

**Statements of Compliance
for UK protected areas and ‘other effective area-based
conservation measures’: 2023 review**

Protected Areas Working Group
of the IUCN National Committee UK



Protected Areas Working Group

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Ballachuan Hazelwood, Argyll – a 'temperate rainforest' – is a Scottish Wildlife Trust Reserve, internationally important for very rich communities of epiphytic lichens, bryophytes and fungi but lacking any statutory protection. Photo: D.A. Stroud.

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Minor amendments made to original version, 14/12/2023

Page 5. Paragraph 7: '*...(although many are likely to contain some areas of land or sea that do not meet that definition, i.e., wherever those areas are also designated under any of the five types that are assessed that fully comply)*' changed to '*...(although many are likely to contain some areas of land or sea that meet that definition, i.e., wherever those areas are also designated under any of the five types that are assessed that fully comply).*'

Page 18. Row 1: '*...natural beauty of the AONB' – noting that beauty does not necessarily relate to biodiversity conservation needs.*' changed to '*...natural beauty of the AONB. This requirement was recently updated in England by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 which now requires relevant authorities to 'seek to further' the purpose. PAWG notes that beauty does not necessarily relate to biodiversity conservation needs.*'

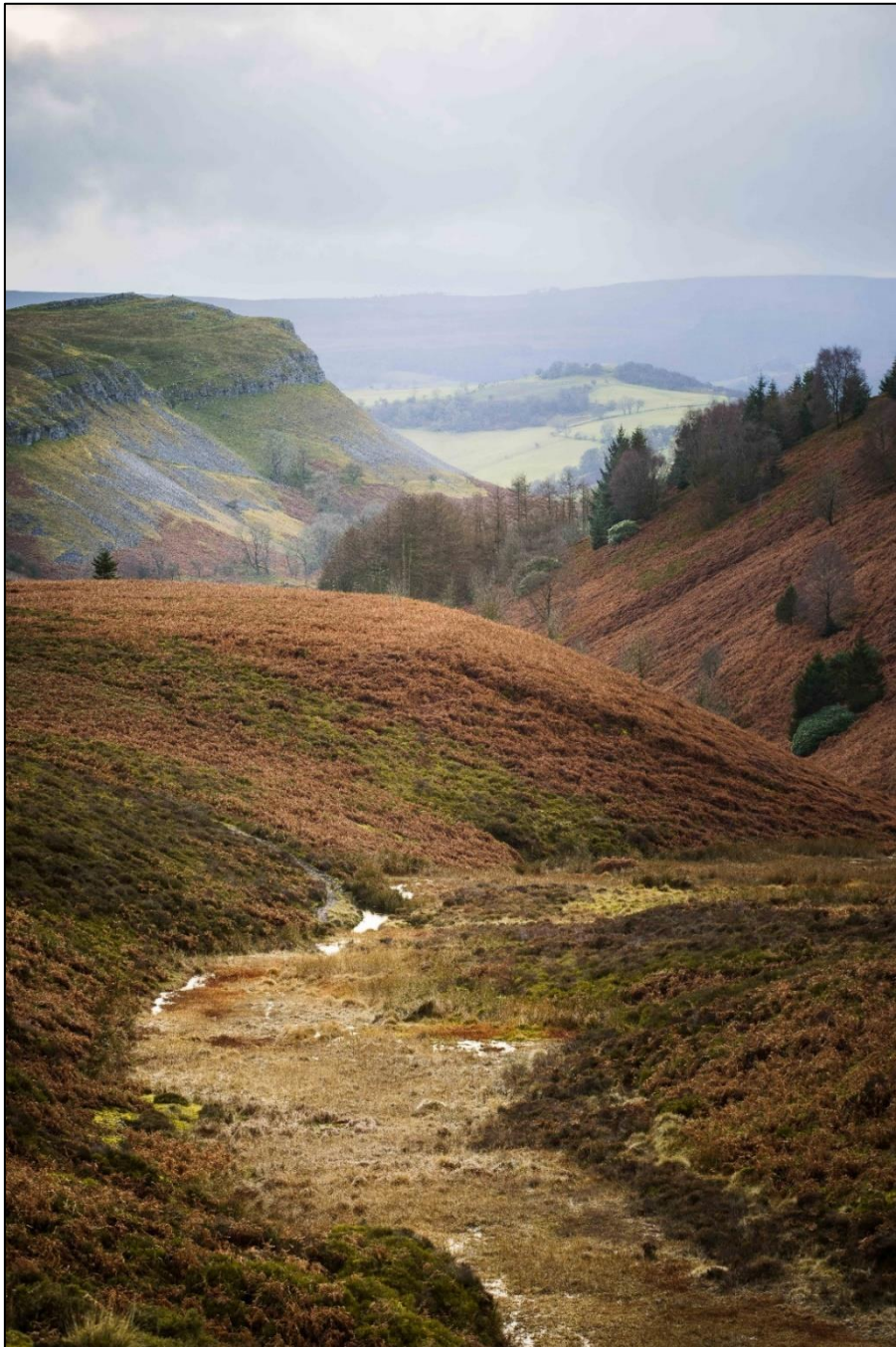
Page 50. Row 1. '*There are 119 NNRs in England...*' changed to '*There are 219 NNRs in England...*'.

Page 132. Bullet 1. '*NO (except for the high proportion of NNR area benefitting from protections afforded by SSSI, ASSI, Ramsar, SPA and/or SAC designations)*' changed to '*NO (except for the high proportion of Global Geopark area benefitting from protections afforded by SSSI, ASSI, Ramsar, SPA and/or SAC designations)*'

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Eglwyseg and Ruabon Moor, Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Photo: Howard Davies.

1. Summary

This independent, evidence-based assessment and technical report by the Protected Areas Working Group (PAWG) of the IUCN National Committee UK (IUCN-NCUK) reviewed 23 types of designation of land and sea for biodiversity conservation against IUCN definitions of ‘protected area’ and ‘other effective area-based conservation measures’ (OECMs).

This review updates the IUCN-NCUK publication *Putting Nature on the Map (PNOTM)*, with the current Statements of Compliance¹ replacing those published in 2014 (and made available for national and international stakeholders involved in protected area dataflows and assessments). It reflects changes since the original assessments were published in 2014, resulting from current evidence being set within the context of the interpretation of new and improved international guidance and evolving overarching assessment frameworks and uses the best publicly available data that PAWG could find. It is the intention of PAWG to revisit these assessments on a periodic basis, and PAWG invites comments and the submission of data to inform subsequent revisions. The aim is to assist and work with UK decision-makers and stakeholders to improve the status of nature through effectively conserved and managed areas, using internationally agreed standards as an authoritative benchmark of excellence.

The findings have relevance to the UK’s implementation of Target 3 of the Global Biodiversity Framework, in particular the expressed intention to establish a network of protected areas and OECMs that, by 2030, will cover 30% of the UK land area and 30% of its territorial marine area (the “30 by 30” (hereafter ‘30x30’) target) – a deadline that is now just six years away. The assessment is offered as a contribution to the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations’ obligations to identify and ensure the effective management of protected areas and OECMs across 30% of land and seas in the UK.

These revised assessments provide new guidance to the UK Government and its agencies, the Devolved Administrations and their respective Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies (SNCBs) on which types of sites should be incorporated within those 30% totals in order to conform with internationally agreed standards.

Assessments were made following searches between May and September 2023 for relevant and publicly available data and information on the websites of, or otherwise published by, those organisations or statutory authorities responsible for the relevant site type.

The evidence identified that five types of site designation are considered to fully comply with IUCN’s definition of ‘protected area’ (Sites/Areas of Special Scientific Interest; marine protected area designations²; Ramsar Sites, Special Protection Areas, and Special Areas of Conservation).

Eighteen other designation types are not considered as ‘protected areas’ in their own right (although many are likely to contain some areas of land or sea that meet that definition, i.e., wherever those areas are also designated under any of the five types that are assessed that fully comply).

Seventeen designation types should be assessed on an individual site-by-site basis with respect to their potential status as OECMs.

¹ The original Statements of Compliance (SoCs) (in 2014) for each type of site provided a common format for a critical review of the legislative and policy context, governance, and management objectives relevant to a site meeting the IUCN protected area definition. The SoCs in this review slightly differ in that they now undertake that review in the new context of both protected areas and OECMs under the framing of Target 3 of the Convention on Biological Diversity’s Global Biodiversity Framework, focusing on the elements of the target requiring sites to be “effectively conserved and managed”.

² Marine Conservation Zones in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, Nature Conservation Marine Protected Areas in Scotland and Highly Protected Marine Areas in England

For no site type was there evidence of complete effective management. In most cases, management was, at best, either partly delivered and/or partly effective, whilst for five site types, effectiveness was unknown.

To meet the required standards for sites legitimately contributing to the objectives of GBF Target 3, sites must meet each of the constituent elements/conditions set out under its definition. These Statements of Compliance assessments address the elements/conditions of a) protection and b) effective management. They do not address the additional definitional elements/conditions of c) ecological representation, d) connectedness and e) equitable governance.

PAWG recommends that the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations invest urgently in improving the management effectiveness of all sites considered in this assessment (and any future types of new areas proposed as OECMs) to ensure that these sites can all effectively contribute to the 30x30 target, noting that to meet the required standards, sites must be both protected *and* effectively managed. PAWG understands that non-governmental organisations rely on charitable resources to manage their sites effectively and that public money should be made available to support their efforts to contribute to the 30x30 target.

PAWG found many data gaps, especially with respect to management effectiveness and condition of sites. These are highlighted in each of the individual designation type Statement of Compliance assessments.

Compared to the 2014 assessments, there have been some notable changes to whether sites are considered by PAWG to qualify against the IUCN criteria for protected areas. These are a re-assessment of current publicly available data, progress (or lack of) towards qualifying criteria since the last assessment where some leniency had been adopted, the option of identifying OECMs rather than protected areas as a method of classifying sites qualifying for the 30x30 target, and a more rigorous assessment against the criteria, have changed the results and conclusions of site types.

Of those designation types that were deemed to qualify as protected areas in the 2014 assessment, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, National Nature Reserves, National Parks, most NGO land, UNESCO Biosphere and World Heritage Sites, no longer qualify as protected areas in their entirety, in the estimation of PAWG. The exceptions are those areas within those designation types which are covered by other qualifying designations i.e., Sites/Areas of Special Scientific Interest; marine protected area designations; Ramsar Sites, Special Protection Areas, and Special Areas of Conservation. However, elements of the remaining geographic areas within those sites could be included as qualifying areas contributing to the 30% target as OECMs but would require assessment on a case-by-case basis. The inclusion of all marine protected area designation types across the UK as protected areas which meet the IUCN definition, takes the assessment further forward for marine areas since the 2014 assessment. However, PAWG remains concerned that the continuation of some damaging activities in these areas needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Based on the assessment, PAWG believes that, subject to a focus on securing management effectiveness, a significant land and sea area across the UK could qualify for the 30x30 target, either as protected area or OECM, and with concerted efforts across the governmental and non-governmental bodies, including attention on completing site networks, progress towards the 2030 deadline is achievable.

PAWG intends to update annually these Statements of Compliance assessments, reflecting anticipated changes in policy and practice in relation to the designation types assessed. PAWG would welcome further information to update our assessments until the end of September 2024, and relevant evidence should be sent to IUCNUK.PAWG@wwt.org.uk.

Limitation of resources means that this review has not yet been extended to UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies.



Grey-headed Albatross *Thalassarche chrysostoma* in front of breeding slopes, South Georgia, which hold 40% of the world population. Copyright Dr Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF.org.uk.

2. Introduction

2.1. Assessment in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

In 2014, the IUCN National Committee UK (IUCN-NCUK) published an assessment – [Putting Nature on the Map](#) (PNOTM) – of potential types of protected areas in the UK against IUCN definitions and standards (Crofts *et al.* 2014).

This was a ground-breaking assessment of the multitude of different types of areas historically established across the UK, at least in part, for the purposes of biodiversity conservation. However, in the nearly a decade since then, much has changed, not least internationally.

In December 2022, the Convention on Biological Diversity’s 15th Conference of Parties (COP15) adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) (Convention on Biological Diversity 2022). The GBF seeks to respond to the 2019 Global Assessment Report of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services issued by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES 2019) in 2019, the fifth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook*, and many other scientific documents which provide ample evidence that, despite ongoing efforts, biodiversity is deteriorating worldwide at rates unprecedented in human history.

Target 3 of the GBF, known colloquially as “30 by 30” (hereafter ‘30x30’), calls for 30% of the world’s terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, to be in effective protection and management by 2030:

“Target 3. Ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, recognizing indigenous and traditional territories, where applicable, and integrated into wider landscapes, seascapes and the ocean, while ensuring that any sustainable use, where appropriate in such areas, is fully consistent with conservation outcomes, recognizing and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities over their traditional territories.”

This target will be achieved through the establishment of effectively conserved and effectively managed protected areas and OECMs.

Both these types of area-based conservation measure are well defined under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and both have extensive CBD and IUCN guidance including, in ‘What Should Count?’: “All protected areas should have clear ecological objectives, be managed with nature conservation as the dominant priority and be free of any environmentally damaging activities” ([IUCN 2022](#)).

The UK Government and the Devolved Administrations have committed to implement Target 3 in the UK both on land and in the marine environment.

These assessments consider those elements of the Target 3 definition that require sites to be “effectively conserved and managed”. It has not been possible to consider whether the individual site types are either “ecologically representative”, “well-connected” and/or are “equitably governed”. PAWG notes for connectivity in particular, that whilst some site types have been selected on a

network basis (for example Special Protection Areas), others – such as World Heritage Sites – are selected individually, making connectivity per se of lesser significance in the context of the individual site type.

Since 2014, the UK has withdrawn from the European Union, with the replacement of the legal obligations for some protected areas established through the Birds and Habitats Directives, and corresponding statutory requirements within new national legislation.

The period has also seen growing awareness of the importance of effective management of land for biodiversity, as well as formal recognition of the role, alongside formally protected areas, of OECMs, introduced as an element of 'Aichi' Target 11 of the Convention on Biological Diversity's *Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020* (CBD 2010). In November 2018, Parties to the CBD adopted at the 14th Conference of the Parties a definition of an "other effective area-based conservation measure" as well as guiding principles, common characteristics and criteria for the identification of OECMs ([CBD/COP/DEC/14/8](#)):

"Other effective area-based conservation measure" means "a geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in situ* conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and, where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socioeconomic, and other locally relevant values";

*"the conservation of ecosystems and natural habitats and the maintenance and recovery of viable populations of species in their natural surroundings and, in the case of domesticated or cultivated species, in the surroundings where they have developed their distinctive properties".

For all these national and international reasons, the Protected Areas Working Group (PAWG)³ of the IUCN NCUK has considered it timely to revisit the Statements of Compliance assessments made in *PNOTM* in the light of new knowledge and understanding, and in particular as an aid to UK Government and the Devolved Administrations in implementing the commitment to establish and effectively manage 30% of land and 30% of territorial marine areas by 2030 – a deadline that is now just six years away.

Methods used are outlined in section 2, with the assessments, and the evidence supporting them are presented in section 3, and summary conclusions in section 4.

PAWG's efforts and support for 30x30 in the UK's Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies are explained in Appendix 1.

2.2. Progress towards targets

Following the global commitment to 30x30 there have been a number of assessments of progress towards that target. [Stames et al. \(2021\)](#) assessed the extent and effectiveness of terrestrial protected areas in the UK and found that only 11.4% of land area falls within protected areas designated primarily for nature conservation, of which at most 43 – 51% (of that land area) is currently

³ The role of the IUCN National Committee UK Protected Areas Working Group (PAWG) is to provide independent strategic analysis and advice in support of the UK Government's and the Devolved Administration' collective aspiration to protect 30% of the UK's land and 30% of its seas by 2030, thus demonstrating leadership in this area of conservation policy and practice. PAWG aims to support the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations in their application of the IUCN definitions and guidance on Protected Areas (PAs) and Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs). It will also assess what opportunities there are in informing, or interest from, the UK Overseas Territories and the three UK Crown Dependencies in such thinking.

assessed to be in favourable condition. On this basis they concluded that ‘as little as 4.9% of UK land area may be effectively protected for nature’ – and the 2023 [State of Nature](#) report (Burns *et al.* 2023) reached a similar conclusion.

At sea, the 2023 [State of Nature](#) report found that ‘although 38% of the UK waters are designated as protected areas, we lack a comprehensive condition assessment and management is not yet fully implemented at most sites’. Analysis at country level paints a similar picture – for example, in England, a [2023 progress report](#) on 30x30 compiled by Wildlife and Countryside Link (WCL 2023) found that in England while 40% of England’s seas and 8.5% its of land are protected, only 8% and 3.1% respectively are *both* protected *and* effectively managed, Scottish Environment Link (2022) [found](#) that 18% of Scottish land is protected for nature, with 65% of features in favourable condition, and [Northern Ireland Environment Link](#) (2021) found the marine protected areas occupy 38% of Northern Ireland’s inshore waters but that only 4.48% of these are considered to be ‘under favourable management’.

To date neither the UK Government nor the Devolved Administrations have published criteria or any process for the identification and assessment of potential OECMs. However, they have made commitments to do so (for example in the Welsh Government’s Biodiversity Deep Dive [recommendations](#) (Welsh Government 2021), the Westminster Government’s [Nature Recovery Green Paper](#) (DEFRA 2022) and the [Scottish Government’s draft Framework](#) for 30x30 in Scotland (NatureScot 2023).

This technical report provides a contemporary analysis of which UK designations currently meet the IUCN definition of protected areas and assesses the efficacy of their management. For those designations assessed in the original *Putting Nature on the Map* report which do not meet that definition, PAWG identifies those which it believes have the potential (in whole or in part) to meet IUCN criteria as OECMs (noting that there will be other areas outside those designations which will also merit such consideration and should be assessed on a case-by-case basis). For example, the role of land owned or managed by non-governmental organisations in the UK (those which were deemed to qualify as Privately Protected Areas⁴ under *PNTOM*) has prompted some new interpretations of the guidance which helps to clarify their vital role in supporting the 30x30 target, but not always as protected areas.

As the analyses cited above have highlighted, the percentage of land and sea at both UK and country levels which currently satisfy IUCN standards and criteria, and which are being effectively managed, falls far short of the 30x30 target. However, PAWG hopes that this assessment is helpful in identifying the pipeline of protected areas and potential OECMs which, subject to the necessary steps to ensure that biodiversity outcomes are being delivered and are adequately secured, could set the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations on an ambitious path towards meeting their 30x30 commitments.

2.3. Assessment methodology

Objective questions were developed from formal protected area and OECM definitions, as well as to determine the effectiveness of management (at the level of the site designation type). In the site designation type proforma (section 3), the Statements of Compliance assessments are presented in three parts.

⁴ PAWG used the guidance on applying the IUCN definition of a protected area to a privately protected areas <https://www.iucn.org/content/futures-privately-protected-areas>, focusing on security of tenure, protection from external threats, and organisational control of offsite impacts on management effectiveness.

The first related to protected areas, defined by IUCN (Dudley 2008) as:

“A clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.”

Part 1. Protected area definition

Main elements of IUCN definition
Does this type of protected area have clearly defined geographical boundaries?
Is this type of site recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature?
Is the main management objective nature conservation?
Does the designation of the site prevent, or eliminate where necessary, any exploitation or management practice that will be harmful to their objectives of designation?
Is the long-term nature conservation ⁵ ensured through legal or other effective means?
Based on the evidence available, does this type of site meet the IUCN’s definition of a protected area?

If the site designation type did not meet the definition of a protected area under Part 1, it was assessed in relation to the OECM definition (as above) in Part 2.

Part 2. Other Effective (Area-based) Conservation Measures assessment

IUCN screening tool tests
Is the designation type a protected area ⁶ ?
Does the site have the essential characteristics required to meet the OECM definition? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is geographically defined • The site is governed and managed and such arrangements are expected to be ongoing and sustained over the long-term • The site delivers effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity • The site is free of environmentally damaging activities and threats to biodiversity
Will the conservation outcome at the site endure over the long-term?
What is the in-situ area-based conservation target (e.g. GBF Target 3) being met by this OECM?
Based on the evidence available, does the site meet the IUCN’s definition of an OECM?

All site types were then assessed for evidence of the effectiveness of their management in the delivery of positive biodiversity outcomes/conservation objectives in Part 3.

“Management effectiveness evaluation is defined as the assessment of how well protected areas are being managed – primarily the extent to which they are

⁵ IUCN define ‘long-term’ as “Protected areas should be managed in perpetuity and not as a short-term or temporary management strategy” (Dudley 2008).

⁶ This report is aiming to establish whether site designation types that have historically been considered to be protected areas across the UK should still be considered as such, based on accepted international definitions (CBD and IUCN). Therefore, some site designation types formerly recognised and reported as protected areas may now be more correctly considered as OECMs, either in their totality, or in part. This could be true at the site designation type level, or on a case-by-case basis of individual sites within a site designation type.

protecting values and achieving goals and objectives.” (Hockings & Dudley 2008).

Part 3. Management effectiveness assessment

Is the management of this type of protected area/OECM documented?
What evidence is there that the measures to achieve the conservation objectives are being implemented?
Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?
Are the protected areas/OECMs moving towards or have they reached their conservation objectives?
Based on the evidence available, is this site designation type/network of sites being managed effectively?

In line with the requirements of the 1998 ‘Aarhus’ [Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters](#), PAWG considers it critical that information on the current status of protected areas and OECMs is in the public domain, including useful and transparent summary data at the very least.

Accordingly, assessments were made following searches for relevant, publicly available data and information on the websites of (or otherwise published elsewhere in other formats) those organisations or statutory authorities responsible for the relevant site designation type.

These searches were made during the period May to September 2023.

In many cases, although data (relevant to management for instance), was not available in detail, some websites nonetheless provided clear statements as to existing processes. Such information was used to inform the assessments.

Where PAWG found no information to suggest any relevant activities were occurring or planned, it concluded that these processes were lacking.

Where future activities were stated to be planned but yet are not currently occurring, PAWG made an assessment on the *status quo* in late 2023 – given the potential for planned processes not to come to fruition.

Some site types were assessed and reported on at a country level, rather than at the scale of Great Britain (GB) or the United Kingdom (UK), where there were significant differences between policy and practices between the four countries. The different geographical occurrence of designation types across the UK is shown in Table 1.

2.4. Future review and call for information

PAWG intends to update these Statements of Compliance annually, reflecting anticipated and enacted changes in policy and practice in relation to the site designation types assessed. PAWG recognises that data not in the accessible public domain may be helpful in refining these assessments and is keen to work with those who can help to inform the assessments over time.

PAWG would welcome further information from relevant stakeholders (until the end of September 2024) to help it update its assessments during 2024, and relevant evidence should be sent to IUCNUK.PAWG@wwt.org.uk.

Table 1. Occurrence of different designation types across the UK.

Type of designation	England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	Yes	Yes		Yes
Butterfly Conservation's (BC) Nature Reserves	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Heritage Coasts	Yes			Yes
John Muir Trust (JMT) properties	Yes		Yes	
Local Nature Reserves (LNR)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Marine Protected Area (MPA) designations⁷	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
National Nature Reserves (NNR)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
National Parks (including The Broads)	Yes		Yes	Yes
National Scenic Areas (NSAs)			Yes	
National Trust (NT) and National Trust for Scotland (NTS) properties	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Plantlife Nature Reserves	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ramsar Sites	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) reserves	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
The Wildlife Trusts' Nature Reserves	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sites and Areas of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI and ASSI)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Special Area of Conservation (SAC; part of the National Site Network)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Special Protection Areas (SPA; part of the National Site Network)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust's (WWT) sites	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Woodland Trust (WT) sites	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
UNESCO Biosphere Reserves	Yes		Yes	Yes
UNESCO Global Geoparks	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
UNESCO World Heritage Sites (natural or mixed sites only)	Yes	Yes	Yes	

⁷ including Marine Conservation Zones in England, Northern Ireland and Wales; Nature Conservation Marine Protected Areas in Scotland; and Highly Protected Marine Areas which can apply in all four countries.



Pengwern Vale, Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB. Photo: Howard Davies.

3. Statements of Compliance for protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures in the UK

3.1. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) (rebranded ‘National Landscapes’ in England and Wales in November 2023)

Summary

Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, known colloquially as “30x30”, calls for 30% of the world’s terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, to be in effective protection and management by 2030. This target will be achieved through the establishment of protected areas (PAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). Both these types of area-based conservation measures are well defined under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and both have extensive CBD and IUCN guidance. Based on the evidence PAWG has gathered, the conclusions are:

- Does the AONB network meet (all) criteria for PAs? **NO (except for the areas of AONBs benefitting from protections afforded by SSSI, ASSI, Ramsar, SPA and/or SAC designations)**
- Does the AONB network meet the criteria for ‘effectively managed’? **PARTLY**
- If not protected areas, do AONBs warrant case-by-case consideration against OECM criteria? **YES**

Recommendations

The IUCN NCUK Protected Areas Working Group (PAWG) does not believe the AONB designation itself qualifies as a PA but defined areas within them could qualify as an OECM as a component of the 30x30 target for the UK following case by case assessment against OECM criteria and subject to evidence of effective management. PAWG recommends that the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations invest urgently in improving the management effectiveness of all AONBs to ensure qualifying areas effectively contribute to the 30x30 target.

AONBs occur in England, Wales and Northern Ireland but not in Scotland. In all three countries where AONBs are present, PAWG believes that the need for a strengthened purpose for nature’s recovery in AONBs must also be accompanied by strengthened duties on all statutory bodies ‘to implement and to further’ (rather than to simply ‘have regard to’) that purpose. There must also be a clear requirement on public bodies (and other responsible bodies) to implement AONB management plans. Together these would place AONBs on a much stronger footing to contribute additional areas to the 30x30 target. In the absence of these, PAWG does not believe the network can assure long-term protection or conservation of land within their boundaries, except in areas that benefit from the provisions of other designations within the AONB, e.g., SSSIs.

<p>Brief description of the site network and its stated objective(s)</p>	<p>An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a designated exceptional landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are precious enough to be safeguarded in the national interest. AONBs occur in England, Wales and Northern Ireland but not in Scotland. NOTE: these areas were rebranded as ‘National Landscapes’ in England and Wales in November 2023 but PAWG refers to them as AONBs in this report as this is what they were called at the time of assessment.</p> <p>The primary purpose of an AONB is “to conserve and enhance natural beauty”. This was laid out for AONBs in England and Wales in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, and further confirmed in the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000. The 1949 Act was passed following reports earlier in the 1940s of the Hobhouse and Dower committees, commissioned by government to look at safeguarding valuable landscapes and providing public access to land for recreation. Supplementary (non-statutory) purposes to AONB designation were developed in the 1990s and are:</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In pursuing the primary purpose, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry and other rural industries, and of the economic and social needs of the local community. • Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment. • Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met in an AONB so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses. <p>AONBs in Northern Ireland were first established through the Amenity Lands (NI) Act 1965; and more recently under the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (NI) Order 1985.</p>
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1. PROTECTED AREAS ASSESSMENT

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to AONBs	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Does this type of protected area have clearly defined geographical boundaries?	<p>YES. Each AONB has a legally notified boundary made – in England and Wales – by formal Order under Section 82 of the CRoW Act and in Northern Ireland under Section 14 of the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (NI) Order 1985⁸.</p> <p>They can be found online for England⁹, Northern Ireland¹⁰ and Wales¹¹. It is a duty of the Agencies to secure that copies of any order are available for inspection by the public at all reasonable times: at the office of the Agencies; at the offices of each local authority whose area includes any part of the area to which the order relates; and at such other place or places in or near that area as the Agencies may determine.</p> <p>There is no provision for AONBs in Scotland where National Scenic Areas provide a similar, alternative designation and are covered in another Statement of Compliance.</p>	No change.
Is this type of site recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature?	<p>PARTLY. Under the legislation in England and Wales, each relevant government authority must prepare and publish a management plan and review that plan every five years. This is a landscape-scale plan, and reflects the broad</p>	This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no (or limited) evidence that the designation per se is recognised, dedicated

⁸ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1985/170/article/14>

⁹ <https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/8e3ae3b9-a827-47f1-b025-f08527a4e84e/areas-of-outstanding-natural-beauty-england>

¹⁰ <https://gis.daera-ni.gov.uk/arcgis/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=bb721449cb8949e7a4f90c722bd2d80b>

¹¹ https://datamap.gov.wales/layers/inspire-nrw:NRW_AONB

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to AONBs	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
	<p>purposes of these landscapes, of which the long-term conservation of nature is one component. Its aim is to ensure focused management over a long period, but there is no statutory requirement to deliver on the content of those plans, and the lack of duties on public bodies to do so, along with resource constraints limits the abilities of the landscape authorities to deliver against Management Plan objectives and targets. To date the plans assumed an adaptive management model but those now in draft are required to develop an “ecosystems approach”.</p> <p>In Northern Ireland, powers to manage AONBs are permissive and not obligatory on DAERA.</p>	<p>and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature.</p>
<p>Is the main management objective nature conservation?</p>	<p>PARTLY. The priority objective of AONB designation in and management is the conservation of natural beauty that (by Section 92) embraces nature conservation. In Northern Ireland, conserving natural beauty is the primary objective of the designation with other objectives of secondary importance¹².</p>	<p>This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no (or limited) evidence that the designation per se is delivering nature conservation as a main management objective.</p>
<p>Does the designation of the site prevent, or eliminate where necessary, any exploitation or management practice that will be harmful to their objectives of designation?</p>	<p>PARTLY. England and Wales: Planning policy and decisions to protect the natural beauty and character of AONBs are the only real regulatory aspect of the designation, and are the responsibility of local authorities, under national guidance. This does not mean no development but ensuring that development complements the character of the landscape, is sustainable and is of an appropriate scale and nature.</p> <p>CRoW Act Section 82: The purpose is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. Improvement targets and indicators are set in the statutory management plan. Regular reporting by State of the AONB reports measures progress. In England, Natural England now produce statements of environmental opportunities for their Natural Character Areas (NCA) to embed the delivery of ecosystem services into management planning. The AONBs boundaries are a close match to the NCA and their plans must seek to achieve these objectives.</p> <p>The CRoW Act Section 85 states that ‘In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, a relevant authority shall have regard to the</p>	<p>This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no evidence that the designation per se is able to prevent management practices harmful to conservation objectives.</p>

¹² Section 14(5) of the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (NI) Order 1985

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to AONBs	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
	<p>purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB'. This requirement was recently updated in England by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 which now requires relevant authorities to 'seek to further' the purpose. PAWG notes that beauty does not necessarily relate to biodiversity conservation needs.</p> <p>AONB management plans are statutory documents that require Habitats Regulation Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisals where the site overlaps with Natura 2000 sites. The Strategic Planning Policy Statement in Northern Ireland, National Planning Policy Framework in England, and Planning Policy in Wales all require nature conservation to be taken into account when considering development in an AONB.</p> <p>Although planning controls give some protection to AONBs, the level of protection for nature conservation is not necessarily prioritised, except in areas where other designations occur, e.g., SSSI. The lack of suitable protection and management across all land within this designation has been recognised by UK Government¹³.</p> <p>At the 2019 'Landscapes for Life' Conference in Colchester, the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty made the Colchester Declaration¹⁴ on Nature Recovery on behalf of AONBs throughout the UK. This sets out pledges and targets to significantly increase the scale and pace of conservation and nature recovery activity to help halt the decline.</p> <p>PAWG notes current proposals to strengthen the statutory basis for AONB management plans which are welcome.</p> <p>Northern Ireland: Powers to manage AONBs are permissive and not obligatory on the DAERA.</p>	
Is the long-term nature conservation ensured through legal or other effective means?	PARTLY (See recommendations above).	This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no evidence that the designation per se is able to deliver continuity of nature conservation.

¹³ https://consult.defra.gov.uk/nature-recovery-green-paper/nature-recovery-green-paper/supporting_documents/Nature%20Recovery%20Green%20Paper%20Consultation%20%20Protected%20Sites%20and%20Species.pdf

¹⁴ <https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/projects/colchester-declaration>

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to AONBs	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Based on the evidence available, does this type of site meet the IUCN's definition of a protected area?	NO	This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance based on considerations outlined above.

2. OTHER EFFECTIVE (AREA-BASED) CONSERVATION MEASURES ASSESSMENT

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to AONBs
Is the designation type a protected area?	NO. AONBs are not in themselves protected areas.
Does the site have the essential characteristics required to meet the OECM definition? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is geographically defined The site is governed and managed and such arrangements are expected to be ongoing and sustained over the long-term The site delivers effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity The site is free of environmentally damaging activities and threats to biodiversity 	PARTLY. AONBs are geographically defined but the extent and type of conservation management varies spatially within and between sites. Biodiversity conservation and the prevention of environmentally damaging activities and threats to biodiversity can only be ensured where other statutorily designated sites overlap the AONB, e.g., SSSIs.
Will the conservation outcome at the site endure over the long-term?	NO. There is no evidence to suggest that conservation objectives will endure in the long-term outside those parts under other statutory designations, e.g., SSSIs.
What is the in-situ area-based conservation target (e.g., GBF Target 3) being met by this OECM?	In-situ area-based GBF Target 3 cannot be delivered in the absence of a statutory basis for AONB conservation and management.
Based on the evidence available, does the site meet the IUCN's definition of an OECM?	Some parts of some AONBs could qualify as OECMs when the landowner can prove long term management, but they should be assessed case-by-case

3. MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

Is the management of this type of protected area/OECM documented?	YES. Under the CRoW Act, AONB Management Plans are statutory documents. They must be reviewed every five years, and where an AONB crosses into the areas of more than one local authority, the authorities must 'act jointly' to prepare the Plan. AONB Partnerships will usually prepare Management Plans, drawing on their wide stakeholder involvement, but the Plans have to be
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		formally approved by the local authorities themselves (except where there is a Conservation Board).
What evidence is there that the measures to achieve the conservation objectives are being implemented?		UNKNOWN. Despite the pledges and targets set out in the Colchester Declaration, PAWG has not found any evidence of specific monitoring or reporting achievements against established nature conservation objectives (outside areas designated specifically for nature, e.g., SSSIs) at any AONB. However, PAWG knows that some excellent work is happening across the network and that the AONB Nature Recovery Solutions project is establishing recovery action where there is need ¹⁵ .
Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?		PARTLY. There is an established framework for monitoring environmental outcomes in protected landscapes in England, but this work is yet to report ¹⁶ . However, PAWG has not found any evidence of specific monitoring data available for AONBs, outside those areas covered by other designations, e.g., SSSIs.
Are the protected areas/OECMs moving towards or have they reached their conservation objectives?		UNKNOWN. Given the absence of whole-site monitoring data, PAWG could not find any quantifiable reporting of achievements against established objectives at any AONB and certainly not across the network.
Based on the evidence available, is this site designation type/network of sites being managed effectively?	England	PARTLY (some areas of some AONBs (e.g., SSSIs) are being managed effectively)
	Northern Ireland	PARTLY (some areas of some AONBs (e.g., SSSIs) are being managed effectively)
	Scotland	N/A
	Wales	PARTLY (some areas of some AONBs (e.g., SSSIs) are being managed effectively)

¹⁵ <https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/about-aonbs/Nature-recovery/nature-recovery-solutions>

¹⁶ <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5646437593382912>

3.2. Butterfly Conservation’s (BC) Nature Reserves

Summary

Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, known colloquially as “30x30”, calls for 30% of the world’s terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, to be in effective protection and management by 2030. This target will be achieved through the establishment of protected areas (PAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). Both these types of area-based conservation measures are well defined under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and both have extensive CBD and IUCN guidance. Based on the evidence PAWG has gathered, our conclusions are:

- Does the BC nature reserve network meet (all) criteria for PAs? **NO (except for the high proportion of BC nature reserve area benefitting from protections afforded by SSSI, ASSI, Ramsar, SPA and/or SAC designations)**
- Does the BC nature reserve network meet the criteria for ‘effectively managed’? **PARTLY**
- If not protected areas, do BC’s nature reserves warrant case-by-case consideration against OECM criteria? **YES**

Recommendations

The IUCN NCUK Protected Areas Working Group (PAWG) does not believe that the BC nature reserve designation itself qualifies as a PA except where land overlaps with statutory sites, but other sites within the designation type could qualify as a PA or a potential OECM and a high proportion of them should therefore be a component of the 30x30 target for the UK following case by case assessment of sites against PA and OECM criteria, and subject to evidence of effective management.

PAWG recognises and supports BC continuing commitment to secure further funding to continue improving, where necessary, the management effectiveness of their sites to ensure they can all effectively contribute to the 30x30 target. Management effectiveness can be constrained by impacts, both on- and off-site, outside organisational control. PAWG recommends that BC is funded to audit those landholdings where external influences are having an impact on management, so enabling the identification of strategic actions and policies that will help address these.

<p>Brief description of the site network and its stated objective(s)</p>	<p>BC owns or manages 35 reserves. These are the formal reserves on which responsibility for management and liability for care and use lies with BC. More than 50 further sites where BC volunteers undertake or support the habitat management needed by Lepidoptera of conservation importance are termed ‘partnership reserves’.</p> <p>BC’s objectives for the acquisition of nature reserves guide us to select sites that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • priorities for the conservation of butterflies and moths; • opportunities for restoration as a conservation measure for threatened populations; • are suitable for visitor access, education and promoting nature conservation; • extending existing reserves, consolidating their function in the landscape; and • provide opportunities for effective partnerships. <p>Through these reserves BC aims to protect habitat areas that can help populations of threatened species to persist and promote landscape scale approaches to conservation and restoration. The reserves should also be exemplars for habitat management. BC aims to manage its nature reserves to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintain and, where possible, enhance their nature conservation value; • promote the conservation of Lepidoptera, through management, research, education and publicity as appropriate;
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure safe access, and adhere to safe working practices; and • ensure the highest standards of management, using best practice and appropriate materials reflecting local character. <p>Reserves are managed in accordance with objectives for maintaining the habitat requirements of the key Lepidoptera species involved any conservation designations and the requirements of any management scheme agreements that support their enhancement or maintenance. There is an expectation that all BC's reserves will be open to visitors but a small number need to have restricted access for conservation and safety reasons. Much reserve maintenance is undertaken by volunteers and such participation in habitat management, likewise on other sites and in conjunction with the public and other groups, is an important aim for BC.</p>
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1. PROTECTED AREA ASSESSMENT

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to Butterfly Conservation Nature Reserves	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Does this type of protected area have clearly defined geographical boundaries?	YES. All BC reserves have a clear boundary that is usually legally defined as the extent of ownership or tenure, and thus recorded by the Land Registry. In addition, the boundaries are mapped digitally on BC's Geographical Information System.	No change.
Is this type of site recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature?	YES. Acquiring nature reserves is a specific function for BC and is in fulfilment of their purpose. They are purchased to be held in perpetuity as nature reserves and, where leased, the tenure is secured for as long as possible. Some reserves are in whole or in part designated SSSI. This is mentioned in any descriptions of the reserves and the full details of the SSSIs are available to the public through the Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies. SSSI notification ensures appropriate management requirements for the widest range of biodiversity features and priorities.	No change.
Is the main management objective nature conservation?	YES. It is the priority objective and purpose and determines management approaches and methods. Public access may be limited where dictated by conservation requirements though the extent to which that might be applied will be limited by statutory access provisions.	No change.

Does the designation of the site prevent, or eliminate where necessary, any exploitation or management practice that will be harmful to their objectives of designation?	PARTLY. Where present, SSSI designation provides means of limiting all management and uses that might be adverse to the designation features. Ownership by BC allows full control of management and uses other than access in accordance with statute. Leases provide a more limited level of control but are invariably negotiated so as to provide the means of control needed. In case of both ownership and lease there are a few instances where sporting rights are not within BC control but no adverse impacts are known at present.	This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no evidence that the designation per se is able to prevent management practices harmful to conservation objectives. The security of site protection is examined more rigorously in this assessment.
Is the long-term nature conservation ensured through legal or other effective means?	PARTLY. Where SSSI, SAC and SPA designations do not apply then BC's objectives and policies for the reserves are an effective means for ensuring their long-term nature conservation purpose. However, the organisation is able to dispose of land and has no obligation to continue to own or manage any of its estate.	This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no evidence that the designation per se is able to deliver continuity of nature conservation.
Based on the evidence available, does this type of site meet the IUCN's definition of a protected area?	NO. Many BC Nature Reserves are underpinned by SSSI, SPA and SAC designations, and those areas so underpinned do qualify by virtue of those underpinning designations. However, the designation of BC nature reserve itself does not sufficiently qualify given that there is no protection offered by legislation and sites can be disposed of.	This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance based on considerations outlined above.

2. OTHER EFFECTIVE (AREA-BASED) CONSERVATION ASSESSMENT (IF THE NETWORK DOES NOT QUALIFY AS A PROTECTED AREA)

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to Butterfly Conservation Nature Reserves
Is the designation type a protected area?	NO. BC Nature Reserves are not in themselves protected areas.
Does the site have the essential characteristics required to meet the OECM definition? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is geographically defined • The site is governed and managed and such arrangements are expected to be ongoing and sustained over the long-term • The site delivers effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity • The site is free of environmentally-damaging activities and threats to biodiversity 	PARTLY. BC nature reserves are geographically defined, deliver in-situ conservation of biodiversity, and offer some protection from environmentally-damaging activities on paper but there is no assurance of long-term management at every site.
Will the conservation outcome at the site endure over the long-term?	PARTLY. BC is committed to the long-term management of its nature reserves with management actions resourced and being implemented. However, except for those sites

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to Butterfly Conservation Nature Reserves
	benefiting from legal protection, BC's management activities will always be constrained by its charitable income and security (or otherwise) of tenure.
What is the in-situ area-based conservation target (e.g., GBF Target 3) being met by this OECM?	In situ area based GBF Target 3 , but only if protections and long-term management are secured across the network.
Based on the evidence available, does the site meet the IUCN's definition of an OECM?	Some BC Nature Reserves could qualify as OECMs and should be assessed on a case by case basis

3. MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

Is the management of this type of protected area/OECM documented?	PARTLY. Management Plans are prepared for all BC Nature Reserves, but these documents are not publicly available.
What evidence is there that the measures to achieve the conservation objectives are being implemented?	UNKNOWN
Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?	YES
Are the protected areas/OECMs moving towards or have they reached their conservation objectives?	UNKNOWN
Based on the evidence available, is this site designation type/network of sites being managed effectively?	PARTLY (impacts on management sometimes fall outside the control of the organisation)

3.3. Heritage Coasts

Summary

Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, known colloquially as “30x30”, calls for 30% of the world’s terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, to be in effective protection and management by 2030. This target will be achieved through the establishment of protected areas (PAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). Both these types of area-based conservation measures are well defined under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and both have extensive CBD and IUCN guidance. Based on the evidence PAWG has gathered, our conclusions are:

- Does the Heritage Coast network meet (all) criteria for PAs? **NO (except for the areas benefitting from separate protections afforded by SSSI, ASSI, Ramsar, SPA and/or SAC designations)**
- Does the Heritage Coast network meet the criteria for ‘effectively managed’? **UNKNOWN**
- If not protected areas, do Heritage Coasts warrant case-by-case consideration against OECM criteria? **YES**

Recommendations

The IUCN NCUK Protected Areas Working Group (PAWG) does not believe the Heritage Coast designation itself qualifies as a PA, and are unlikely to qualify as an OECM, and should not be a component of the 30x30 target for the UK (except for those areas benefitting from protections afforded by other designations).

<p>Brief description of the site network and its stated objective(s)</p>	<p>Heritage Coasts are ‘defined’ rather than designated, so there is no statutory designation process like that associated with protected landscapes. They were established to conserve the best stretches of undeveloped coast in England and Wales. A Heritage Coast is defined by agreement between the relevant maritime local authorities and Natural England or Natural Resources Wales. The national policy framework and objectives for Heritage Coasts were developed by the Countryside Commission, a predecessor of Natural England and Natural Resources Wales, and agreed by government.</p> <p>Heritage Coasts were established to conserve, protect and enhance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the natural beauty of the coastline; • their terrestrial, coastal and marine flora and fauna; • their heritage features; • encourage and help the public to enjoy, understand and appreciate these areas; • maintain and improve the health of inshore waters affecting heritage coasts and their beaches through appropriate environmental management measures; and • take account of the needs of agriculture, forestry and fishing and the economic and social needs of the small communities on these coasts.
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1. PROTECTED AREA ASSESSMENT

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to Heritage Coasts	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Does this type of protected area have clearly defined geographical boundaries?	YES. Each Heritage Coast is mapped and its boundaries plotted but there is no statutory basis for the designation.	No change.
Is it recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature?	YES. The aims include nature conservation and broadly speaking these aims align with those of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks – but see immediately below.	No change.
Is the main management objective nature conservation?	NO. The aims most certainly include conservation of nature. However, although this aim is listed first, there is no explicit hierarchy (no Sandford-type test) between this and the other aims.	No change.
Does the designation of the site prevent, or eliminate where necessary, any exploitation or management practice that will be harmful to their objectives of designation?	PARTLY. This will depend on planning policies and sympathetic ownership and land management. In England, Heritage Coasts receive some protection through development control with the planning system. Paragraph 114 of the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) states that local authorities should: 'maintain the character of the undeveloped coast, protecting and enhancing its distinctive landscapes, particularly in areas defined as heritage coast, and improve public access to and enjoyment of the coast.' Although these planning controls give some protection to Heritage Coasts, the level of protection for nature conservation is not necessarily prioritised, except in areas where other designations occur, e.g., SSSI.	No change.
Is the long-term nature conservation ensured through legal or other effective means?	NO. As planning definitions, the long-term status of Heritage Coasts could be in question and their aims could be arbitrarily weakened without any formal legal process. Though most Heritage Coasts have existed for many years, they are inherently vulnerable to governments' changing priorities. The management of the Heritage Coasts is dependent on the agreement of owners.	This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no evidence that the designation per se is able to deliver continuity of nature conservation.
Based on the evidence available, does this type of site meet the IUCN's definition of a protected area?	NO	No change.

2. OTHER EFFECTIVE (AREA-BASED) CONSERVATION MEASURES ASSESSMENT

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to Heritage Coasts
Is the designation type a protected area?	NO. Heritage Coasts are not in themselves protected areas.
Does the site have the essential characteristics required to meet the OECM definition? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is geographically defined The site is governed and managed and such arrangements are expected to be ongoing and sustained over the long-term The site delivers effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity The site is free of environmentally damaging activities and threats to biodiversity 	PARTLY. Heritage Coasts are geographically defined but the extent and type of conservation management varies spatially within and between sites. There is some legal constraint on land management within all Heritage Coasts through the planning process but this does not always prioritise nature conservation. Biodiversity conservation the prevention of environmentally damaging activities and threats to biodiversity can only be ensured where other statutorily designated sites are present, e.g., SSSIs.
Will the conservation outcome at the site endure over the long-term?	NO. There is no evidence to suggest that conservation objectives will endure in the long-term outside those parts under other statutory designations, e.g., SSSIs. Whilst positive management for conservation has always been an important part of the aims of Heritage Coasts, delivery in many cases depends upon sympathetic ownership (the National Trust owns about 40% of the coastline of Heritage Coasts).
What is the in-situ area-based conservation target (e.g., GBF Target 3) being met by this OECM?	In-situ area-based GBF Target 3 cannot be delivered in the absence of a statutory basis for Heritage Coast conservation and management.
Based on the evidence available, does the site meet the IUCN's definition of an OECM?	NO

3. MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

Is the management of this type of protected area/OECM documented?	NO. Natural England is tasked with encouraging local authorities to proactively plan management where Heritage Coasts are outside of those designated landscapes but PAWG has found no evidence of plans in the public domain.
What evidence is there that the measures to achieve the conservation objectives are being implemented?	NO. The Countryside Commission reviewed the effectiveness of the Heritage Coast network in 2006 ¹⁷ but there was little in that report to suggest there have been any significant progress towards any specific conservation objectives beyond those provided by other designations and schemes.
Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?	NO. PAWG has not found any evidence of specific monitoring data available for Heritage Coasts, outside those areas covered by other designations, e.g., SSSIs.

¹⁷ <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4594438590431232?category=56001>

Are the protected areas/OECMs moving towards or have they reached their conservation objectives?	UNKNOWN. Given the absence of whole-site monitoring data, PAWG could not find any recent reporting of achievements against established objectives at any site and certainly not across the whole network.
Based on the evidence available, is this site designation type/network of sites being managed effectively?	England and Wales: UNKNOWN

3.4. John Muir Trust (JMT) properties

Summary

Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, known colloquially as “30x30”, calls for 30% of the world’s terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, to be in effective protection and management by 2030. This target will be achieved through the establishment of protected areas (PAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). Both these types of area-based conservation measures are well defined under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and both have extensive CBD and IUCN guidance. Based on the evidence PAWG has gathered, our conclusions are:

- Does the John Muir Trust property network meet (all) criteria for PAs? **NO (except for the high proportion of JMT properties benefitting from protections afforded by SSSI, ASSI, Ramsar, SPA and/or SAC designations)**
- Does the John Muir Trust property network meet the criteria for ‘effectively managed’? **PARTLY**
- If not protected areas, do John Muir Trust properties warrant case-by-case consideration against OECM criteria? **YES**

Recommendations

The IUCN NCUK Protected Areas Working Group (PAWG) does not believe that the JMT property designation itself qualifies as a PA except where land overlaps with statutory sites, but other sites within the designation type should qualify as a PA or a potential OECM and a high proportion of them could therefore be a component of the 30x30 target for the UK following case by case assessment of sites against PA and OECM criteria, and subject to evidence of effective management.

PAWG recognises and supports JMT continuing commitment to secure further funding to continue improving, where necessary, the management effectiveness of their sites to ensure they can all effectively contribute to the 30x30 target. Management effectiveness can be constrained by impacts, both on- and off-site, outside organisational control. PAWG recommends that JMT is funded to audit those landholdings where external influences are having an impact on management, so enabling the identification of strategic actions and policies that will help address these.

<p>Brief description of the site network and its stated objective(s)</p>	<p>The JMT is committed to practical action to conserve Britain’s remaining wild places, for their own sake, for the wildlife that depends on them, for the benefit of local communities, and for the quiet enjoyment of present and future generations. JMT’s distinctive role in the conservation of wild land is to safeguard whole landscapes within it, areas sufficiently large – whole hill ranges or watersheds – that they retain or can be restored to their natural processes and biodiversity and can provide the spiritual qualities for which humans value wild land: freedom, tranquillity and solitude.</p> <p>JMT acquires land in order to protect it from potential threats, demonstrate wild land management and work with local people and visitors to achieve protection, conservation and enhancement. It will seek to support others with an interest in the effective protection and conservation management of wild land, whether they are communities, public or private landowners, or other conservation organisations. JMT aims to cooperate with other owners of wild land, to influence others by demonstrating best practice in the care of wild land, and to collaborate in conservation projects with other organisations.</p> <p>The principal aim of JMT is to safeguard wild land for its long-term conservation. Land will therefore usually only be disposed of when there is a legal requirement to do so. For instance, in the case of compulsory purchase and croft sales. In addition, there may be occasions where peripheral areas of land of limited conservation interest might be better managed by others. For example, by local communities or other conservation bodies.</p> <p>JMT owns wild land to protect it from inappropriate development, and to improve habitats and encourage a more natural landscape and ecosystem. A prime aim of management is to retain, and where possible restore, natural processes and indigenous populations of plants and animals. The Trust will therefore promote sustainable</p>
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	<p>management practices, and the repair where necessary of physical damage that has resulted in declines in biodiversity and deterioration of soils and landscape.</p> <p>For each of its properties, JMT aims build up a body of knowledge, through appropriate research, surveys and monitoring; and on this basis plans to develop a management plan covering all relevant ecological, historic, social and recreational aspects. Management plans will be drawn up, and regularly reviewed, in accordance with the Trust's Wild Land Management Standards. Five of JMT's estates include land that is under crofting tenure, and therefore managed by local crofters.</p>
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1. PROTECTED AREA ASSESSMENT

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to JMT properties	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Does this type of protected area have clearly defined geographical boundaries?	YES. JMT properties have digitally mapped boundaries. Land ownership and tenure is recorded by the Land Registry. Seven of the properties are, in whole or in part, SSSIs and each SSSI has a legally notified boundary available through the NatureScot and Natural England.	No change.
Is this type of site recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature?	YES. The Memorandum of Association states "The Trust's object is to conserve and protect wild places with their indigenous animals, plants and soils for the benefit of present and future generations" and in particular 3.1.2 to protect existing wild places so as to conserve their natural processes, and their indigenous animals, plants and soils. Further, for properties that have SSSI designation, individual SSSIs are designated for one or more specified natural features – plants, animal, rocks and landforms; management must give priority to these features but may also support the conservation of other habitats, species, rocks and landforms.	No change.
Is the main management objective nature conservation?	YES. JMT manages its properties according to its wild land management standards, which focus on habitat improvement and encouraging a more natural landscape and ecosystem. Its Land Management Policy states that "A prime aim of management is to retain, and where possible restore, natural processes and indigenous populations of plants and animals. JMT will therefore promote sustainable management practices, and the repair where necessary of physical damage that has resulted in declines in biodiversity and deterioration of soils and landscape." For JMT properties that are also SSSIs, the priority objective of SSSI designation and management is nature conservation.	No change.
Does the designation of the site prevent, or eliminate where necessary, any	PARTLY. "The Trust owns wild land to protect it from inappropriate development, to repair the damage that	This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no evidence that the

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to JMT properties	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
exploitation or management practice that will be harmful to their objectives of designation?	humans have done to wild land and to prevent future harm". In addition, eight of the nine properties have statutory designations. For those sites that are also SSSIs, the designating authorities have various statutory and other means to prevent or eliminate practices that would obstruct achievement of a site's nature conservation objective, this includes lists of Potentially Damaging Operations.	designation per se is able to prevent management practices harmful to conservation objectives. The security of site protection is examined more rigorously in this assessment.
Is the long-term nature conservation ensured through legal or other effective means?	PARTLY. JMT's long-term vision is that "Wild land is protected and enhanced throughout the UK and wild places are valued by all sectors of society". All properties have management plans that are revised every five years. For those JMT properties that are also SSSIs, these are established in law (Scotland: Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended)); England: Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). These legislations are periodically reviewed and updated to address emerging issues. However, the organisation is able to dispose of land and has no obligation to continue to own or manage any of its estate.	This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no evidence that the designation per se is able to deliver continuity of nature conservation. The security of site tenure is examined more rigorously in this assessment.
Based on the evidence available, does this type of site meet the IUCN's definition of a protected area?	NO. Many JMT properties are underpinned by SSSI, SPA, and/or SAC designations, and those areas underpinned by these protections do qualify by virtue of those designations. However, the designation of JMT property itself does not sufficiently qualify given that there is no overall protection offered by legislation and sites can be disposed of in some circumstances.	This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance based on considerations outlined above.

2. OTHER EFFECTIVE (AREA-BASED) CONSERVATION ASSESSMENT (IF THE NETWORK DOES NOT QUALIFY AS A PROTECTED AREA)

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to JMT properties
Is the designation type a protected area?	NO. JMT properties are not in themselves protected areas.
Does the site have the essential characteristics required to meet the OECM definition? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is geographically defined The site is governed and managed and such arrangements are expected to be ongoing and sustained over the long-term The site delivers effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity The site is free of environmentally damaging activities and threats to biodiversity 	PARTLY. JMT properties are geographically defined, deliver in-situ conservation of biodiversity, offer some protection from environmentally damaging activities on paper but there is no assurance of long-term management at every site.

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to JMT properties
Will the conservation outcome at the site endure over the long-term?	PARTLY. JMT is committed to the long-term management of its properties with management actions resourced and being implemented. However, except for those sites benefiting from legal protection, JMT's management activities will always be constrained by its charitable income.
What is the in-situ area-based conservation target (e.g., GBF Target 3) being met by this OECM?	In situ area based GBF Target 3 , but only if protections and long-term management are secured across the network.
Based on the evidence available, does the site meet the IUCN's definition of an OECM?	Some JMT properties could qualify as OECMs. Assess case by case.

3. MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

Is the management of this type of protected area/OECM documented?	PARTLY. Management Plans are prepared for all JMT properties but these documents are not publicly available.
What evidence is there that the measures to achieve the conservation objectives are being implemented?	UNKNOWN
Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?	YES
Are the protected areas/OECMs moving towards or have they reached their conservation objectives?	UNKNOWN
Based on the evidence available, is this site designation type/network of sites being managed effectively?	PARTLY (impacts on management sometimes fall outside the control of the organisation)

3.5. Local Nature Reserves (LNR)

Summary

Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, known colloquially as “30x30”, calls for 30% of the world’s terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, to be in effective protection and management by 2030. This target will be achieved through the establishment of protected areas (PAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). Both these types of area-based conservation measures are well defined under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and both have extensive CBD and IUCN guidance. Based on the evidence PAWG has gathered, our conclusions are:

- Does the LNR network meet (all) criteria for PAs? **NO (except for those LNRs area benefitting from protections afforded by SSSI, ASSI, Ramsar, SPA and/or SAC designations)**
- Does the LNR network meet the criteria for ‘effectively managed’? **UNKNOWN**
- If not Protected Areas, do LNRs warrant case-by-case consideration against OECM criteria? **YES**

Recommendations

The IUCN NCUK Protected Areas Working Group (PAWG) does not believe that the LNR designation qualifies as a PA but sites within the designation type could qualify as a PA or a potential OECM and a high proportion of them could therefore be a component of the 30x30 target for the UK following case by case assessment of sites against PA and OECM criteria, and subject to evidence of effective management. PAWG recommends that the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations invest, through local authorities/government, urgently in improving the management effectiveness of all LNRs to ensure these sites effectively contribute to the 30x30 target.

<p>Brief description of the site network and its stated objective(s)</p>	<p>Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 by principal local authorities. Local Nature Reserves are established and managed by local authorities, following consultation with Natural Resources Wales (NRW), NatureScot and Natural England (NE) under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, and in Northern Ireland under the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985. For a site to become an LNR it must have natural features of special interest to the local area, and the authority must either have a legal interest in the land or have an agreement with the owner to manage the land as a reserve.</p> <p>An area to be designated LNR must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ at least of local importance in terms of its natural heritage; ▪ wholly within the area of the local authority planning to designate it a reserve; or ▪ owned or leased by the local authority, or the owner(s) must formally agree to the designation
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1. PROTECTED AREA ASSESSMENT

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to LNRs	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Does this type of protected area have clearly defined geographical boundaries?	YES. Maps of the boundaries of LNRs are held by relevant local authorities and typically published in local planning documentation, and their declaration is a statutory process.	No change.

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to LNRs	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Is this type of site recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature?	NO. There is no assurance of long-term conservation in LNRs and there is provision for sites to be de-declared, unless they receive protection under other statutory designations, e.g., SSSI/ASSI. Otherwise, they are more generally protected through planning policy mechanisms and not the law.	No change.
Is the main management objective nature conservation?	YES. Schedule 11 (12) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, which replaced Section 15 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, describes a 'nature reserve' as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • land managed solely for a conservation purpose, or • land managed not only for a conservation purpose but also for a recreational purpose, if the management of the land for the recreational purpose does not compromise its management for the conservation purpose. Therefore, PAWG concludes that the primary purpose of the declaration of an LNR is for nature conservation purposes.	No change.
Does the designation of the site prevent, or eliminate where necessary, any exploitation or management practice that will be harmful to their objectives of designation?	NO. The local authority's interest in the LNR, through ownership and/or management, should give a high degree of inherent protection and effective management. For example, LNRs may be given some protection against damaging operations. They have some protection against development on and around them and this is generally offered by the local plan (produced by the planning authority), and sometimes supplemented by byelaws or protection under other designations, e.g., SSSI/ASSI. However, there is no legal protection specifically for LNRs anywhere in the UK and sites can be de-designated.	No change.
Is the long-term nature conservation ensured through legal or other effective means?	NO. Unless underpinned by other overlapping designations, e.g., SSSI/ASSI, long-term conservation is not ensured by virtue of declaration as an LNR and there is always a risk of de-designation.	No change.
Based on the evidence available, does this type of site meet the IUCN's definition of a protected area?	NO	No change.

2. OTHER EFFECTIVE (AREA-BASED) CONSERVATION MEASURES ASSESSMENT

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to LNRs
Is the designation type a protected area?	NO. LNRs are not in themselves protected areas.
Does the site have the essential characteristics required to meet the OECM definition? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is geographically defined The site is governed and managed and such arrangements are expected to be ongoing and sustained over the long-term The site delivers effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity The site is free of environmentally-damaging activities and threats to biodiversity 	PARTLY. LNRs are geographically defined, some deliver targeted in-situ conservation of biodiversity, but they offer limited protection from environmentally-damaging activities and there is no assurance of long-term management (unless they are protected under other overlapping designations, e.g., SSSI/ASSI). De-designation is a risk to long-term management.
Will the conservation outcome at the site endure over the long-term?	PARTLY. There is currently no mechanism to ensure the long-term management of LNRs in any of the four countries of the UK, except where the landowner/approved body has agreed to implement a management plan or are obliged to do so under other designations. From the evidence PAWG has seen, the development of management plans across the LNR network is patchy.
What is the in-situ area-based conservation target (e.g., GBF Target 3) being met by this OECM?	In situ area-based GBF Target 3 but only if protections and long-term management are secured across the network.
Based on the evidence available, does the site meet the IUCN's definition of an OECM?	Some LNRs will qualify as OECMs when the landowner/land-manager can prove long term management, but they should be assessed case-by-case

3. MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

Is the management of this type of protected area/OECM documented?		PARTLY. Objectives for the site, plus information on biodiversity management, must be documented prior to declaration. Management plans exist for some sites but not others.
What evidence is there that the measures to achieve the conservation objectives are being implemented?		PARTLY. PAWG found limited evidence of effective management and monitoring by some owners and/or managers of LNRs and no collation of information across the network or other scales. Some LNRs are covered by Common Standards Monitoring but it was not possible to source these data.

Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?		PARTLY. Information on LNR monitoring across the network is not publicly available for any of the four countries. It is not mandatory for LNRs and PAWG found little evidence of effective monitoring outside areas covered by more strict designations.
Are the protected areas/OECMs moving towards or have they reached their conservation objectives?		UNKNOWN. Information on the overall state of LNR networks is not publicly available for any of the four countries.
Based on the evidence available, is this site designation type/network of sites being managed effectively?	England	UNKNOWN
	Northern Ireland	UNKNOWN
	Scotland	UNKNOWN
	Wales	UNKNOWN

3.6. Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)

Summary

Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, known colloquially as “30x30”, calls for 30% of the world’s terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, to be in effective protection and management by 2030. This target will be achieved through the establishment of protected areas (PAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). Both these types of area-based conservation measures are well defined under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and both have extensive CBD and IUCN guidance. Based on the evidence PAWG has gathered, our conclusions are:

- Does the LWS network meet (all) criteria for PAs? **NO**
- Does the LWS network meet the criteria for ‘effectively managed’? **UNKNOWN**
- If not protected areas, do LWSs warrant case-by-case consideration against OECM criteria? **YES**

Recommendations

The IUCN NCUK Protected Areas Working Group (PAWG) does not believe that Local Wildlife Sites qualify as a PA but sites within the designation type could qualify as a protected area or a potential OECM and a high proportion of them could therefore be a component of the 30x30 target for the UK following case by case assessment of sites against PA and OECM criteria, and subject to evidence of effective management. PAWG recommends that the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations invest, through Local Wildlife Site system partnerships, urgently in improving the management effectiveness and monitoring of all LWS to ensure these sites effectively contribute to the 30x30 target.

<p>Brief description of the site network and its stated objective(s)</p>	<p>Local Wildlife Sites are areas of land that are especially important for their wildlife. LWS are identified and selected locally using robust, scientifically determined criteria and detailed ecological surveys. Their selection is based on the most important, distinctive and threatened species and habitats within a national, regional and local context. They are corridors for wildlife, forming key components of ecological networks.</p> <p>Local Wildlife Sites are identified and selected locally by partnerships of local authorities, nature conservation charities, statutory agencies, ecologists and local nature experts. They are non-statutory but afforded some protection through national planning policy.</p> <p>Local Wildlife Sites are named differently across the UK.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • England: Local Wildlife Sites; • Wales: Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation; • Scotland: Local Nature Conservation Sites; • Northern Ireland: Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance. <p>Within England, there can also be local variations on the name too, e.g., County Wildlife Site; Site of Nature Conservation Importance.</p> <p>In England there are at least 44,000 Local Wildlife Sites covering more than 611,000 ha (at least 5% of England’s land area) and in Wales there are more than 4,700 sites covering 80,000 ha (approximately 4% of Wales).</p>
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1. PROTECTED AREA ASSESSMENT

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to LWS	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Does this type of protected area have clearly defined geographical boundaries?	YES. LWS are defined areas that are identified and selected locally for their nature conservation value. For most LWS system partnerships, it will be the Local Environmental Records Centre that are responsible for holding digitised LWS boundary data. National planning policy also includes a requirement to map these sites in local plans. For example, in Scotland, all Local Nature Conservation Sites should be shown on the maps used in planning authority documents.	Not assessed
Is this type of site recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature?	YES. Local Wildlife Sites are identified and selected locally by a Local Wildlife Site system partnership. Their selection is based on the most important, distinctive, and threatened species and habitats within a national, regional and local context. All sites that meet the criteria should be selected.	Not assessed
Is the main management objective nature conservation?	YES. All sites that meet the given criteria are selected as Local Wildlife Sites (some of which are of SSSI quality) making them some of the most valuable wildlife areas. In England, LWS system guidance requires the LWS partnership to promote the appropriate management of sites including providing support and advice to landowners.	Not assessed
Does the designation of the site prevent, or eliminate where necessary, any exploitation or management practice that will be harmful to their objectives of designation?	NO. There is no statutory protection for Local Wildlife Sites although some will be within other areas receiving statutory protection such as National Parks. LWS are afforded some protection through national planning policy (i.e., National Policy Planning Framework in England where they are recognised as a designated site) which set out requirements for protection through local policy and plans.	Not assessed
Is the long-term nature conservation ensured through legal or other effective means?	NO. There is no statutory protection for Local Wildlife Sites and many are privately owned. National planning policy requires local authorities to identify, map and safeguard LWS through local policy and decision making.	Not assessed
Based on the evidence available, does this type of site meet the IUCN's definition of a protected area?	NO	No change

2. OTHER EFFECTIVE (AREA-BASED) CONSERVATION MEASURES ASSESSMENT

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to LWS
Is the designation type a protected area?	NO. LWS are not in themselves protected areas.
<p>Does the site have the essential characteristics required to meet the OECM definition?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is geographically defined • The site is governed and managed and such arrangements are expected to be ongoing and sustained over the long-term • The site delivers effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity • The site is free of environmentally damaging activities and threats to biodiversity 	<p>PARTLY. LWS are geographically defined (with national planning policy requiring local authorities to identify, map and safeguard LWS through local policy and decision making).</p> <p>Local Wildlife Site system partnerships should establish effective systems for identifying, managing and monitoring LWS. However, a large majority of LWS are privately owned. Other owners include NGOs and public authorities.</p> <p>Despite being some of the most valuable wildlife areas (given sites are selected based on robust, scientifically determined criteria), lack of management and/or inappropriate management are the greatest threats to the condition of Local Wildlife Sites. This is mainly due to a lack of resources and can result in sites being degraded or lost. Despite being recognised as a designated site in the NPPF, development also presents a significant threat as LWS are not statutorily protected.</p>
Will the conservation outcome at the site endure over the long-term?	PARTLY. Local Wildlife Sites are recognised in national planning policy and Local Wildlife Site system partnerships should establish effective systems for identifying, managing and monitoring LWS. However, there is no mechanism to ensure the long-term management of LWS in any of the four countries of the UK. Lack of resources is the most commonly cited reason for lack of management.
What is the in-situ area-based conservation target (e.g., GBF Target 3) being met by this OECM?	In situ GBF Target 3 but only if protections and long-term management are secured across the network.
Based on the evidence available, does the site meet the IUCN's definition of an OECM?	Some LWS will qualify as OECMs when the landowner/land-manager can prove in long term management and conservation outcomes are being delivered, but they should be assessed on a site-by-site basis.

3. MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

Is the management of this type of protected area/OECM documented?		PARTLY. Local Wildlife Site system partnerships should establish effective systems for identifying, managing and monitoring LWS. Some LWS owners will have documented management plans. However, the main constraint restricting the ability of partnerships to provide management advice is no or limited funding.
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What evidence is there that the measures to achieve the conservation objectives are being implemented?		PARTLY. In England, <i>Local Sites in positive conservation management in England</i> , is an official statistic as part of the Single Data List. The latest published data is “in the five years prior to 31 March 2022, 43% of Local Sites across England for which we received data, were in positive conservation management” (based on a 46% response rate from local authorities) ¹⁸ .
Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?		PARTLY. For England, a report from 2018 states that in the previous five years 15% of LWS (6,815 sites out of nearly 44,000) had been monitored to assess their status. When asked, most Local Wildlife Site system partnerships reported that they do not have sufficient resources especially for survey and management. In Wales, the ambition is for all sites to be monitored for condition every few years and management recommendations made to support management practices and enhance the value of these sites for wildlife.
Are the Protected Areas/OECMs moving towards or have they reached their conservation objectives?		UNKNOWN
Based on the evidence available, is this network of sites being managed effectively?	England	PARTLY. A report from 2018 provides information on the condition of about 15% of LWS in England.
	Northern Ireland	UNKNOWN
	Scotland	UNKNOWN
	Wales	UNKNOWN

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-sites-in-positive-conservation-management--2/nature-conservation-local-sites-in-positive-conservation-management-in-england-2008-09-to-2021-22> .

3.7. Marine Protected Area (MPA) designations

Summary

Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, known colloquially as “30x30”, calls for 30% of the world’s terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, to be in effective protection and management by 2030. This target will be achieved through the establishment of protected areas (PAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). Both these types of area-based conservation measures are well defined under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and both have extensive CBD and IUCN guidance. Based on the evidence PAWG has gathered, our conclusions are:

- Does the Marine Protected Area network meet (all) criteria for PAs? **YES**
- Does the Marine Protected Area network meet the criteria for ‘effectively managed’? **PARTLY**

Recommendations

The IUCN NCUK Protected Areas Working Group (PAWG) believes that the MPA designations qualify as a PA and this network, in their entirety, should be a component of the 30x30 target for the UK. However, to meet the required standards for 30x30, sites must be both protected and effectively managed. PAWG recommends that the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations a) invest urgently in improving the monitoring and effective management of all MPAs, and b) uses all available regulatory powers to end damaging activities, such as bottom trawling in some offshore MPAs, to ensure these sites effectively contribute to the 30x30 target.

<p>Brief description of the site network and its stated objective(s)</p>	<p>There are three main Marine Protected Area designations in the UK: Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs in England, Northern Ireland and Wales), Nature Conservation Marine Protected Areas (NCMPAs in Scotland) and Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs in England); which, between them can apply in all four countries).</p> <p>MCZs are a type of marine protected area that can be designated in English, Welsh and Northern Irish territorial and offshore waters under the UK Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013. MCZs protect a range of nationally important habitats and species such as cold-water coral reefs which thrive in the UK’s deeper waters, sedimentary seabed habitats vital for a range of marine processes and other species, and the slow-growing Ocean Quahog <i>Artica islandica</i> identified as an OSPAR Convention Threatened and/or Declining species.</p> <p>NCMPAs are a type of marine protected area that can be designated in Scottish territorial and offshore waters under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 and the UK Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. Nature Conservation MPAs protect a range of nationally important habitats and species such as Sandeel species, which form an important component of the marine food web, sedimentary seabed habitats vital for a range of marine processes and other species, and deep-sea sponge aggregations identified as an OSPAR Threatened and/or Declining habitat.</p> <p>HPMAs are areas of the sea designated for the protection and recovery of marine ecosystems. They prohibit extractive, destructive, and depositional uses, allowing only non-damaging levels of other activities to the extent permitted by international law. The only three HPMAs (in England) which are designated as Marine Conservation Zones under the UK Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. Plans for HPMAs in Scotland have been shelved and there are no commitments yet for this type of MCZ in Wales or Northern Ireland.</p>
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1. PROTECTED AREA ASSESSMENT

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to MPAs	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Does this type of protected area have clearly defined geographical boundaries?	YES. The provisions of three relevant Acts require that the boundaries of MCZs and NCMPAs are legally defined in England ¹⁹ , Northern Ireland ²⁰ , Scotland ²¹ and Wales ²² . Details of the boundaries of the only three HPMAs in the UK, in English waters are available ²³ .	These areas were not considered in the original PNOTM assessment.
Is this type of site recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature?	YES. MPA designation under UK law is permanent for all types. Individual MPAs in each of the four countries are designated for one or more specified natural features. Management and protection must give priority to these notified features.	These areas were not considered in the original PNOTM assessment.
Is the main management objective nature conservation?	YES. All MPAs are designated under relevant Acts to protect nationally important species, habitats, ecological processes and features of geological/geomorphological importance.	These areas were not considered in the original PNOTM assessment.
Does the designation of the site prevent, or eliminate where necessary, any exploitation or management practice that will be harmful to their objectives of designation?	PARTLY. Environmentally damaging activities, like certain types of fishing, are restricted under legislation across the UK. The relevant Acts also allow government departments and their agencies to make byelaws to protect MPAs from damage caused by unregulated activities such as fishing, anchoring, kite surfing, jet skiing <i>etc.</i> although there is no evidence that these legal powers have been used. It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly destroy or damage a protected feature of an MPA or to contravene a byelaw. Marine licences are required from some activities but some damaging operations may still be permitted for over-riding reasons of national interest. For example, Natural England has recently determined that consented developments have permanently damaged a number of MPA features in England ²⁴ . There is evidence that some highly damaging activities continue, as the appropriate management measures have	These areas were not considered in the original PNOTM assessment.

¹⁹ <https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/82bf811005484412a75c438738d51f82/explore>

²⁰ <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/protected-areas/type/mcz>

²¹ <https://marinescotland.atkinsgeospatial.com/nmpi/default.aspx?layers=844>

²² https://datamap.gov.wales/layers/inspire-nrw:NRW_MNR

²³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/highly-protected-marine-areas/highly-protected-marine-areas-hpmas>

²⁴ See Natural England's supplementary advice on the conservation objectives for [Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge SAC](#), [Haisborough, Hammond and Winterton SAC](#), [The Wash and North Norfolk Coast SAC](#), and [Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ](#).

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to MPAs	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
	not been introduced, for example bottom trawling in offshore MPAs ²⁵ . For, HPMAs it is anticipated that extractive, destructive and depositional activities will be prohibited within each site offering full protection. Full management measures are yet to be introduced at the time of writing.	
Is the long-term nature conservation ensured through legal or other effective means?	YES. All the MPA designations across the UK are established in law.	These areas were not considered in the original PNOTM assessment.
Based on the evidence available, does this type of site meet the IUCN's definition of a protected area?	YES	

2. OTHER EFFECTIVE (AREA-BASED) CONSERVATION MEASURES ASSESSMENT

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to MPAs
Is the designation type a protected area?	n/a
Does the site have the essential characteristics required to meet the OECM definition? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is geographically defined The site is governed and managed and such arrangements are expected to be ongoing and sustained over the long-term The site delivers effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity The site is free of environmentally damaging activities and threats to biodiversity 	n/a
Will the conservation outcome at the site endure over the long-term?	n/a
What is the in-situ area-based conservation target (e.g., GBF Target 3) being met by this OECM?	n/a
Based on the evidence available, does the site meet the IUCN's definition of an OECM?	n/a

²⁵ <https://marine-conservation-society-production.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/marine-unprotected-areas-summary-report.pdf>

3. MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

<p>Is the management of this type of protected area/OECM documented?</p>	<p>England</p>	<p>PARTLY. Detailed management plans are developed post designation, including the features vulnerability assessment and the conservation objectives of the MCZ (and HPMA). The general management approach (i.e., either for the feature to be maintained in favourable condition, or for it to be recovered to favourable condition) is described in site descriptions published alongside designation orders and in the SNCB advice. The approach is one of regulating potentially damaging activities which occur within the site rather than proactive management of all activities which may cause damage.</p> <p>Although these are the requirements, PAWG could not find evidence that management plans have been written for every MCZ in England and that even if written they had actually been implemented.</p>
	<p>Northern Ireland</p>	<p>PARTLY. Detailed management plans are developed post designation, including the features vulnerability assessment and the conservation objectives of the MCZ features. In principle, each MCZ has one conservation objective. The objective applies to all the features being protected. The objective is that each of the features being protected be in favourable condition. The approach is one of regulating potentially damaging activities rather than proactive management.</p> <p>Although PAWG can find management options alongside descriptions of conservation objectives, PAWG could not find evidence that management plans have been written for every MCZ in Northern Ireland or that those that exist were being implemented.</p>
	<p>Scotland</p>	<p>PARTLY. Detailed management plans are developed post designation, including the features vulnerability assessment and the conservation objectives of the NCMPA features. In principle, each NCMPA has one conservation objective. The objective applies to all the features being protected. The objective is that each of the features being protected be in favourable condition. The approach is one of regulating potentially damaging activities rather than proactive management.</p> <p>Although these are the requirements, PAWG could not find evidence that management plans have been written for every NCMPA in Scotland or that those that exist were being implemented.</p>

	Wales	UNKNOWN. The only MCZ in Wales, Skomer, has a management plan in place ²⁶ but there is no published information on implementation. No features have been designated for the site.
What evidence is there that the measures to achieve the conservation objectives are being implemented?	England	PARTLY. Some regulatory measures are apparently in place or in the process of being introduced. Assessments against progress towards conservation objectives are presented in the Marine Protected Areas Network Report 2012-2018 ²⁷ and these data suggest that there is more work to do to secure an accurate measure of the success of the network, some features may be in favourable condition and others may not. The MMO have a target to introduce necessary fisheries management measures for offshore MPAs in England by the end of 2024. The appropriate agencies are also in the process of introducing management measures for the three new HPAs in England.
	Northern Ireland	PARTLY. Some regulatory measures are in place. MCZs will be reviewed by DAERA as part of a six-year monitoring and reporting programme to ensure they are meeting (or at least progressing towards) their conservation objectives and to determine if any additional management action is required. A condition/vulnerability assessment is available for each MCZ (apart from Strangford Lough which has no designated features).
	Scotland	PARTLY. Some regulatory measures are in place. PAWG could not find evidence of the condition of MPAs in Scotland but there should be some form of assessment published by Marine Scotland in 2024 ²⁸ .
	Wales	PARTLY. Some regulatory measures are in place although no features have been designated for the sole Welsh MCZ. Natural Resources Wales is apparently developing a permanent, sustainable, site-level feature condition reporting process that can be delivered on a regular basis.

²⁶ <https://naturalresources.wales/guidance-and-advice/environmental-topics/wildlife-and-biodiversity/protected-areas-of-land-and-seas/skomer-marine-conservation-zone/?lang=en>

²⁷ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/916310/mcaa-mpa-report-2012-2018a.pdf

²⁸ <https://marine.gov.scot/sma/assessment/marine-protected-areas#results>

Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?	England	PARTLY. Defra is obliged to publish a report every six years with an assessment of how well MCZs are achieving their objectives individually and collectively as part of an effective network of marine protected areas that contributes to the conservation and improvement of the marine environment and is representative of the range of marine habitats, fauna and flora. Defra directs Natural England and JNCC to carry out the necessary monitoring although without adequate resources to deliver this. These reports should also provide information on MCZs established during that period and any further steps required. The first of these reports was published in December 2012 and the second in 2018 ²⁹ .
	Northern Ireland	UNKNOWN. DAERA sets out views on monitoring priorities in the documents describing the conservation objectives and potential management options for each MCZ. PAWG has struggled to find any evidence of surveys or condition assessments beyond these summaries.
	Scotland	PARTLY. Marine Scotland, in partnership with NatureScot and JNCC, has developed a Scottish Marine Protected Area monitoring strategy. This will ensure the necessary information is collected from the Scottish NCMPA network to underpin assessment and reporting obligations. The Strategy is supported by a series of annexes which provide more detail on monitoring methods, collaborative working, current monitoring and a two year forward look for MPA monitoring.
	Wales	NO. Natural Resources Wales say it is unlikely that resources and suitable evidence sources will all be available at any given time to monitor and report on all features, or to report with the same level of confidence. Their aim is to develop, over the coming few years, an assessment and reporting process that is of practical use in informing effective site management for the maintenance or improvement of feature and site condition.
Are the protected areas/OECMs moving towards or have they reached their conservation objectives?	UK	UNKNOWN. Given the absence of monitoring data, PAWG could not find any reporting of achievements against established objectives at any site.
Based on the evidence available, is this site designation type/network of sites being managed effectively?	England	PARTLY. Some sites are being managed effectively.
	Northern Ireland	UNKNOWN
	Scotland	PARTLY
	Wales	UNKNOWN

²⁹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/916310/mcaa-mpa-report-2012-2018a.pdf

3.8. National Nature Reserves (NNR)

Summary

Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, known colloquially as “30x30”, calls for 30% of the world’s terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, to be in effective protection and management by 2030. This target will be achieved through the establishment of protected areas (PAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). Both these types of area-based conservation measures are well defined under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and both have extensive CBD and IUCN guidance. Based on the evidence PAWG has gathered, our conclusions are:

- Does the National Nature Reserve network meet (all) criteria for PAs? **NO (except for that NNR area benefitting from other protections afforded by SSSI, ASSI, SPA and/or SAC designations)**
- Does the National Nature Reserve network meet the criteria for ‘effectively managed’? **PARTLY**
- If not protected areas, do National Nature Reserves warrant case-by-case consideration against OECM criteria? **YES**

Recommendations

The IUCN NCUK Protected Areas Working Group (PAWG) does not believe that the NNR designation itself qualifies as a PA. Sites within the designation type could qualify as a protected area or a potential OECM and a high proportion of them could therefore be a component of the 30x30 target for the UK following case by case assessment of sites against PA and OECM criteria, and subject to evidence of effective management. PAWG recommends that the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations invest urgently in improving the management effectiveness of all NNRs to ensure these sites effectively contribute to the 30x30 target.

<p>Brief description of the site network and its stated objective(s)</p>	<p>The legal and policy arrangements for National Nature Reserves (NNRs) vary but the use of the designation has much in common across the United Kingdom. NNRs are declared by NatureScot, Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Natural England (NE) and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) in their respective countries. In Northern Ireland, NIEA uses the designation under current legislation but earlier legislation under which most sites were designated provided only for statutory ‘nature reserves’ (NRs). In practice, NNRs and NRs in Northern Ireland receive the same level of protection.</p> <p>All NNRs are owned, leased or held under formal agreement by their managing organisations, or bodies approved by them for the purpose of managing an NNR.</p> <p>The nature of the NNR designation has changed since it was first applied in 1951. Then it was the primary means (through purchase by the -State) by which to protect high value nature conservation land from inappropriate development. This regulatory role has been replaced by SSSI, following strengthening of the legislation from 1981, and SAC/SPA designations along with other environmental legislation.</p> <p>The NNR remains a management facilitating designation and a high level, national accolade. The original purpose of NNRs, as stated in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 was for “preserving flora, fauna or geological or physiographical features of special interest in the area and/or for providing opportunities for the study of, and research into, those features”.</p> <p>The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 re-emphasised the use of nature reserves in any strategy towards protecting and managing scarce wildlife resources. This Act also contains provisions to designate as an NNR, land held by an</p>
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approved body. The Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006, applying to England, extended the role of NNRs to include the provision of opportunities for public enjoyment of nature and/or open-air recreation.

NNRs in Scotland

There are 46 NNRs in Scotland extending to c.100,000 ha. 90% (by area) are SSSI and/or Natura sites.

Scotland's NNR policy, when reviewed in 2003³⁰ established that all NNRs must be for one or more of three purposes:

- Raising national awareness;
- Providing specialised management;
- Encouraging research & demonstration;

and must have the following four attributes

- Primacy of nature;
- National importance;
- Best practice management; and
- Continuity of management.

NNR policy was further reviewed in 2012. The main change concerned the broadened governance of the NNR designation which is now overseen by the NNR Partnership Group. This group comprises representatives of NNR-managing organisations (National Trust Scotland, Scottish Wildlife Trust, the RSPB, North Lanarkshire Council, Forestry Commission Scotland, NatureScot) and community and land-owning groups (North Harris Trust, the Woodland Trust, Scottish Land and Estates). The Group defines the criteria and standards required of land and land managers to be bestowed with the NNR accolade.

The relevant SNH (now NatureScot) Board paper³¹ reads:

“The national accolade of National Nature Reserve will be applied to land and water of acknowledged significance for nature that is being managed to agreed high standards for nature and the enjoyment of nature. Nature on these reserves will be of national importance and the sites will be managed primarily for nature in the long term and for people to enjoy nature.

National Nature Reserves will be run by a range of public, private, community and voluntary organisations; and the accolade will be managed by a partnership representing these organisations. This partnership will agree selection and review criteria, and set high and demanding management standards expected of a national accolade. The legal power to confer the accolade will remain with SNH based on the recommendations of the partnership.

Taken together, NNRs will be the best of Scotland's nature reserves.”

NNRs in Wales

There are 76 NNRs and one Marine Nature Reserve in Wales. NRW manages 41 of these entirely, and 17 through partnerships e.g., with the National Trust. Third parties manage 18 NNRs.

³⁰ Scottish Natural Heritage (2003). *Scotland's National Nature Reserves – A policy statement*. SNH, Battleby.

³¹ SNH Board Paper (09 August 2012) SNH/12/8/B1113300 - *National Nature Reserves - A National Accolade for Scotland's Best Nature Reserves*
<http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/B1119431.pdf>

Approximately 98% by area are also SSSI; and 58 NNRs are wholly or partly within one or more international designations (SAC, SPA, Ramsar, Biogenetic Reserve, Biosphere Reserve) and collectively they account for approximately 20% (by area) of these designations.

In 2004, at the behest of the Welsh Assembly Government, the (then) Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) undertook a strategic review of the NNRs in Wales. The primary purpose was to consider CCW's wider remit for landscape, recreation/access and public understanding.

The 2004 review formed the basis of CCW's 'Strategy for National Nature Reserves' - agreed by CCW's Council in February 2006. The cornerstone of this strategy is CCW's Corporate Vision for NNRs, which reads as follows: The suite of Welsh NNRs as a whole will be managed in an exemplary way to:

1. Conserve wildlife features and to contribute to Biodiversity Action Plans (Habitat Action Plans and Species Action Plans).
2. Conserve earth science features and the physical and cultural landscape.
3. Develop and maintain strategic partnerships with other organisations.
4. Manage access, recreation and health.
5. Provide interpretation, and opportunities for education and learning for all.
6. Promote long-term public appreciation of the value of the environment.
7. Enhance local economies and social justice.
8. Involve stakeholders and communities.
9. Support policy and research, and demonstrate innovative good practice.
10. Manage environmental data sets, including monitoring environmental change.
11. Achieve sustainable resource management.

In 2012, CCW's Council endorsed its commitment to the 'Common Core Principles for National Nature Reserves in the United Kingdom' document in respect of the NNR series in Wales. (Council Paper April 2012). This reads as follows:

1. NNRs must be of national importance.
2. The primary land use of NNRs is for nature conservation.
3. NNRs will be managed to the highest standards, they will be exemplars of 'good practice' in conservation management.
4. NNRs will be areas where the necessary management can be assured over a long period, they will have long-term surety.
5. NNRs will provide opportunities for study and research.
6. NNRs will be used to provide opportunities for public access, and to encourage appreciation and enjoyment of the countryside for people of all abilities.
7. NNRs will be used to provide opportunities for the delivery of interpretation, education and learning for all and demonstration of good conservation management practice.
8. NNRs will act as a locus for encouraging stakeholder and local community involvement in conservation land management, so fostering a sense of value and shared ownership.
9. NNRs will be managed by the most appropriate bodies, which may involve strategic partnerships.
10. NNRs will contribute to local economies and deliver social justice.

In Wales, these core principles have been aspired to and delivered through the legacy body's (CCW) NNR strategy (Strategy for National Nature Reserves – 2006 – see earlier).

NNRs in England

There are 219 NNRs in England covering 109,00 ha³². NE manages 143 on its own or jointly with others, and the remainder are managed by Approved Bodies. A total of 97.5% (by area) of England's NNRs are Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and 82.2% are SPAs or SACs.

Natural England may declare as NNR land which meets the following principles, as set out in 2013:

1. *Qualification*

The main nature conservation interest feature(s) of the proposed site, as categorised by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) in the SSSI selection guidelines, is/are within land notified as SSSI or within land likely to be eligible for selection as such.

2. *Primary attributes (National Importance)*

The site is in the top 10% in England, by number, for a particular feature (habitats, species or earth science), using JNCC's SSSI selection criteria to validate its quality, or is of national iconic significance from a nature conservation perspective.

3. *Additional attributes*

The site offers excellent opportunity for study and research in nature conservation or, in addition, offers excellent opportunities for the enjoyment of nature or for open-air recreation where this does not conflict with the conservation purpose.

4. *Achievability*

The primary land use will be nature conservation; it can be managed in an exemplary manner; and it will be declared NNR for the long-term or in perpetuity.

NNRs and NRs in Northern Ireland

There are 12 NNRs and 36 other statutory NRs in Northern Ireland. Of these 48 reserves, 40 are managed by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), 19 in partnership (15 with Forest Service, two with the Ministry of Defence and two with private landowners). Eight are managed directly by Approved Bodies (environmental NGOs and a local authority). The total area protected by designation is around 4,891 ha, of which 97.7% (by area) is ASSI and 83.1% (by area) lies within Natura sites. [It is likely that around 10 more of the NRs will, in due course, be designated as NNR. In addition, NIEA manages another 17 sites as NR pending their formal designation as NR or NNR.]

Under its enabling legislation, where DAERA is satisfied that any land which –

- (a) is being managed as a nature reserve under an agreement entered into with the Department;
- (b) is held by the Department and is being managed by it as a nature reserve; or
- (c) is held by an approved body and is managed by that body as a nature reserve, is of national importance, the Department may declare that land to be a national nature reserve.

³² <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-nature-reserves-in-england#full-publication-update-history>

	<p>The current policy³³ on selection of NNR adopts the same Common Core Principles as those adopted in Wales, but with several provisos, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. NNRs must be of national importance. Note: Northern Ireland only: 'National Importance' implies importance at a Northern Ireland level as opposed to UK or all-Ireland level. ii. The primary land use of NNRs is for nature conservation. iii. NNRs will be managed to the highest standards, they will be exemplars of 'good practice' in conservation management. Note: Northern Ireland only: where resources for management are limited, NNRs will be prioritised over NRs. v. NNRs will be areas where the necessary management can be assured over a long period; they will have long-term surety. Note: Northern Ireland only: while essential for NNRs, lack of such long-term surety will not necessarily preclude NR declaration where, for example, only a shorter-term management agreement can be secured. v. NNRs will provide opportunities for study and research. Note: Individual proposals for study or research will be subjected to appropriate assessment and any deemed likely to cause damage, deterioration or disturbance to the conservation of the designation features will be disallowed. <p><i>While the primary function of NNRs is to provide special places reserved for nature, many NNRs can also contribute to other agendas. The remaining Core Principles (6-10) address this so most are prefixed 'where appropriate'. Such additional uses must not adversely impact upon Core Principles 1-5; for example, visitor access would not necessarily be encouraged where it is likely to cause disturbance to a breeding bird population of national importance.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> vi. Where appropriate - NNRs will provide opportunities for public access, appreciation and enjoyment of the countryside for people of all abilities. vii. Where appropriate - NNRs will provide opportunities for interpretation, education and learning for all and demonstration of good conservation management practice. viii. Where appropriate - NNRs will act as a focus for encouraging stakeholder and local community involvement in conservation land management, so fostering a sense of value and shared ownership. ix. NNRs will be managed by the most appropriate bodies, which may involve strategic partnerships. Note: It is likely that a number of different organisations will be involved in management across the full suite of NNRs. In selecting the best management option for individual NNRs, consideration will be given to criteria such as value for money, expertise, management capacity, proximity to a management base, and community or stakeholder involvement. To ensure that high management standards are maintained, approval will be accorded only to bodies meeting strict competence criteria. x. So far as is reasonably possible - NNRs will contribute to local economies and deliver social justice.
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³³ NIEA Policy Position Statement on the selection, establishment and management of Statutory Nature Reserves – March 2012.

1. PROTECTED AREA ASSESSMENT

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to NNRs	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Does this type of protected area have clearly defined geographical boundaries?	YES. NNRs are clearly defined and designated geographical areas, as required under the relevant legislation. The boundaries can be located online for England ³⁴ , Northern Ireland ³⁵ , Scotland ³⁶ and Wales ³⁷ .	No change.
Is this type of site recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature?	<p>YES. NNRs are declared in law for the purposes of preserving flora, fauna or geological or physiographical features of special interest and/or for providing opportunities for the study of, or research into, those features (for specific details see above). They may also be declared not only for a conservation purpose but also for a recreational purpose, if the management of the land for the recreational purpose does not compromise its management for the conservation purpose.</p> <p>In England, Scotland and Wales, a NNR is the land declared under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949³⁸ or Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981)³⁹ as amended.</p> <p>In Northern Ireland, NNRs are nationally important wildlife sites protected under law by the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985⁴⁰.</p> <p>NNRs are owned or managed by each country's Statutory Nature Conservation Body, or held under a formal agreement with other organisations or bodies who are 'approved bodies' for the purposes of NNR management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • England - Natural England Access to Evidence - National Nature Reserves • Scotland - Scotland's National Nature Reserves (NNR.scot) • Wales - Natural Resources Wales / National Nature Reserves 	No change.

³⁴ <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx?layers=Designations,9,10&box=-288417:46530:777997:746530>

³⁵ <https://gis.daera-ni.gov.uk/arcgis/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=bb721449cb8949e7a4f90c722bd2d80b>

³⁶ <https://sitelink.nature.scot/map>

³⁷ https://datamap.gov.wales/layers/inspire-nrw:NRW_NNR

³⁸ [National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

³⁹ [Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

⁴⁰ [The Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1985 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to NNRs	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Ireland - Nature Reserves Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (daera-ni.gov.uk) 	
Is the main management objective nature conservation?	<p>YES. The primary purpose of NNRs is nature conservation.</p> <p>In England, the Natural England White Paper 2011⁴¹ provided a detailed policy of the context for managing NNRs, highlighting the importance of having an improved, more coordinated and monitored management level. It highlights the need to manage NNR sites better, coordinate management across sites at a landscape scale, and strengthen the public's connections with the natural environment. Additional NNR Public Engagement Standard⁴² was established in 2013 to provide a framework within which NE can fulfil its aim to "Engage the public with their natural environment by providing local places where they can experience, enjoy and participate in looking after their natural heritage".</p> <p>Scotland established an NNR policy (2003)^{43, 44} (see above). However, the main aims of each reserve are to conserve important habitats and species and allow people to enjoy and connect with nature.</p> <p>In 2021, Wales refreshed its Nature Recovery Action Plan: Our Strategy for Nature 2015⁴⁵ which set objectives for NNRs.</p> <p>Northern Ireland established NIEA's vision for maintaining NNRs⁴⁶, contributing to its protection and management by using the best practice to maximise the delivery of the administration's responsibilities and targets for conserving nature.</p>	No change.
Does the designation of the site prevent, or eliminate where necessary, any exploitation or management practice that	NO. The ownership or management of NNRs, by either state or non-government conservation organisations, gives a high degree of inherent protection and effective management.	This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no evidence that the designation per se is able to prevent management

⁴¹ <https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwi3rOLT6J - AhVinVwKHWogAtwQFnoECBUQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fpublications.naturalengland.org.uk%2Ffile%2F6055047911178240&usq=AOvVaw0P0FEa-Z3s70NvUEjCYzLq>

⁴² [Natural England Standard: NNR Public Engagement - NESTND025](#)

⁴³ [Scotland's National Nature Reserves A policy statement. \(yumpu.com\)](#)

⁴⁴ [216588470.23.pdf \(nls.uk\)](#)

⁴⁵ [The Nature Recovery Plan for Wales - Part 1: Our Strategy for Nature \(gov.wales\)](#)

⁴⁶ [NIEA Policy Position Statement on Statutory Nature Reserves | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to NNRs	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
will be harmful to their objectives of designation?	However, there are no legal obligations to undertake necessary conservation works and some sites can be de-designated if management by the landowner is deemed inappropriate, or at the end of a management agreement where the owner does not wish to review the lease. Whilst there is the opportunity to introduce byelaws when required to regulate activity, there is also no legal requirement or obligation to do this.	practices harmful to conservation objectives. Changed understanding of limitations of statutory status.
Is the long-term nature conservation ensured through legal or other effective means?	<p>NO. Despite the policy intentions for this by the Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies, e.g., NE's NNR management standards⁴⁷, long-term conservation is not ensured by virtue of declaration as an NNR.</p> <p>Although the legal and policy arrangements for NNRs may vary across the UK, The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act provides for (but does not ensure) the preservation of flora, fauna, and geological or physiographic features of NNR areas.</p> <p>In Wales, where NNRs are legally protected as SSSIs, this issue is made redundant through this higher level of protection across the network⁴⁸. This is also the case in the other countries where coincident designations offer greater protections.</p> <p>In Northern Ireland, the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 – Part V⁴⁹ – provides the power to protect NNRs but does not ensure it.</p>	<p>The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 was amended on 7/12/2022⁵⁰ with the following modification in the act related to NNRs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [F59 Agreements for management of nature reserves in Scotland and Wales] • Compulsory acquisition of land by [F74 and F78 conservation body] for establishment of nature reserves. • Declaration that areas are nature reserves • Bylaws for the protection of nature reserves • Establishment of nature reserves by local authorities <p>The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 was amended on 1/10/2022 where the following amendments were associated with NNRs: FR326, F356, Section 35, F363.</p> <p>This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no evidence that the designation per se is able to deliver continuity of nature conservation.</p>
Based on the evidence available, does this type of site meet the IUCN's definition of a protected area?	NO. Most NNRs are underpinned by ASSI/SSSI, SPA, SAC and Ramsar designations, and those areas so underpinned do qualify by virtue of those separate underpinning designations. However, the designation of NNR itself does not, in itself, sufficiently qualify given the gaps in protection offered by the underpinning legislation and lack of obligations on landowners/managers.	This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance based on considerations outlined above.

⁴⁷ <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5642141770448896>

⁴⁸ [Natural Resources Wales / National Nature Reserves](#)

⁴⁹ [The Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1985 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

⁵⁰ [Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

2. OTHER EFFECTIVE (AREA-BASED) CONSERVATION ASSESSMENT (IF THE NETWORK DOES NOT QUALIFY AS A PROTECTED AREA)

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to NNRs
Is the designation type a protected area?	NO. NNRs are not in themselves protected areas.
Does the site have the essential characteristics required to meet the OECM definition? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is geographically defined The site is governed and managed and such arrangements are expected to be ongoing and sustained over the long-term The site delivers effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity The site is free of environmentally damaging activities and threats to biodiversity 	PARTLY. NNRs are geographically defined, deliver in-situ conservation of biodiversity, offer some protection from environmentally damaging activities on paper but there is no assurance of long-term management at every site. At present, the only solution to ongoing ineffective management is the de-designation of unprotected sites and notification of SSSI/ASSI, which renders the original designation as a protected area defunct.
Will the conservation outcome at the site endure over the long-term?	PARTLY. There is currently no mechanism to ensure the long-term management of NNRs in any of the four countries of the UK, except where the landowner/approved body has agreed to long-term management objectives, with management actions resourced and being implemented.
What is the in-situ area-based conservation target (e.g., GBF Target 3) being met by this OECM?	GBF Target 3 , but only if protections and long-term management are secured across the network.
Based on the evidence available, does the site meet the IUCN's definition of an OECM?	Some NNRs could qualify as OECMs when the landowner/approved body can prove effective and long term management but they should be assessed case-by-case.

3. MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

Is the management of this type of protected area/OECM documented?	England	UNKNOWN. NE has established a standard format ⁵¹ for managing NNRs. This standard set out the key principles for the management of NNRs. It includes the examination of each site with the relevant descriptions, key features, analyses and sets objectives, as well as the management and monitoring prescriptions. The connected management plan is written within a year of the NNR being declared. All the outcomes of monitoring and analysing should be reviewed regularly against objectives, at least every five years. However, the latest NNR
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⁵¹ [Natural England Standard: NNR Management - NESTND029](#)

		management statement was published in 2013: Natural England Access to Evidence - Natural England standards
	Northern Ireland	PARTLY. Northern Ireland introduced a Policy Position Statement stating the aims and roles in the conservation management of nature reserves: NIEA Policy Position Statement on Statutory Nature Reserves Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (daera-ni.gov.uk) However, no evidence of the planning process, management plans, or monitoring was found, apart from the Policy Position Statement on the Establishment and Management of Statutory Nature Reserves (2016) ⁵² .
	Scotland	PARTLY. Scotland provides data on management plans and reviews, consultation reports, and habitat restoration plan reviews at: https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/protected-areas-and-species/protected-areas/national-designations/national-nature-reserves . However, the available documents provide insufficient data set to be able to assess monitoring outcomes. Moreover, the available NNR Selection Criteria and Standards documentation has not been updated since 2016 ⁵³ .
	Wales	UNKNOWN. Wales established a new board in order to deal with the responsibilities pursuant to legislation concerned with conservation, including NNRs. However, PAWG could not find any NNR-related documentation online.
What evidence is there that the measures to achieve the conservation objectives are being implemented?	England	UNKNOWN. PAWG could not find any evidence in the public domain.
	Northern Ireland	UNKNOWN. PAWG could not find any evidence in the public domain.
	Scotland	UNKNOWN. PAWG could not find any evidence in the public domain.
	Wales	UNKNOWN. PAWG could not find any evidence in the public domain.
Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?	England	UNKNOWN. Information on monitoring is not publicly available for any of the four countries. However, given the information found on the monitoring of SSSIs/ASSIs that underpin many of these sites (see SoC1) PAWG can only conclude that the NNR
	Northern Ireland	
	Scotland	

⁵² [NIEA Policy Position Statement on Statutory Nature Reserves | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

⁵³ [National Nature Reserve Selection Criteria and Standards | NatureScot](#)

	Wales	network is unlikely to be being monitored adequately despite efforts and success at many sites.
Are the protected areas/OECMs moving towards or have they reached their conservation objectives?	England	UNKNOWN. Information on the overall state of NNRs is not publicly available for any of the four countries. However, given the information found on the condition of SSSIs/ASSIs that underpin many of these sites (see SoC1) PAWG can only conclude that the NNR network is unlikely to be meeting all conservation objectives despite efforts and success at many sites.
	Northern Ireland	
	Scotland	
	Wales	
Based on the evidence available, is this site designation type/network of sites being managed effectively?	England	UNKNOWN
	Northern Ireland	PARTLY. Some sites are being managed effectively.
	Scotland	PARTLY. Some sites are being managed effectively.
	Wales	UNKNOWN



Fenn's, Whixall & Bettisfield Mosses NNR straddles the English-Welsh border and is one of UK's several shared conservation sites. Photo: Howard Davies.

3.9. National Parks (including The Broads)

Summary

Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, known colloquially as “30x30”, calls for 30% of the world’s terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, to be in effective protection and management by 2030. This target will be achieved through the establishment of protected areas (PAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). Both these types of area-based conservation measures are well defined under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and both have extensive CBD and IUCN guidance. Based on the evidence PAWG has gathered, our conclusions are:

- Does the National Park network meet (all) criteria for PAs? **NO (except for the areas of National Parks benefitting from protections afforded by SSSI, ASSI, Ramsar, SPA and/or SAC designations)**
- Does the National Park network meet the criteria for ‘effectively managed’? **PARTLY**
- If not protected areas, do National Parks warrant case-by-case consideration against OECM criteria? **YES**

Recommendations

The IUCN NCUK Protected Areas Working Group (PAWG) does not believe the National Park designation itself qualifies as a PA but defined areas within them could qualify as an OECM as a component of the 30x30 target for the UK following case by case assessment against OECM criteria and subject to evidence of effective management. PAWG recommends that the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations invest urgently in improving the management effectiveness of all National Parks to ensure qualifying areas effectively contribute to the 30x30 target.

In all three countries where they occur, PAWG believes that the need for a strengthened purpose for nature’s recovery in National Parks must also be accompanied by strengthened duties on all statutory bodies ‘to implement and to further’ (rather than to simply ‘have regard to’) that purpose. There must also be a clear requirement on public bodies (and other responsible bodies) to implement National Park management plans. In absence of these, PAWG does not believe the network can assure long-term conservation, except in areas that benefit from the provisions of other designations, e.g., SSSIs.

<p>Brief description of the site network and its stated objective(s)</p>	<p>National Parks in Great Britain are substantial tracts of land, sometimes remote, with wide-open spaces large enough to provide the public with opportunities for outdoor recreation. National Parks are designated because of their landscape quality, wildlife and their values as a recreational resource.</p> <p>The statutory purposes of National Parks in England and Wales are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Parks; and • To promote opportunities for the public understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Parks. <p>In those cases where conflict exists between the two purposes and reconciliation proves impossible, the first purpose should take precedence. This is known as the Sandford Principle⁵⁴.</p> <p>In Scotland the statutory aims are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area • To promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area
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⁵⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sandford_principle

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public To promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities <p>There are National Parks in England, Scotland and Wales but Northern Ireland, despite having the provision to do so, has not identified any National Parks yet.</p> <p>Note: The Broads was designated under a special Act of Parliament in 1988 and is a member of the National Park family. Its three statutory purposes are conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Broads, promoting the enjoyment of the Broads by the public and protecting the interests of navigation. It does not enjoy the benefit of the Sandford Principle.</p>
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1. PROTECTED AREA ASSESSMENT

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to National Parks	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Does this type of protected area have clearly defined geographical boundaries?	<p>YES. In England and Wales, boundaries are established under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and subsequent individual National Park Designation Orders. In Scotland, boundaries are established under the National Parks Act 2000 and subsequent individual National Park Designation Orders. Boundary information is available online for England⁵⁵, Scotland⁵⁶ and Wales⁵⁷.</p> <p>There is a legal boundary to the Broads and the protections set out in the 1988 legislation and the National Planning Policy Framework apply to it.</p>	No change.
Is this type of site recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature?	<p>YES. In England and Wales, 'to conserve and enhance natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage' is the first statutory purpose of National Parks as set out in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. In Scotland, 'to conserve and enhance natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage' is the first statutory aim of National Parks as set out in the Scotland National Parks Act 2000.</p>	No change.
Is the main management objective nature conservation?	<p>YES. In all three countries, the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage is the first purpose.</p>	No change.

⁵⁵ <https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/334e1b27-e193-4ef5-b14e-696b58bb7e95/national-parks-england>

⁵⁶ <https://hub.arcgis.com/datasets/ScotGov::national-parks-scotland/explore>

⁵⁷ https://datamap.gov.wales/layers/inspire-nrw:NRW_NATIONAL_PARK

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to National Parks	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
	<p>Other purposes also exist, and where there is conflict legislation (Scotland National Parks Act 2000 for Scotland, and the Environment Act 1995 for England and Wales) the Sandford Principle, and similar in Scotland, determines that first purpose/aim should, in principle, take priority. Note: the Sandford Principle does not apply in the Broads National Park which was set up under the 1998 Norfolk & Suffolk Broads Act.</p>	
<p>Does the designation of the site prevent, or eliminate where necessary, any exploitation or management practice that will be harmful to their objectives of designation?</p>	<p>PARTLY. In England, National Planning Policy makes it clear that great weight should be given to the conservation of wildlife and local planning is determined by the National Park Authority itself, which is delivered in order to achieve its first purpose to conserve and enhance natural beauty. The Glover Review⁵⁸ advocated giving protected landscapes new statutory purposes to recover nature, tackle climate change and improve people's connection to nature, embedding targets to deliver on all statutory purposes in management plans and requiring other public authorities to further those targets. This was supported by the UK Government's response. However, until this is in place, PAWG can only conclude that the necessary legislation is not in place to meet this criterion, except for areas that benefit from protections afforded by other designations, e.g., SSSI.</p> <p>In Scotland, Planning Policy makes it clear that "Development that affects a National Park....should only be permitted where: it will not adversely affect the integrity of the area or the qualities for which it has been designated; or any such adverse effects are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of national importance." The document also makes clear that conservation of natural and cultural heritage should take precedence where there are conflicts with other objectives. As elsewhere, the relevant National Park Authority (NPA) is the planning authority for Scottish National Parks, and so applies this in ways that furthers its first aim to conserve and enhance natural beauty.</p> <p>In Wales, National Planning Policy makes it clear that great weight should be given to the conservation of wildlife (Planning Policy Wales Edition 4, 2011) and local planning is determined by the National Park Authority itself, which is</p>	<p>This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no evidence that the designation per se is able to prevent management practices harmful to conservation objectives.</p>

⁵⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-landscapes-national-parks-and-aonbs-2018-review>

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to National Parks	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
	<p>delivered in order to achieve its first purpose to conserve and enhance natural beauty.</p> <p>Although these planning controls give some protection to National Parks, the level of protection for nature conservation is not necessarily prioritised, except in areas where other designations occur, e.g., SSSI. The lack of suitable protection and management across all land within National Parks has been recognised by the UK Government⁵⁹ and PAWG agrees that not all land within National Parks qualifies under this criterion.</p>	
<p>Is the long-term nature conservation ensured through legal or other effective means?</p>	<p>PARTLY. In England, conservation is achieved through the NPA being the Planning Authority for the area; through the development (in partnership) of National Park Management Plans; through the duty placed on NPAs and others to have regard to conserving biodiversity (Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006); and the duty on all public bodies to have regard to National Parks (National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949). The importance of nature conservation is reflected in the Government’s main policy document, the National Parks Circular and Vision 2010.</p> <p>In Scotland, conservation is achieved through the relevant National Park Authority being the responsible Planning Authority for the area; through the development (in partnership) of National Park Management Plans; through the duty placed on NPAs and others to have regard to conserving biodiversity (Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004); and the duty on all public bodies to have regard to National Parks (National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949), which was recently updated in England by the Levelling up and Regeneration Act 2023 and now requires relevant authorities to ‘seek to further’ the purpose. The importance of National Parks contributing to biodiversity outcomes is clearly set out in guidance to them on the preparation of National Park Plans.</p> <p>In Wales, conservation is achieved through the National Park Authority being the Planning Authority for the area; through the development (in partnership) of National Park Management Plans; through the duty placed on NPAs and</p>	<p>This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no evidence that the designation per se is able to deliver continuity of nature conservation.</p>

⁵⁹ https://consult.defra.gov.uk/nature-recovery-green-paper/nature-recovery-green-paper/supporting_documents/Nature%20Recovery%20Green%20Paper%20Consultation%20%20Protected%20Sites%20and%20Species.pdf

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to National Parks	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
	others to have regard to conserving biodiversity (Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006); and the duty on all public bodies to have regard to National Park purposes (National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949). The importance of nature conservation is reflected in the Welsh Government's Policy Statement for National Parks (2007).	
Based on the evidence available, does this type of site meet the IUCN's definition of a protected area?	NO	

2. OTHER EFFECTIVE (AREA-BASED) CONSERVATION ASSESSMENT (IF THE NETWORK DOES NOT QUALIFY AS A PROTECTED AREA)

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to National Parks
Is the designation type a protected area?	NO. National Parks are not in themselves Protected Areas.
Does the site have the essential characteristics required to meet the OECM definition? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is geographically defined The site is governed and managed and such arrangements are expected to be ongoing and sustained over the long-term The site delivers effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity The site is free of environmentally damaging activities and threats to biodiversity 	PARTLY. National Parks are geographically defined (although the Broads is defined under separate legislation) but the extent and type of conservation management varies spatially within and between sites. There is some legal constraint on land management within all National Parks but this does not always prioritise nature conservation. Biodiversity conservation through the prevention of environmentally damaging activities and threats to biodiversity can only be ensured where other statutorily designated sites are present, e.g., SSSIs.
Will the conservation outcome at the site endure over the long-term?	NO. There is no evidence to suggest that conservation objectives will endure in the long-term outside those parts under other statutory designations, e.g., SSSIs.
What is the in-situ area-based conservation target (e.g., GBF Target 3) being met by this OECM?	In-situ area-based GBF Target 3 cannot be delivered in the absence of a statutory basis for National Park conservation and management.
Based on the evidence available, does the site meet the IUCN's definition of an OECM?	Some parts of some National Parks could qualify as OECMs when the landowner can prove long term management, but they should be assessed case-by-case

3. MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

Is the management of this type of protected area/OECM documented?	England	YES. Management Plans (covering all aspects of the purposes) are available for all National Parks in England ⁶⁰ .
	Northern Ireland	n/a
	Scotland	YES. Each National Park has its own authority responsible for writing a national park partnership plan (covering all aspects of the aims) and working with everyone involved in managing the Park to ensure its implementation ⁶¹ .
	Wales	YES. National Park plans inform, contribute to and guide the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of each designated area (covering all aspects of the purposes) ⁶² .
What evidence is there that the measures to achieve the conservation objectives are being implemented?	England	PARTLY. There is an established framework for monitoring environmental outcomes in protected landscapes in England but this work is yet to report ⁶³ .
	Northern Ireland	n/a in 2023.
	Scotland	UNKNOWN. PAWG has not found any evidence of specific monitoring or reporting achievements against established nature conservation objectives (outside areas designated specifically for nature, e.g., SSSIs) at any National Park.
	Wales	UNKNOWN. PAWG has not found any evidence of specific monitoring or reporting achievements against established nature conservation objectives (outside areas designated specifically for nature, e.g., SSSIs) at any National Park.
Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?		NO. PAWG has not found any evidence in any country of specific monitoring data available for National Parks, outside those areas covered by other designations, e.g., SSSIs. Performance reports from individual National Parks carry some data but the picture is generally unclear due to the paucity of monitoring capacity.

⁶⁰ <https://www.nationalparksengland.org.uk/national-park-management-plans/the-ten-english-national-park-management-plans>

⁶¹ <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/protected-areas-and-species/protected-areas/national-designations/national-park>

⁶² <https://www.nationalparkswales.uk/npw/policy/national-park-plans>

⁶³ <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5646437593382912>

<p>Are the protected areas/OECMs moving towards or have they reached their conservation objectives?</p>		<p>UNKNOWN. Given the absence of whole-site monitoring data, PAWG could not find any quantifiable reporting of achievements against established objectives at any site and certainly not across the whole network.</p> <p>In fact, the only evidence PAWG has suggests that National Parks in England afford no more protection to bird species than the wider countryside⁶⁴.</p>
<p>Based on the evidence available, is this site designation type/network of sites being managed effectively?</p>	<p>England</p>	<p>PARTLY (some areas of some National Parks (e.g., SSSIs) are being managed effectively)</p>
	<p>Northern Ireland</p>	<p>N/A</p>
	<p>Scotland</p>	<p>PARTLY (some areas of some National Parks (e.g., SSSIs) are being managed effectively)</p>
	<p>Wales</p>	<p>PARTLY (some areas of some National Parks (e.g., SSSIs) are being managed effectively)</p>

⁶⁴ <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5801032570634240>



Sycamore Gap, on Hadrian's Wall lies within Northumberland National Park. Photo: D.A. Stroud.

3.10. National Scenic Areas (NSAs)

Summary

Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, known colloquially as “30x30”, calls for 30% of the world’s terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, to be in effective protection and management by 2030. This target will be achieved through the establishment of protected areas (PAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). Both these types of area-based conservation measures are well defined under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and both have extensive CBD and IUCN guidance. Based on the evidence PAWG has gathered, our conclusions are:

- Does the NSA network meet (all) criteria for PAs? **NO**
- Does the NSA network meet the criteria for ‘effectively managed’? **NO**
- If not protected areas, do NSAs warrant case-by-case consideration against OECM criteria? **NO**

Recommendations

The IUCN NCUK Protected Areas Working Group (PAWG) does not believe the NSA designation itself qualifies as a PA, and would struggle to qualify as an OECM, and should not be a component of the 30x30 target for the UK (except for those areas benefitting from protections afforded by other designations).

Brief description of the site network and its stated objective(s)	National Scenic Areas (NSAs) are Scotland's only national landscape designation and defined as areas “of outstanding scenic value in a national context” for which special protection measures are required. The designation’s purpose is both to identify the finest scenery and to ensure its protection from inappropriate development. NSAs are broadly equivalent to the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty found in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
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1. PROTECTED AREA ASSESSMENT

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to NSAs	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Does this type of protected area have clearly defined geographical boundaries?	YES. NSAs were first established in 1980, under planning legislation, by order of the Secretary of State. In December 2010, NSAs were designated under new legislation. Part 10 of the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 gave NSAs a statutory basis. The Town and Country Planning (National Scenic Areas) (Scotland) Designation Directions 2010 then brought this into force. Each NSA is mapped, its boundaries plotted and made available on the Scottish Government’s website ⁶⁵ .	No change.
Is this type of site recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature?	NO. Their main objective relates to the management of the special qualities of the areas’ landscape, including conservation of its landscape and scenic qualities and promotion of its enjoyment by the public. Many of these	No change.

⁶⁵ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-scenic-areas-of-scotland-maps/>

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to NSAs	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
	<p>special landscape qualities depend on the species, habitats and geology of the area but they do not have to be explicitly taken into account. To manage these qualities, means taking into account the management of nature but they are not recognised and dedicated to long term conservation of nature as that is at best only a by-product of the conservation of scenic beauty and landscape amenity.</p> <p>The NSA designation is recognised in all relevant development plans and in Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations.</p>	
Is the main management objective nature conservation?	<p>NO. The main objective relates to the management of the special qualities of the landscape and scenery of the areas, including their conservation and promotion of their enjoyment by the public. Many of these special landscape qualities depend on the species, habitats, and geology of the area, but there is no explicit requirement to manage for nature conservation. NSA land is owned largely independent of the relevant authorities and decisions on conflicting objectives are made through local and national planning processes, giving due weight to the merits of proposals and conservation of scenery – and therefore distinctively different to other protected area designations in UK which pass the IUCN definitional test.</p>	No change.
Does the designation of the site prevent, or eliminate where necessary, any exploitation or management practice that will be harmful to their objectives of designation?	<p>NO. This will depend on planning policies, sympathetic ownership and local land management and so cannot be assured. Designation will encourage the protection of these areas, but it can only be assured through other means.</p>	No change.
Is the long-term nature conservation ensured through legal or other effective means?	<p>NO. NSAs are established by statute for the long-term conservation of scenery and amenity and there is no explicit requirement for long-term nature conservation. Appropriate management is effected through various means including planning legislation and policy, recognition as 'sensitive areas' in EIA regulations for development, agriculture and forestry etc or given due consideration in National Park Plans and NNR management plans.</p>	No change.
Based on the evidence available, does this type of site meet the IUCN's definition of a protected area?	NO	No change.

2. OTHER EFFECTIVE (AREA-BASED) CONSERVATION MEASURES ASSESSMENT

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to NSAs
Is the designation type a protected area?	NO. NSAs are not in themselves protected areas.
Does the site have the essential characteristics required to meet the OECM definition? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is geographically defined The site is governed and managed and such arrangements are expected to be ongoing and sustained over the long-term The site delivers effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity The site is free of environmentally-damaging activities and threats to biodiversity 	PARTLY. NSAs are geographically defined but the extent and type of conservation management varies spatially within and between sites. Only the three NSAs in Dumfries and Galloway have active strategies ⁶⁶ . There is some legal constraint on land management within all NSAs but there is no obligation to prioritise nature conservation. Biodiversity conservation and the prevention of environmentally damaging activities and threats to biodiversity can only be ensured where other statutorily designated sites are present, e.g., SSSIs.
Will the conservation outcome at the site endure over the long-term?	NO. There is no evidence to suggest that conservation objectives will endure in the long-term outside those parts under other designations, e.g., SSSIs.
What is the in-situ area-based conservation target (e.g., GBF Target 3) being met by this OECM?	In-situ area-based GBF Target 3 cannot be delivered in the absence of a statutory basis for NSA conservation and management.
Based on the evidence available, does the site meet the IUCN's definition of an OECM?	NO

3. MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

Is the management of this type of protected area/OECM documented?	PARTLY. Only the three NSAs in Dumfries and Galloway have active strategies.
What evidence is there that the measures to achieve the conservation objectives are being implemented?	NO. PAWG has not found any evidence of specific monitoring or reporting achievements against established nature conservation objectives (outside areas designated specifically for nature, e.g., SSSIs) at any NSA. NSAs do not have specific conservation objectives.
Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?	NO. We have not found any evidence of specific monitoring data available for SCAs, outside those areas covered by other designations, e.g., SSSIs, and there are no conservation objectives to measure.
Are the protected areas/OECMs moving towards or have they reached their conservation objectives?	NO. There are no conservation objectives for these sites.

⁶⁶ <http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/article/15974/National-Scenic-Areas-NSAs>

Based on the evidence available, is this site designation type/network of sites being managed effectively?

NO



The Paps of Jura (within Jura NSA, Argyll) seen from Islay. Photo: D.A. Stroud.

3.11. National Trust (NT) and National Trust for Scotland (NTS) properties

Summary

Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, known colloquially as “30x30”, calls for 30% of the world’s terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, to be in effective protection and management by 2030. This target will be achieved through the establishment of protected areas (PAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). Both these types of area-based conservation measures are well defined under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and both have extensive CBD and IUCN guidance. Based on the evidence PAWG has gathered, our conclusions are:

- Does the NT property network meet (all) criteria for PAs? **PARTLY (all inalienable land and sites subject to statutory designations qualify)**
- Does the NT property network meet the criteria for ‘effectively managed’? **PARTLY**
- If not protected areas, do NT properties warrant case-by-case consideration against OECM criteria? **YES**

Recommendations

The IUCN NCUK Protected Areas Working Group (PAWG) does not believe that the NT and NTS property designation itself qualifies as a PA except where land is inalienable or overlaps with statutory sites (which is the majority), but other sites within the designation type should qualify as a protected area or a potential OECM and a high proportion of them could therefore be a component of the 30x30 target for the UK following case by case assessment of sites against PA and OECM criteria, and subject to evidence of effective management.

PAWG recognises and supports NT and NTS continuing commitment to secure further funding to continue improving, where necessary, the management effectiveness of their sites to ensure they can all effectively contribute to the 30x30 target. Management effectiveness can be constrained by impacts, both on- and off-site, outside organisational control. PAWG recommends that NT and NTS are funded to audit those landholdings where external influences are having an impact on management, so enabling the identification of strategic actions and policies that will help address these.

<p>Brief description of the site network and its stated objective(s)</p>	<p>The NT is a registered charity, established in 1895 but is unusual in having its role formalised by Act of Parliament in 1907, and hence having statutory purposes and powers. It operates in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, but north of the border is complemented by the National Trust for Scotland (a separate organisation established in 1931 but considered hereafter also as ‘NT’ to cover all properties).</p> <p>The core purposes of the NT, set out in the Act, are usually summarised as: “the permanent preservation of places of historic interest or natural beauty for the benefit of the nation”. The current expression of this core purpose in contemporary language is: “Looking after special places, for everyone, for ever”. The Act conferred on the NT the power to declare land it had purchased as ‘inalienable’, with the intention of providing permanent protection. In simple terms, this means that once it has been declared ‘inalienable’ the NT has to secure specific permission from Parliament before it can dispose of the land. Being declared inalienable does not constrain the management of the land, only the NT’s ability to sell it. Land is only declared inalienable after careful consideration, and although the majority of the NT’s land has been declared inalienable, a small proportion has not.</p>
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1. PROTECTED AREA ASSESSMENT

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to NT properties	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Does this type of protected area have clearly defined geographical boundaries?	<p>YES. All the main areas of land owned by the NT are recorded on the Property Database and are digitally mapped. This database distinguishes land that is managed in hand from land that is tenanted or leased. A digital map of the land that has been declared 'inalienable' has now been completed for all countries, based on the information recorded in the annals of the NT.</p>	No change.
Is this type of site recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature?	<p>PARTLY. All land declared inalienable is effectively dedicated in perpetuity to delivering the NT's core purpose, which explicitly includes the long-term conservation of nature. Virtually all land that is managed in hand is managed with the aim of directly delivering the NT's core objectives of protecting places of beauty, their flora and fauna and historic interest. In practice, natural beauty has always been interpreted as including biodiversity, landscapes, landforms and geodiversity. Sites that are designated SSSI or ASSI (including those also designated SPA or SAC) are managed under plans agreed with the relevant Statutory Nature Conservation Body, with the aim of achieving favourable ecological condition.</p> <p>In conclusion, the following categories of land would meet these criteria: a) all land that is inalienable and managed in hand; b) all land that is inalienable and also SSSI/ASSI but not managed in hand (i.e., tenanted).</p>	The extent of conservation management across all properties is examined more rigorously in this assessment.
Is the main management objective nature conservation?	<p>PARTLY. The NT's core purpose sets preservation of historic interest alongside natural beauty but does not give any prioritisation between them. In practice, conflicts between them are very rare and are managed without compromising nature. An implicit objective is enabling people to enjoy places of natural beauty, and there is good public access to nearly all the land managed in hand. Such access is managed, controlled and routed to avoid disturbance to sensitive species and damage to vulnerable habitats. Where land is tenanted but also SSSI/ASSI then it is managed in accordance with relevant legislation and management agreements to ensure that nature conservation objectives are being met and are not jeopardised by any other uses.</p> <p>In conclusion, the following categories of land would meet these criteria: a) all land that is inalienable and managed in</p>	The prioritisation of nature conservation is examined more rigorously in this assessment.

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to NT properties	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
	hand; b) all land that is inalienable and also SSSI/ASSI but not managed in hand (i.e., tenanted).	
Does the designation of the site prevent, or eliminate where necessary, any exploitation or management practice that will be harmful to their objectives of designation?	PARTLY. The NT is assiduous in pursuing its core purposes, and there is a presumption against allowing any activity that would jeopardise the natural beauty of the site. There are mandatory instructions to Property Managers to try to prevent any harm to the assets they manage. But this would not generally constrain farming practices on tenanted land. Similarly, there would be a presumption against any activity that would hamper achievement of the conservation objectives set for an SSSI/ASSI. In conclusion, inalienable land managed in hand would qualify, along with tenanted land which is designated an SSSI/ASSI.	The security of site protection is examined more rigorously in this assessment.
Is the long-term nature conservation ensured through legal or other effective means?	PARTLY. Land that has been declared inalienable has additional and very strong statutory protection against being sold by the NT. All SSSIs/ASSIs, SACs and SPAs are subject to the legal protection provided by these designations. The explicit reference in the NT's core purpose to 'protecting in perpetuity' ensures it takes a very long-term perspective in its decisions, plans and management practices. And the fact that this core purpose is established in statute gives this commitment added weight. In conclusion, all inalienable land and sites subject to statutory designations would definitely qualify as having additional legal protection.	The security of site tenure is examined more rigorously in this assessment.
Based on the evidence available, does this type of site meet the IUCN's definition of a protected area?	PARTLY. Land that has been declared inalienable has additional and very strong statutory protection against being sold by the Trust. All SSSIs/ASSIs, SACs and SPAs are subject to the legal protection provided by these designations. The explicit reference in the NT's core purpose to 'protecting in perpetuity' ensures it takes a very long-term perspective in its decisions, plans and management practices. The fact that this core purpose is established in statute gives this commitment added weight. In conclusion, all inalienable land and that subject to statutory designations would definitely qualify as having additional legal protection.	No change.

2. OTHER EFFECTIVE (AREA-BASED) CONSERVATION ASSESSMENT (IF THE NETWORK DOES NOT QUALIFY AS A PROTECTED AREA)

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to NT properties
Is the designation type a protected area?	NO. NT properties are not in themselves protected areas (except those which are inalienable).
Does the site have the essential characteristics required to meet the OECM definition? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is geographically defined The site is governed and managed and such arrangements are expected to be ongoing and sustained over the long-term The site delivers effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity The site is free of environmentally-damaging activities and threats to biodiversity 	PARTLY. NT properties are geographically defined, deliver in-situ conservation of biodiversity, offer some protection from environmentally damaging activities on paper but there is no assurance of long-term management at every site.
Will the conservation outcome at the site endure over the long-term?	PARTLY. The NT and NTS are obliged to the long-term management of their properties with management actions resourced and being implemented. However, except for those sites benefiting from legal protection, the NT/NTS's management activities will always be constrained by income and ability to influence tenants.
What is the in-situ area-based conservation target (e.g., GBF Target 3) being met by this OECM?	In situ area based GBF Target 3 , but only if protections and long-term management are secured across the network.
Based on the evidence available, does the site meet the IUCN's definition of an OECM?	Some NG/NTS properties could qualify as OECMs. Assess case by case.

3. MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

Is the management of this type of protected area/OECM documented?	NO. Management Plans are prepared for all NT properties but these documents are not publicly available.
What evidence is there that the measures to achieve the conservation objectives are being implemented?	UNKNOWN
Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?	YES
Are the protected areas/OECMs moving towards or have they reached their conservation objectives?	UNKNOWN
Based on the evidence available, is this site designation type/network of sites being managed effectively?	PARTLY (impacts on management sometimes fall outside the control of the organisations)

3.12. Plantlife Nature Reserves

Summary

Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, known colloquially as “30x30”, calls for 30% of the world’s terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, to be in effective protection and management by 2030. This target will be achieved through the establishment of protected areas (PAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). Both these types of area-based conservation measures are well defined under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and both have extensive CBD and IUCN guidance. Based on the evidence PAWG has gathered, our conclusions are:

- Does the Plantlife Nature Reserve network meet (all) criteria for PAs? **NO (except for the high proportion of Plantlife Nature Reserve area benefitting from protections afforded by SSSI, SPA and/or SAC designations)**
- Does the Plantlife Nature Reserve network meet the criteria for ‘effectively managed’? **PARTLY**
- If not protected areas, do Plantlife Nature Reserves warrant case-by-case consideration against OECM criteria? **YES**

Recommendations

The IUCN NCUK Protected Areas Working Group (PAWG) does not believe that the Plantlife Nature Reserve designation itself qualifies as a PA except where land overlaps with statutory sites, but other sites within the designation type should qualify as a PA or a potential OECM and a high proportion of them could therefore be a component of the 30x30 target for the UK following case by case assessment of sites against PA and OECM criteria, and subject to evidence of effective management.

PAWG recognises and supports Plantlife continuing commitment to secure further funding to continue improving, where necessary, the management effectiveness of their Nature Reserves to ensure they can all effectively contribute to the 30x30 target. Management effectiveness can be constrained by impacts, both on- and off-site, outside organisational control. PAWG recommends that Plantlife is funded to audit those landholdings where external influences are having an impact on management, so enabling the identification of strategic actions and policies that will help address these.

<p>Brief description of the site network and its stated objective(s)</p>	<p>Plantlife owns and manages 24 Nature Reserves principally for the direct conservation of threatened plant species and habitats. They are also owned and managed for research and demonstration, for supporting its policy advocacy work, for inspiring the public to support plant conservation and to support other areas of Plantlife’s work.</p> <p>The overall objectives for the management of Plantlife’s Nature Reserves are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To maintain and enhance their natural biodiversity • To stimulate public interest in wild plants • To carry out research that supports its conservation advocacy work • To generate public support for plant conservation within local communities • To extend existing nature reserves where this will provide strategic benefits <p>Plantlife holds information about the habitats and species that occur on its Nature Reserves. These data are managed and shared in accordance with the principles outlined by the National Biodiversity Network. Plantlife retains the right to withhold any information that it deems sensitive or which could lead to a detrimental impact on the wildlife of its Nature Reserves.</p>
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1. PROTECTED AREA ASSESSMENT

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to Plantlife Nature Reserves	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Does this type of protected area have clearly defined geographical boundaries?	YES. Each of Plantlife's Nature Reserves has a fixed boundary that is mapped digitally. Land ownership and tenure is recorded by the Land Registry.	No change.
Is this type of site recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature?	YES. Plantlife's Articles of Association state the objects for which the Company is established, one of which is "to promote and undertake for the public benefit the establishment and maintenance of places of botanical interest for the cultivation and preservation of plants". Some of Plantlife's Nature Reserves are also in whole, or in part, SSSI/ASSIs, and this designation is open-ended (i.e., permanent). Individual SSSI/ASSIs are designated for one or more specified natural features - plants, animals, rocks and landforms; management must give priority to these features but may also support the conservation of other habitats, species, rocks and landforms.	No change.
Is the main management objective nature conservation?	YES. The principal objective in the management of Plantlife's Nature Reserves is "to maintain and enhance their natural biodiversity". For those Plantlife Nature Reserves that are also SSSI/ASSIs, the priority objective of SSSI/ASSI designation and management is nature conservation.	No change.
Does the designation of the site prevent, or eliminate where necessary, any exploitation or management practice that will be harmful to their objectives of designation?	PARTLY. The principal function of Plantlife's Nature Reserves is "the direct conservation of threatened plant species and habitats". In addition, some of Plantlife's Nature Reserves are designated as SSSI/ASSIs, some are also SACs and one is also an SPA and Ramsar Site. For those sites that are also SSSI/ASSIs, the designating authorities have various statutory and other means to prevent or eliminate practices that would obstruct achievement of a site's nature conservation objective(s). However, those not protected in this way are at risk of proposals that could damage sites despite the wishes of the organisation.	This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no evidence that the designation per se is able to prevent management practices harmful to conservation objectives. The long-term security of site protection is examined more rigorously in this assessment.
Is the long-term nature conservation ensured through legal or other effective means?	PARTLY. The over-riding objective for Plantlife's Nature Reserves is to "maintain and enhance their natural biodiversity". Plantlife is committed to ensuring that the nature conservation interest on each of its reserves is properly safeguarded and managed in perpetuity. Plantlife owns the freehold on a high proportion of its nature reserves. In addition, a number of Nature Reserves benefit from statutory protection (several are SSSI).	This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no evidence that the designation per se is able to deliver continuity of nature conservation. The security of site tenure is examined more rigorously in this assessment.

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to Plantlife Nature Reserves	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
	For those reserves that are SSSIs, these are established in law (Scotland: Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended); England and Wales: Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)). However, the organisation is able to dispose of land and has no obligation to continue to own or manage any of its estate.	
Based on the evidence available, does this type of site meet the IUCN's definition of a protected area?	NO. Many Plantlife Nature Reserves are underpinned by SSSI, SPA, SAC and Ramsar Site designations, and those areas underpinned by these protections do qualify by virtue of those designations. However, the designation of Plantlife Nature Reserve itself does not sufficiently qualify given that there is no overall protection offered by legislation and sites can be disposed of in some circumstances.	This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance based on considerations outlined above.

2. OTHER EFFECTIVE (AREA-BASED) CONSERVATION ASSESSMENT (IF THE NETWORK DOES NOT QUALIFY AS A PROTECTED AREA)

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to Plantlife Nature Reserves
Is the designation type a protected area?	NO. Plantlife Nature Reserves are not in themselves protected areas.
Does the site have the essential characteristics required to meet the OECM definition? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is geographically defined The site is governed and managed and such arrangements are expected to be ongoing and sustained over the long-term The site delivers effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity The site is free of environmentally damaging activities and threats to biodiversity 	PARTLY. Plantlife Nature Reserves are geographically defined, deliver in-situ conservation of biodiversity, offer some protection from environmentally damaging activities on paper but there is no assurance of long-term management at every site.
Will the conservation outcome at the site endure over the long-term?	PARTLY. Plantlife is committed to the long-term management of its Nature Reserves with management actions resourced and being implemented. However, except for those sites benefiting from legal protection, Plantlife's management activities will always be constrained by its charitable income.
What is the in-situ area-based conservation target (e.g., GBF Target 3) being met by this OECM?	In situ area based GBF Target 3 , but only if protections and long-term management are secured across the network.
Based on the evidence available, does the site meet the IUCN's definition of an OECM?	Some Plantlife Nature Reserves could qualify as OECMs. Assess case by case.

3. MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

Is the management of this type of protected area/OECM documented?	NO. Management Plans are prepared for all Plantlife Nature Reserves but these documents are not publicly available.
What evidence is there that the measures to achieve the conservation objectives are being implemented?	UNKNOWN
Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?	YES
Are the protected areas/OECMs moving towards or have they reached their conservation objectives?	UNKNOWN
Based on the evidence available, is this site designation type/network of sites being managed effectively?	PARTLY (impacts on management sometimes fall outside the control of the organisation)

3.13. Ramsar Sites

Summary

Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, known colloquially as “30x30”, calls for 30% of the world’s terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, to be in effective protection and management by 2030. This target will be achieved through the establishment of protected areas (PAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). Both these types of area-based conservation measures are well defined under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and both have extensive CBD and IUCN guidance. Based on the evidence PAWG has gathered, our conclusions are:

- Does the Ramsar Site network meet (all) criteria for PAs? **YES**
- Does the Ramsar Site network meet the criteria for ‘effectively managed’? **PARTLY**

Recommendations

The IUCN NCUK Protected Areas Working Group (PAWG) believes that the Ramsar Site designation continues to qualify as a PA and this network, in its entirety, should be a component of the 30x30 target for the UK. However, in order to meet the required standards for 30x30, sites must be both protected and effectively managed. PAWG recommends that the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations invest urgently in improving the management effectiveness of all Ramsar Sites to ensure these sites effectively contribute to the 30x30 target.

Brief description of the site network and its stated objective(s)	<p>Ramsar Sites are wetlands of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention on wetlands: an intergovernmental treaty that aims to conserve wetlands through local and national actions for the wise use of wetlands, and international cooperation.</p> <p>Whilst there is no dedicated legislation for the protection of Ramsar Sites in the UK, nearly all Ramsar Sites are either Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and/or Sites/Areas of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs/ASSIs) and are protected under the relevant statutory regimes. Ramsar Sites are not part of the National Site Network (that covers SPAs and SACs) but through policy statements, receive the same level of protection as sites in that network⁶⁷.</p>
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1. PROTECTED AREA ASSESSMENT

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to Ramsar Sites	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Does this type of protected area have clearly defined geographical boundaries?	YES. Each Ramsar Site has an established boundary and these are mapped digitally by the Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies ⁶⁸ . These boundaries are submitted to the Ramsar Secretariat by JNCC on behalf of the UK Government and are available on the Ramsar Sites Information Service .	No change.

⁶⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-the-habitats-regulations-2017/changes-to-the-habitats-regulations-2017#:~:text=Designated%20Wetlands%20of%20International%20Importance,of%20the%20national%20site%20network.>

⁶⁸ <https://hub.jncc.gov.uk/assets/f0e372e3-1580-4bf4-b31a-2b18ab9ca51d>

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to Ramsar Sites	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Is this type of site recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature?	<p>YES. The designation of UK Ramsar Sites has generally been underpinned through prior notification of these areas as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) (or Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) in Northern Ireland). Accordingly, these receive statutory protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended) and the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (as amended). UK Government and the Devolved Administrations have also issued policy statements relating to Ramsar Sites which extend to them the same protection at a policy level as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). In Scotland, this is only where qualifying interests are the same as for the Natura site, otherwise it has SSSI equivalent status⁶⁹.</p> <p>However, where sites do not benefit from underpinning of statutory designations, problems can occur. For example, the southern component of the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg Ramsar Site in Northern Ireland lies outside the boundary for the SPA and ASSI. Although planning policy applies the procedures under the Habitats Regulations in respect of Ramsar Sites, this area has been subject to illegal damage with reports of issues to the Convention since the late 1980s⁷⁰. It was subject to a Ramsar Advisory Mission in 1989.</p> <p>Ramsar Sites can be de-listed by the Contracting Party in the urgent national interest. However, deletion or boundary restriction is not considered acceptable when such deletion or restriction is being proposed “in order to permit or facilitate future developments or other land use change in that area which is not justified as in the “urgent national interests”⁷¹.</p>	No change.
Is the main management objective nature conservation?	YES. In designating a wetland as a Ramsar Site, Contracting Parties commit to establish and implement a management framework aimed at conserving the wetland and ensuring its wise use.	No change.
Does the designation of the site prevent, or eliminate where necessary, any exploitation or management practice that	YES. Although the designation does not offer legal protection in itself, the underpinning by other site protection legislation means that all activities within the site are	No change.

⁶⁹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/implementation-of-scottish-government-policy-on-protecting-ramsar-sites/>

⁷⁰ https://rsis.ramsar.org/RISapp/files/AM/AM_010_GB_en.pdf

⁷¹ https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/res/key_res_ix_06_e.pdf

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to Ramsar Sites	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
will be harmful to their objectives of designation?	<p>managed to eliminate or minimise adverse effects on the species for which the site is selected, and/or their habitats.</p> <p>“Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site’s conservation objectives.”⁷² Only activities deemed to be of overriding national importance are potentially allowed and, in such cases, compensatory measures must to be put in place and reported.</p> <p>Any revocation of the legislation underpinning SPAs and SACs, for example undertaken under the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 in England, could disqualify Ramsar Sites under this criterion.</p>	
Is the long-term nature conservation ensured through legal or other effective means?	YES. Legal protections are afforded, permanently, under the provisions of the legislation protecting SPAs, SACs, SSSIs and ASSIs (see SoC1, SoC2, and SoC3 for more details).	No change.
Based on the evidence available, does this type of site meet the IUCN’s definition of a protected area?	YES	No change.

2. OTHER EFFECTIVE (AREA-BASED) CONSERVATION ASSESSMENT (IF THE NETWORK DOES NOT QUALIFY AS A PROTECTED AREA)

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to [candidate OECM]
Is the designation type a protected area?	n/a
<p>Does the site have the essential characteristics required to meet the OECM definition?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is geographically defined • The site is governed and managed and such arrangements are expected to be ongoing and sustained over the long-term • The site delivers effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity • The site is free of environmentally damaging activities and threats to biodiversity 	n/a

⁷² Article 6.3 of the Habitats Directive

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to [candidate OECEM]
Will the conservation outcome at the site endure over the long-term?	n/a
What is the in-situ area-based conservation target (e.g., GBF Target 3) being met by this OECEM?	n/a
Based on the evidence available, does the site meet the IUCN's definition of an OECEM?	n/a

3. MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

Is the management of this type of protected area/OECEM documented?	PARTLY. JNCC reports that 125 Ramsar Sites in the UK have a formal management plan. PAWG was unable to find the data to disaggregate the source of this information.	
What evidence is there that the measures to achieve the conservation objectives are being implemented?	England	YES. Information on the current condition of the 73 Ramsar Sites in England (as reported in the UK's national report to COP14 reveals that 56% of the total area of these sites is in favourable condition (i.e., the condition objectives for the interest features are being met) and 44% is in unfavourable condition, with most of the latter judged to be recovering rather than stable or declining (79% v 21%) ⁷³ .
	Northern Ireland	UNKNOWN. PAWG could not find specific information on the condition of Ramsar Sites in Northern Ireland.
	Scotland	YES. In Scotland, 76% of the Ramsar Site features are in favourable or recovering condition, with the remaining 24% of features in unfavourable condition ⁶ .
	Wales	UNKNOWN. PAWG could not find specific information on the condition of Ramsar Sites in Wales.
	UK	The effectiveness of the management of Ramsar Sites has been assessed via site condition monitoring. This has largely been based on Common Standards Monitoring, which provides an agreed approach to the assessment of condition on statutory sites designated through UK legislation and international agreements. In 2021, the national

⁷³ https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/cop14nr_uk_e.pdf

		<p>report for the 14th Conference of Parties (COP14)⁷ reported that 123 out of 125 management plans for Ramsar Sites are being implemented but PAWG was unable to determine how this assessment was made.</p>
<p>Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?</p>		<p>PARTLY. Most of the area of Ramsar Sites in the UK is covered by Common Standards Monitoring and therefore its status reflects that reported in SoC1.</p> <p>In the national report to CBD COP14, the UK Government stated that “resourcing both baseline inventory and monitoring of Ramsar Sites and wetlands more widely is challenging, partly because of the remote and patchy nature of certain wetland habitats. The UK has continued to make best use of existing resources and to develop and use new technologies.”</p>
<p>Are the protected areas/OECMs moving towards or have they reached their conservation objectives?</p>		<p>PARTLY. As reported for SSSIs/ASSIs, the progress towards improvement in Ramsar Site condition across the four countries is patchy. If favourable condition (and possibly unfavourable recovering with caveats) is the ultimate measure of success, then the Ramsar Site network cannot be said to be reaching its conservation objectives despite encouraging action and success at many sites.</p> <p>Two Ramsar Sites are listed on the Montreux Record (Dee Estuary and Ouse Washes). The Montreux Record is a register of wetland sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference.</p> <p>Natural Resources Wales and Natural England have undertaken a substantial review of the issues raised by the Ramsar Secretariat on the reasons behind the listing of the Dee Estuary Ramsar Site on the Montreux Record. This review has been presented to Government for discussion in the near future. It considers the issues raised originally and provides an update on progress in addressing these in light of current knowledge. The main threats continue to come from development pressures,</p>

		<p>pollution, and disturbance through recreation (including wildfowling).</p> <p>The habitat creation project to improve the conservation condition of the Ouse Washes has been underway since 2007 led by the Environment Agency (EA), balancing flood control and conservation interests. Planning permission for the first habitat creation site at Coveney was secured in September 2013 and construction of the first phase completed at the end of October 2015. The EA will continue to progress a second phase of habitat creation at Coveney plus an additional site at Sutton. Together, these projects could deliver around 330 ha of new wet grassland habitat, which is expected to make an important contribution towards offsetting the observed deterioration.</p>
<p>Based on the evidence available, is this site designation type/network of sites being managed effectively?</p>	<p>England</p>	<p>PARTLY. Some sites are being managed effectively.</p>
	<p>Northern Ireland</p>	<p>PARTLY. Some sites are being managed effectively.</p>
	<p>Scotland</p>	<p>PARTLY. Some sites are being managed effectively.</p>
	<p>Wales</p>	<p>PARTLY. Some sites are being managed effectively.</p>



Eilean na Muice Dubh/Duich Moss, Islay is a Ramsar Site designated for its international importance for Greenland White-fronted Geese *Anser albifrons flavirostris* as well as for its peatland habitats. Photo: D.A. Stroud

3.14. Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Nature Reserves

Summary

Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, known colloquially as “30x30”, calls for 30% of the world’s terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, to be in effective protection and management by 2030. This target will be achieved through the establishment of protected areas (PAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). Both these types of area-based conservation measures are well defined under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and both have extensive CBD and IUCN guidance. Based on the evidence PAWG has gathered, our conclusions are:

- Does the RSPB Nature Reserve network meet (all) criteria for PAs? **NO (except for the high proportion of RSPB Nature Reserve area benefitting from protections afforded by SSSI, ASSI, Ramsar, SPA and/or SAC designations)**
- Does the RSPB Nature Reserve network meet the criteria for ‘effectively managed’? **PARTLY**
- If not protected areas, do RSPB Nature Reserves warrant case-by-case consideration against OECM criteria? **YES**

Recommendations

The IUCN NCUK Protected Areas Working Group (PAWG) does not believe that RSPB Nature Reserve designation itself qualifies as a PA except where land overlaps with statutory sites, but other sites within the designation type could qualify as a PA or a potential OECM and a high proportion of them should therefore be a component of the 30x30 target for the UK following case by case assessment of sites against PA and OECM criteria, and subject to evidence of effective management.

PAWG recognises and supports the RSPB’s continuing commitment to secure further funding to continue improving, where necessary, the management effectiveness of their sites to ensure they can all effectively contribute to the 30x30 target. Management effectiveness can be constrained by impacts, both on- and off-site, outside organisational control. PAWG recommends that the RSPB is funded to audit those landholdings where external influences are having an impact on management, so enabling the identification of strategic actions and policies that will help address these.

Brief description of the site network and its stated objective(s)	The RSPB’s vision is to secure a wildlife-rich future by expanding and managing a network of nature reserves which contribute significantly to landscape-scale conservation. The RSPB aspires to protect, enhance and create habitats for the important species that depend on them, aiming to manage 1,604 km ² of land as nature reserves and acquire 250 km ² of new land by 2030. The RSPB seeks to improve land management in the wider countryside by demonstrating best practice and trialling new ideas on its reserves. The RSPB’s Nature Reserves provide first hand inspiring experiences that connect people with nature, building a deep and lasting commitment to saving nature and supporting RSPB, financially, practically and morally.
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1. PROTECTED AREA ASSESSMENT

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to RSPB Nature Reserves	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Does this type of protected area have clearly defined geographical boundaries?	YES. 226 RSPB Nature Reserves have defined boundaries which have been digitally mapped and are available as	No change.

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to RSPB Nature Reserves	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
	shapefiles ⁷⁴ . Land ownership and tenure is recorded by the Land Registry. Several of the Nature Reserves are, in whole or in part, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or Areas of Scientific Interest (ASSI). Each of the SSSI/ASSIs has a legally notified boundary. In addition, many RSPB sites receive protection as SPAs and/or SACs.	
Is this type of site recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature?	YES. The RSPB aims to protect and enhance the nature conservation value of the Nature Reserves they own and manage. The RSPB owns much of their estate, the remaining land is held under lease or management agreement. For those RSPB Nature Reserves that are also in whole or part SSSI/ASSIs, this designation is open-ended (i.e., permanent). Individual SSSI/ASSIs are designated for one or more specified natural features. Management must give priority to these features, but notification may have incidental benefits to other natural features	No change.
Is the main management objective nature conservation?	YES. Nature conservation is the main objective of the RSPB's Nature Reserves. However, many of the reserves have the secondary objective to promote access for recreation and education. For those Nature Reserves that are also SSSI/ASSIs, the priority objective of notification and management is nature conservation. That said, the RSPB does in some instances manage land to demonstrate the potential to deliver long-term conservation of nature in harmony with other objectives which may constrain the potential scale of benefits for nature. (For example, the RSPB's Hope Farm is delivering for nature but within the confines of a primary objective of being a productive and profitable arable farming operation).	No change.
Does the designation of the site prevent, or eliminate where necessary, any exploitation or management practice that will be harmful to their objectives of designation?	PARTLY. The RSPB has a strong commitment to the protection and enhancement of their Nature Reserves. Many reserves have multiple designations, including SSSI/ASSI, SPA, SAC and Ramsar Site, which have a high level of statutory protection that restricts damaging activities or practices that, would obstruct achievement of a sites conservation objective(s). However, those not protected in this way are at risk of proposals that could damage sites despite the wishes of the organisation.	This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no evidence that the designation per se is able to prevent management practices harmful to conservation objectives. The security of site protection is examined more rigorously in this assessment.

⁷⁴ https://opendata-rspb.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/6076715cb76d4c388fa38b87db7d9d24_0/explore

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to RSPB Nature Reserves	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Is the long-term nature conservation ensured through legal or other effective means?	PARTLY. RSPB aims to provide long-term protection and management to their Nature Reserves. However, this is sometimes restricted by shorter-term leases and management agreements. For those RSPB Nature Reserves that are also SSSI/ASSIs, the protection is established in law. However, the organisation is able to dispose of land and has no obligation to continue to own or manage any of its estate.	This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no evidence that the designation per se is able to deliver continuity of nature conservation. The security of site tenure is examined more rigorously in this assessment.
Based on the evidence available, does this type of site meet the IUCN's definition of a protected area?	NO. Many RSPB Nature Reserves are underpinned by ASSI/SSSI, SPA, SAC and Ramsar Site designations, and those areas underpinned by these protections do qualify by virtue of those designations. However, the designation of RSPB Nature Reserve itself does not sufficiently qualify given that there is no overall protection offered by legislation and sites can be disposed of in some circumstances.	This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance based on considerations outlined above.

2. OTHER EFFECTIVE (AREA-BASED) CONSERVATION ASSESSMENT (IF THE NETWORK DOES NOT QUALIFY AS A PROTECTED AREA)

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to RSPB Nature Reserves
Is the designation type a protected area?	NO. RSPB Nature Reserves are not in themselves protected areas.
Does the site have the essential characteristics required to meet the OECM definition? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is geographically defined The site is governed and managed and such arrangements are expected to be ongoing and sustained over the long-term The site delivers effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity The site is free of environmentally damaging activities and threats to biodiversity 	PARTLY. RSPB Nature Reserves are geographically defined, deliver in-situ conservation of biodiversity, offer some protection from environmentally damaging activities on paper but there is no assurance of long-term management at every site given the option for disposal and limitations to management when charitable resources are restricted.
Will the conservation outcome at the site endure over the long-term?	PARTLY. The RSPB is committed to the long-term management of its Nature Reserves with management actions resourced and being implemented. However, except for those sites benefiting from legal protection, the RSPB's management activities will always be constrained by its charitable income.
What is the in-situ area-based conservation target (e.g., GBF Target 3) being met by this OECM?	In situ area based GBF Target 3 , but only if protections and long-term management are secured across the network.

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to RSPB Nature Reserves
Based on the evidence available, does the site meet the IUCN's definition of an OECM?	Some RSPB Nature Reserves could qualify as OECMs. Assess case by case.

3. MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

Is the management of this type of protected area/OECM documented?	NO. Management Plans are prepared for all RSPB Nature Reserves but these documents are not publicly available.
What evidence is there that the measures to achieve the conservation objectives are being implemented?	UNKNOWN. RSPB produces annual report entitled 'Wildlife on RSPB Reserves' which reports on the status of species and habitats across its estate, but that reporting at the individual Nature Reserve level is not available in the public domain.
Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?	YES
Are the protected areas/OECMs moving towards or have they reached their conservation objectives?	UNKNOWN
Based on the evidence available, is this site designation type/network of sites being managed effectively?	PARTLY (impacts on management sometimes fall outside the control of the organisation)

3.15. Sites and Areas of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI and ASSI)

Summary

Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, known colloquially as “30x30”, calls for 30% of the world’s terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, to be in effective protection and management by 2030. This target will be achieved through the establishment of protected areas (PAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). Both these types of area-based conservation measures are well defined under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and both have extensive CBD and IUCN guidance. Based on the evidence PAWG has gathered, our conclusions are:

- Does the SSSI/ASSIs network meet (all) criteria for PAs? **YES**
- Does the SSSI/ASSIs network meet the criteria for ‘effectively managed’? **PARTLY**

Recommendations

The IUCN NCUK Protected Areas Working Group (PAWG) believes that the SSSI/ASSI designation continues to qualify as a PA. This network, in its entirety, therefore has the potential to contribute to the 30x30 target for the UK. However, to meet the required standards for 30x30, sites must be both protected and effectively managed. PAWG recommends that the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations invest urgently in improving the management effectiveness of all SSSI/ASSIs to ensure these sites can all effectively contribute to the 30x30 target.

<p>Brief description of the site network and its stated objective(s)</p>	<p>Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in Great Britain, and Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) in Northern Ireland, are designated as the UK’s best wildlife and geological sites on land and down to low water mark. The boundaries of some SSSIs also extend into subtidal areas. SSSIs are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Nature Conservation Scotland Act 2004. ASSIs are protected by the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 and the Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002.</p> <p>These sites are ‘notified’ (designated) by the relevant Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies (SNCBs) for the representation and protection of the United Kingdom’s natural features – their plants, animals, habitats, rocks and landforms. The designating authorities are NatureScot (Scotland), Natural England (NE), Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). Whilst the legislation aims to prohibit damage to these sites from potentially damaging activities including lack of necessary management, the policy ambition is that they achieve ‘favourable condition’ status. Favourable condition means that the SSSI/ASSI’s habitats and features are being conserved by appropriate management to achieve specified conservation objectives.</p>
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1. PROTECTED AREA ASSESSMENT

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to SSSI/ASSIs	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Does this type of protected area have clearly defined geographical boundaries?	YES. Each SSSI/ASSI has a boundary defined in a map attached to what is called the ‘citation’ which is required under the relevant legislation. In Scotland, these are publicly	No change.

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to SSSI/ASSIs	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
	available in the Register of SSSIs ⁷⁵ . In England ⁷⁶ , Wales ⁷⁷ and Northern Ireland ⁷⁸ every SSSI/ASSI is mapped online and registered as a local land charge.	
Is this type of site recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature?	<p>YES. SSSI/ASSI legislation ensures designation is permanent (but see below). Individual SSSIs/ASSIs are 'notified' (designated) for one or more specified natural features – plants, animals, habitats, rocks and landforms. Unlike SSSIs, ASSIs include both natural environments and man-made structures.</p> <p>There are defined procedures for denotifying sites that lose their 'interest features'.</p> <p>Management and protection must give priority to notified features but may also support the conservation of other habitats, species, rocks and landforms.</p>	Guidelines for the selection of SSSIs (only) in Great Britain for different taxa have been revised by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) since PNOTM ⁷⁹ .
Is the main management objective nature conservation?	YES. The priority objective of SSSI/ASSI notification and management is nature conservation, but the designation may also accommodate other land use objectives where they are compatible with the nature conservation objectives. In all countries, the policy ambition is for all site features to be maintained in or returned to 'favourable condition'.	No change.
Does the designation of the site prevent, or eliminate where necessary, any exploitation or management practice that will be harmful to their objectives of designation?	<p>YES. The designating authorities have various statutory and other means to prevent or eliminate practices that would obstruct achievement of a site's nature conservation objective(s). They may refuse consent or issue consent subject to safeguarding conditions for proposed operations and can require necessary management to take place.</p> <p>Other regulatory authorities may only grant permission for operations likely to damage SSSI/ASSI after statutory consultation with the designating authority and taking account of its advice. Damaging operations may still be permitted in some limited circumstances and the effective enforcement of the legislation is highly dependent on the</p>	There were proposals to change the measurement used in reporting the condition of SSSIs in England in 2021. As a result of this consultation, Natural England has devised a mechanism to continue to report condition at a unit scale, whilst progressing with the change in metric to officially report SSSI condition at feature scale from April 2023 ⁸⁰ .

⁷⁵ <https://www.ros.gov.uk/our-registers/register-of-sites-of-special-scientific-interest#:~:text=This%20register%20records%20sites%20of,high%20scientific%20value%20for%20conservation.>

⁷⁶ <https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/Defra::sites-of-special-scientific-interest-england/about>

⁷⁷ https://datamap.gov.wales/layers/inspire-nrw:NRW_SSSI

⁷⁸ <https://apps.d.aera-ni.gov.uk/aca>

⁷⁹ <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/guidelines-for-selection-of-sssisi/>

⁸⁰ <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/natural-england/changes-to-the-measurement-metric-used-to-report-o/>

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to SSSI/ASSIs	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
	capacity of the police (if it is criminal) and the SNCBs to engage.	
Is the long-term nature conservation ensured through legal or other effective means?	<p>YES. SSSI/ASSI are established in law (Scotland: Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended); England & Wales: Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended); Northern Ireland: The Nature Conservation and Amenity lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 & The Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002). These enactments and regulations amended to address emerging issues as opportunities arise and on an ad hoc basis.</p> <p>The designating authorities may vary, extend and de-notify SSSI/ASSI to reflect ecological changes. To safeguard an SSSI/ASSI they may also exercise powers to enter land for various purposes, erect signs, enter management agreements to support appropriate conservation management of the land, seek land management orders (or equivalent) to compel the appropriate management of the land, establish byelaws, seek nature conservation orders to strictly prohibit specified activities by any person and, as a last resort compulsorily purchase the land.</p>	No change.
Based on the evidence available, does this type of site meet the IUCN's definition of a protected area?	YES	There are no grounds to change the conclusion reached by the original PNOTM exercise.

2. OTHER EFFECTIVE (AREA-BASED) CONSERVATION MEASURES

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to ASSI/SSSI
<p>Does the site have the essential characteristics required to meet the OECM definition?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is geographically defined • The site is governed and managed and such arrangements are expected to be ongoing and sustained over the long-term • The site delivers effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity • The site is free of environmentally damaging activities and threats to biodiversity 	n/a
Will the conservation outcome at the site endure over the long-term?	n/a

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to ASSI/SSSI
What is the in-situ area-based conservation target (e.g., GBF Target 3) being met by this OECD?	n/a
Based on the evidence available, does the site meet the IUCN's definition of an OECD?	n/a

3. MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

Is the management of this type of protected area/OECD documented?	England	YES. Management planning requirements are set out in the relevant legislation for all countries. Formal Management Plans are prepared by landowners and managers, e.g., Forestry Commission England or most environmental NGOs, for some SSSIs/ASSIs but there is no requirement to prepare a formal plan for most SSSI/ASSI landowners unless deemed necessary, i.e., when the site is deteriorating from neglect or poor management. In England, for each SSSI Natural England provides a 'views about management' report for its steer on how to manage SSSI land effectively and this is available in the public domain ⁸¹ .
	Northern Ireland	YES. In Northern Ireland, each ASSI has a site management statement attached to the citation ⁸² .
	Scotland	YES. NatureScot provides each SSSI owner and occupier with a site management statement ⁸³ . This describes the interest of the site and explains the management needed to conserve its protected natural features.
	Wales	YES. In Wales, each SSSI has a site management statement ⁸⁴ .
What evidence is there that the measures to achieve the conservation objectives are being implemented?	England	PARTLY. The condition of SSSIs in England is reported via a live online database ⁸⁵ (sourced on 2 August 2023). These data suggest there has been a

⁸¹ <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteSearch.aspx>

⁸² <https://gis.daera-ni.gov.uk/arcgis/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=bb721449cb8949e7a4f90c722bd2d80b>

⁸³ <https://sitelink.nature.scot/home>

⁸⁴ <https://naturalresources.wales/guidance-and-advice/environmental-topics/wildlife-and-biodiversity/protected-areas-of-land-and-seas/sites-of-special-scientific-interest-responsibilities-of-owners-and-occupiers/?lang=en>

⁸⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/england-biodiversity-indicators/1-extent-and-condition-of-protected-areas>

		<p>net decrease in the <i>area</i> of SSSIs in favourable condition; down from 44.0% in 2003 to 38.2% in March 2022. The sudden drop in the SSSI area in favourable condition from 43.2% in 2010 to 36.6% in 2011 is reported to be due to a more rigorous application of the 'Common Standard for Monitoring' protocols in assessing feature condition.</p> <p>The area in unfavourable recovering condition is reported to have increased substantially from 13.0% in 2003 to 50.8% in 2022 (although this assessment is based on the existence of a plan for recovery, not necessarily any actual progress towards favourable condition). The overall proportion of SSSIs in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition remained above the 95% target (originally set out in the England Biodiversity 2020 Strategy) from 2011 to 2016 but has since fallen year-on-year to 89.1% in 2022.</p> <p>The Westminster Government has committed in its 25 Year Environment Plan to restoring, in England, 75% of SSSIs by area to favourable condition by 2042⁸⁶.</p>
	Northern Ireland	<p>NO. The most up-to-date figures for the 2022/23 reporting period highlight that 55% of all features in 'protected areas' (which may include some international sites not coincident with SSSI boundaries) are in favourable condition, 36% are in unfavourable condition, 3% are unfavourable recovering and fewer than 1% are destroyed⁸⁷ (data sourced 2 August 2023).</p> <p>A total of 6% of features have not had a formal condition assessment, and so a feature condition assessment cannot be determined for them.</p>
	Scotland	<p>YES. The proportion of natural features in favourable condition on 3 August 2023 was 73.5%⁸⁸ (sourced on 2 August 2023). The percentage unfavourable was 19.5%, and the number recovering was 7%. A total of 23 features were not assessed and six were to be denotified.</p>

⁸⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>

⁸⁷ <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/daera/ni-environmental-statistics-report-2023.pdf>

⁸⁸ <https://informatics.sepa.org.uk/ProtectedNatureSites/>

	Wales	NO ⁸⁹ . The results show that NRW currently has insufficient evidence to determine the condition of around half of the features on 'protected sites' (condition classed as unknown) ⁹⁰ . Of those features where there is now an assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an estimated 20% are favourable • around 30% are in unfavourable condition • around 50% are not in a desired state
Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?	England	NO . A total of 78% of sites had not been assessed as to their condition between 15 February 2015 and 17 February 2021 ⁹¹ . The monitoring data available suggest the condition of the area of SSSI has been declining since 2016 (see above).
	Northern Ireland	UNKNOWN . There is insufficient evidence publicly available to assess the level of monitoring or identify if measures are working.
	Scotland	UNKNOWN . Monitoring suggests the condition of protected sites has been improving since 2005. PAWG is unable to identify the level of monitoring across the network in recent years but, 31 March 2023, of the 5,591 designated natural features on protected sites, the condition of 5,365 had been assessed and thus form the Official Statistic ⁹² .
	Wales	UNKNOWN . There are insufficient data available publicly to quantify if measures are working across the suite of SSSIs but only 20% of those monitored are deemed to be in favourable condition so PAWG has to assume that they are not. It is unclear from the data how many sites in the 30% 'unfavourable' condition criteria are 'unfavourable recovering' so comparisons with other countries is not possible. PAWG could not find any information of the level of monitoring achieved across the network.

⁸⁹ Date sourced on 2 August 2023 and these data may include protected sites beyond the SSSI network

⁹⁰ <https://naturalresources.wales/evidence-and-data/research-and-reports/protected-sites-baseline-assessment-2020/?lang=en>

⁹¹ <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2021-02-09.151834.h&s=%27SSSI%27#g151834.r0> (Answer to Parliamentary Question by Rebecca Pow 17 February 2021)

⁹² <https://www.nature.scot/doc/proportion-scotlands-protected-sites-favourable-condition-2023>

Are the protected areas/OECMs moving towards or have they reached their conservation objectives?		PARTLY-UNKNOWN. The progress towards improvement in condition of SSSIs and ASSIs across the four countries is patchy and, for Northern Ireland and Wales, probably unknown in many cases. If favourable condition (and possibly unfavourable recovering with caveats) is the ultimate measure of success then much of the SSSI/ASSI network cannot be said to be reaching its conservation objectives despite encouraging action at many sites.
Based on the evidence available, is this site designation type/network of sites being managed effectively?	England	PARTLY. Some sites are being managed effectively.
	Northern Ireland	PARTLY. Some sites are being managed effectively.
	Scotland	PARTLY. Some sites are being managed effectively.
	Wales	PARTLY. Some sites are being managed effectively.



The Garvellachs SSSI are Argyll islands notified for both their geological and botanical importance. Photo: D.A. Stroud.

3.16. Special Area of Conservation (SAC; part of the National Site Network)

Summary

Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, known colloquially as “30x30”, calls for 30% of the world’s terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, to be in effective protection and management by 2030. This target will be achieved through the establishment of protected areas (PAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). Both these types of area-based conservation measures are well defined under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and both have extensive CBD and IUCN guidance. Based on the evidence PAWG has gathered, our conclusions are:

- Does the SAC network meet (all) criteria for PAs? **YES**
- Does the SAC network meet the criteria for ‘effectively managed’? **PARTLY**

Recommendations

The IUCN NCUK Protected Areas Working Group (PAWG) believes that the SAC designation continues to qualify as a PA and this network, in its entirety, should be a component of the 30x30 target for the UK. However, in order to meet the required standards for 30x30, sites must be both protected and effectively managed. PAWG recommends that the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations invest urgently in improving the management effectiveness of all SACs to ensure these sites effectively contribute to the 30x30 target.

<p>Brief description of the site network and its stated objective(s)</p>	<p>The UK Government and Devolved Administrations are required to establish a network of important high-quality conservation sites that will make a significant contribution to conserving the habitats and species identified in Annexes I and II, respectively, of European Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, known as the Habitats Directive. The listed terrestrial and marine habitat types and species are those considered to be most in need of conservation at a European level (excluding birds which are the focus of the Birds Directive). Of the Annex I habitat types, 78 are believed to occur in the UK. Of the Annex II species, 43 are native to, and normally resident in, the UK. SACs, together with Special Protection Areas (SPAs), form part of the UK’s national site network.</p> <p>SACs are protected areas classified under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) in England and Wales (including the adjacent territorial sea) and to a limited extent in Scotland (reserved matters) and Northern Ireland (excepted matters); The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended) in Scotland; the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 1995 (as amended) in Northern Ireland; the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) in the UK offshore area.</p>
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1. PROTECTED AREA ASSESSMENT

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to SACs	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Does this type of protected area have clearly defined geographical boundaries?	<p>YES. Each SAC has a legally established boundary and these are mapped digitally by the Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies (SNCBs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural England 	No change.

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to SACs	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NatureScot • Natural Resources Wales • Northern Ireland Environment Agency <p>Site-specific data are included in the Standard Data Forms on the Joint Nature Conservation Committee's (JNCC's) website, providing information of size and location for each site across England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and also offshore and inshore sites; some site boundaries also cross country borders.</p>	
Is this type of site recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature?	YES. SACs are designated to protect special habitats or species of international importance. With other specified measures, they help to ensure the conservation of a wide range of rare, threatened, or endemic animal and plant species.	No change.
Is the main management objective nature conservation?	YES. The primary objective of SAC management is to achieve the favourable conservation status (as defined by the Directive) of protected habitats and species of European importance.	No change.
Does the designation of the site prevent, or eliminate where necessary, any exploitation or management practice that will be harmful to their objectives of designation?	<p>YES. SAC designation requires taking appropriate steps to avoid deterioration of the natural habitats, habitats of species for which the site is designated and disturbance of such species. The appropriate authority is required to undertake an assessment of any plan or project that is likely to have a significant effect on the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. This assessment is known as a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). If a negative assessment is concluded, a plan or project can only proceed if there are no less damaging alternatives, it is necessary for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, (including those of a social or economic nature except in the case of priority habitats and species). The relevant conservation authority must take compensatory measures to ensure the overall coherence of the network.</p> <p>However, any revocation of the underpinning legislation, for example undertaken under the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 in England, could disqualify these areas under this criterion.</p>	No change.

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to SACs	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Is the long-term nature conservation ensured through legal or other effective means?	<p>YES. SACs were originally established under the 1992 European Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and have since been transposed by all four of UK's governments into domestic statute. SPAs and SACs together are also the UK's contribution to the Emerald Network – an international network of protected areas under the Bern Convention to which the UK is a signatory.</p> <p>SACs are classified under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) in England and Wales (including the adjacent territorial sea) and to a limited extent in Scotland and Northern Ireland; The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended) in Scotland; The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 1995 (as amended) in Northern Ireland; The Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) in the UK offshore area.</p> <p>These Regulations are periodically reviewed and updated to address emerging issues.</p> <p>Licensable activities, such as oil and gas exploration, within SACs have to comply with The Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).</p>	No change.
Based on the evidence available, does this type of site meet the IUCN's definition of a protected area?	YES	

2. OTHER EFFECTIVE (AREA-BASED) CONSERVATION ASSESSMENT (IF THE NETWORK DOES NOT QUALIFY AS A PROTECTED AREA)

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to SACs
Is the designation type a protected area?	n/a
<p>Does the site have the essential characteristics required to meet the OECM definition?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is geographically defined • The site is governed and managed and such arrangements are expected to be ongoing and sustained over the long-term • The site delivers effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity 	n/a

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to SACs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The site is free of environmentally damaging activities and threats to biodiversity 	
Will the conservation outcome at the site endure over the long-term?	n/a
What is the in-situ area-based conservation target (e.g., GBF Target 3) being met by this OECM?	n/a
Based on the evidence available, does the site meet the IUCN's definition of an OECM?	n/a

3. MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

Is the management of this type of protected area/OECM documented?		<p>PARTLY. list of SACs provides a link to each designated SAC's Standard Data Form which notes whether a management plan exists for each of the sites across all four countries. Management Plans are optional, but the relevant nature conservation body is required to communicate the conservation objectives for the site and must also advise of operations that may cause deterioration or disturbance to the features for which the site has been designated (see SoC2 for links to relevant websites).</p> <p>In 2017, DAERA released a '5 Key things you need to know about SAC Conservation Management Plans' which highlighted that they are preparing to draft 57 management plans for Northern Ireland's SACs with the aim of improving their ecological health, and it is intended that these will be available in the public domain. However, many of Northern Ireland's SACs have not been updated on the JNCC Standard Data Forms so the existence of these updated/new management plans are not yet documented publicly.</p>
	England	<p>PARTLY. Site Improvement Plans have been developed for each SAC in England as part of the Improvement Programme for England's Natura 2000 Sites (IPENS). Each plan provides a high-level overview of the issues (both current and predicted) affecting the condition of the SAC features on the site(s) and outlines the priority measures required to improve the condition of the features. There have been no resources for, nor assessment of the implementation of these plans, however.</p>

		Condition assessments of features in English SACs can be found for individual sites, if available, but PAWG was unable to find a contemporary summary figure for the entire English network ⁹³ .
	Northern Ireland	UNKNOWN. There was no evidence found for the condition of features separately at Northern Ireland SACs.
	Scotland	PARTLY. The proportion of natural features in favourable condition reported on 3 August 2023 was 70.0% ⁹⁴ . The proportion of natural features recovering was 8.2% and the proportion of natural features in unfavourable condition was 21.8%. A total of 16 features were not assessed.
	Wales	<p>UNKNOWN. A marine SAC feature-level condition assessment for 2005-07 covered 11 SAC sites and showed that the proportion of features in favourable condition was 29.6%⁹⁵. The proportion of features in unfavourable condition was 45.1% and the proportion of features not assessed was 25.3%.</p> <p>The Welsh government also undertook a 2017 indicative assessment, which indicated the proportion of features in favourable condition as 36.6%, highlighting an increase from the previous assessment. However, there was also indicated to be an increase in the proportion of features in unfavourable condition was 53.5%. This indicative assessment included all features so none were left unassessed, but there were 9.9% of features unknown in their condition upon indicative assessment.</p> <p>PAWG could not find a comprehensive source of information on the status of the terrestrial SAC network in Wales.</p>

⁹³ <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/>

⁹⁴ <https://informatics.sepa.org.uk/ProtectedNatureSites/>

⁹⁵ <https://naturalresources.wales/guidance-and-advice/environmental-topics/wildlife-and-biodiversity/protected-areas-of-land-and-seas/indicative-feature-condition-assessments-for-european-marine-sites-ems/?lang=en>

Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?		<p>PARTLY. The UK’s Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies are responsible for assessing the condition of habitats and species protected the designated SACs. This is carried out through Common Standards Monitoring. Every six years, the results of this monitoring within SACs have been, and will continue to be used to inform a UK-wide assessment of the status and trends of species and habitats for which these sites are protected.</p> <p>This feeds into a broader assessment of the status and trends of these species and habitats across their whole UK distribution (i.e., both inside and outside sites). Revisions to JNCC monitoring guidance have led to Natural Resources Wales to review its conservation objectives for river SACs in Wales, notably with respect to phosphorus where targets have been substantially tightened⁹⁶. Data were available to assess 107 of the 125 water bodies (86%), with 18 water bodies not being assessed due to data being inadequate or lacking. Overall, 39% of assessed SAC water bodies passed their targets and 61% failed. These monitoring results demonstrate that phosphorus pollution is a significant problem in Welsh SAC rivers that requires catchment level action.</p>
Are the protected areas/OECMs moving towards or have they reached their conservation objectives?		<p>PARTLY. Site-specific conservation objectives have been compiled for SACs, and these are based on maintaining/restoring the favourable conservation condition of the habitats and species for which the sites are selected. As the favourable condition of site features is the main conservation objective for SACs, it can be concluded that they have not yet reached their conservation objectives as many sites still contain features that are either unassessed or in unfavourable condition.</p> <p>In Northern Ireland, DAERA state that many of their SACs are not in good health⁹⁷, and highlight that “we need to establish key measures to address current pressures and future threats that are impacting sites and their features, helping to ensure our SACs are in a favourable condition”.</p>
Based on the evidence available, is this site designation type/network of sites being managed effectively?	England	PARTLY. Some sites are being managed effectively.
	Northern Ireland	PARTLY. Some sites are being managed effectively.
	Scotland	PARTLY. Some sites are being managed effectively.

⁹⁶ <https://naturalresources.wales/evidence-and-data/research-and-reports/water-reports/compliance-assessment-of-welsh-river-sacs-against-phosphorus-targets/?lang=en>

⁹⁷ <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/conservation-management-plans-northern-irelands-special-areas-conservation>

	Wales	PARTLY. Some sites are being managed effectively.
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3.17. Special Protection Areas (SPA; part of the National Site Network)

Summary

Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, known colloquially as “30x30”, calls for 30% of the world’s terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, to be in effective protection and management by 2030. This target will be achieved through the establishment of protected areas (PAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). Both these types of area-based conservation measures are well defined under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and both have extensive CBD and IUCN guidance. Based on the evidence PAWG has gathered, our conclusions are:

- Does the SPA network meet (all) criteria for PAs? **YES**
- Does the SPA network meet the criteria for ‘effectively managed’? **PARTLY**

Recommendations

The IUCN NCUK Protected Areas Working Group (PAWG) believes that the SPA designation continues to qualify as a PA. This network, in its entirety, therefore has the potential to contribute to the 30x30 target for the UK. However, in order to meet the required standards for 30x30, sites must be both protected and effectively managed. PAWG recommends that the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations invest urgently in improving the management effectiveness of all SSSI/ASSIs to ensure these sites can all effectively contribute to the 30x30 target.

<p>Brief description of the site network and its stated objective(s)</p>	<p>Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are protected areas for birds and occur through the terrestrial and marine extent of the UK, out to marine territorial limits. SPAs are selected to protect one or more rare, threatened or vulnerable bird species, or regularly occurring migratory species. The conservation objectives for the protected features of SPAs are to ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate.</p> <p>In the UK, SPAs are classified under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) in England and Wales (including the adjacent territorial sea) and to a limited extent in Scotland (reserved matters) and Northern Ireland (excepted matters); The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended) in Scotland; the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 1995 (as amended) in Northern Ireland; the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) in the UK offshore area. Since UK’s departure from the EU, SPAs, together with Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), form the UK’s ‘National Site Network’ under the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (England and Wales), The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, and the ‘UK Site Network’ under The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) (EU Exit) (Scotland) (Amendment) Regulations 2019 and the Marine Environment (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018.</p>
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1. PROTECTED AREA ASSESSMENT

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to SPAs	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Does this type of protected area have clearly defined geographical boundaries?	<p>YES. Each SPA has a legally established boundary and these are mapped digitally by the Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies (SNCBs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural England 	Corrections have been made to Standard Data Forms where discrepancies were found in the area figures for six SPAs - five SPAs increased in area, with one SPA reduced in extent.

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to SPAs	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NatureScot • Natural Resources Wales • Northern Ireland Environment Agency • JNCC https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/list-of-spas/ <p>UK SPA selection guidelines⁹⁸ define them as distinct in habitat and/or ornithological importance from the surroundings and have definable and recognisable character (i.e., the boundary aims to be clearly identifiable 'on the ground'⁹⁹).</p>	<p>Discrepancy in area measurement largely relates to improved accuracy in mapping technology since the time of classification.</p>
<p>Is this type of site recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature?</p>	<p>YES. Individual SPAs are selected to protect one or more rare, threatened or vulnerable bird species listed on Annex I of the Birds Directive, and/or regularly occurring migratory species. They are permanent designations.</p> <p>Obligations for SPA management were originally established by Article 6 of the Habitats Directive in the context of Article 4 of the Birds Directive (both as transposed into national legislation across the UK) with network objectives now included in all of relevant Regulations¹⁰⁰.</p>	<p>Site-related populations were updated for all sites by the third national review to assess decadal change since the second network review published in 2001. The results of the sufficiency assessments of the third network review (2016) recommended the need for management reviews for five species at 29 sites in the light of national and/or site-related declines as well as multiple additional classifications to address the identified and documented insufficiencies.</p> <p>However, to date the 2001 review (in large part) and the 2016 review (in its entirety) have yet to be implemented.</p>
<p>Is the main management objective nature conservation?</p>	<p>YES. The priority objective of SPA classification and management is to conserve wild birds that are listed on Annex I of the Birds Directive and/or some regularly occurring migratory species.</p>	<p>No change.</p>
<p>Does the designation of the site prevent, or eliminate where necessary, any exploitation or management practice that will be harmful to their objectives of designation?</p>	<p>YES. It is the intention of the legislation that all activities within the site are managed to eliminate or minimise adverse effects on the species for which the site is selected, and/or their habitats.</p> <p>“Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site’s conservation</p>	<p>No change.</p>

⁹⁸ <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20190307215226/http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1405-theme=default>

⁹⁹ Noting that the guidelines relate also to marine SPAs

¹⁰⁰ See for example new Regulation 16A in England/Wales https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2019/9780111176573/pdfs/ukdsi_9780111176573_en.pdf

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to SPAs	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
	<p>objectives.”¹⁰¹ Only activities deemed to be of overriding national importance are potentially allowed and, in such cases, can only be permitted where there are no less damaging alternative solutions, and compensatory measures must be put in place and reported.</p> <p>Sixty bird species are currently protected in UK SPAs with marine components¹⁰². Fishing is considered to be a direct threat that may negatively impact the protected features of Marine SPAs. The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) provides advice on operations at marine SPAs, and advise that the competent authorities should manage these pressures/threats to reduce or remove the overall risk to the site’s qualifying features¹⁰³. The efficacy of such arrangements is unknown.</p> <p>It is important to note that revocation of the underpinning legislation, for example if undertaken under the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 in England, could disqualify these areas under this criterion.</p>	
<p>Is the long-term nature conservation ensured through legal or other effective means?</p>	<p>YES. The obligation to classify and maintain the status (above) of SPAs was established by the 1979 Birds Directive and has since been transposed into national laws across the UK.</p> <p>SPAs are classified under:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) in England and Wales (including the adjacent territorial sea) and to a limited extent in Scotland and Northern Ireland; • The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended) in Scotland; • The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 1995 (as amended) in Northern Ireland; • The Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) in the UK offshore area 	<p>SPAs in the UK no longer form part of the EU’s Natura 2000 Network. The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 have created a National Site Network on land and sea, including both inshore and offshore UK marine areas (this includes SACs).</p> <p>Site network objectives have since been established through most recent Regulations¹⁰⁴.</p>

¹⁰¹ Article 6.3 of the Habitats Directive

¹⁰² <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/spas-with-marine-components/>

¹⁰³ e.g., <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/outer-firth-of-forth-and-st-andrews-bay-complex-spa/#conservation-advice>

¹⁰⁴ See for example new Regulation 16A in England/Wales https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2019/9780111176573/pdfs/ukdsi_9780111176573_en.pdf

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to SPAs	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Based on the evidence available, does this type of site meet the IUCN's definition of a protected area?	YES	No change.

2. OTHER EFFECTIVE (AREA-BASED) CONSERVATION ASSESSMENT (IF THE NETWORK DOES NOT QUALIFY AS A PROTECTED AREA)

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to SPAs
Is the designation type a protected area?	n/a
Does the site have the essential characteristics required to meet the OECM definition? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is geographically defined The site is governed and managed and such arrangements are expected to be ongoing and sustained over the long-term The site delivers effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity The site is free of environmentally damaging activities and threats to biodiversity 	n/a
Will the conservation outcome at the site endure over the long-term?	n/a
What is the in-situ area-based conservation target (e.g., GBF Target 3) being met by this OECM?	n/a
Based on the evidence available, does the site meet the IUCN's definition of an OECM?	n/a

3. MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

Is the management of this type of protected area/OECM documented?	PARTLY. As part of national reporting, JNCC provides information on the existence of management plans for each UK SPA ¹⁰⁵ . The Article 12 Birds Directive Report 2019 states that conservation measures have been set out in a comprehensive management plan for 58.7% of the SPA network area (n = 113) ¹⁰⁶ . However, there is no public information as to whether extant management plans are being implemented nor whether they are publicly available.		
		Number of SPAs with management plans	% of all relevant SPAs

¹⁰⁵ <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/list-of-spas/>

¹⁰⁶ <https://data.jncc.gov.uk/data/63b0f65d-671b-44f9-86f2-e23e0fcdcb2c/UK-birds-general-report.pdf>

England - terrestrial	7	8%	
Scotland – terrestrial	2	1%	8
England/Scotland – terrestrial	1	100%	
Wales – terrestrial	16	94%	1
Wales – offshore	1	100%	
England/Wales – terrestrial	2	100%	
Northern Ireland	0	0%	
England/Wales – offshore	1	100%	
Scotland - offshore	0	0%	1
England - offshore	0	0%	

Management plans for SPAs are not legally required, but the relevant nature conservation body is legally required to make any site's conservation objectives publicly available and must also advise on operations that may cause deterioration or disturbance of any features for which the site has been classified. PAWG found conservation objectives published for Northern Ireland¹⁰⁷, England, Scotland¹⁰⁸, and Wales¹⁰⁹.

Site Improvement Plans (SIPs) have also been developed for each Natura 2000 site in England as part of the Improvement Programme for England's Natura 2000 Sites (IPENS). This work has been financially supported by LIFE, a financial instrument of the European Community. These plans provide a high-level overview of the issues (both current and predicted) affecting the condition of the Natura 2000 features on the site(s) and outline the priority measures required to improve the condition of the features. It does not cover issues where remedial actions are already in place or ongoing management activities which are required for maintenance. Similar action has been taken in Wales and Scotland provides conservation advice packages and conservation and management advice documents. There is no systematic implementation of SIPs.

In most (but not all) cases the terrestrial and intertidal components of SPAs are also designated at SSSI/ASSI and so can also be managed utilising the mechanisms associated with those designations¹¹⁰.

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) created a site-specific strategic management table in March 2016¹¹¹ which highlighted current management actions for some SPAs, with most stating they were assessing the risk of fishing gears on site interest features. The relevant individual JNCC Standard Data Forms highlight whether these marine SPA sites have management plans in place, but there is no public information as to whether these plans are being implemented.

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/protected-areas/type/spa>

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.nature.scot/doc/about-conservation-advice-documents-european-sites-scotland#:~:text=The%20conservation%20objectives%20set%20out%20the%20essential%20elements,or%20significant%20disturbance%20of%20the%20qualifying%20features%20avoided>

¹⁰⁹ <https://naturalresources.wales/guidance-and-advice/environmental-topics/wildlife-and-biodiversity/protected-areas-of-land-and-seas/find-protected-areas-of-land-and-sea/?lang=en>

¹¹⁰ <https://www.rya.org.uk/knowledge/planning-licensing/environmental-designations/special-protection-areas>

¹¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/marine-protected-areas-strategic-management-table>

What evidence is there that the measures to achieve the conservation objectives are being implemented?	UK	<p>The proportion of 'favourable' or 'unfavourable-recovering' condition SPAs in the UK increased from 73% in 2005 to a high of 84% in the UK from 2011 to 2014¹¹², but this has since decreased to 75% in 2022¹¹(data sourced 2 August 2023).</p> <p>The proportion in 'unfavourable-recovering' condition is reported to have increased from 9% to 23%. It is suggested that this change reflects improved management of sites and a greater number of sites/features being assessed over time. A technical document published by JNCC explains how the data, which is partial in some cases, has been analysed to produce these figures¹¹³.</p>
	England	UNKNOWN. Condition assessments of features in English SPAs can be found for individual sites, if available ¹¹⁴ but PAWG was unable to find a summary figure for the entire English network ¹¹⁵ .
	Northern Ireland	UNKNOWN. There was no evidence found for the condition of features at Northern Ireland SPAs.
	Scotland	PARTLY. The proportion of natural features in favourable condition reported on 3 August 2023 was 59.3% ¹¹⁶ (data sourced 2 August 2023). The proportion of natural features 'recovering' was 1.2% and the proportion of natural features in 'unfavourable' condition was 39.5%. A total of 118 features were not assessed.
	Wales	<p>PARTLY. In 2018, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) documented their indicative assessments of the condition of marine features in SPAs in Wales (data sourced 2 August 2023):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 57.9% are in 'favourable' condition • 33.3% are in 'unfavourable' condition • The condition of 8.8% are unknown

¹¹² <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/ukbi-c1-protected-areas/#background-figure-c1v-cumulative-proportion-of-special-protection-areas-spa-in-favourable-or-unfavourable-recovering-condition-2005-to-2022>

¹¹³ <https://data.jncc.gov.uk/data/e79d820e-5b1d-45de-94db-752f2542478d/ukbi2022-techbg-c1-a.pdf>

¹¹⁴ <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/>

¹¹⁵ In theory at: <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/ReportUnitConditionSummary.aspx?SiteType=SPA> but page unavailable in late 2023.

¹¹⁶ <https://informatics.sepa.org.uk/ProtectedNatureSites/>

		<p>As part of this, NRW did not provide an indicative assessment for the Dyfi Estuary that is also a marine SPA.</p> <p>Note: PAWG could not find evidence for the condition of features at UK Offshore SPAs. Nor could PAWG find a comprehensive source of information on the status of the terrestrial SPA network in Wales (beyond cross-border sites with England).</p>
<p>Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?</p>		<p>PARTLY. The third SPA network review¹¹⁷ assessed the adequacy of monitoring across the network of 270 SPAs across the UK classified for 130 species/populations. In 2016, the network had 1,516 interest 'features' (a combination of qualifying species X at classified site Y). The review found:</p> <p>“At least one site count from the 2000s was located for over 96% of the SPA interest features on the network indicating an overall excellent level of coverage from existing surveillance schemes or recent surveys.”</p> <p>However:</p> <p>“...coverage was not consistent across species. There was 100% coverage for many species, whilst in contrast, estimates exist for just three of 20 sites for non-breeding Hen Harrier (15% of SPAs)...”</p> <p>The review made a significant number of recommendations with respect to improvements in monitoring and to address issues discovered (such as the mismatch of boundaries between monitoring areas and SPAs). There is no available information on the extent, if at all, to which these have been implemented since 2016.</p> <p>The review concluded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “...there are no reliable methods for monitoring and therefore almost no useable monitoring data for some non-breeding raptors. The current status of nonbreeding

¹¹⁷ Section 6.4 of <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20190307210346/http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-7309-theme=default>

		<p>Merlin and Hen Harrier on SPAs classified for these species remains unknown.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Contemporary assessments of species’ populations are not available for all sites, and for a few species they are lacking completely. The species accounts ... consider issues of data deficiency and make recommendations for future monitoring. Key issues include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ that appropriate monitoring regimes are in place for all relevant species and sites; ○ that count data can be matched against site boundary information; and ○ that national surveys routinely supply not only national population estimates but also relevant site assessments.” <p>The UK’s Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies are responsible for assessing the condition of SPAs, carried out through Commons Standards Monitoring. The original intention was that every six years, the results of this monitoring within SPAs would be used to inform a UK-wide assessment of the status and trends of birds for which these sites are protected.</p> <p>NRW stated in 2018 that they would like to work towards a system of producing site level feature condition reports on a regular basis, and a series of projects were in the planning stage to try to achieve this¹¹⁸, but it is unclear whether these projects have been implemented. They also note that they are unlikely to ever be able to monitor and report on all features to the level they wish.</p>
<p>Are the protected areas/OECMs moving towards or have they reached their conservation objectives?</p>		<p>PARTLY. The third SPA network review, which reported to Ministers in 2016, found the network had multiple insufficiencies with respect to species’ population coverage, range and ecological (habitat) coverage and documented these. The review also made multiple recommendations on improvements</p>

¹¹⁸ <https://cdn.cyfoethnaturiol.cymru/media/683655/special-protection-areas-in-welsh-waters.pdf>

		<p>to monitoring and the need for explicit management reviews for particular sites and species.</p> <p>There is no available public information on the extent, if at all, to which these recommendations have been implemented since 2016 so PAWG can only conclude that there has not been any concerted action towards reaching conservation objectives across the network.</p>
<p>Based on the evidence available, is this site designation type/network of sites being managed effectively?</p>	<p>England</p>	<p>PARTLY. Some sites are being managed effectively.</p>
	<p>Northern Ireland</p>	<p>PARTLY. Some sites are being managed effectively.</p>
	<p>Scotland</p>	<p>PARTLY. Some sites are being managed effectively.</p>
	<p>Wales</p>	<p>PARTLY. Some sites are being managed effectively.</p>



Farne Islands SPA is internationally important for its breeding seabirds and also has multiple other conservation designations. Photo: Howard Davies.

3.18. The Wildlife Trusts' Nature Reserves

Summary

Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, known colloquially as “30x30”, calls for 30% of the world’s terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, to be in effective protection and management by 2030. This target will be achieved through the establishment of protected areas (PAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). Both these types of area-based conservation measures are well defined under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and both have extensive CBD and IUCN guidance. Based on the evidence PAWG has gathered, our conclusions are:

- Does The Wildlife Trusts' Nature Reserve network meet (all) criteria for PAs? **NO (except for the high proportion of TWT sites benefitting from protections afforded by SSSI, ASSI, Ramsar, SPA and/or SAC designations)**
- Does The Wildlife Trusts' Nature Reserve network meet the criteria for 'effectively managed'? **PARTLY**
- If not protected areas, do Wildlife Trust Nature Reserves warrant case-by-case consideration against OECM criteria? **YES**

Recommendations

The IUCN NCUK Protected Areas Working Group (PAWG) does not believe that The Wildlife Trusts' Nature Reserve designation itself qualifies as a PA except where land overlaps with statutory sites, but other sites within the designation type could qualify as a protected area or a potential OECM and a high proportion of them should therefore be a component of the 30x30 target for the UK following case by case assessment of sites against PA and OECM criteria, and subject to evidence of effective management.

It is within The Wildlife Trusts' charitable objectives to manage their nature reserves with the aim of ensuring that they are functioning naturally, support nature's recovery and are places where people can enjoy wildlife. PAWG recognises and supports The Wildlife Trusts' continuing commitment to secure further funding – via public funding, green financing or private investment - to continue improving, where necessary, the management effectiveness of their sites to ensure they can all effectively contribute to the 30x30 target. Management effectiveness can be constrained by impacts, both on- and off-site, outside organisational control. PAWG recommends The Wildlife Trusts are funded to audit those landholdings where external influences are having an impact on management, so enabling the identification of strategic actions and policies that will help address these.

<p>Brief description of the site network and its stated objective(s)</p>	<p>The Wildlife Trusts (a federation of 47 individual nature conservation charities across the UK and Crown Dependencies) acquire and maintain a network of nature reserves to safeguard a broad representation of wildlife habitat found throughout the UK, and to act as examples to others and for the public benefit including enjoyment, information and education. Collectively, Wildlife Trust Nature Reserves will meet this definition, although not all of the functions stated above will be found on every reserve.</p> <p>Protecting and improving these sites is an integral part of The Wildlife Trusts' vision and charitable objectives. The management of Wildlife Trust Nature Reserves reflects the wider local, regional and national habitats and species requirements, contributing to landscape-scale management and policy initiatives which support the conservation of the UK's wildlife. The Wildlife Trusts' Nature Reserves also provide places where people can see, learn about and enjoy wildlife and a focus for the organisations' members and their activities, helping them encourage more people to understand and engage with the wildlife of the UK. Wildlife Trusts are taking on degraded land or land not currently good for wildlife in the hope of restoring the sites and contributing to nature's recovery.</p> <p>The Wildlife Trusts maintain a network of Nature Reserves for the benefit of wildlife and people. In particular, they try to use their Nature Reserves to demonstrate best practice or innovation to others, as well as meeting all legal and health and safety requirements. They also maintain an inventory of habitats and species which occur on their Nature Reserves. These data are managed and intended to be shared in accordance with the principles outlined by the</p>
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	National Biodiversity Network. The Wildlife Trusts retain the right to withhold any information which it deems sensitive or which could lead to a detrimental impact on the wildlife on their Nature Reserves.
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1. PROTECTED AREA ASSESSMENT

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to Wildlife Trust Nature Reserves	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Does this type of protected area have clearly defined geographical boundaries?	YES. Each Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve has a boundary and these are mapped digitally. Land ownership and tenure is recorded by the Land Registry. Many are, in whole or in part, SSSI/ASSIs and each of these has a legally notified boundary.	No change.
Is this type of site recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature?	YES. The primary aim of Wildlife Trust Nature Reserves is the long-term protection and recovery of nature. For those reserves that are also in whole or part SSSI/ASSIs, this designation is permanent. Individual SSSI are designated for one or more specified natural features – plants, animal, rocks and landforms; management must give priority to these features but may also support the conservation of other habitats, species, rocks and landforms.	No change.
Is the main management objective nature conservation?	YES. The overriding function of Wildlife Trust Nature Reserves is for the protection and enhancement of wildlife. For those Wildlife Trust Nature Reserves that are also SSSI/ASSIs, the priority objective of SSSI designation and management is nature conservation.	No change.
Does the designation of the site prevent, or eliminate where necessary, any exploitation or management practice that will be harmful to their objectives of designation?	PARTLY. The overriding function of Wildlife Trust Nature Reserves is the protection and enhancement of wildlife. Some sites are acquired to prevent development or are sites that are currently not good for wildlife but are on a management trajectory towards favourable conservation status. For those sites that are also SSSI/ASSIs, the designating authorities have various statutory and other means to prevent or eliminate practices that would obstruct achievement of a site's nature conservation objective(s). For example, any management operation required out with the management plan has to be consented by the relevant Statutory Nature Conservation Body (SNCB). Similarly, some management activities, such as those near water,	This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no evidence that the designation per se is able to prevent management practices harmful to conservation objectives. The security of site protection is examined more rigorously in this assessment.

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to Wildlife Trust Nature Reserves	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
	require an operating licence to be issued by the relevant SNCB.	
Is the long-term nature conservation ensured through legal or other effective means?	PARTLY. The long-term objective of The Wildlife Trusts is to ensure wildlife is protected and enhanced for future generations to enjoy. Each Nature Reserve should have a Reserve Management Plan that describes the conservation, wildlife value and history of a site. Reserve Management Plans are extensively updated periodically and reviewed annually. For those Nature Reserves that are also SSSIs, these are established in laws which are periodically reviewed and updated to address emerging issues. However, the designation of Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve itself does not sufficiently qualify given that there is no overall protection offered by legislation and sites can be disposed of in some circumstances.	This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no evidence that the designation per se is able to deliver continuity of nature conservation. The security of site tenure is examined more rigorously in this assessment.
Based on the evidence available, does this type of site meet the IUCN's definition of a protected area?	NO. Many Wildlife Trust Nature Reserves are underpinned by ASSI/SSSI, SPA, SAC and Ramsar Site designations, and those areas underpinned by these protections do qualify by virtue of those designations. However, the designation of Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve itself does not sufficiently qualify given that there is no overall protection offered by legislation.	This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance based on considerations outlined above.

2. OTHER EFFECTIVE (AREA-BASED) CONSERVATION ASSESSMENT (IF THE NETWORK DOES NOT QUALIFY AS A PROTECTED AREA)

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to Wildlife Trust Nature Reserves
Is the designation type a protected area?	NO. Wildlife Trust Nature Reserves are not in themselves protected areas.
<p>Does the site have the essential characteristics required to meet the OECM definition?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is geographically defined • The site is governed and managed and such arrangements are expected to be ongoing and sustained over the long-term • The site delivers effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity • The site is free of environmentally-damaging activities and threats to biodiversity 	PARTLY. Wildlife Trust Nature Reserves are geographically defined, deliver in-situ conservation of biodiversity, and assurance of long-term management through each Wildlife Trust's charitable objectives. However, some sites may be subject to off-site impacts to biodiversity.

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to Wildlife Trust Nature Reserves
Will the conservation outcome at the site endure over the long-term?	PARTLY. The Wildlife Trusts are committed to the long-term management of their Nature Reserves with management actions resourced and being implemented. However, funding changes through the agricultural transition will leave many land managers – not just Wildlife Trust Nature Reserves – struggling to finance the appropriate management. A report published in 2023 by The Wildlife Trusts, RSPB and the National Trust suggested that the UK and devolved governments must invest at least £4.4bn a year in nature and climate-friendly farming to meet environmental commitments ¹¹⁹ .
What is the in-situ area-based conservation target (e.g., GBF Target 3) being met by this OECM?	In situ area based GBF Target 3 , but only if protections and long-term management are secured across the network.
Based on the evidence available, does the site meet the IUCN’s definition of an OECM?	Some Wildlife Trust Nature Reserves could qualify as OECMs. Assess case by case.

3. MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

Is the management of this type of protected area/OECM documented?	NO. Management Plans are prepared for Wildlife Trust Nature Reserves but these documents are not publicly available.
What evidence is there that the measures to achieve the conservation objectives are being implemented?	UNKNOWN
Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?	YES
Are the protected areas/OECMs moving towards or have they reached their conservation objectives?	UNKNOWN
Based on the evidence available, is this site designation type/network of sites being managed effectively?	PARTLY (impacts on management sometimes fall outside the control of the organisations)

¹¹⁹ <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/news/more-investment-needed-for-climate-friendly-farming>

3.19. Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust's (WWT) sites

Summary

Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, known colloquially as “30x30”, calls for 30% of the world’s terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, to be in effective protection and management by 2030. This target will be achieved through the establishment of protected areas (PAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). Both these types of area-based conservation measures are well defined under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and both have extensive CBD and IUCN guidance. Based on the evidence PAWG has gathered, our conclusions are:

- Does the WWT site network meet (all) criteria for PAs? **NO (except for the high proportion of WWT sites benefitting from protections afforded by SSSI, ASSI, Ramsar, SPA and/or SAC designations)**
- Does the WWT site network meet the criteria for ‘effectively managed’? **PARTLY**
- If not protected areas, do WWT sites warrant case-by-case consideration against OECM criteria? **YES**

Recommendations

The IUCN NCUK Protected Areas Working Group (PAWG) does not believe that the WWT site designation itself qualifies as a PA except where land overlaps with statutory sites, but other sites within the designation type should qualify as a PA or a potential OECM and a high proportion of them could therefore be a component of the 30x30 target for the UK following case by case assessment of sites against PA and OECM criteria, and subject to evidence of effective management.

PAWG recognises and supports WWT’s continuing commitment to secure further funding to continue improving, where necessary, the management effectiveness of their sites to ensure they can all effectively contribute to the 30x30 target. Management effectiveness can be constrained by impacts, both on- and off-site, outside organisational control. PAWG recommends that WWT is funded to audit those landholdings where external influences are having an impact on management, so enabling the identification of strategic actions and policies that will help address these.

Brief description of the site network and its stated objective(s)	<p>Founded in 1946, the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) is a leading wetland conservation charity which works to protect wetland habitats in the UK and globally, and the services and value that wetlands give to wildlife and people. WWT manages ten sites across the UK, which contain over 3,000 hectares of land managed as nature reserves, much of which is designated as being of national and international importance. WWT has over 200,000 members and around one million people visit its sites each year to learn about the practical benefits of wetlands as well as to experience the enjoyment of being among wetlands and their wildlife. The organisation provides formal learning about wetlands and their wildlife to tens of thousands of school pupils each year.</p>
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1. PROTECTED AREA ASSESSMENT

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to WWT sites	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Does this type of protected area have clearly defined geographical boundaries?	YES. Each of the ten WWT sites have boundaries clearly marked on maps, typically following natural boundaries on the ground (e.g., field boundaries). These boundaries have	No change.

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to WWT sites	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
	<p>been digitised across all sites. Land ownership and tenure is recorded by the Land Registry. Nine of the nature reserves are, in whole or in part, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or Areas of Scientific Interest (ASSI). Each of the SSSI/ASSIs has a legally notified boundary. In addition, eight sites receive protection as SPAs and/or SACs.</p>	
<p>Is this type of site recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature?</p>	<p>YES. The WWT Memorandum of Association states “The objects of the Trust are to promote the conservation and study of wildfowl and wetlands forming their habitat...and to maintain an establishment at Slimbridge and such other branch establishments as the Council may think fit...for the conservation of wildfowl and wetlands...”. Nine of WWT’s reserves are designated, in whole or in part, under UK and/or EU legislation. The site at WWT Washington is not designated nationally or internationally but is recognised locally as a wildlife site (a Site of Nature Conservation Importance). The designations for WWT sites are based mainly on their wildlife value although some sites are covered by broader designations and are parts of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Natural Scenic Areas. With respect to reserve management, key designations exist because aspects of the habitat or species the site supports have been identified as important. However, as reserves and knowledge of them develops it has become clear that they are important for a broader spectrum of wildlife. Management plans reflect all the significant wildlife features on WWT sites whilst continuing to conserve the aspects for which the sites were historically designated.</p>	<p>No change.</p>
<p>Is the main management objective nature conservation?</p>	<p>YES. The areas within WWT sites delineated as ‘reserve’ refers to those areas of the site where the primary function and guiding principles are associated to biological (species and habitat) management and conservation. This includes land which is both formally designated and undesignated.</p>	<p>No change.</p>
<p>Does the designation of the site prevent, or eliminate where necessary, any exploitation or management practice that will be harmful to their objectives of designation?</p>	<p>PARTLY. All WWT sites have some form of statutory designation. The designating authorities have various statutory and other means to prevent or eliminate practices that would obstruct achievement of a site’s nature conservation objective(s). For example, any management</p>	<p>This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no evidence that the designation per se is able to prevent management practices harmful to conservation objectives. The</p>

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to WWT sites	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
	<p>operation required out with the management plan (which are submitted to the relevant Statutory Nature Conservation Body (SNCB) for endorsement), has to be consented by the relevant agency. Similarly, some management activities, such as those near water, require an operating licence to be issued by the relevant SNCB. Those areas of WWT sites without statutory designations over them are still covered by WWT's own management plans and principles, which for reserve areas are first and foremost about biological conservation and management. However, those not protected in this way are still at some risk of proposals that could damage sites despite the wishes of the organisation.</p>	<p>security of site protection is examined more rigorously in this assessment.</p>
<p>Is the long-term nature conservation ensured through legal or other effective means?</p>	<p>PARTLY. WWT's long term vision is that society values, protects and manages wetlands to sustain wildlife, people and the Planet. The organisation's policies and approaches with respect to site management are guided by this vision. Each reserve has a Management Plan that describes the conservation, wildlife value and history of a site. Reserve Management Plans are extensively updated on a 5-year cycle and reviewed annually. For the reserves or parts of reserves that are designated, their long-term conservation is established in law (e.g., The EU Birds and Habitats Directives, the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended); the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)). These pieces of legislation are periodically reviewed and updated to address emerging issues. However, the organisation is able to dispose of land and has no obligation to continue to own or manage any of its estate.</p>	<p>This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no evidence that the designation per se is able to deliver continuity of nature conservation. The security of site tenure is examined more rigorously in this assessment.</p>
<p>Based on the evidence available, does this type of site meet the IUCN's definition of a protected area?</p>	<p>NO . All but one WWT site are underpinned by ASSI/SSSI, SPA, SAC and Ramsar Site designations, and those areas underpinned by these protections do qualify by virtue of those designations. However, the designation of a WWT site itself does not sufficiently qualify given that there is no overall protection offered by legislation and sites can be disposed of in some circumstances.</p>	<p>This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance based on considerations outlined above.</p>

2. OTHER EFFECTIVE (AREA-BASED) CONSERVATION ASSESSMENT (IF THE NETWORK DOES NOT QUALIFY AS A PROTECTED AREA)

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to WWT sites
Is the designation type a protected area?	NO. WWT sites are not in themselves protected areas.
Does the site have the essential characteristics required to meet the OECM definition? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is geographically defined • The site is governed and managed and such arrangements are expected to be ongoing and sustained over the long-term • The site delivers effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity • The site is free of environmentally damaging activities and threats to biodiversity 	PARTLY. WWT sites are geographically defined, deliver in-situ conservation of biodiversity, offer some protection from environmentally damaging activities on paper but there is no assurance of long-term management at every site.
Will the conservation outcome at the site endure over the long-term?	PARTLY. WWT is committed to the long-term management of its sites with management actions resourced and being implemented. However, except for those sites benefiting from legal protection, the WWT's management activities will always be constrained by its charitable income.
Based on the evidence available, does the site meet the IUCN's definition of an OECM?	Some WWT sites could qualify as OECMs. Assess case by case.

3. MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

Is the management of this type of protected area/OECM documented?	NO. Management Plans are prepared for all WWT sites but these documents are not publicly available.
What evidence is there that the measures to achieve the conservation objectives are being implemented?	UNKNOWN
Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?	YES
Are the protected areas/OECMs moving towards or have they reached their conservation objectives?	UNKNOWN
Based on the evidence available, is this site designation type/network of sites being managed effectively?	PARTLY (impacts on management sometimes fall outside the control of the organisation)

3.20. Woodland Trust (WT) sites

Summary

Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, known colloquially as “30x30”, calls for 30% of the world’s terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, to be in effective protection and management by 2030. This target will be achieved through the establishment of protected areas (PAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). Both these types of area-based conservation measures are well defined under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and both have extensive CBD and IUCN guidance. Based on the evidence PAWG has gathered, our conclusions are:

- Does the WT’s site network meet (all) criteria for PAs? **NO (except for the high proportion of WT sites benefitting from protections afforded by SSSI, ASSI, Ramsar, SPA and/or SAC designations)**
- Does the WT’s site network meet the criteria for ‘effectively managed’? **PARTLY**
- If not protected areas, do WT site’s warrant case-by-case consideration against OECM criteria? **YES**

Recommendations

The IUCN NCUK Protected Areas Working Group (PAWG) does not believe that the WT property designation itself qualifies as a PA except where land overlaps with statutory sites, but other sites within the designation type should qualify as a PA or a potential OECM and a high proportion of them could therefore be a component of the 30x30 target for the UK following case by case assessment of sites against PA and OECM criteria, and subject to evidence of effective management.

PAWG recognises and supports WT’s continuing commitment to secure further funding to continue improving, where necessary, the management effectiveness of their sites to ensure they can all effectively contribute to the 30x30 target. Management effectiveness can be constrained by impacts, both on- and off-site, outside organisational control. PAWG recommends that the WT is funded to audit those landholdings where external influences are having an impact on management, so enabling the identification of strategic actions and policies that will help address these.

<p>Brief description of the site network and its stated objective(s)</p>	<p>The Woodland Trust (WT) is the UK’s leading woodland conservation charity. Founded in 1972 it works to protect native woods, trees and their wildlife; to enable the creation of more native woods and places rich in trees; and to inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees.</p> <p>The Trust owns and manages woodland sites across the UK– all of which are open for free public access. WT sites include ancient semi-natural woodland and additional ancient woodland restoration sites which were planted in the past with non-native species and will be restored. Some ancient woodland sites are also designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). In addition, WT has created new native woodland contributing to improved habitat networks, buffering, linking and extending existing priority woodland habitat and providing a range of public access and other social benefits. Their land holding also includes significant areas of non-woodland and open habitat of conservation value.</p> <p>In biodiversity terms, ancient woodland is often considered to be the UK’s richest terrestrial habitat and has suffered serious decline and reduction in extent over an extended period of time. This Statement is confined to that part of WT’s land that is known to be ancient woodland – by virtue of its inclusion on the appropriate Ancient Woodland Inventory held and maintained by the relevant Statutory Nature Conservation Body in each constituent part of the UK. The Woodland Trust is a registered charity and answerable to the charity regulators; the Charity Commission for England and Wales, and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator in Scotland.</p> <p>WT’s approach to conservation seeks to secure the future of the UK’s woodland through a combined approach of protecting the irreplaceable, restoring that which is damaged and degraded, and adding new and diverse woods to</p>
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	depleted landscapes – new woods that can buffer, extend and link fragmented habitats to build more resilient landscapes. WT does this directly through work on WT's own land, and more widely through working in partnership with others, and through advocacy and influencing with a range of other bodies including government departments and agencies.
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1. PROTECTED AREA ASSESSMENT

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to WT sites	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Does this type of protected area have clearly defined geographical boundaries?	YES. All WT owned land has defined boundaries which have been digitally mapped and are available as geographic information system files. Land ownership and tenure is recorded by the Land Registry. In addition, all land identified as ancient woodland sites is also mapped and digitally recorded as part of the appropriate Ancient Woodland Inventory held and maintained by the relevant Statutory Nature Conservation Body in each constituent part of the UK. Some of this land is also designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), a statutory designation used throughout England, Scotland and Wales or Areas of Scientific Interest (ASSI) in Northern Ireland. Each of the SSSI/ASSIs has a legally notified boundary.	No change.
Is this type of site recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature?	YES. WT's objectives include the protection, restoration and enhancement of the nature conservation value of all the land that they own and manage. For those sites that are also in whole or part SSSIs, this designation is permanent. Individual SSSIs are designated for one or more specified natural features. Management must give priority to these features, but notification may have incidental benefits to other natural features.	No change.
Is the main management objective nature conservation?	YES. Nature conservation is the principal objective of all ancient woodland sites owned and managed by WT. However, many of these sites have secondary objectives to promote access for public enjoyment, recreation and education. For those sites that are also SSSIs, the priority objective of SSSI notification and management is nature conservation.	No change.
Does the designation of the site prevent, or eliminate where necessary, any exploitation or management practice that	PARTLY. WT has a strong commitment to the protection and enhancement of the nature conservation value all of their sites. This is enshrined in the charitable purpose and objectives of the organisation. Sites that also have a	This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no evidence that the designation per se is able to prevent management practices harmful to

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to WT sites	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
will be harmful to their objectives of designation?	statutory designation, such as SSSI, also have a high level of statutory protection that restricts damaging activities or practices that would obstruct achievement of a site's conservation objective(s). However, those not protected in this way are at risk of proposals that could damage sites despite the wishes of the organisation.	conservation objectives. The security of site protection is examined more rigorously in this assessment.
Is the long-term nature conservation ensured through legal or other effective means?	PARTLY. WT's own organisational policy and objectives are designed to ensure the protection, restoration and enhancement of the nature conservation value of its sites. All WT sites have a publicly available management plan and all plans are independently audited, assessed and verified as complying with the UK Woodland Assurance Standard and certified with the Forest Stewardship Council. For those sites that are also SSSIs, their protection is established in law (Scotland: Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended); England & Wales: Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)). However, the organisation is able to dispose of land and has no obligation to continue to own or manage any of its estate.	This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no evidence that the designation per se is able to deliver continuity of nature conservation. The security of site tenure is examined more rigorously in this assessment.
Based on the evidence available, does this type of site meet the IUCN's definition of a protected area?	NO. Many WT sites are underpinned by ASSI/SSSI, SPA, and/or SAC site designations, and those areas underpinned by these protections do qualify by virtue of those designations. However, the designation of WT site itself does not sufficiently qualify given that there is no overall protection offered by legislation and sites can be disposed of in some circumstances.	This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance based on considerations outlined above.

2. OTHER EFFECTIVE (AREA-BASED) CONSERVATION ASSESSMENT (IF THE NETWORK DOES NOT QUALIFY AS A PROTECTED AREA)

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to WT sites
Is the designation type a protected area?	NO. WT sites are not in themselves protected areas.
Does the site have the essential characteristics required to meet the OECM definition? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is geographically defined The site is governed and managed and such arrangements are expected to be ongoing and sustained over the long-term The site delivers effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity 	PARTLY. WT sites are geographically defined, deliver in-situ conservation of biodiversity, offer some protection from environmentally damaging activities on paper but there is no assurance of long-term management at every site.

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to WT sites
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The site is free of environmentally damaging activities and threats to biodiversity 	
Will the conservation outcome at the site endure over the long-term?	PARTLY. WT is committed to the long-term management of its nature reserves with management actions resourced and being implemented. However, except for those sites benefiting from legal protection, the WT's management activities will always be constrained by its charitable income.
What is the in-situ area-based conservation target (e.g., GBF Target 3) being met by this OECM?	In situ area based GBF Target 3 , but only if protections and long-term management are secured across the network.
Based on the evidence available, does the site meet the IUCN's definition of an OECM?	Some WT sites could qualify as OECMs. Assess case by case.

3. MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

Is the management of this type of protected area/OECM documented?	YES. Management Plans are prepared for all WT sites and are publicly available.
What evidence is there that the measures to achieve the conservation objectives are being implemented?	UNKNOWN
Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?	YES
Are the protected areas/OECMs moving towards or have they reached their conservation objectives?	UNKNOWN
Based on the evidence available, is this site designation type/network of sites being managed effectively?	PARTLY (impacts on management sometimes fall outside the control of the organisation)

3.21. UNESCO Biosphere Reserves

Summary

Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, known colloquially as “30x30”, calls for 30% of the world’s terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, to be in effective protection and management by 2030. This target will be achieved through the establishment of protected areas (PAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). Both these types of area-based conservation measures are well defined under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and both have extensive CBD and IUCN guidance. Based on the evidence PAWG has gathered, our conclusions are:

- Does the Biosphere Reserve network meet (all) criteria for PAs? **NO (except for the high proportion of Biosphere Reserve area benefitting from protections afforded by SSSI, ASSI, Ramsar, SPA and/or SAC designations)**
- Does the Biosphere Reserve network meet the criteria for ‘effectively managed’? **PARTLY**
- If not protected areas, do Biosphere Reserves warrant case-by-case consideration against OECM criteria? **YES**

Recommendations

The IUCN NCUK Protected Areas Working Group (PAWG) does not believe the Biosphere Reserve designation itself qualifies as a PA but defined areas within them could qualify as an OECM as a component of the 30x30 target for the UK following case by case assessment against OECM criteria and subject to evidence of effective management PAWG recommends that the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations invest urgently in improving the management effectiveness of all Biosphere Reserves to ensure qualifying areas effectively contribute to the 30x30 target (although noting the lack of powers available to direct land-use in Biosphere Reserves).

Brief description of the site network and its stated objective(s)	UNESCO Biosphere Reserves promote solutions reconciling the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use. They are described as learning areas for sustainable development under diverse ecological, social and economic contexts. There are currently 738 Biosphere Reserves in 134 countries, including 22 transboundary sites that belong to the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.
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1. PROTECTED AREAS ASSESSMENT

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to Biosphere Reserves	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Does this type of protected area have clearly defined geographical boundaries?	YES. There are defined geographical Biosphere Reserves boundaries, although these are <i>not legally established</i> . In Great Britain, there are six Biosphere Reserves ¹²⁰ . There are currently no Biosphere Reserves in Northern Ireland.	No change.
Is this type of site recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature?	PARTLY. The objective of Biosphere Reserve designation is to promote the integrated and sustainable management of an area.	This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no (or limited) evidence that the designation per se is recognised, dedicated

¹²⁰ [UK Reserves - UK Man and the Biosphere Committee \(unesco-mab.org\)](http://ukreserves.unesco-mab.org)

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to Biosphere Reserves	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
	<p>To maintain the aims, Biosphere Reserves use a zonation approach with a protected area and a buffer area within which sustainable development may be promoted. However, it is up to local communities to decide if they want their area to become a Biosphere Reserve and how they plan to support, manage, and develop it. Although Biosphere Reserves are designated through the UK's implementation of the "Man and the Biosphere (MAB)" Programme of UNESCO, there are no additional regulations or laws applied to protect these areas in the UK. However, an integrated Biodiversity Action Plan¹²¹ should be provided to show how conservation features will be applied.</p> <p>Biosphere Reserves are not designated under legislation but are more of a 'statement of intent' that aims to steer land use within the context of sustainable development. The extent to which this occurs in practice depends on local initiatives and the receptiveness of individual landowners rather than any statutory or regulated process. Therefore, the importance of conservation as an objective varies markedly between zones (i.e., in the three different parts of the Biosphere Reserve model - below).</p>	<p>and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature.</p>
<p>Is the main management objective nature conservation?</p>	<p>PARTLY. There is recognition of nature conservation in the Core Areas of each Biosphere Reserve, however, the degree and type of conservation management vary within the site.</p> <p>Buffer Zones have a wider purpose of sustainable development, in which conservation is only one element, but not the priority one. Those other elements are the conservation of nature and culture, sustainable development, learning, awareness, and engagement.</p> <p>Zone concepts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core areas: includes and typically comprised of protected areas, where the maintenance of environmental quality is a priority. • Buffer zones: surround or is contiguous to the core area. Here the activities may be organised, where conservation is one of the main objectives. These zones are usually less occupied by people and rather 	<p>This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no (or limited) evidence that the designation per se is delivering nature conservation as a main management objective.</p>

¹²¹ [bap_3.pdf \(northdevonbiosphere.org.uk\)](#) ; [mgconvert2pdf.aspx \(brighton-hove.gov.uk\)](#) ; [The Isle of Wight Biodiversity Action Plan \(wildonwight.co.uk\)](#) ; [Dyfi Biosphere Swift Project | dyfibiosphere](#); [Highland Nature 2021 - 26 first discussion \(highlandenvironmentforum.info\)](#) ; [What is biodiversity - South Ayrshire Council \(south-ayrshire.gov.uk\)](#)

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to Biosphere Reserves	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
	<p>available for experimental research, tourism, or natural vegetation management such as agriculture, forestry, or fisheries to enhance the overall quality of production while conserving biodiversity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition area: the larger outer area of a Biosphere Reserve where human activity is high. Here, sustainability may be more prioritised. 	
<p>Does the designation of the site prevent, or eliminate where necessary, any exploitation or management practice that will be harmful to their objectives of designation?</p>	<p>PARTLY. Conservation management is only assured in some Core Areas as a consequence of other overlapping statutory designations (e.g., SSSIs) since there are no additional regulations to protect other parts of Biosphere Reserves.</p> <p>Most, but not all, Core Areas of Biosphere Reserves in the UK are offered statutory protections, e.g., SSSI designations, where activities are only permitted if compatible with the conservation objectives. In contrast, multiple human activities and settlements exist in Buffer Zones and Transition Areas with no similar statutory control on activities.</p> <p>The Buffer Zone is where it is proposed that human activities are compatible with nature conservation such as agriculture and recreation, but PAWG is unclear how this is ensured across the network.</p> <p>Transition Areas can be used more intensively by people where economic activities, such as commercial sea fishing, also occur.</p> <p>However, in Wales¹²², within Core Areas and Buffer Zones, only those activities and land ownerships that are compatible with environmental protection requirements are permitted.</p>	<p>This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no evidence that the designation per se is able to prevent management practices harmful to conservation objectives.</p>
<p>Is the long-term nature conservation ensured through legal or other effective means?</p>	<p>NO. The Biosphere Reserve designation confers no additional legal protection or obligation on the local or national government other than that provided by other statutory designations that may occur within the site.</p> <p>Statutory sites within Biosphere Reserves offering long-term conservation can include Sites of Special Scientific Interest,</p>	<p>This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no evidence that the designation per se is able to deliver continuity of nature conservation.</p>

¹²² [What is a UNESCO Biosphere? \(dyfibiosphere.wales\)](http://dyfibiosphere.wales)

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to Biosphere Reserves	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
	Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Ramsar Sites, and Marine Conservation Zones ¹²³ .	
Based on the evidence available, does this type of site meet the IUCN's definition of a protected area?	NO	This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance based on considerations outlined above.

2. OTHER EFFECTIVE (AREA-BASED) CONSERVATION MEASURES ASSESSMENT

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to Biosphere Reserves
Is the designation type a protected area?	NO. Biosphere Reserves are not in themselves protected areas.
Does the site have the essential characteristics required to meet the OECM definition? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is geographically defined The site is governed and managed and such arrangements are expected to be ongoing and sustained over the long-term The site delivers effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity The site is free of environmentally damaging activities and threats to biodiversity 	NOT IN ENTIRETY. Biosphere Reserves are geographically defined (although not under any statutory process) but the extent and type of "governance" and conservation management varies spatially within and between sites, with all six UK sites presenting different implementation models. There is no legal constraint on land-management within large areas of all sites. Biodiversity conservation can only be assured within the control zone and only there inasmuch as delivered by other statutorily designated sites that may be present. Prevention of environmentally damaging activities and threats to biodiversity can only be assured within the Core Zone, and then only inasmuch as these are addressed by other statutory designated sites that may be present.
Will the conservation outcome at the site endure over the long-term?	NO. There is no evidence to suggest that conservation objectives will endure in the long-term outside those parts under other statutory designations, e.g., SSSIs.
What is the in-situ area-based conservation target (e.g., GBF Target 3) being met by this OECM?	In-situ area-based GBF Target 3 cannot be delivered in the absence of a statutory basis for Biosphere Reserve conservation and management.
Based on the evidence available, does the site meet the IUCN's definition of an OECM?	Some parts of some Biosphere Reserves (e.g., Core Areas) will qualify as OECMs when the landowner can prove in long term management but sites should be assessed case-by-case.

3. MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

	England	PARTLY. For example:
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¹²³ [mgconvert2pdf.aspx \(brighton-hove.gov.uk\)](#)

Is the management of this type of protected area/OECM documented?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brighton and Lewes Downs Biosphere – The Living Coast (the managing organisation) introduced their Management Strategy Plan 2025, in 2020, to provide an update on the refreshed management strategy. https://thelivingcoast.org.uk/ North Devon Biosphere Reserve – Bodies are required to produce a Management Plan delivered through different organisations to provide their conservation, research, and development framework. They recently published a Sustainable Development Plan for 2014 – 2024. www.northdevonbiosphere.org.uk Isle of Wight Biosphere – A Biodiversity Action Plan was made in 2005 to provide a framework for action to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Additional Action Plan was produced for the 2019 – 2024 period, at: Resources — Isle of Wight UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve (iwbiosphere.org)
	Northern Ireland	n/a
	Scotland	<p>PARTLY. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Galloway and Southern Ayrshire – have introduced their Strategic Plan⁴ for the period between 2016 and 2022 reflecting on the objectives. Additional aims are provided in the MAB Lima Strategy 2016 – 2025¹²⁴. More reports and plans archived at: Reports & Plans Archives - Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere (gsabiosphere.org.uk) Wester Ross Biosphere – has a Strategic Plan established for the 2018 – 2023 period. Further information on their aims and projects at: What we do About Wester Ross Biosphere (wrb.scot)
	Wales	<p>PARTLY. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biosffer Dyfi Biosphere – a Coordination Plan has been established with proposed aims, actions, and how they are to be coordinated. However, the last update of this kind of document was in 2019. Additionally, a Core Management Plan Including Conservation summarise the objectives and what needs to be achieved on the sites. Again, this

⁴ OPERAs Report Template (gsabiosphere.org.uk)

¹²⁴ [Lima Action Plan for UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere \(MAB\) Programme and its World Network of Biosphere Reserves \(2016-2025\) - UNESCO Digital Library](#)

		document has not been updated since 2011. Some further documents and reports are found here: Periodic review documents for UNESCO reporting (dyfibiosphere.wales) .
What evidence is there that the measures to achieve the conservation objectives are being implemented?	England	NO. PAWG has not found any evidence of specific monitoring or reporting achievements against established objectives at any Biosphere Reserve.
	Northern Ireland	n/a
	Scotland	NO. PAWG has not found any evidence of specific monitoring or reporting achievements against established objectives at any Biosphere Reserve.
	Wales	NO. PAWG has not found any evidence of specific monitoring or reporting achievements against established objectives at any Biosphere Reserve.
Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?		NO. PAWG has not found any evidence of specific monitoring data available for Biosphere Reserves.
Are the protected areas/OECMs moving towards or have they reached their conservation objectives?		UNKNOWN. Given the absence of whole-site monitoring data, PAWG could not find any reporting of achievements against established objectives at any site.
Based on the evidence available, is this site designation type/network of sites being managed effectively?	England	PARTLY (some areas of Biosphere Reserves are being managed effectively)
	Northern Ireland	n/a
	Scotland	PARTLY (some areas of Biosphere Reserves are being managed effectively)
	Wales	PARTLY (some areas of Biosphere Reserves are being managed effectively)

3.22. UNESCO Global Geoparks

Summary

Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, known colloquially as “30x30”, calls for 30% of the world’s terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, to be in effective protection and management by 2030. This target will be achieved through the establishment of protected areas (PAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). Both these types of area-based conservation measures are well defined under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and both have extensive CBD and IUCN guidance. Based on the evidence PAWG has gathered, our conclusions are:

- Does the Global Geopark network meet (all) criteria for PAs? **NO (except for the high proportion of Global Geopark area benefitting from protections afforded by SSSI, ASSI, Ramsar, SPA and/or SAC designations)**
- Does the Global Geopark network meet the criteria for ‘effectively managed’? **UNKNOWN**
- If not protected areas, do Global Geoparks warrant case-by-case consideration against OECM criteria? **YES**

Recommendations

The IUCN NCUK Protected Areas Working Group (PAWG) does not believe the Global Geopark designation itself qualifies as a PA but defined areas within them could qualify as an OECM as a component of the 30x30 target for the UK following case by case assessment against OECM criteria and subject to evidence of effective management. PAWG recommends that the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations invest urgently in improving the management effectiveness of all Global Geoparks to ensure qualifying areas effectively contribute to the 30x30 target.

Brief description of the site network and its stated objective(s)	UNESCO Global Geoparks (hereafter ‘Geoparks’) are single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development. A Geopark uses its geological heritage, in connection with all other aspects of the area’s natural and cultural heritage, to enhance awareness and understanding of key issues facing society, such as using earth’s resources sustainably, mitigating the effects of climate change and reducing natural hazard-related risks.
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1. PROTECTED AREA ASSESSMENT

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to Geoparks	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Does this type of protected area have clearly defined geographical boundaries?	YES. There are defined geographical Geopark boundaries, although these are <i>not legally established</i> . In the UK, there are seven Geoparks distributed in all four countries.	No change.
Is this type of site recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature?	NO. Geoparks are part of areas with other conservation objectives such as National Parks and SSSIs, whose conservation objectives and supporting instruments will override those of the Geopark. The Geopark status does not	This is a change from the 2014 Statement of Compliance since there is no (or limited) evidence that the designation per se is recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature.

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to Geoparks	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
	in itself offer long-term conservation provisions given that there is no legal underpinning.	
Is the main management objective nature conservation?	NO. The primary purpose of Geoparks is a combination of conservation, public education and tourism development, and if there is a problem there is no clear statement to favour conservation of the geoheritage unless this exists in statutory protection under, for example, SSSI.	No change.
Does the designation of the site prevent, or eliminate where necessary, any exploitation or management practice that will be harmful to their objectives of designation?	NO. This is because the designation of a Geopark does not bring any additional powers of protection than may or may not exist already. The UNESCO Guidelines make it clear that domestic protection measures are needed for this purpose.	No change.
Is the long-term nature conservation ensured through legal or other effective means?	NO. Geopark designation does not bring with it any additional powers. Protection is solely reliant on domestic legislative and other powers. However, protection does rely on the application of other powers through the working of the formal managing partnership for the Geopark, such as local structure and other plans and policies. The UK Committee for UNESCO Global Geoparks is responsible for coordinating Geoparks at a national level and plays an important role.	No change.
Based on the evidence available, does this type of site meet the IUCN's definition of a protected area?	NO	

2. OTHER EFFECTIVE (AREA-BASED) CONSERVATION MEASURES ASSESSMENT

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to Geoparks
Is the designation type a protected area?	NO. Geoparks are not in themselves protected areas.
Does the site have the essential characteristics required to meet the OECM definition? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is geographically defined The site is governed and managed and such arrangements are expected to be ongoing and sustained over the long-term The site delivers effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity 	PARTLY. Geoparks are spatially defined (although not under any statutory process) but the extent and type of "governance" and conservation management varies spatially within and between sites, with UK sites presenting different implementation models. There is no legal constraint on land-management within some areas of those Geoparks that are not formally protected under other designations, e.g., SSSI/ASSI. Biodiversity conservation and the prevention of environmentally damaging activities and threats to biodiversity can only be assured through other statutory designated sites that may be present.

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to Geoparks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The site is free of environmentally damaging activities and threats to biodiversity 	
Will the conservation outcome at the site endure over the long-term?	NO. There is no evidence to suggest that conservation objectives will endure in the long-term outside those parts under other statutory designations, e.g., SSSI/ASSI.
What is the in-situ area-based conservation target (e.g., GBF Target 3) being met by this OECM?	In-situ area-based GBF Target 3 cannot be delivered in the absence of a statutory basis for Biosphere Reserve conservation and management.
Based on the evidence available, does the site meet the IUCN's definition of an OECM?	Some parts of some Geoparks will qualify as OECMs when the landowner can prove long term management, but sites should be assessed case-by-case.

3. MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

Is the management of this type of protected area/OECM documented?	PARTLY. Management plans are publicly available for some Geoparks ¹²⁵ but they are primarily focused on geological heritage.
What evidence is there that the measures to achieve the conservation objectives are being implemented?	NO. PAWG has not found any evidence of specific monitoring or reporting achievements against established nature conservation objectives at any Geopark other than JNCC Common Standards Monitoring for other designations, i.e., SSSI/ASSI.
Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?	NO. PAWG has not found any evidence of specific monitoring data available for Biosphere Reserves outside of Common Standards Monitoring.
Are the protected areas/OECMs moving towards or have they reached their conservation objectives?	UNKNOWN. Given the absence of whole-site monitoring data, PAWG could not find any reporting of achievements against nature conservation objectives at any site.
Based on the evidence available, is this site designation type/network of sites being managed effectively?	UNKNOWN

¹²⁵ http://www.englishrivierageopark.org.uk/section_main.cfm?section=114

3.23. UNESCO World Heritage Sites (natural or mixed sites only)

Summary

Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, known colloquially as “30x30”, calls for 30% of the world’s terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, to be in effective protection and management by 2030. This target will be achieved through the establishment of protected areas (PAs) and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). Both these types of area-based conservation measures are well defined under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and both have extensive CBD and IUCN guidance. Based on the evidence PAWG has gathered, our conclusions are:

- Does the World Heritage Site network meet (all) criteria for PAs? **NO (except for the high proportion of NNR area benefitting from protections afforded by SSSI, ASSI, Ramsar, SPA and/or SAC designations)**
- Does the World Heritage Site network meet the criteria for ‘effectively managed’? **PARTLY**
- If not protected areas, do World Heritage Sites warrant case-by-case consideration against OECM criteria? **YES**

Recommendations

The IUCN NCUK Protected Areas Working Group (PAWG) does not believe the World Heritage Site designation itself qualifies as a PA but defined areas within them could qualify as an OECM as a component of the 30x30 target for the UK following case by case assessment against OECM criteria and subject to evidence of effective management. PAWG recommends that the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations invest urgently in improving the management effectiveness of all World Heritage Sites to ensure qualifying areas effectively contribute to the 30x30 target.

<p>Brief description of the site network and its stated objective(s)</p>	<p>World Heritage Sites are cultural and/or natural sites considered to be of ‘Outstanding Universal Value’, which have been inscribed on the World Heritage List by the World Heritage Committee. These places or buildings are thought to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have special importance for everyone; and • represent unique, or the most significant or best, examples of the world’s cultural and/or natural heritage. <p>Outstanding Universal Value is considered to transcend national boundaries and to be of importance for future generations.</p> <p>World Heritage Site status is a high accolade that brings with it responsibilities and international scrutiny. However, designation of a World Heritage Site by UNESCO brings no additional statutory controls, protection is afforded through the UK planning system as well as through any other the other designations that may exist.</p>
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1. PROTECTED AREA ASSESSMENT

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to World Heritage Sites	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Does this type of protected area have clearly defined geographical boundaries?	YES. There are defined geographical World Heritage site (WHS) boundaries, although these are not legally established.	No change.

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to World Heritage Sites	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
Is this type of site recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature?	YES. Designation of a World Heritage Site by UNESCO brings no additional statutory controls, but some protection is afforded through the planning system as well as through the other designations, e.g., SSSI/ASSI, where areas have been designated as such.	No change.
Is the main management objective nature conservation?	<p>NO. There are five strategic objectives of the World Heritage Convention:</p> <p>Credibility: Strengthen the credibility of the World Heritage List, as a representative and geographically balanced testimony of cultural and natural properties of outstanding universal value.</p> <p>Conservation: Ensure the effective conservation of World Heritage properties.</p> <p>Capacity-building: Promote the development of effective capacity-building measures, including assistance for preparing the nomination of properties to the World Heritage List, for the understanding and implementation of the World Heritage Convention and related instruments.</p> <p>Communication: Increase public awareness, involvement and support for World Heritage through communication.</p> <p>Communities: Enhance the role of communities in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention.</p> <p>Although 'conservation' is recognised as an objective of the World Heritage Sites, the Convention also recognises that 'the ways in which people interact with nature, and of the fundamental need to preserve the balance between the two.' This aspiration for balance suggests a trade-off between needs and no primacy for nature conservation.</p>	No change.
Does the designation of the site prevent, or eliminate where necessary, any exploitation or management practice that will be harmful to their objectives of designation?	NO. Conservation management is only assured because of other statutory designations (e.g., SSSI/ASSI) since there are no additional regulations to protect all parts of World Heritage Sites. More generally, some protection is afforded through the planning systems of the four countries of the UK.	No change.
Is the long-term nature conservation ensured through legal or other effective means?	NO. The World Heritage Site designation confers no additional legal protection or obligation on the local or national government other than that provided by other statutory designations that may occur within the site.	No change.

Main elements of IUCN definition	Discussion of element in relation to World Heritage Sites	Summary of changes from previous assessment (PNOTM)
	If sites no longer comply with the designation criteria, they can be de-listed (as was Liverpool in 2022).	
Based on the evidence available, does this type of site meet the IUCN's definition of a protected area?	NO	

2. OTHER EFFECTIVE (AREA-BASED) CONSERVATION MEASURES ASSESSMENT

IUCN screening tool tests	Discussion of element in relation to World Heritage Sites
Is the designation type a protected area?	NO. World Heritage Sites are not in themselves protected areas.
Does the site have the essential characteristics required to meet the OECM definition? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is geographically defined The site is governed and managed and such arrangements are expected to be ongoing and sustained over the long-term The site delivers effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity The site is free of environmentally damaging activities and threats to biodiversity 	<p>PARTLY. World Heritage Sites are geographically defined (although not under any statutory process) but the extent and type of “governance” and conservation management varies spatially within and between sites.</p> <p>There is no legal constraint on land management within large areas of all sites.</p> <p>Biodiversity conservation can only be assured where statutorily designated sites are present, i.e., SSSI/ASSI.</p> <p>Prevention of environmentally damaging activities and threats to biodiversity can only be assured inasmuch as these are addressed by other statutory designated sites that may be present or through the planning process.</p>
Will the conservation outcome at the site endure over the long-term?	NO. There is no evidence to suggest that conservation objectives will endure in the long-term outside those parts under statutory designations, e.g., SSSI/ASSI.
What is the in-situ area-based conservation target (e.g., GBF Target 3) being met by this OECM?	In-situ area-based GBF Target 3 cannot be delivered in the absence of a statutory basis for WHS conservation and management.
Based on the evidence available, does the site meet the IUCN's definition of an OECM?	Some parts of some World Heritage Sites will qualify as OECMs when the landowner can prove long term management but sites should be assessed case-by-case.

3. MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

Is the management of this type of protected area/OECM documented?		YES. Each World Heritage Site is required to have a Management Plan by the international World Heritage Committee and UK Government Policy. Management Plans are not statutory documents. Instead, they draw together a range of policies, plans and strategies, which create a statutory and non-statutory framework that recognises and protects the World Heritage Site and its surroundings.
What evidence is there that the measures to achieve the conservation objectives are being implemented?		YES. Regular State of Conservation reports by World Heritage Sites and five-yearly Periodic Reports by the State Party are submitted to the World Heritage Committee.
Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?		PARTLY. PAWG believes that some bespoke monitoring is undertaken but PAWG was unable to find sources of data.
Are the Protected Areas/OECMs moving towards, or have they reached their conservation objectives?		UNKNOWN. Given the absence of whole-site monitoring data, PAWG could not find any reporting of achievements against established objectives at any site.
Based on the evidence available, is this site designation type/network of sites being managed effectively?		PARTLY

4. Conclusions

A high-level summary of assessment findings is given in Table 2. Five types of site designation are considered by PAWG to fully comply with IUCN's definition of a 'protected area':

- Sites/Areas of Special Scientific Interest;
- Marine Protected Area designations;
- Ramsar Sites;
- Special Protection Areas; and
- Special Areas of Conservation.

Eighteen other site types are not considered as 'protected areas' in their own right (although many are likely to contain some areas of land or sea that do meet the definition i.e., wherever those areas are also designated under any of the five types that are assessed that fully comply) (Tables 2 and 3).

Sixteen designation types should be assessed on a site-by-site basis with respect to their potential status as OECMs (Table 4). A site-level tool for identifying OECMs was published in 2023 to guide guides an assessor through three steps to apply eight criteria which determine if a site qualifies as an OECM as set out under the Convention on Biological Diversity¹²⁶.

For no site type was there evidence of complete effective management (Table 5) although individual sites do demonstrate effective management. In most cases, management was, at best, partly effective, whilst for three site types (Heritage Coasts, Local Nature Reserves and UNESCO Global Geoparks) management effectiveness was unknown.

The findings have relevance to the UK's implementation of Target 3 of the Global Biodiversity Framework, in particular the expressed intention by government to establish a network of protected areas and OECMs that, by 2030, will cover 30% of the UK land area¹²⁷ and 30% of its territorial marine area¹²⁸.

These assessments, which supersede Statements of Compliance published in 2014 (and which were made available for national and international stakeholders involved in protected area dataflows and assessments (including being made available for the World Database of Protected Areas (WDPA)), provide updated guidance to UK Government and the Devolved Administrations and their Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies on which types of sites should be incorporated with these 30% totals, to measure legitimate progress towards the 30x30 targets on land and in marine, benchmarked against internally-agreed definitions and standards. To meet the required standards for GBF Target 3, sites must be both protected and effectively managed. Governance is a main factor in determining the effectiveness and efficiency of management¹²⁹ and we need to build our collective and unified understanding between all stakeholders of how this works across existing UK protected areas and how it will work for OECMs.

¹²⁶ Jonas, H. D., MacKinnon, K., Marnewick, D. and Wood, P. (2023). Site-level tool for identifying other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). First edition. IUCN WCPA Technical Report Series No. 6. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.

¹²⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-commits-to-protect-30-of-uk-land-in-boost-for-biodiversity>;
<https://www.leaderspledgefornature.org/>

¹²⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-pushes-protections-for-international-marine-biodiversity>

¹²⁹ Borrini-Feyerabend, G., Dudley, N., Jaeger, T., Lassen, B., Pathak Broome, N., Phillips, A. and Sandwith, T. (2013). Governance of Protected Areas: From understanding to action. Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 20, Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. xvi + 124pp.

PAWG recommends that the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations invest urgently in improving the management effectiveness of all sites considered in this assessment to ensure that as many as possible (in whole or in part) can all effectively contribute to the 30x30 target. PAWG believes that the target can be met with renewed efforts from government and non-government bodies to govern and manage existing sites effectively whilst governments also implement the findings of reviews that show that existing networks of protected areas are not yet complete.

Other sites, not considered in this review, which have primary objectives potentially compatible with delivering nature conservation outcomes at least equivalent to those of protected areas, could have the potential to be a component of the 30x30 target for the UK following case by case assessment of such sites against OECM criteria. However, in line with the internationally agreed standards, such sites clearly exclude multiple use areas as well as those where their primary objectives are not compatible with delivery of nature conservation outcomes equivalent to those provided by protected areas.

PAWG notes that the effectiveness of managing many protected areas and other designation types considered here is constrained, sometimes significantly, through the impact of both on-site and especially off-site factors outside the control of organisations responsible for the sites. It recommends the cross-sector nature conservation community be funded to audit their sites to identify those external influences negatively impacting these areas. This will enable the identification of strategic actions and policies that would help to enhance management effectiveness. PAWG would seek to report on these in its next assessment.

PAWG intends to update annually these Statements of Compliance, reflecting anticipated changes in policy and practice in relation to designation types assessed.

PAWG would welcome further information from any stakeholders until the end of September 2024, which will be used to further inform and update these Statements of Compliance assessments. Relevant evidence should be sent to IUCNUK.PAWG@wwt.org.uk.



Lulworth Cove AONB. Photo: Howard Davies.

Table 2. Summary findings for potential types of protected area in 2023 in respect to IUCN definitions and effectiveness of management. All assessments at UK scale.

Type of designation	Statement of compliance no.	Does the site type meet IUCN's definition of a Protected Area (PA)?	If not PA, does site type warrant case-by-case consideration against OECM criteria?	Is this network of sites being managed effectively?
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	9	No	Yes	Partly
Butterfly Conservation's (BC) Nature Reserves	17	No	Yes	Partly
Heritage Coasts	11	No	Yes	Unknown
John Muir Trust (JMT) properties	18	No	Yes	Partly
Local Nature Reserves (LNR)	7	No	Yes	Unknown
Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)	23	No	Partly	Unknown
Marine Protected Area (MPA) designations¹³⁰	5	Yes	n/a	Partly
National Nature Reserves (NNR)	6	No	Yes	Partly
National Parks (including The Broads)	8	No	Yes	Partly
National Scenic Areas (NSAs)	10	No	No	No
National Trust (NT) and National Trust for Scotland (NTS) properties	16	Partly	Yes	Partly
Plantlife Nature Reserves	19	No	Yes	Partly
Ramsar Sites	4	Yes	n/a	Partly
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Nature Reserves	15	No	Yes	Partly
The Wildlife Trusts' Nature Reserves	20	No	Yes	Partly
Sites and Areas of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI and ASSI)	1	Yes	n/a	Partly
Special Area of Conservation (SAC; part of the National Site Network)	3	Yes	n/a	Partly
Special Protection Areas (SPA; part of the National Site Network)	2	Yes	n/a	Partly
Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust's (WWT) sites	22	No	Yes	Partly
Woodland Trust (WT) sites	21	No	Yes	Partly
UNESCO Biosphere Reserves	12	No	Yes	Partly
UNESCO Global Geoparks	13	No	Yes	Unknown
UNESCO World Heritage Sites (natural or mixed sites only)	14	No	Yes	Partly

¹³⁰ including Marine Conservation Zones in England, Northern Ireland and Wales; Nature Conservation Marine Protected Areas in Scotland; and Highly Protected Marine Areas which can apply in all four countries.

Table 3. Summary detailed findings for protected area assessments. All assessments at UK scale unless otherwise stated.

Type of designation	Are there clearly defined geographical boundaries?	Recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve long-term conservation of nature?	Is the main management objective nature conservation?	Does designation prevent, or eliminate, any exploitation or management practice harmful to objectives of designation?	Is the long-term nature conservation ensured through legal or other effective means?	Based on the evidence available, does this type of site meet the IUCN's definition of a protected area?
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	Yes	Partly	Partly	Partly	Partly	No
Butterfly Conservation's (BC) Nature Reserves	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partly	Partly	No
Heritage Coasts	Yes	Yes	No	Partly	No	No
John Muir Trust (JMT) properties	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partly	Partly	No
Local Nature Reserves (LNR)	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Marine Protected Area (MPA) designations	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partly	Yes	Yes
National Nature Reserves (NNR)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
National Parks (including The Broads)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partly	Partly	No
National Scenic Areas (NSAs) Scotland	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
National Trust (NT) and National Trust for Scotland (NTS) properties	Yes	Partly	Partly	Partly	Partly	Partly
Plantlife Nature Reserves	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partly	Partly	No
Ramsar Sites	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Nature Reserves	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partly	Partly	No

Type of designation	Are there clearly defined geographical boundaries?	Recognised, dedicated and managed to achieve long-term conservation of nature?	Is the main management objective nature conservation?	Does designation prevent, or eliminate, any exploitation or management practice harmful to objectives of designation?	Is the long-term nature conservation ensured through legal or other effective means?	Based on the evidence available, does this type of site meet the IUCN's definition of a protected area?
The Wildlife Trusts' Nature Reserves	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partly	Partly	No
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Great Britain	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) Northern Ireland	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Special Area of Conservation (SAC; part of the National Site Network)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Special Protection Areas (SPA; part of the National Site Network)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust's (WWT) sites	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partly	Partly	No
Woodland Trust (WT) sites	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partly	Partly	No
UNESCO Biosphere Reserves	Yes	Partly	Partly	Partly	No	No
UNESCO Global Geoparks	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
UNESCO World Heritage Sites (natural or mixed sites only)	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No

Table 4. Summary detailed findings for OECM assessments. All assessments at UK scale unless otherwise stated. n/a = not appropriate.

Type of designation	Is the designation type a protected area?	Does the site have the essential characteristics required to meet the OECM definition?	Will the conservation outcome at the site endure over the long-term?	Based on the evidence available, does the site meet the IUCN's definition of an OECM?
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	No	Partly	No	Assess case by case
Butterfly Conservation's (BC) Nature Reserves	No	Partly	Partly	Assess case by case
Heritage Coasts	No	Partly	No	No
John Muir Trust (JMT) properties	No	Partly	Partly	Assess case by case
Local Nature Reserves (LNR)	No	Partly	Partly	Assess case by case
Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)	No	Partly	Partly	Assess case by case
Marine Protected Area (MPA) designations	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
National Nature Reserves (NNR)	No	Partly	Partly	Assess case by case
National Parks (including The Broads)	No	Partly	No	Assess case by case
National Scenic Areas (NSAs) Scotland	No	Partly	No	No
National Trust (NT) and National Trust for Scotland (NTS) properties	No	Partly	Partly	Assess case by case
Plantlife Nature Reserves	No	Partly	Partly	Assess case by case
Ramsar Sites	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Nature Reserves	No	Partly	Partly	Assess case by case
The Wildlife Trusts' Nature Reserves	No	Partly	Partly	Assess case by case
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Great Britain	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) Northern Ireland	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Type of designation	Is the designation type a protected area?	Does the site have the essential characteristics required to meet the OECM definition?	Will the conservation outcome at the site endure over the long-term?	Based on the evidence available, does the site meet the IUCN's definition of an OECM?
Special Area of Conservation (SAC; part of the National Site Network)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Special Protection Areas (SPA; part of the National Site Network)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust's (WWT) sites	No	Partly	Partly	Assess case by case
Woodland Trust (WT) sites	No	Partly	Partly	Assess case by case
UNESCO Biosphere Reserves	No	Not in entirety	No	Assess case by case
UNESCO Global Geoparks	No	Partly	No	Assess case by case
UNESCO World Heritage Sites (natural or mixed sites only)	No	Partly	No	Assess case by case



Lake District National Park. Photo; Howard Davies.

Table 5. Summary detailed findings for management effectiveness. All assessments at UK scale unless otherwise stated.

Type of designation	Is management documented?	Evidence is there that measures to achieve conservation objectives being implemented?	Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?	Are sites moving towards or have reached conservation objectives?	Based on available evidence is the site network being managed effectively?				
					England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales	UK
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	Yes	Unknown	Partly	Unknown	Partly	Partly	n/a	Partly	
Butterfly Conservation's (BC) Nature Reserves	Partly	Unknown	Yes	Unknown					Partly
Heritage Coasts	No	No	No	Unknown	Unknown	n/a	n/a	Unknown	
John Muir Trust (JMT) properties	Partly	Unknown	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	
Local Nature Reserves (LNR)	Partly	Partly	Partly	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	
Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) England	Partly	Partly	Partly	Unknown	Partly				
Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) Northern Ireland	Partly	Partly	Partly	Unknown		Unknown			
Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) Scotland	Partly	Partly	Partly	Unknown			Unknown		
Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) Wales	Partly	Partly	Partly	Unknown				Unknown	
Marine Protected Area (MPA) designations England	Partly	Partly	No	No	Partly				
Marine Protected Area (MPA) designations Northern Ireland	Partly	Partly	Unknown	No		Unknown			
Marine Protected Area (MPA) designations Scotland	Partly	Partly	Partly	No			Partly		
Marine Protected Area (MPA) designations Wales	Unknown	Partly	No	No				Unknown	
National Nature Reserves (NNR) England	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown				

Type of designation	Is management documented?	Evidence is there that measures to achieve conservation objectives being implemented?	Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?	Are sites moving towards or have reached conservation objectives?	Based on available evidence is the site network being managed effectively?				
					England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales	UK
National Nature Reserves (NNR) Northern Ireland	Partly	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown		Partly			
National Nature Reserves (NNR) Scotland	Partly	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown			Partly		
National Nature Reserves (NNR) Wales	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown				Unknown	
National Parks (including The Broads) England	Yes	Partly	No	Unknown	Partly				
National Parks (including The Broads) Scotland	Yes	Unknown	No	Unknown			Partly		
National Parks (including The Broads) Wales	Yes	Unknown	No	Unknown				Partly	
National Scenic Areas (NSAs) Scotland	Partly	No	No	No			No		
National Trust (NT) and National Trust for Scotland (NTS) properties	No	Unknown	Yes	Unknown					Partly
Plantlife Nature Reserves	No	Unknown	Yes	Unknown					Partly
Ramsar Sites England	Partly	Yes	Partly	Partly	Partly				
Ramsar Sites Northern Ireland	Partly	Unknown	Partly	Partly		Partly			
Ramsar Sites Scotland	Partly	Yes	Partly	Partly			Partly		
Ramsar Sites Wales	Partly	Unknown	Partly	Partly				Partly	
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Nature Reserves	No	Unknown	Yes	Unknown					Partly
The Wildlife Trusts' Nature Reserves	No	Unknown	Yes	Unknown					Partly

Type of designation	Is management documented?	Evidence is there that measures to achieve conservation objectives being implemented?	Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?	Are sites moving towards or have reached conservation objectives?	Based on available evidence is the site network being managed effectively?				
					England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales	UK
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) England	Yes	Partly	No	Partly-Unknown	Partly				
Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) Northern Ireland	Yes	No	Unknown	Partly-Unknown		Partly			
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Scotland	Yes	Yes	Unknown	Partly-Unknown			Partly		
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Wales	Yes	No	Unknown	Partly-Unknown				Partly	
Special Area of Conservation (SAC; part of the National Site Network) England	Partly	Unknown	Partly	Partly	Partly				
Special Area of Conservation (SAC; part of the National Site Network) Northern Ireland	Partly	Unknown	Partly	No		Partly			
Special Area of Conservation (SAC; part of the National Site Network) Scotland	Partly	Partly	Partly	Partly			Partly		
Special Area of Conservation (SAC; part of the National Site Network) Wales	Partly	Unknown	Partly	Partly				Partly	
Special Protection Areas (SPA; part of the National Site Network) England	Partly	Unknown	Partly	Partly	Partly				
Special Protection Areas (SPA; part of the National Site Network) Northern Ireland	Partly	Unknown	Partly	Partly		Partly			
Special Protection Areas (SPA; part of the National Site Network) Scotland	Partly	Partly	Partly	Partly			Partly		

Type of designation	Is management documented?	Evidence is there that measures to achieve conservation objectives being implemented?	Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working?	Are sites moving towards or have reached conservation objectives?	Based on available evidence is the site network being managed effectively?				
					England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales	UK
Special Protection Areas (SPA; part of the National Site Network) Wales	Partly	Partly	Partly	Partly				Partly	
Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust's (WWT) sites	Yes	Unknown	Yes	Unknown					Partly
Woodland Trust (WT) sites	Yes	Unknown	Yes	Unknown					Partly
UNESCO Biosphere Reserves England	Partly	No	No	Unknown	Partly				
UNESCO Biosphere Reserves Scotland	Partly	No	No	Unknown			Partly		
UNESCO Biosphere Reserves Wales	Partly	No	No	Unknown				Partly	
UNESCO Global Geoparks	Partly	No	No	Unknown					Unknown
UNESCO World Heritage Sites (natural or mixed sites only)	Yes	Yes	Partly	Unknown					Partly

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In the dawn light, the last of the female Green Turtles *Chelonia mydas* pull themselves back to the sea after laying and burying their clutches, Ascension Island. Copyright Dr Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF.org.uk.



Many National Trust properties have significant biodiversity values, including through habitat restoration and management, such as the recreation of the medieval orchard set in hay meadows at Lyvden New Bield, Northamptonshire.
Photo: D.A. Stroud.

7. Appendix 1. Assessment in UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies

When it was being established, PAWG was keen to include in its work the UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs) and Crown Dependencies (CDs). This had been the wish also of the predecessor project *PNOTM*. However, the UKOTs and CDs constitute 21 different administrations, each with their own legislation and set of types of protected and conserved area. At a conservative estimate, this could add at least 100 types of site designation to the total. Resource constraints prevented the inclusion of UKOTs and CDs in *PNOTM*.

In the present project, the PAWG Chairman and the Chairman of UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF) wrote early in the project to UKOTCF's partner organisations in the UKOTs and CDs to describe the work. With the approval of the Chair of the Council of Environment Ministers of UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, they wrote also to the Environment Ministers (or Lead Councillors for those with non-ministerial systems) and their environment officials to explore interest. This was followed up by a presentation and discussion at the Fifth UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies Environment Ministers' Council Meeting in October 2022. Some key extracts from the closing Statement of the Ministers' Council meeting are quoted below:

“3. *The biodiversity of the territories and dependencies we represent is considerable. We have 3,300 endemic species, compared with around 90 in the UK. About 75% of these are globally threatened. Our ecosystems contain some of the rarest, and most threatened habitat types: we have, for example, nearly 5,000 km² of coral reefs, which makes the UK the twelfth largest reef nation in the world. Our environmental capital has underpinned sustainable livelihoods in our populations for many generations, and can help continued growth in our economies and our living standards, as well as public health. But it is increasingly under threat, and needs both safeguarding and management. We recognise the hard spending choices facing UK and Territory politicians post-pandemic and during the current economic challenges, but note the conclusions of the HM Treasury-commissioned*

report by Professor Sir Partha Dasgupta and the increasing public awareness of the reality of the immediate major threats to human life and well-being caused by biodiversity loss and climate change.

12. *We heard of the work of the Protected Areas Working Group of the UK Committee of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and how this might relate to UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. We welcomed the identified opportunity to make even more use of our protected area data already being collated by JNCC. Making this available (under the same constraints) to the IUCN and UKOTCF for further analysis will greatly enhance the international standing of our protected areas and the information available to us to aid management.*
14. *At our 2018 meeting in the Isle of Man, we welcomed Blue Belt funding for extensive marine protection around oceanic territories, and recognised also the success of co-operative fishery management alongside marine protected areas. We joined the participants in the recent technical conference “Staying Connected for Conservation in a Changed World” in calling on the UK Government to commit funding to support the continuation and expansion of the Blue Belt programme for the remaining years of the current parliament, in order to (a) provide the necessary financial and technical support to bring about effective and locally-led protection and sustainable management of their large-scale MPAs; and (b) expand the Blue Belt Programme and assistance for UKOTs developing other types of protected areas to other territories, including those not in mid-ocean, as required. Safeguarding vital marine biodiversity and enabling ecosystem recovery will sustain the blue economies of tourism and fishing, enable sequestration of ‘blue carbon’, and improve territories’ climate resilience against increasingly frequent and stronger extreme weather events. Accordingly, we welcome the extension of the Blue Belt programme to develop a complementary “Blue Shield” initiative. Several territories have joined one or both schemes. We wish to see a comparable scheme for terrestrial conservation, on which most of the species found only in our territories depend. Some of our senior officers have expressed concern at the discomfort between their terrestrial and marine staff that this discrepancy in UK support that this has generated, and called for a “green dot” initiative.*
15. *We again recall our governments’ commitments to biodiversity conservation and sustainable development by choosing to be included in various international environmental agreements. We note that, in 2021, the UK Government and UKOTs reached 20 years of the existence of the Environment Charters and their commitments, not created under the Charters but brought together from under other international measures. We again note the invaluable role played by the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum’s (UKOTCF’s) “Review of performance by 2016 of UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies in implementing the 2001 Environment Charters or their equivalents and moving towards the Aichi Targets and Sustainable Development Targets” (<https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/env-charter/progress/>) which we endorsed at our 2017 meeting. We regret that the UK Government has not provided the modest financial support we sought to enable the updating of this. We are grateful that the UKOTCF is nevertheless trying to undertake an update using unpaid skilled volunteers, and call on all to assist with this.”*

Unfortunately, the resource constraints of PAWG noted above have again impeded progress in this area, so that it has again proven impracticable to include UKOTs and CDs in this report. At present, the barriers may be too great to overcome. PAWG considers that an assessment of the financial and technical support required to unblock these challenges would be helpful in order to assist the UKOTs and CDs in relation to their vitally important contribution to the global 30x30 target.

PAWG and UKOTCF remain ready to help insofar as resources allow.

UKOT and CD portfolio-holders for the environment and their officials addressed the 30x30 commitment at their meeting in November 2023 and PAWG and UKOTCF recommitted their support insofar as resources allow. Their continuing commitment was underlined in the following extract from the closing Statement of the Sixth UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies Environment Ministers' Council Meeting in May 2023:

6. *We confirm our commitment to conserve our environmental capital, and, recognising its global importance, some territories have chosen to be included in UK's ratification of international environmental agreements. We share with the UK a partnership approach to integrating environmental considerations in government decision-making, marked in the case of most Overseas Territories by individual Environment Charters as envisaged in the 1999 White Paper Partnership for Progress and Prosperity, on which the 2012 White Paper The Overseas Territories: Security, Success and Sustainability is explicitly built. The approach is shared by other territories and dependencies through their commitment to the international agreements in which they are included. The Territories are important to the delivery of UK's global environmental promises, for example in protecting the over 90% of species found only on UK sovereign territory and by the declaration of by far the largest area of UK protected ocean. The Territories are a positive asset to be celebrated and invested in."*