

National Parks and Wildlife Service

Conservation Objectives Series

Slyne Head Islands SAC 000328



NPWS

An tSeirbhís Páirceanna
Náisiúnta agus Fiadhúlra
National Parks and Wildlife
Service

**National Parks and Wildlife Service,
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage,
90 King Street North, Dublin 7, D07 N7CV, Ireland.
Web: www.npws.ie
E-mail: natureconservation@npws.gov.ie**

Citation:

**NPWS (2024) Conservation Objectives: Slyne Head Islands SAC 000328. Version
2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local
Government and Heritage.**

**Series Editors: Maria Long and Colin Heaslip
ISSN 2009-4086**

Introduction

The overall aim of the Habitats Directive is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest. These habitats and species are listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives and Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas are designated to afford protection to the most vulnerable of them. These two designations are collectively known as the Natura 2000 network.

European and national legislation places a collective obligation on Ireland and its citizens to maintain habitats and species in the Natura 2000 network at favourable conservation condition. The Government and its agencies are responsible for the implementation and enforcement of regulations that will ensure the ecological integrity of these sites.

A site-specific conservation objective aims to define favourable conservation condition for a particular habitat or species at that site.

The maintenance of habitats and species within Natura 2000 sites at favourable conservation condition will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at a national level.

Favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing, and
- the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and
- the conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, and
- the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and
- there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

Notes/Guidelines:

1. The targets given in these conservation objectives are based on best available information at the time of writing. As more information becomes available, targets for attributes may change. These will be updated periodically, as necessary.
2. An appropriate assessment based on these conservation objectives will remain valid even if the targets are subsequently updated, providing they were the most recent objectives available when the assessment was carried out. It is essential that the date and version are included when objectives are cited.
3. Assessments cannot consider an attribute in isolation from the others listed for that habitat or species, or for other habitats and species listed for that site. A plan or project with an apparently small impact on one attribute may have a significant impact on another.
4. Please note that the maps included in this document do not necessarily show the entire extent of the habitats and species for which the site is listed. This should be borne in mind when appropriate assessments are being carried out.
5. When using these objectives, it is essential that the relevant backing/supporting documents are consulted, particularly where instructed in the targets or notes for a particular attribute.

Qualifying Interests

** indicates a priority habitat under the Habitats Directive*

000328	Slyne Head Islands SAC
1170	Reefs
1349	Common Bottlenose Dolphin <i>Tursiops truncatus</i>
1364	Grey Seal <i>Halichoerus grypus</i>

Please note that this SAC overlaps with Slyne Head to Ardmore Point Islands SPA (004159) and is adjacent to Slyne Head Peninsula SAC (002074) and West Connacht Coast SAC (002998). See map 2. The conservation objectives for this site should be used in conjunction with those for the overlapping and adjacent sites as appropriate. **IMPORTANT:** This 'Version 2' document includes 1 additional QI (1349). The conservation objectives for pre-existing QIs have generally not been updated.

Supporting documents, relevant reports & publications

Supporting documents, NPWS reports and publications are available for download from: www.npws.ie/Publications

NPWS Documents

Year :	2004
Title :	Harbour seal population assessment in the Republic of Ireland: August 2003
Author :	Cronin, M.; Duck, C.; O Cadhla, O.; Nairn, R.; Strong, D.; O'Keeffe, C.
Series :	Irish Wildlife Manual No. 11
Year :	2004
Title :	Summary of National Parks and Wildlife Service surveys for common (harbour) seals (<i>Phoca vitulina</i>) and grey seals (<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>), 1978 to 2003
Author :	Lyons, D.O.
Series :	Irish Wildlife Manual No. 13
Year :	2007
Title :	Grey seal moult population survey in the Republic of Ireland, 2007
Author :	Ó Cadhla, O.; Strong, D.
Series :	Unpublished report to NPWS
Year :	2008
Title :	An assessment of the breeding population of grey seals in the Republic of Ireland, 2005
Author :	O Cadhla, O.; Strong, D.; O'Keeffe, C.; Coleman, M.; Cronin, M.; Duck, C.; Murray, T.; Dower, P.; Nairn, R.; Murphy, P.; Smiddy, P.; Saich, C.; Lyons, D.O.; Hiby, L.
Series :	Irish Wildlife Manual No. 34
Year :	2012
Title :	Slyne Head Islands SAC (site code 000328) Conservation objectives supporting document - Marine habitats and species V1
Author :	NPWS
Series :	Conservation objectives supporting document
Year :	2024
Title :	Slyne Head Islands SAC (site code 000328) Conservation objectives supporting document - Bottlenose Dolphin V1
Author :	NPWS
Series :	Conservation objectives supporting document

Other References

Year :	1983
Title :	The grey seal (<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>) in Ireland
Author :	Summers, C.F.
Series :	Unpublished Report to the Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Wildlife
Year :	2005
Title :	Grey seal population status in the Slyne Head SAC/SPA and Hen Island Co. Galway, as determined from breeding ground surveys in 2004
Author :	O Cadhla, O.; Strong, D.; O'Donnell, G.
Series :	Unpublished Report to NPWS
Year :	2006
Title :	Exploratory surveys for grey seals on islands off northwest Galway and southwest Mayo, 2004-05
Author :	O Cadhla, O.; Strong, D.; O'Donnell, G.
Series :	Unpublished Report to NPWS
Year :	2011
Title :	Reef Investigations in Slyne Head Islands cSAC (Site Code: IE000328) Co. Galway
Author :	Aquafact
Series :	Unpublished Report to NPWS & MI

Spatial data sources

Year :	Interpolated 2012
Title :	Subtidal reef survey 2010
GIS Operations :	Polygon feature classes from marine community types base data sub-divided based on interpolation of marine survey data. Expert opinion used as necessary to resolve any issues arising
Used For :	Marine community types, 1170 (maps 3 and 4)
Year :	2005
Title :	OSi Discovery series vector data
GIS Operations :	High water mark (HWM) and low water mark (LWM) polyline feature classes converted into polygon feature classes and combined; EU Annex I Saltmarsh and Coastal data erased out if present
Used For :	Marine community types base data (map 4)
Year :	2005
Title :	OSi Discovery series vector data
GIS Operations :	High Water Mark (HWM) polyline feature class converted into polygon feature class; clipped to SAC boundary. Expert opinion used as necessary to resolve any issues arising
Used For :	1364 (map 5)
Year :	2012
Title :	NPWS rare and threatened species database
GIS Operations :	Dataset created from spatial references in database records. Expert opinion used as necessary to resolve any issues arising
Used For :	1364 (map 5)

1170 Reefs

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Reefs in Slyne Head Islands SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

Attribute	Measure	Target	Notes
Distribution	Occurrence	The distribution of reefs is stable or increasing, subject to natural processes. See map 3	Distribution was established from 2010 subtidal reef survey (Aquafact, 2011) and 2012 field observations
Habitat area	Hectares	The permanent area is stable, subject to natural processes. See map 3	Habitat area was estimated as 1418ha from 2010 subtidal reef survey (Aquafact, 2011) and 2012 field observations
Community structure	Biological composition	Conserve the following community types in a natural condition: Exposed intertidal reef community complex; <i>Laminaria</i> -dominated community; and Exposed subtidal reef with echinoderms and encrusting algae community. See map 4	Based on 2010 subtidal reef survey (Aquafact, 2011) and 2012 field observations

Conservation Objectives for : Slyne Head Islands SAC [000328]

1349 Common Bottlenose Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus*

To maintain the Favourable conservation condition of Bottlenose Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) in Slyne Head Islands SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

Attribute	Measure	Target	Notes
Access to suitable habitat	Number of artificial barriers	Species range within the site should not be restricted by artificial barriers to site use. See map 1	See the Slyne Head Islands SAC conservation objectives supporting document - Bottlenose Dolphin for further details (NPWS, 2024)
Disturbance	Level of impact	Human activities should occur at levels that do not adversely affect the Bottlenose Dolphin population at the site	See the Slyne Head Islands SAC conservation objectives supporting document - Bottlenose Dolphin for further details (NPWS, 2024)

Conservation Objectives for : Slyne Head Islands SAC [000328]

1364 Grey Seal *Halichoerus grypus*

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Grey Seal in Slyne Head Islands SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

Attribute	Measure	Target	Notes
Access to suitable habitat	Number of artificial barriers	Species range within the site should not be restricted by artificial barriers to site use. See map 5	See marine supporting document for further details
Breeding behaviour	Breeding sites	Conserve the breeding sites in a natural condition. See map 5	Attribute and target based on background knowledge of Irish breeding populations, review of data from Summers (1983), Lyons (2004), Ó Cadhla et al. (2005), a comprehensive breeding survey in 2005 (Ó Cadhla et al., 2008) and unpublished National Parks and Wildlife Service records. See marine supporting document for further details
Moulting behaviour	Moult haul-out sites	Conserve the moult haul-out sites in a natural condition. See map 5	Attribute and target based on background knowledge of Irish populations, review of data from Ó Cadhla et al. (2006), a national moult survey (Ó Cadhla and Strong, 2007) and unpublished National Parks and Wildlife Service records. See marine supporting document for further details
Resting behaviour	Resting haul-out sites	Conserve the resting haul-out sites in a natural condition. See map 5	Attribute and target based on review of data from Lyons (2004), Cronin et al. (2004), Ó Cadhla et al. (2005) and unpublished National Parks and Wildlife Service records. See marine supporting document for further details
Disturbance	Level of impact	Human activities should occur at levels that do not adversely affect the grey seal population at the site	See marine supporting document for further details









