

National Parks and Wildlife Service

Conservation Objectives Series

Bellacragher Saltmarsh SAC 002005



An Roinn Ealaíon, Oidhreachta,
Gnóthaí Réigiúnacha, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta

Department of Arts, Heritage,
Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs



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Citation:

**NPWS (2016) Conservation Objectives: Bellacragher Saltmarsh SAC 002005.
Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage,
Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.**

**Series Editor: Rebecca Jeffrey
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*

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|--------|--|
| 002005 | Bellacragher Saltmarsh SAC |
| <hr/> | |
| 1330 | Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) |
| 1410 | Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) |

Supporting documents, relevant reports & publications

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

NPWS Documents

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Year : | 2007 |
| Title : | Saltmarsh Monitoring Project 2006 |
| Author : | McCorry, M. |
| Series : | Unpublished report to NPWS |
| Year : | 2009 |
| Title : | Saltmarsh monitoring project 2007-2008 |
| Author : | McCorry, M.; Ryle, T. |
| Series : | Unpublished report to NPWS |
| Year : | 2016 |
| Title : | Bellacragher Saltmarsh SAC (site code: 2005) Conservation objectives supporting document-coastal habitats V1 |
| Author : | NPWS |
| Series : | Conservation objectives supporting document |

Spatial data sources

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Year : | Revision 2010 |
| Title : | Saltmarsh Monitoring Project 2007-2008. Version 1 |
| GIS Operations : | QIs selected; clipped to SAC boundary. Expert opinion used as necessary to resolve any issues arising |
| Used For : | 1330, 1410 (map 2) |

Conservation Objectives for : Bellacragher Saltmarsh SAC [002005]

1330 Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*)

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*) in Bellacragher Saltmarsh SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

| Attribute | Measure | Target | Notes |
|---|---|--|---|
| Habitat area | Hectares | Area stable or increasing, subject to natural processes, including erosion and succession. For the sub-site mapped: Bellacragher Bay - 0.80ha. See map 2 | Based on data from the Saltmarsh Monitoring Project (SMP) (McCorry, 2007; McCorry and Ryle, 2009). The sub-site Bellacragher Bay (site ID: SMP0021) that supports Atlantic salt meadows (ASM) was mapped to give a total estimated area of 0.80ha within Bellacragher Saltmarsh SAC. NB further unsurveyed areas may be present within the SAC. See the Bellacragher Saltmarsh SAC conservation objectives supporting document for coastal habitats for further details |
| Habitat distribution | Occurrence | No decline or change in habitat distribution, subject to natural processes. See map 2 for known distribution | Based on data from McCorry (2007) and McCorry and Ryle (2009). NB further unsurveyed areas may be present within the SAC. See the coastal habitats supporting document for further details |
| Physical structure: sediment supply | Presence/absence of physical barriers | Maintain natural circulation of sediments and organic matter, without any physical obstructions | Based on data from McCorry (2007) and McCorry and Ryle (2009). The saltmarsh occurs mostly on a peat substrate, though some patches occur on the stony shoreline. Within the SAC it mainly occurs as a thin band of vegetation generally between 3-6m wide on a thin band of mud/peat generally overlaying rocky/shingle deposits. See the coastal habitats supporting document for further details |
| Physical structure: creeks and pans | Occurrence | Maintain creek and pan structure, subject to natural processes, including erosion and succession | Based on data from McCorry (2007) and McCorry and Ryle (2009). The ASM structure is poorly developed, which is typical of these fringe marshes and no creek or pans are present. See the coastal habitats supporting document for further details |
| Physical structure: flooding regime | Hectares flooded; frequency | Maintain natural tidal regime | Based on data from McCorry (2007) and McCorry and Ryle (2009). See the coastal habitats supporting document for further details |
| Vegetation structure: zonation | Occurrence | Maintain the range of coastal habitats including transitional zones, subject to natural processes including erosion and succession | Based on data from McCorry (2007) and McCorry and Ryle (2009). The saltmarsh vegetation that occurs on peat generally transitions to blanket bog, wet heath, wet grassland, dry grassland, bracken (<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>) scrub and mosaics of these habitats. The seaward edge of the saltmarsh usually borders intertidal mud or rocky shoreline. See the coastal habitats supporting document for further details |
| Vegetation structure: vegetation height | Centimetres | Maintain structural variation within sward | Based on data from McCorry (2007) and McCorry and Ryle (2009). The saltmarsh is mainly grazed by sheep and some areas are noticeably close-cropped. See the coastal habitats supporting document for further details |
| Vegetation structure: vegetation cover | Percentage cover at a representative number of monitoring stops | Maintain more than 90% of the area outside of creeks vegetated | Based on data from McCorry (2007) and McCorry and Ryle (2009). There are signs of erosion around the edge of the shoreline, some of which is caused by overgrazing by sheep with bare ground (<10%) significant in places. See the coastal habitats supporting document for further details |

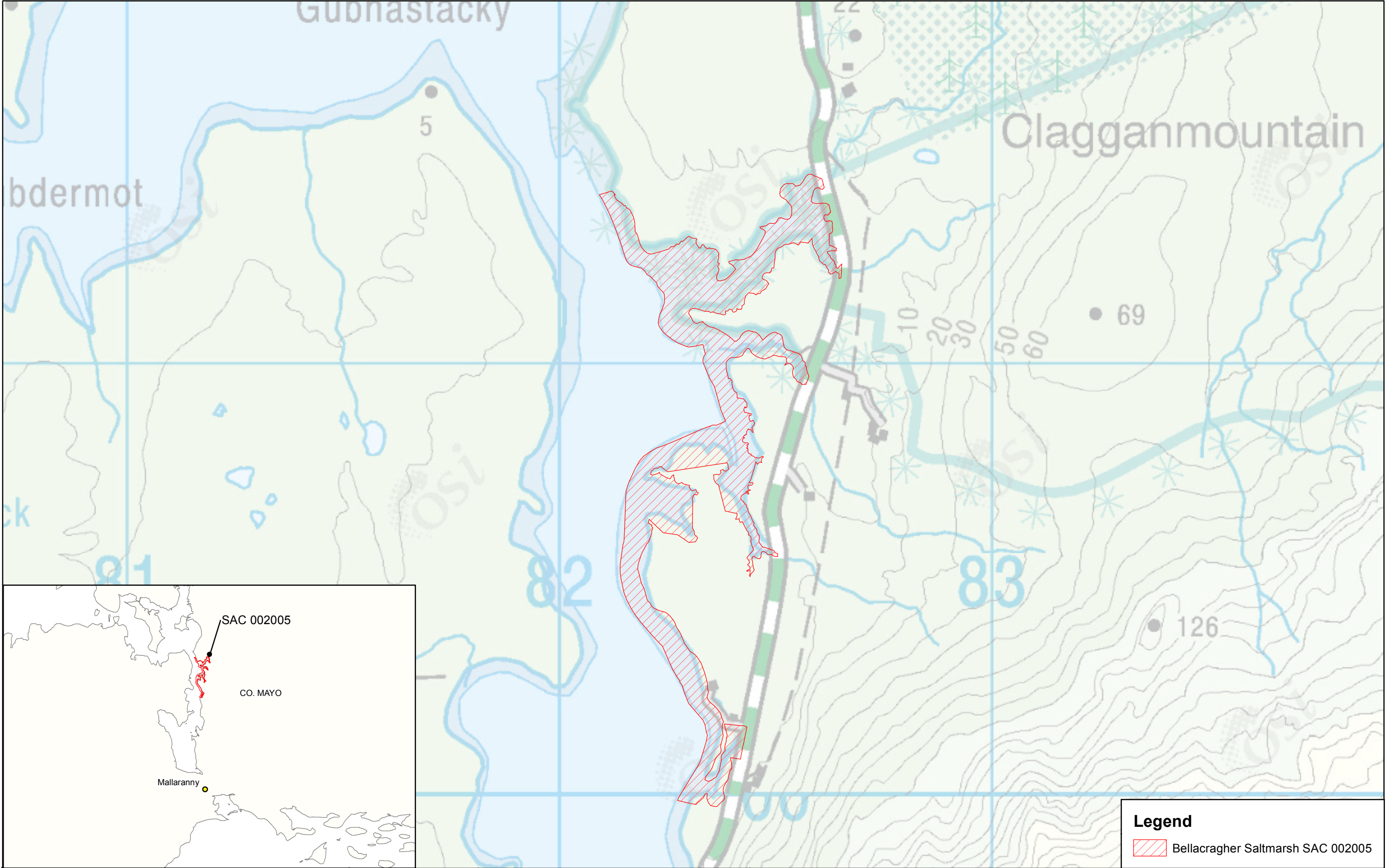
| | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| Vegetation composition: typical species and sub-communities | Percentage cover at a representative number of monitoring stops | Maintain range of sub-communities with typical species listed in McCorry and Ryle (2009) | Based on data from McCorry (2007) and McCorry and Ryle (2009). The species typical of ASM are present including saltmarsh rush (<i>Juncus gerardii</i>), common saltmarsh-grass (<i>Puccinellia maritima</i>), red fescue (<i>Festuca rubra</i>), buck's-horn plantain (<i>Plantago coronopus</i>), sea plantain (<i>P. maritima</i>) and thrift (<i>Armeria maritima</i>). A feature of the marsh is the presence of 'turf fucoids', a term given to various species of brown algae which occur in miniature forms on saltmarshes, especially in western Ireland. See the coastal habitats supporting document for further details |
| Vegetation composition: negative indicator species - <i>Spartina anglica</i> | Hectares | There is no record of common cordgrass (<i>Spartina anglica</i>) in the SAC and its establishment should be prevented | Based on data from McCorry (2007) and McCorry and Ryle (2009). Common cordgrass (<i>Spartina anglica</i>) was not recorded in Bellacragher Saltmarsh SAC. See the coastal habitats supporting document for further details |

Conservation Objectives for : Bellacragher Saltmarsh SAC [002005]

1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (*Juncetalia maritimi*)

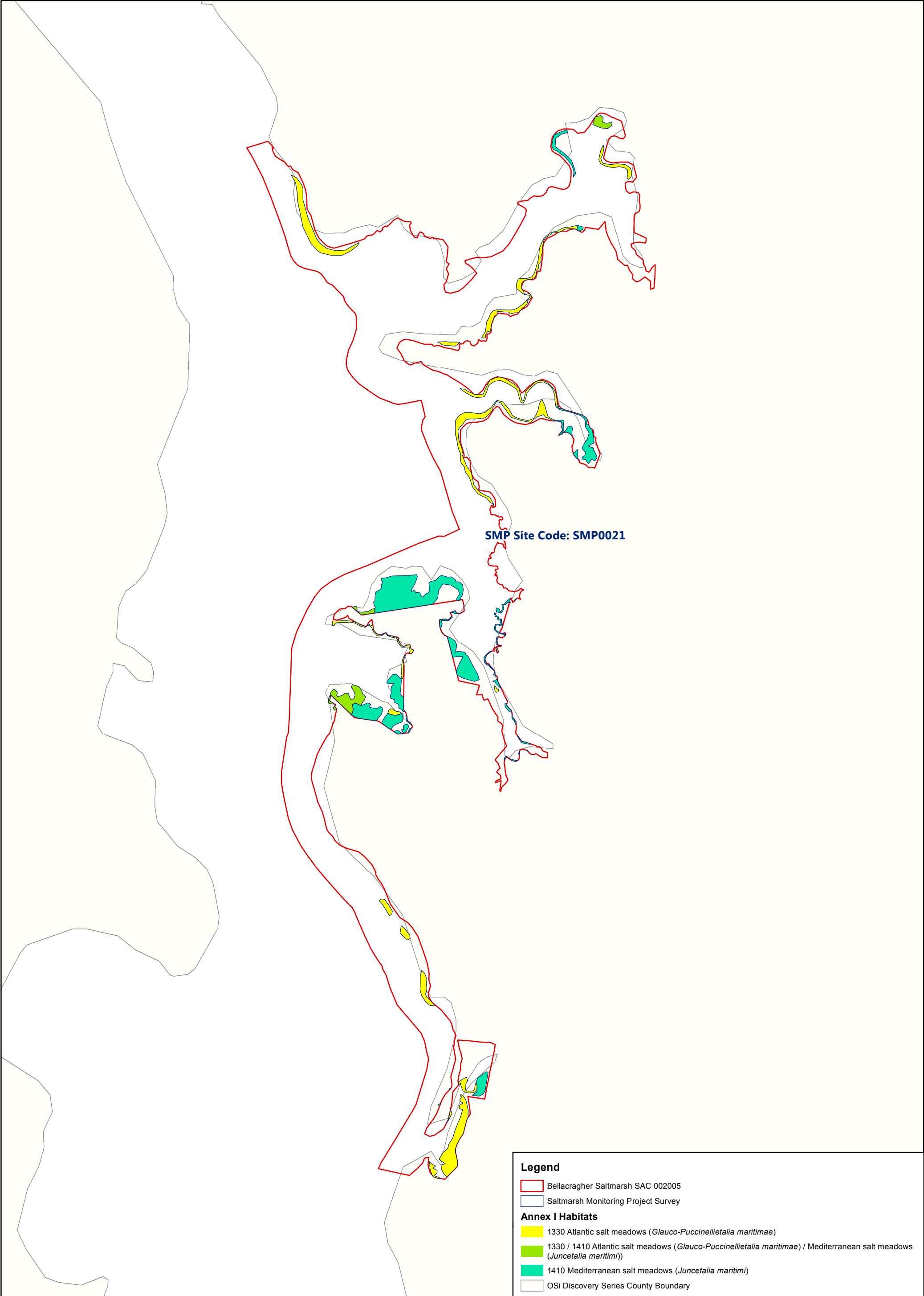
To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Mediterranean salt meadows (*Juncetalia maritimi*) in Bellacragher Saltmarsh SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

| Attribute | Measure | Target | Notes |
|--|---|--|---|
| Habitat area | Hectares | Area stable or increasing, subject to natural processes, including erosion and succession. For the sub-site mapped: Bellacragher Bay - 0.88ha. See map 2 | Based on data from the Saltmarsh Monitoring Project (SMP) (McCorry, 2007; McCorry and Ryle, 2009). The sub-site Bellacragher Bay (site ID: SMP0021) that supports Mediterranean salt meadows (MSM) was mapped to give a total estimated area of 0.88ha within Bellacragher Saltmarsh SAC. NB further unsurveyed areas may be present within the SAC. See the Bellacragher Saltmarsh SAC conservation objective supporting document for coastal habitats for further details |
| Habitat distribution | Occurrence | No decline or change in habitat distribution, subject to natural processes. See map 2 for known distribution | Based on data from McCorry (2007) and McCorry and Ryle (2009). NB further unsurveyed areas may be present within the SAC. See the coastal habitats supporting document for further details |
| Physical structure: sediment supply | Presence/absence of physical barriers | Maintain natural circulation of sediments and organic matter, without any physical obstructions | Based on data from McCorry (2007) and McCorry and Ryle (2009). See the coastal habitats supporting document for further details |
| Physical structure: creeks and pans | Occurrence | Maintain creek and pan structure, subject to natural processes, including erosion and succession | Based on data from McCorry (2007) and McCorry and Ryle (2009). See the coastal habitats supporting document for further details |
| Physical structure: flooding regime | Hectares flooded; frequency | Maintain natural tidal regime | Based on data from McCorry (2007) and McCorry and Ryle (2009). MSM is found high up in the saltmarsh but requires occasional tidal inundation. See the coastal habitats supporting document for further details |
| Vegetation structure: zonation | Occurrence | Maintain the range of coastal habitats including transitional zones, subject to natural processes including erosion and succession | Based on data from McCorry (2007) and McCorry and Ryle (2009). Patches of sea rush (<i>Juncus maritimus</i>) occur in rocky and muddy areas in narrow bands at the foot of peat cliff faces and may form mosaics with ASM in places. There are also natural transitions from MSM to wet and dry grassland, blanket bog and wet heath. See the coastal habitats supporting document for further details |
| Vegetation structure: vegetation height | Centimetres | Maintain structural variation in the sward | Based on data from McCorry (2007) and McCorry and Ryle (2009). MSM generally is not significantly overgrazed in the SAC. See the coastal habitats supporting document for further details |
| Vegetation structure: vegetation cover | Percentage cover at a representative number of monitoring stops | Maintain more than 90% of the area outside of creeks vegetated | Based on data from McCorry (2007) and McCorry and Ryle (2009). Sheep grazing is causing some localised damage to MSM in the SAC although the area affected is generally quite small (<5%). See the coastal habitats supporting document for further details |
| Vegetation composition: typical species and sub-communities | Percentage cover at a representative number of monitoring stops | Maintain range of sub-communities with typical species listed in McCorry and Ryle (2009) | Based on data from McCorry (2007) and McCorry and Ryle (2009). MSM habitat is dominated by dense sea rush (<i>Juncus maritimus</i>) which forms some of the largest areas of saltmarsh vegetation. See the coastal habitats supporting document for further details |
| Vegetation composition: negative indicator species - <i>Spartina anglica</i> | Hectares | There is no record of common cordgrass (<i>Spartina anglica</i>) in the SAC and its establishment should be prevented | Based on data from McCorry (2007) and McCorry and Ryle (2009). Common cordgrass (<i>Spartina anglica</i>) was not recorded in Bellacragher Saltmarsh SAC. See the coastal habitats supporting document for further details |



Legend

 Bellacragher Saltmarsh SAC 002005



Legend

Bellacragher Saltmarsh SAC 002005

Saltmarsh Monitoring Project Survey

Annex I Habitats

1330 Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*)

1330 / 1410 Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*) / Mediterranean salt meadows (*Juncetalia maritimi*)

1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (*Juncetalia maritimi*)

OSi Discovery Series County Boundary