 2014

From Angelo Salsi, Ref: ENV.E3 LB/TS/ ARES (2014) 4232438

The letter requested a number of supporting documents to be annexed to the Final Report. Below we have addressed each request:

Technical issues

Point 1: Noted.

Point 2: Noted.

Point 3: Delivered by internal and external partners as described in the After LIFE Plan.

Point 4: Noted. All outputs are published on the LIFE N2K Wales web pages unless not appropriate (e.g. because they contain sensitive data).

Point 5: A significant effort has been invested into developing a social media presence for LIFE N2K Wales. On World Wetlands Day 2015 the project and video outputs were promoted on social media. NRW will continue to share outputs using PR events like Biodiversity Day. Please also note the full series of articles as shown in Table 12. In particular, LIFE N2K Wales is pleased to present a set of unique high quality short videos (11 in English and 11 in Welsh) showcasing the best of Natura 2000 in Wales to a general audience.

Point 6: The updated version of the Welsh element of the UK PAF is submitted with this Final Report in Annex 27.

Financial issues

Point 7: Noted.

Point 8: VAT status of the “Countryside Council for Wales”

The auditor has explicitly addressed this issue in section 7 of the report (Annex 88) and has confirmed that the Countryside Council for Wales was not able to reclaim VAT, this is reinforced in the report in Annex 90 (a) by David Ormesher, Value Added Tax consultant.

Point 9: We can confirm that personnel costs were calculated in accordance with Article 25.2 of the Common Provisions based on the ‘basic salary’ and not ‘total gross payment’.

Point 10. Temporary staff are clearly labelled as such in the Statement of Expenditure.

Point 11. Noted.

Point 12. Noted.

Point 13: For Kathryn Hewitt and Jennifer Kelly:

- i) Detailed calculation of the annual personnel costs. Annex 90 (b).

During the LIFE of the project, two different payroll systems have been in operation. Up until March 2015 the Northgate payroll system was used. From April 2015, the Agresso system was used. Extracts from both the payroll systems are shown in this spreadsheet for both employees, together with a reconciliation back to the actual amounts claimed.

- ii) Documentation for annual gross salary (extracts from the payroll accounts).

This is provided in Annex 90 (c) and Annex 90 (d), please note that two payroll systems have been in operation during the life of the project (Northgate & Agresso).

iii) March and December salary slips and P60.

The above are provided in Annex 90 (e).

iv) Timesheets.

As all personnel on the project were employed full time explicitly on the project, we have chosen to benefit from the exception to keep timesheets which was introduced in the Common Provisions of 2012 (please see point 14 below).

v) Copies of contacts for temporary staff or letters of secondment for permanent staff.

The above are provided in Annex 90 (f) and 90 (g).

vi) The applicable rate of NI and pension used.

Evidence of applicable National Insurance rates are provided in Annex 90 (h) and Pension rates are provided in Annex 90 (i).

Point 14. Accounting evidence that the personnel costs have been attributed to the specific cost code in the accounting system.

As specified in point (iv) above, as all personnel on the project were employed full time explicitly on the project, we have chosen to benefit from the exception to keep timesheets which was introduced in the Common Provisions of 2012. All staff were employed full time on the project and accounting evidence that personnel costs have been attributed to the specific cost code in the accounting system is shown in Annex 90 (j). Please note that during the life of the project, two accounting systems have been in use. Up until, and including November 2014 e-fin was in use. During this time that project used the specific cost code “124609” and it is shown on sheet 1 of Annex 90 (j) that the personnel costs were wholly attributed to this cost code. From December 2014, the new “Agresso” accounting system was in use. On this accounting system the project used the cost code 743000 and the specific project code RV0050-000. Sheet 2 shows that the personnel costs were wholly attributed to this project code.

Point 15. Quantification of equipment purchased.

This is detailed in Annex 90 (k).

Letter dated 4 July 2014

From Anne Burrill, Ref: ENV.E3 LB/TS/sp ARES (2014) 2224297

Following the January 2014 Mission, an email from Neil Wilkie was received raising queries from the Commission seeking more information on the progress of the Welsh PAF including targeting, and the integration of N2K needs into the Welsh Regional Development Plan. The Commission also needed more information on how planned measures link up with realistic financing opportunities.

A response was sent on 6 February 2014 as follows:

As part of the Action A.11 IT tool development, the LIFE N2K Wales Programme is in the process of adding extra fields and creating a set of pre-defined queries specifically for the PAF, in the Natural Resources Wales Actions Database for protected sites. This will allow those creating the next version of the PAF to access data from an extensive evidence base and derive on the key elements of information which are required.

As part of this work (and the work to create Action A.6 Actions Plans - now known as Prioritised Improvement Plans) we will be collecting data on 'Potential Funding Sources' for every action logged in the database as well as costs. The details of the procedure for this are currently being developed, but we expect the data to indicate which EU funding source would be appropriate e.g. EFF, EAFRD etc. We are also due to let a contract (Actions A.5) in the near future to assess funding mechanisms (current and new) and in particular look at how N2K requirements can be better integrated into funding sources from other sectors such as agri-environment, flood defence etc.

In addition, we are currently in the process of developing a scheme of for prioritising actions and projects for N2K. This will operate on both a 'Site Level' and an 'All-Wales level'. LIFE N2K Wales has developed a procedure for the prioritisation of those issues which have the greatest impact on N2K features at a Site Level. It uses criteria and a matrix approach to aid decision-making and will automatically identify the priority-level of all associated actions. We are now about to begin liaison work with regional site officers who will set the priorities.

The aim of the 'All-Wales prioritisation' work is to set a strategic framework which will allow organisations like Natural Resources Wales and the Welsh Government to, for example, determine which larger-scale projects should be funded first. We are currently working on the approach and procedure for this. It is likely that stakeholder involvement will be required.

We hope that once the LIFE N2K Wales Programme nears completion the elements described above can be brought together to create the next version of the PAF, which we expect to be more focused on the most urgent and high priority management and restoration projects.

However, it is worth noting at this point that Natural Resources Wales has had no official feedback from the EU about the PAF for Wales, so we are not clear about exactly what the shortcomings of the document are deemed to be. (Although it could be that feedback has been given to Defra or the Welsh Government but has not reached us). Any clarification in this area would be gratefully received.

With regard to the EU's query about the Regional Development Plan, whilst it is an output of the LIFE N2K Wales Programme to identify and plan for opportunities to integrate N2K requirements into other EU funding sources, it is not within the Programme's remit to actually facilitate and deliver at integration at this point in time. Therefore, the LIFE N2K Wales Programme team have not been involved in discussions regarding the Welsh Regional Development Plan. This is essentially the responsibility of the Welsh Government, although I understand that other Natural Resources Wales officers have been involved in an advisory capacity. No doubt, colleagues in NRW would be able to provide more information if required by the EU, however, they would need to consult with Welsh Government on the matter.

Following the letter 4 July 14, and the request to LIFE to extend the project, it was agreed to produce the updated PAF for Wales as part of the LIFE N2K Wales outputs (Action A.7). Representatives from Welsh Government were present at the September 2014 mission as requested.

Letter dated 11 July 2013

From Anne Burrill, Ref: ENV.E3 LB/pl ARES (2013) 2638226

Following the Inception Report, LIFE N2K Wales has received a letter from the Commission, dated 11 July 2013, supporting the continuation of the project but highlighting the web site as an area for improvement. LIFE N2K Wales was also instructed to submit an amendment to change the beneficiary organisation. Both these issues have been addressed.

Letter dated 15 March 2013

From Anne Burrill, Ref: ENV.E3 LB/pl ARES (2013) 342400

Following the first mission the Commission raised the issue of some shortcomings with the website which was subsequently resolved. Inadequate referencing of the project code and name was also raised. This problem was also resolved and the issue was checked at the audit undertaken on 13 January 2016.