



**Cyfoeth
Naturiol
Cymru**
**Natural
Resources
Wales**

LIFE Natura 2000 Programme for Wales

// Summary Report



www.naturalresourceswales.gov.uk



Supported by LIFE, a financial instrument of the European Community. N2K Wales LIFE 11 NAT/UK/385

Published by:

Natural Resources Wales
Cambria House
29 Newport Road
Cardiff
CF24 0TP

0300 065 3000 (Mon-Fri, 8am - 6pm)

enquiries@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk
www.naturalresourceswales.gov.uk

© *Natural Resources Wales*

All rights reserved. This document may be reproduced with prior permission of Natural Resources Wales.

Images © Crown copyright (2015) Visit Wales.

1. Introduction

The diverse landscapes and seascapes of Wales support a wonderfully rich and varied wildlife. The prime examples of habitats and species threatened in Europe are protected by 92 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and 20 Special Protection Areas (SPAs). These are collectively known as Natura 2000 – part of a European-wide network of nearly 28,000 sites.

Natura 2000 sites are adversely affected by a range of pressures and threats, and require investment in active management and restoration if their protected habitats and species are to remain in or reach favourable condition.

2. Natura 2000 Programme for Wales

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

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

The purpose is to enable Wales to make significant progress towards bringing Natura 2000 species and habitats into favourable condition and help meet its commitments under the European Habitats and Birds Directives. The Programme also aims to provide a platform to seek funding for Natura 2000 related projects from all potential sources, and to integrate Natura 2000 funding into other financial instruments and policy areas.



3. Natura 2000 in Wales

The Natura 2000 network was established to assure the long-term survival of the continent's most threatened species and habitats. The network is designated and managed under the terms of the Birds Directive 1979 and Habitats Directive 1992, and is the centrepiece of European Union's nature and biodiversity policy.

Natura 2000 statistics

The 112 Natura 2000 sites in Wales cover over 700,000 ha. Around one quarter of the protected area is on land and three quarters at sea. The coverage equates to nearly 7% of the Welsh land area and nearly 36% of Welsh territorial waters.

Summary statistics for Natura 2000 sites and features



Natura 2000 Site	No of sites	Area (ha)	Relevant Annex	No of features
Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)	92	628,557	Habitats Directive Annex I habitats	54
			Habitats Directive Annex II species	28
Special Protection Areas (SPAs)	20	262,237	Birds Directive Annex I and regularly occurring migratory species	41
Totals	112	717,943*		123

**Some areas are designated both SAC and SPA. The figure takes account of this overlap.*





Benefits of Natura 2000

Natura 2000 sites are the cornerstone of biodiversity conservation in Wales, providing the highest level of protection for the best of our wildlife, and delivering our European legal obligations.

However, equally they are also key contributors to the benefits we enjoy from healthy well-functioning ecosystems through:

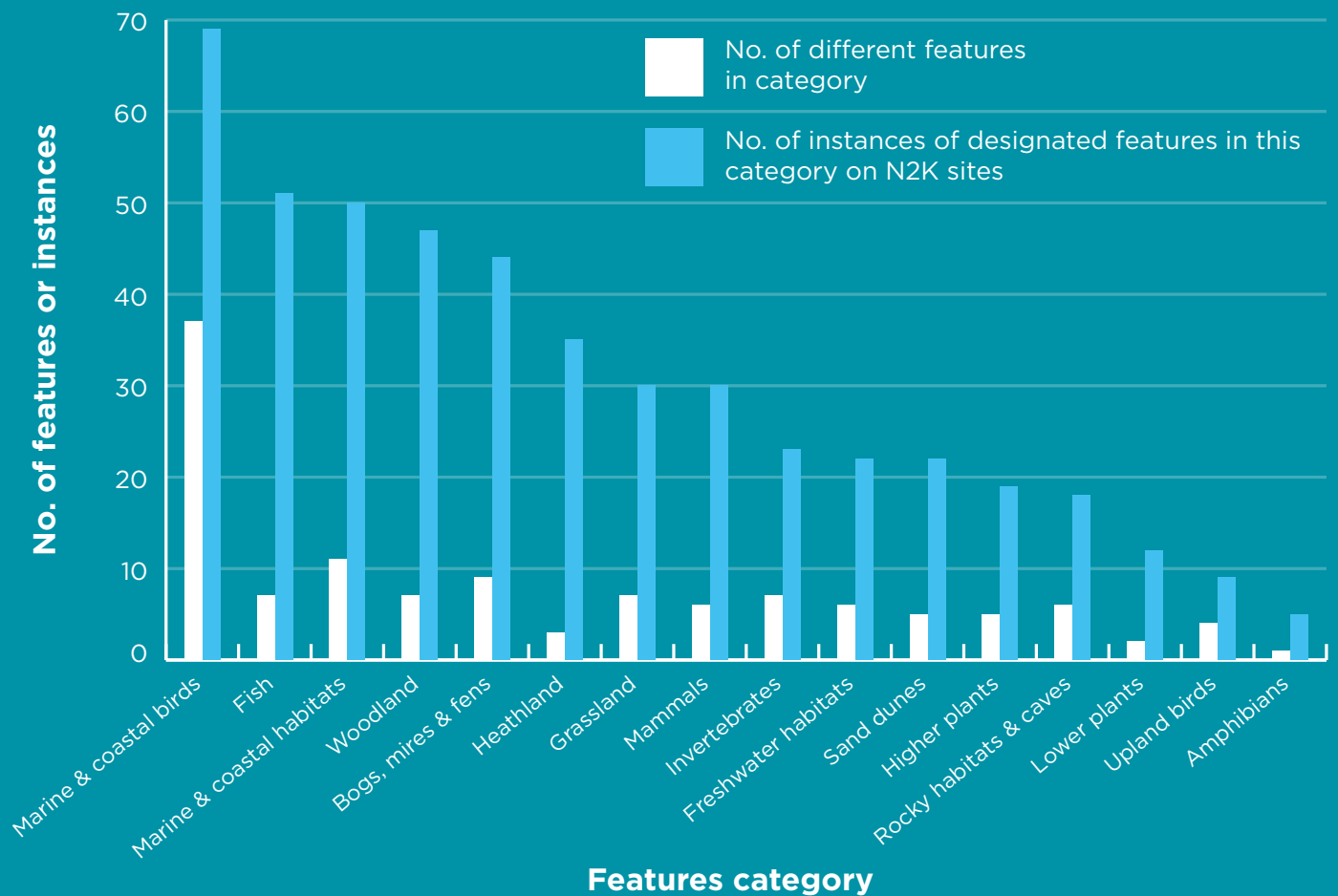
- **Supporting services:** they contribute to ecosystem function; help maintain natural diversity giving capacity to adapt and hence resilience; they are a source of diversity for the wider countryside and act as stepping stones which allow climate change adaptation.
- **Provisioning services:** they support opportunities for production in livestock farming, fisheries and woodland products.
- **Regulating services:** they provide services such as carbon storage, water management, flood and erosion defence, pollination and amelioration of pollution.
- **Cultural services:** they support a wide range of benefits including wellbeing, education, recreation and associated tourism.

Natura 2000 habitat and species features

There are 123 different habitat and species features designated under Natura 2000 in Wales including active raised bog, western oak woodland, reefs, grey seal, white-clawed crayfish, puffin and hen harrier. They represent a range of habitat and taxon categories, as shown in the table overleaf.

Most Natura 2000 sites have been designated for between two and five features, but with the most diverse supporting 19 features. Across the network of sites there is a total of 486 designated features.

Number of habitat and species features on Natura 2000 sites displayed by feature category

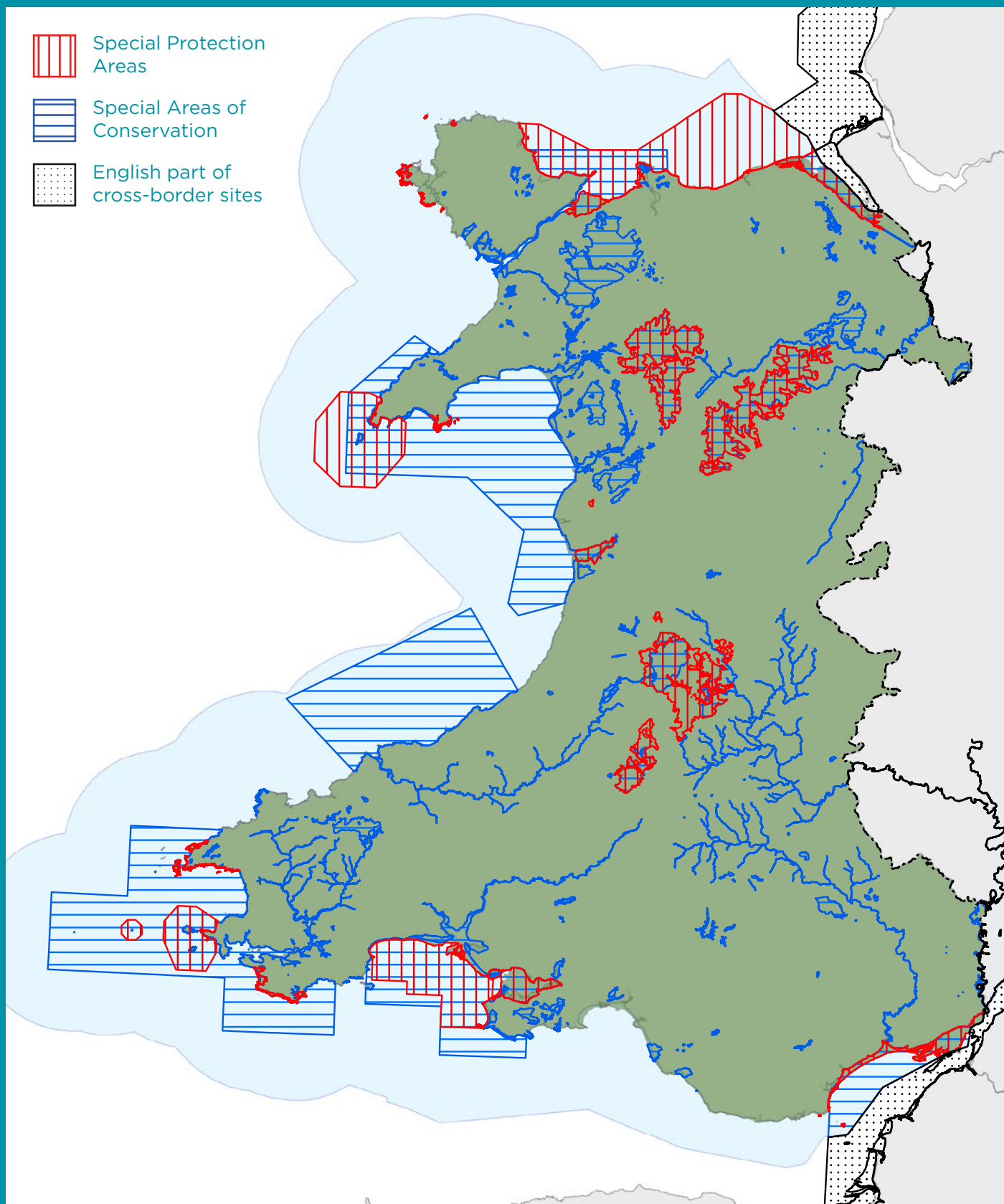


Description of Natura 2000 sites

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

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

Location of Natura 2000 Sites in Wales



© Crown copyright. All rights reserved.
Natural Resources Wales, 100019741, 2013.

© British Crown and OceanWise Ltd, 2015. All rights reserved.
License No. EK001-20120402

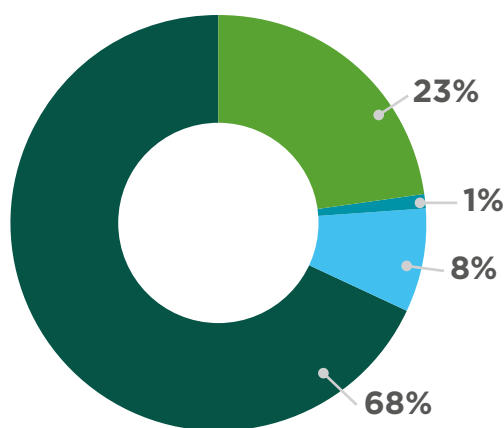
4. Management and restoration of Natura 2000

Condition of Natura 2000 features

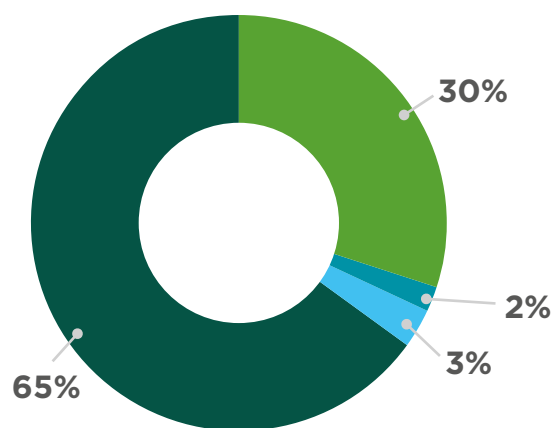
The condition of the majority of Natura 2000 habitat and species features where they occur on SACs and SPAs in Wales, have been monitored systematically. Although 63% of bird features,

33% of other species and 31% of habitats are in favourable or recovering condition, a significant proportion of features remain in unfavourable condition, most notably 68% of habitats.

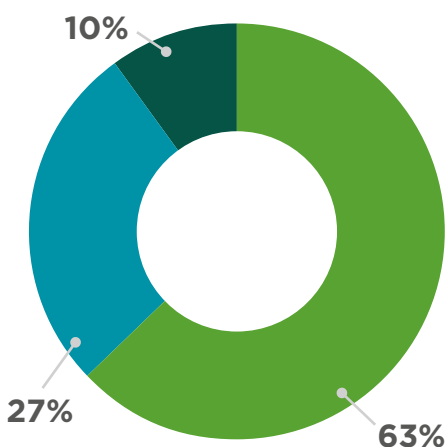
Condition of Annex I habitat features



Condition of Annex II species features



Condition of Annex I and regularly occurring migratory bird features



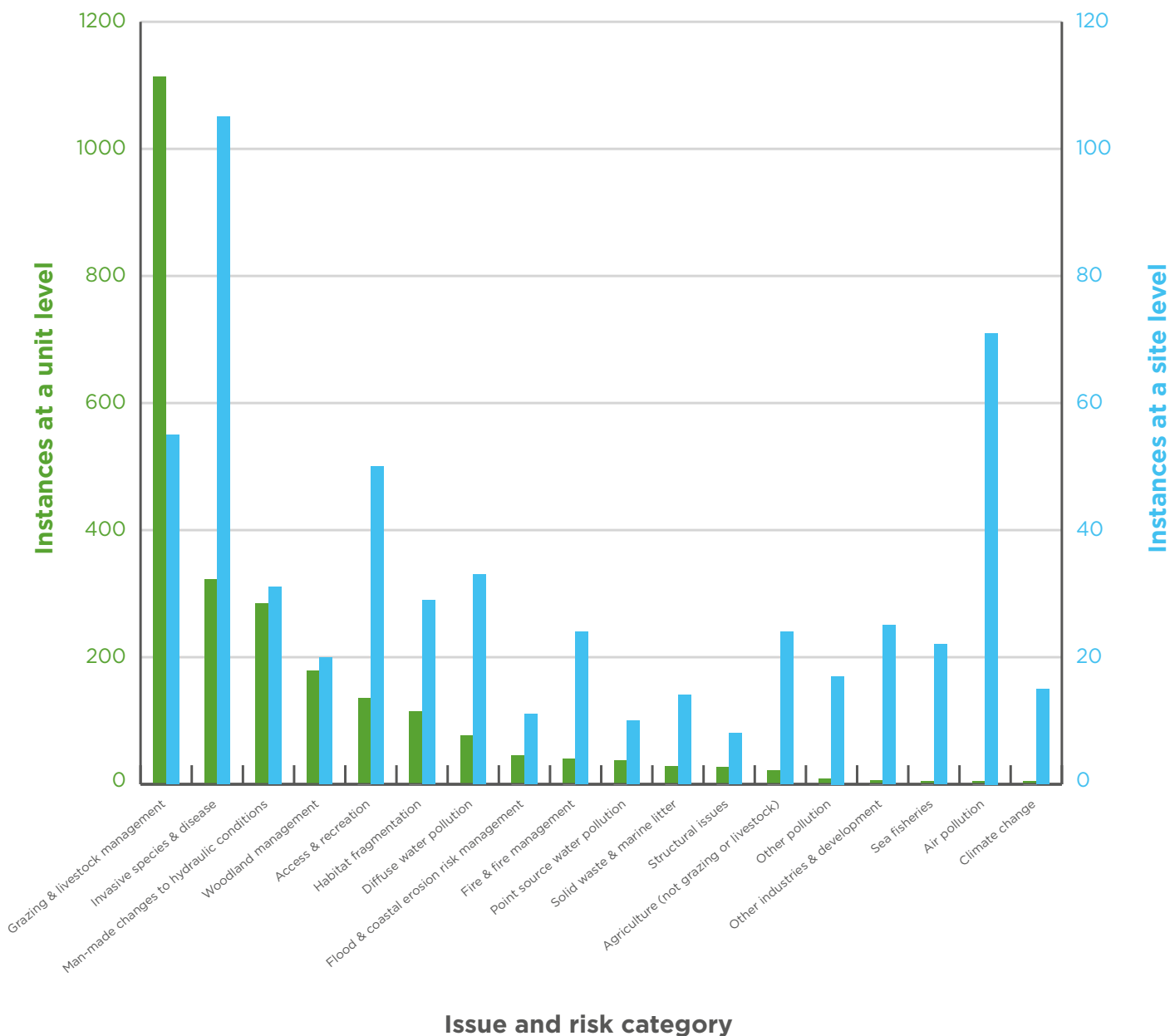
Source: WES Measure 025: Species and habitats in favourable, recovering or unfavourable condition, July 2013. Unpublished document, Countryside Council for Wales/Natural Resources Wales. Based on N2K Common Standards Monitoring data.

Issues and risks

A range of different issues and risks have been identified as adversely impacting Natura 2000 features on sites. Major impacts include inappropriate grazing type and levels, invasive

species, changes to hydraulic conditions, access and recreation, management, air pollution and diffuse water pollution.

Major issues and risks affecting Natura 2000 network in Wales by frequency of occurrence



5. Programme of action for Natura 2000

To address these issues and risks and work towards the appropriate management and restoration of Natura 2000, the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme has developed a strategic prioritised programme of actions, for the period to 2020.

The Programme is comprised of four key elements:

- **Prioritised Improvement Plans**
- **Thematic Action Plans**
- **Cross-cutting Action Plans**
- **Prioritised Action Framework**

Prioritised Improvement Plans

The LIFE Natura 2000 Programme has produced Prioritised Improvement Plans (PIPs) for all Natura 2000 sites. PIPs are prioritised, costed action plans which summarise the actions needed to help improve the condition of the designated habitat and species features of the site.

For sites which straddle the England/Wales border, Site Improvement Plans have been developed in collaboration with Natural England's LIFE-funded IPENS project.

PIPs provide a summary of proposed actions to 2020, to address high and medium priority issues and risks which are preventing the features of the site from reaching favourable condition. PIPs are live documents which will be updated when actions are completed or when new information becomes available. PIPs do not cover remedial actions which are already in place or ongoing management activities which are required for the maintenance of features in favourable condition.

Natura 2000 Core Management Plans (terrestrial sites) and Regulation 35 Advice (marine sites) lay out the conservation objectives for the site and provide a framework for management. PIPs complement and supplement these by providing detailed action programmes.

NRW Actions Database

The PIPs draw information from the NRW Actions Database, which holds all identified actions. Actions have been updated and expanded by NRW Conservation Officers in association with stakeholders and partners, based on current evidence and knowledge. Actions are usually recorded at a detailed management unit level but also, where appropriate, at a whole site level.

The individual actions are:

- Prioritised – as described in Section 8.
- Costed – based on standard cost tables or previous similar works carried out.
- SMART i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timetabled.
- Sufficiently detailed to provide the basis for a practitioner to plan a work programme or initiate a funding bid.
- Allocated to an organisation to lead.
- Linked to relevant Natura 2000 features.

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

Summary of results

In total nearly 3,600 actions to address issues and risks on Natura 2000 in Wales have been logged both at a site and unit level. On average there are 32 unique actions per site. The total estimated cost is approximately £120 million – with an average of just over £1 million per site, although there is a great deal of variation between sites.

Summary of actions and costs for Welsh Natura 2000 sites

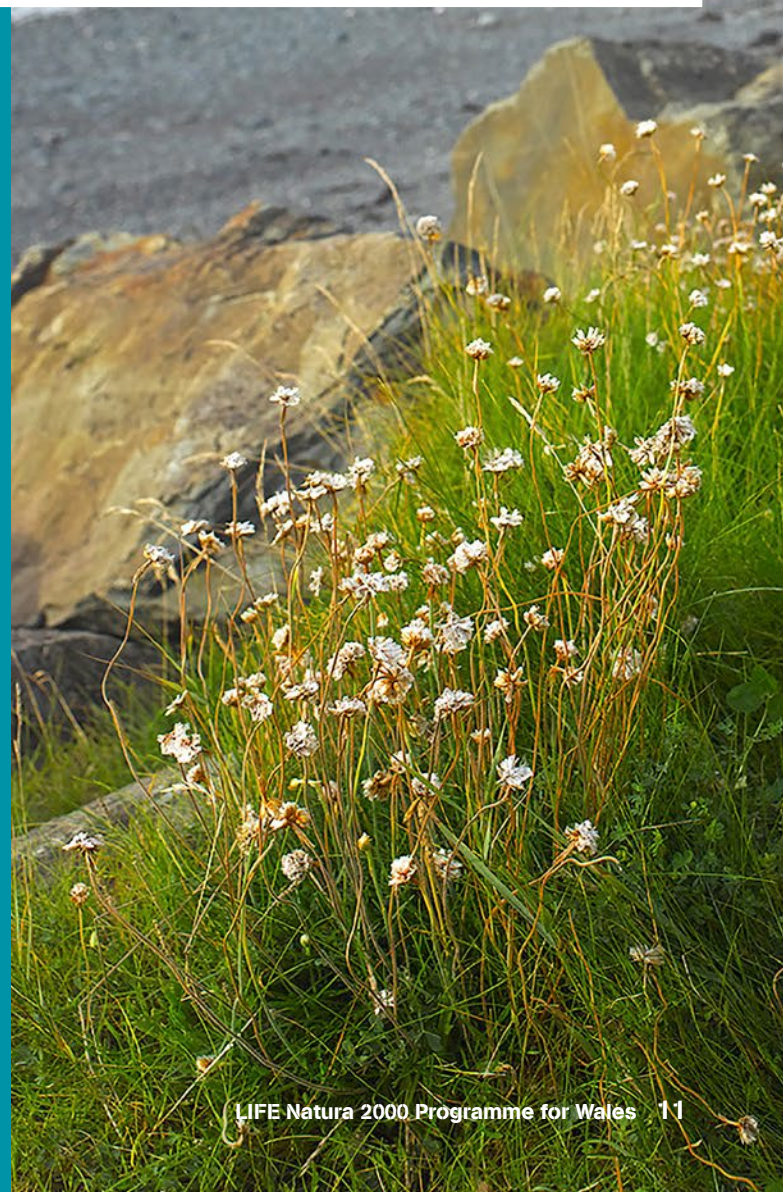
	Number (all actions)	Cost (all actions)	Average no of actions per site	Average cost per site	Capital costs	Running costs
Unit Actions	2,709	£62,249,000	24	£556,000	£28,094,000	£34,155,000
Site Actions	888	£57,780,000	8	£516,000	£52,645,000	£5,135,000
Totals	3,597	£120,029,000	32	£1,072,000	£80,739,000	£39,290,000

Costs rounded to the nearest £1,000

74% of actions have been costed. If costs are extrapolated at current rates, to include uncosted actions then the total is £144 million and £1.3 million per site.

The figures are based on high, medium and low priority actions. Costs shown above do not include staff time, ongoing maintenance work, or costs for strategic actions in Thematic Action Plans.

The issues and risks with most frequently logged actions and highest costs are shown overleaf.



Natura 2000 actions and costs for most frequently logged issues and risks

Issues and risks	No of site-level actions	No of unit-level actions	Total no of actions	Cost of actions
Grazing and livestock management	74	1,223	1,297	£23,904,000
Invasive species (native and non-native), parasites and pathogens	154	443	597	£12,723,000
Man-made changes to hydraulic conditions	63	336	399	£18,972,000
Access and recreation management	94	187	281	£3,085,000
Woodland management	27	207	234	£4,710,000
Habitat fragmentation	55	136	191	£2,688,000
Diffuse water pollution	76	108	184	£12,909,000
Air pollution	74	4	78	£355,000
Flood and coastal erosion risk management	18	59	77	£44,157,000

Some actions may address more than one issue so some double counting may exist.

The most commonly cited mechanisms or measures to address the issues and risks are shown below.

Natura 2000 actions and costs for most frequently occurring mechanisms

Mechanisms	No at site level	No at unit level	Total number	Total Cost
Direct management	191	871	1062	£36,609,000
Investigation	277	703	980	£2,264,000
NRW management agreement	11	534	545	£8,677,000
Glastir agri-environment scheme	14	231	245	£20,114,000
Risk surveillance	113	11	124	£141,000
Targeted education, awareness raising and liaison	84	11	95	£1,502,000
Site nitrogen action plan	71	0	71	£355,000

Includes mechanisms cited in more than 70 instances.

Thematic Action Plans to address major issues and risks

The LIFE Natura 2000 Programme has created 11 Thematic Action Plans (shown below) which identify priority strategic actions to address major issues and risks which have an adverse impact on Natura 2000 features across the network. The actions, may be delivered at national or regional level, to complement the site-level actions within the PIPs.

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

The actions have been identified from workshops with professionals with expertise in the field in consultation with stakeholders.

Cross-cutting Action Plans

A set of cross-cutting actions have also been identified which apply across the Natura 2000 network. They are as follows:

- **Communication and education** – relating to public awareness raising, training of practitioners, farmers and landowners and targeted education of site users.
- **Finance and funding** – facilitating better access to funds for Natura 2000.
- **Legislation and policy** – supporting the development and delivery of new legislation and policy, and the modification of existing legislation, policy and schemes.
- **Integration** of Natura 2000 needs into other sectors such as flood defence, forestry, agriculture and tourism.
- **Investigations** – addressing investigation and evidence gap actions in a strategic manner and sourcing new funding.

Prioritised Action Framework

The LIFE Natura 2000 Programme has produced the Welsh chapter of the revised UK Prioritised Action Framework (PAF) on behalf of the Welsh Government, as required by Article 8 of the Habitats Directive. The PAF which is created to a standard template, informs the European Commission of priorities for Natura 2000 and describes requirements for European co-funding.

The PAF will be used by the European Commission to target biodiversity funding, for example, through the LIFE financial instrument and support the process of integrating Natura 2000 needs into the allocation of other major EU funds such as the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, Structural Funds etc.

The content of the PAF will include the key messages from the PIPs, Thematic and Cross-cutting Action Plans.

AfterLIFE plan

The AfterLIFE plan describes how the actions described in the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme will be delivered by relevant organisations including NRW, Welsh Government and third sector bodies. In some cases, actions can be delivered through existing programmes of work, and this is an opportunity to reassess priorities within those programmes. In other cases, new areas of work, supported by new funding streams will need to be developed for example, by making bids to external funding schemes, or exploring new ways of working together to make better uses of resources.

6. Financing

Natura 2000

The LIFE Natura 2000 Programme have produced two key reports which relate to the current and potential future funding of Natura 2000 management: **Natura 2000 Funding in Wales and New Solutions for Natura 2000 in Wales.**

The Funding report acts as a ‘funding map’ through which to understand the potential of different funding types to address the management actions required on Natura 2000 sites. The New Solutions report also explores innovative funding approaches.

Current costs are borne heavily by Welsh public authorities with restricted budgets. However, there is a diverse range of other funding options available with potential for Natura 2000 financing – 23 were identified with 18 of these considered to have scope to increase or enhance their use.

The main types of funding options include:

- Glastir agri-environment scheme
- EU funds
- Improved integration with other sectors
- Private, lottery and voluntary sector funds
- Alternative and innovative funding mechanisms

However, there are significant constraints as funding sources are fragmented and generally not targeted at Natura 2000; creating some discontinuities and difficulties of access. Many require a project-based approach, involving competitive bidding, significant up-front investment, match funding and skills to deliver to time and budget. Innovative approaches require further trialling and research and the development of supporting processes and structures.





7. Ecosystem services provided by Natura 2000

The LIFE Natura 2000 Programme has developed a practical inventory to help identify the ecosystem services supplied to the people of Wales by Natura 2000 habitats and species. It also provides a basis for developing this information for sites. It is intended to provide baseline information that can be updated in the future when more data becomes available.

The Inventory shows that the Natura 2000 network in Wales delivers a wide range of ecosystem services at a significant scale. Of primary importance are regulatory services such as carbon sequestration (delivered particularly by wetlands and woodland), amelioration of coastal erosion and flood hazard (delivered by intertidal habitats, saltmarsh and sand dunes), and assimilation of air and water pollution (many habitats). Natura 2000 also plays a part in the economies of low-intensity livestock farming and sea fish and shellfish industries of Wales.

Cultural services of landscape quality and tranquillity and sense of place are delivered by the majority of Natura 2000. Some Natura 2000 sites are also key tourist attractions, and many also allow for a wide diversity of access and recreational opportunities such as walking, seaside visits, wildlife watching, boating, and adventure sports. Together these contribute to the tourism economy of Wales.

A clear understanding of ecosystem services provided by Natura 2000 will help to support the ongoing process of integrating biodiversity needs into other sectors such as flood defence, agriculture, tourism and health to deliver mutual benefits. It will also aid the development of a coherent area-based approach to natural resource management which examines interrelationships of environmental factors at a landscape, catchment or regional level. The Inventory can also help source funding for Natura 2000 from alternative finance sources, where biodiversity is not the priority criteria.

8. Prioritisation

It is necessary to have clear guidance on where priorities lie so limited staff and financial resources can be targeted to best effect. A clear set of priorities is also important when bidding for European or other external funds. Therefore, the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme has established a framework to enable the prioritisation of actions based on conservation need, drivers and pressures. The approach is based on a structured process and, as far as possible on an evidence base, so that it is robust and repeatable.

Three tools have been developed to enable prioritisation, as shown below. The tools can be used separately or together, and at local or national scales depending on specific needs.

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 by stakeholders, as shown on page 13.
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 matrix-based method to prioritise the issue/risk affecting features at a site level, taking account of extent and severity of the impact and urgency. Related actions are consequently prioritised as High, Medium and Low.

Natura 2000 priority highlights

By using these tools in combination the following highlight priorities have been established for Natura 2000 in Wales for the period up to 2020, namely:

- Peatlands – lowland and upland
- Sand dunes
- River features
- Woodlands

In the marine/coastal environment:

- Lagoons and associated vegetated shingle
- Estuaries and saltmarsh

In each case, relevant species and habitat features are included.



9. Engagement with partners

The LIFE Natura 2000 Programme has engaged with both NRW colleagues and external partners throughout the project to draw on their expertise, improve the outputs based on feedback and build support for the delivery of the actions.

The Programme has hosted 38 stakeholder engagement workshops/events attended by over 500 people. Team members have also attended over 100 other meetings reaching over 1800 stakeholders, and 26 external events or conferences.

10. Reports

The following reports have produced by the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme:

- Challenges Facing Natura 2000 Habitats and Species: An Analysis of Issues and Risks
- Addressing the Challenges on Natura 2000 Sites in Wales; An Appraisal of Existing Management Mechanisms
- New Solutions for Natura 2000 in Wales: Potential New Management Approaches and Mechanisms
- Natura 2000 Funding in Wales
- Natura 2000 Facts and Figures
- Inventory of Ecosystem Services provided by Natura 2000 in Wales
- Natura 2000 Feature Multi-criteria Decision-Analysis.
- Natura 2000 Habitat and Species Mapping: Analysis of Data Sources
- Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment for Marine Natura 2000 Features
- Terrestrial and marine costings reports
- Site Nitrogen Action Plan feasibility study
- Identification of aquatic (highly water dependent) Natura 2000 features
- List of evidence gaps

Further information

All Natura 2000 Programme documents are available from the Natural Resources Wales website naturalresources.wales/LIFEN2K or by contacting enquiries@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk or **0300 065 3000**.

