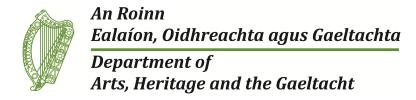
# **National Parks and Wildlife Service**

# **Conservation Objectives Series**

## Blasket Islands SAC 002172





# National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht,

7 Ely Place, Dublin 2, Ireland.

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### 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

002172	Blasket Islands SAC
1170	Reefs
1230	Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts
1351	Harbour porpoise Phocoena phocoena
1364	Grey seal Halichoerus grypus
4030	European dry heaths
8330	Submerged or partially submerged sea caves

Please note that this SAC overlaps with Blasket Islands SPA (004008) and Dingle Peninsula SPA (004153). See map 2. The conservation objectives for this site should be used in conjunction with those for the overlapping sites as appropriate.

### Supporting documents, relevant reports & publications

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

### **NPWS Documents**

**Year:** 1988

Title: The 1988 Blasket Islands expedition

Author: Brazier, H.; Merne, O.

Series: Unpublished report by Irish Wildbird Conservancy/Wildlife Service

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 (Phoca

vitulina) and grey seals (Halichoerus grypus), 1978 to 2003

Author: Lyons, D.O.

Series: Irish Wildlife Manual No. 13

Year: 2004

Title: Aerial surveying of grey seal breeding colonies on the Blasket Islands, Co. Kerry, the Inishkea

Group, Co. Mayo and the Donegal coast during the 2003 breeding season

Author: Cronin, M.; Ó Cadhla, O.

Series: Unpublished report to NPWS

Year: 2007

Title: Abundance estimate and acoustic monitoring of harbour porpoise Phocoena phocoena in the

Blasket Islands candidate Special Area of Conservation

Author: Berrow, S.D.; O'Brien, J.; O'Connor, I.; McGrath, D.

Series: Unpublished report to NPWS

**Year**: 2007

Title: Grey seal moult population survey in the Republic of Ireland, 2007

Author: O 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**: 2011

Title: National survey and assessment of the conservation status of Irish sea cliffs

Author: Barron, S.J.; Delaney, A.; Perrin, P.M.; Martin, J.; O'Neill, F.

Series: Irish Wildlife Manual No. 53

Year: 2013

**Title:** Monitoring of the breeding population of grey seals in Ireland, 2009 - 2012

Author: Ó Cadhla, O.; Keena, T.; Strong, D.; Duck, C.; Hiby, L.

Series: Irish Wildlife Manual No. 74

Year: 2013

Title: An aerial survey of harbour seals in Ireland: part 2: Galway Bay to Carlingford Lough. August-

September 2012.

Author: Duck, C.; Morris, C.

Series: Unpublished report to NPWS

07 Apr 2014 Version 1 Page 5 of 14

Year: 2014

Title: Blasket Islands SAC (site code: 2172) Conservation objectives supporting document- coastal

habitats V1

Author: NPWS

Series: Conservation objectives supporting document

Year: 2014

Title: Blaskets Islands SAC (site code: 2172) Conservation objectives supporting document-

European dry heaths V1

Author: NPWS

Series: Conservation objectives supporting document

Year: 2014

Title: Blasket Islands SAC (site code: 2172) Conservation objectives supporting document- marine

habitats and species V1

Author: NPWS

Series: Conservation objectives supporting document

Year: in prep

Title: Guidelines for a national survey and conservation assessment of upland vegetation and

habitats in Ireland. Version 2

Author: Perrin, P.M.; Barron, S.J., Roche, J.R.; O'Hanrahan, B.

Series: Irish Wildlife Manual No. 79

### **Other References**

**Year**: 1997

Title: The BioMar biotope viewer: a guide to marine habitats, fauna and flora in Britain and Ireland

Author: Picton, B.E.; Costello, M.J.

Series: Environmental Science Unit, Trinity College Dublin

Year: 1998

Title: Population biology of grey seals (Halichoerus grypus, Fabricius 1791) in western Ireland

Author: Kiely, O.R.M.

Series: Unpublished PhD thesis, National University of Ireland, University College Cork

**Year**: 1998

Title: Grey seal (Halichoerus grypus) pup production at the Inishkea island group, Co. Mayo and the

Blasket Islands, Co. Kerry

Author: Kiely, O.; Myers, A.A.

Series: Biology and Environment: Proc. Royal Ir. Acad. 98B (2): 113-122

Year: 2007

Title: Aerial surveying of grey seal breeding colonies on the Blasket Islands, Co. Kerry, the Inishkeas

group, Co. Mayo and the Donegal coast, Ireland

Author: Cronin, M.A.; Duck, C.D.; O Cadhla, O.

Series: J. Nat. Conserv. 15(2): 77-83

Year: 2011

Title: Reef investigations in Blasket Islands cSAC (site code: IE002172)

Author: Aquafact

Series: Unpublished report to the Marine Institute and NPWS

07 Apr 2014 Version 1 Page 6 of 14

### Spatial data sources

Year: Interpolated 2014

Title: 1996 BioMar Survey; 2010 subtidal reef survey

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:** 1170, marine community types (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: 2011

Title: National Survey and assessment of the conservation status of Irish sea cliffs

GIS Operations : Clipped to SAC boundary

**Used For**: 1230 (map 5)

Year: 2014

Title: Internal NPWS files

GIS Operations: Digitised using the OSi 1:5000 mapping series and orthophotography as reference datasets.

Clipped to SAC boundary. Expert opinion used as necessary to resolve any issues arising

 Used For :
 4030 (map 6)

 Year :
 Derived 2014

Title: Coast of Ireland Oblique Imagery Survey 2003

GIS Operations: Point dataset created from visual inspection of survey

**Used For:** 8330 (map 7)

Year: 2005

Title: OSi Discovery series vector data

GIS Operations: Low Water Mark (LWM) polyline feature class converted into polygon feature class; clipped to

SAC boundary. Expert opinion used as necessary to resolve any issues arising

**Used For**: 1351 (map 8)

Year: 2014

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 9)

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 9)

### **Conservation Objectives for : Blasket Islands SAC [002172]**

### 1170 Reefs

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

Attribute	Measure	Target	Notes
Habitat area	Hectares	The permanent habitat area is stable or increasing, subject to natural processes. See map 3	Habitat area estimated as 4,860ha from a 1996 BioMar survey (Picton and Costello, 1997) and a 2010 subtidal reef survey (Aquafact, 2011)
Distribution	Occurrence	The distribution of reefs remains stable, subject to natural processes. See map 3 for mapped distribution	Based on information from a 1996 BioMar survey (Picton and Costello, 1997) and a 2010 subtidal reef survey (Aquafact, 2011). See marine supporting document for further details
Community structure	Biological composition	Conserve the following community types in a natural condition: Subtidal reef with faunal turf and echinoderms community complex; <i>Laminaria</i> dominated community. See map 4	Reef mapping based on information from a 1996 BioMar survey (Picton and Costello, 1997) and a 2010 subtidal reef survey (Aquafact, 2011). See marine supporting document for further details

07 Apr 2014 Version 1 Page 8 of 14

### **Conservation Objectives for : Blasket Islands SAC [002172]**

### 1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts in Blasket Islands SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

Attribute	Measure	Target	Notes
Habitat length	Kilometres	Area stable, subject to natural processes, including erosion. For sub- sites mapped: Great Blasket - 18.41km; Clogher Head to Slea Head - 7.50km. See map 5	Based on data from the Irish Sea Cliff Survey (ISCS) (Barron et al., 2011). Cliffs are linear features and are therefore measured in kilometres. The length of each cliff was measured (in some cases the cliff was measured in sections) to give a total estimated area of 25.37km. Length of cliff within the SAC likely to be under-estimated. See coastal habitats supporting document for further details
Habitat distribution	Occurrence	No decline, or change in habitat distribution, subject to natural processes. See map 5	The ISCS only surveyed and assessed cliffs on the mainland and the Great Blasket Island. However, cliffs are thought to occur on most of the other islands in the SAC. Hard cliffs are the predominant cliff type in this SAC (Browne, 2005; Barron et al., 2011). See coastal habitats supporting document for further details
Physical structure: functionality and hydrological regime	Occurrence of artificial barriers	No alteration to natural functioning of geomorphological and hydrological processes due to artificial structures	Based on data from ISCS (Barron et al., 2011). Maintaining natural geomorphological processes including natural erosion is important for the health of a vegetated sea cliff. Hydrological processes maintain flushes and in some cases tufa formations that can be associated with sea cliffs. See coastal habitats supporting document for further details
Vegetation structure: zonation	Occurrence	Maintain range of sea cliff habitat zonations including transitional zones, subject to natural processes including erosion and succession	Based on data from Barron et al. (2011). At Great Blasket Island, splash, crevice ledge and heath zones were recorded. See coastal habitats supporting document for further details and the conservation objective for European dry heaths (4030)
Vegetation structure: vegetation height	Centimetres	Maintain structural variation within sward	Based on data from Barron et al. (2011). Some non- intensive sheep grazing was noted on Great Blasket Island by the ISCS. See 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 the Irish Sea Cliff Survey (Barron et al., 2011)	See coastal habitats supporting document for further details
Vegetation composition: negative indicator species	Percentage	Negative indicator species (including non-natives) to represent less than 5% cover	Based on data from Barron et al. (2011). The non- native species, <i>Hebe</i> sp., was recorded by the ISCS on Great Blasket Island. See coastal habitats supporting document for further details
Vegetation composition: bracken and woody species	Percentage	Cover of bracken ( <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> ) on grassland and/or heath less than 10%. Cover of woody species on grassland and/or heath less than 20%	Based on data from Barron et al. (2011). Bracken ( <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> ) was recorded from the cliffs on Great Blasket Island. See coastal habitats supporting document for further details

07 Apr 2014 Version 1 Page 9 of 14

### **Conservation Objectives for : Blasket Islands SAC [002172]**

### 4030 European dry heaths

# To maintain the favourable conservation condition of European dry heaths in Blasket Islands 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. See map 6	Total habitat area is estimated as 306ha based on digitisation of map from Brazier and Merne (1988) and unpublished NPWS files. No recent field survey has occurred. Great Blasket and Inistooskert have the largest proportion of dry heath with limited areas on Inishvickillane and Inishnabro. Dry heath occurs in mosaic with wet heath and blanket bog on Great Blasket and Inishvickillane. See also the conservation objective for Vegetated sea cliffs (1230). See dry heaths supporting document for further details
Habitat distribution	Occurrence	No decline from current habitat distribution, subject to natural processes. See map 6	Dry heath is recorded on Great Blasket, Inishtooskert, Inishvickillane and Inishnabro. The heath in this SAC represents an extremely exposed example at one on the most westerly parts of its Irish and European range. See dry heaths supporting document for further details
Ecosystem function: soil nutrient status	Soil pH and appropriate nutrient levels at a representative number of monitoring stops	Maintain soil nutrient status within natural range	See dry heaths supporting document for further details
Vegetation structure: dwarf- shrub indicator species	Percentage cover at a representative number of monitoring stops	Cover of dwarf shrub indicator species at least 25%	Attribute and target based on Perrin et al. (in prep.). Ling heather ( <i>Calluna vulgaris</i> ) is dominant but bell heather ( <i>Erica cinerea</i> ) is also a locally important dwarf-shrub component of dry heath in this SAC. See dry heaths supporting document for further details
Vegetation structure: growth phases of ling ( <i>Calluna vulgaris</i> )	Percentage cover at a representative number of monitoring stops	Senescent proportion of ling ( <i>Calluna vulgaris</i> ) cover less than 50%. Outside boundaries of Sensitive Areas, all growth phases of ling should occur throughout, with at least 10% of cover in mature phase	Attribute and target based on Perrin et al. (in prep.). See dry heaths supporting document for further details
Vegetation structure: signs of browsing	Percentage cover at a representative number of monitoring stops	Last complete growing season's shoots of ericoids showing signs of browsing collectively less than 33%	Attribute and target based on Perrin et al. (in prep.)
Vegetation structure: native trees and shrubs	Pecentage cover	Cover of scattered native trees and shrubs less than 20%	Attribute and target based on dry heath habitat condition assessment methodology outlined in Perrin et al. (2010)
Physical structure: disturbed bare ground	Percentage cover at a representative number of monitoring stops	Cover of disturbed bare ground less than 5%	Attribute and target based on Perrin et al. (in prep.). See dry heaths supporting document for further details
Vegetation structure: burning	Occurrence in local vicinity	No signs of burning within sensitive areas	Attribute and target based on Perrin et al. (in prep.). See dry heaths supporting document for further details
Vegetation composition: positive indicator species	Percentage cover at a representative number of monitoring stops	At least two positive indicator species, as listed in Perrin et al. (in prep), with combined cover of at least 60%	Attribute and target based on Perrin et al. (in prep.). See dry heaths supporting document for further details
Vegetation composition: bryophyte and non-crustose lichen species	Number at a representative number of monitoring stops	Number of bryophyte or non-crustose lichen species present at least three, excluding <i>Campylopus</i> and <i>Polytrichum</i> mosses	Attribute and target based on Perrin et al. (in prep.)

Vegetation composition: rare/scarce heath species	Occurrence and population size	No decline in distribution or population sizes of rare, threatened or scarce species associated with the habitat	See dry heaths supporting document for further details
Vegetation composition: bracken ( <i>Pteridium</i> aquilinum)	Percentage cover in local vicinity	Cover of bracken ( <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> ) less than 10%	Attribute and target based on Perrin et al. (in prep.). See dry heaths supporting document for further details
Vegetation composition: negative indicator species	Pecentage cover at a representative number of monitoring stops	Cover of negative indicator "weed" species collectively less than 1%	Attribute and target based on Perrin et al. (in prep.). See dry heaths supporting document for further details
Vegetation composition: non-native species	Percentage cover in local vicinity	Cover of non-native species less than 1%	Attribute and target based on Perrin et al. (in prep.)
Vegetation composition: soft rush cover	Percentage cover in local vicinity	Cover of soft rush ( <i>Juncus effusus</i> ) less than 10%	Attribute and target based on Perrin et al. (in prep). Dense areas of soft rush ( <i>Juncus effusus</i> ) can indicate disturbance

### **Conservation Objectives for: Blasket Islands SAC [002172]**

8330 Submerged or partially submerged sea caves

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Submerged or partially submerged sea caves in Blasket Islands SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

Attribute	Measure	Target	Notes
Distribution	Occurrence	The distribution of sea caves occurring in the site should remain stable, subject to natural processes. See map 7 for known caves	Sea cave distribution was derived from an oblique aerial survey and therefore only detects the presence of sea caves visible intertidally in the flight path
Community structure	Biological composition	Human activities should occur at levels that do not adversely affect the ecology of sea caves at the site	See marine supporting document for further details

07 Apr 2014 Version 1 Page 12 of 14

### **Conservation Objectives for: Blasket Islands SAC [002172]**

### 1351 Harbour porpoise *Phocoena phocoena*

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Harbour Porpoise in Blasket 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 8	See marine supporting document for further details
Disturbance	Level of impact	Human activities should occur at levels that do not adversely affect the harbour porpoise community at the site	See marine supporting document for further details

07 Apr 2014 Version 1 Page 13 of 14

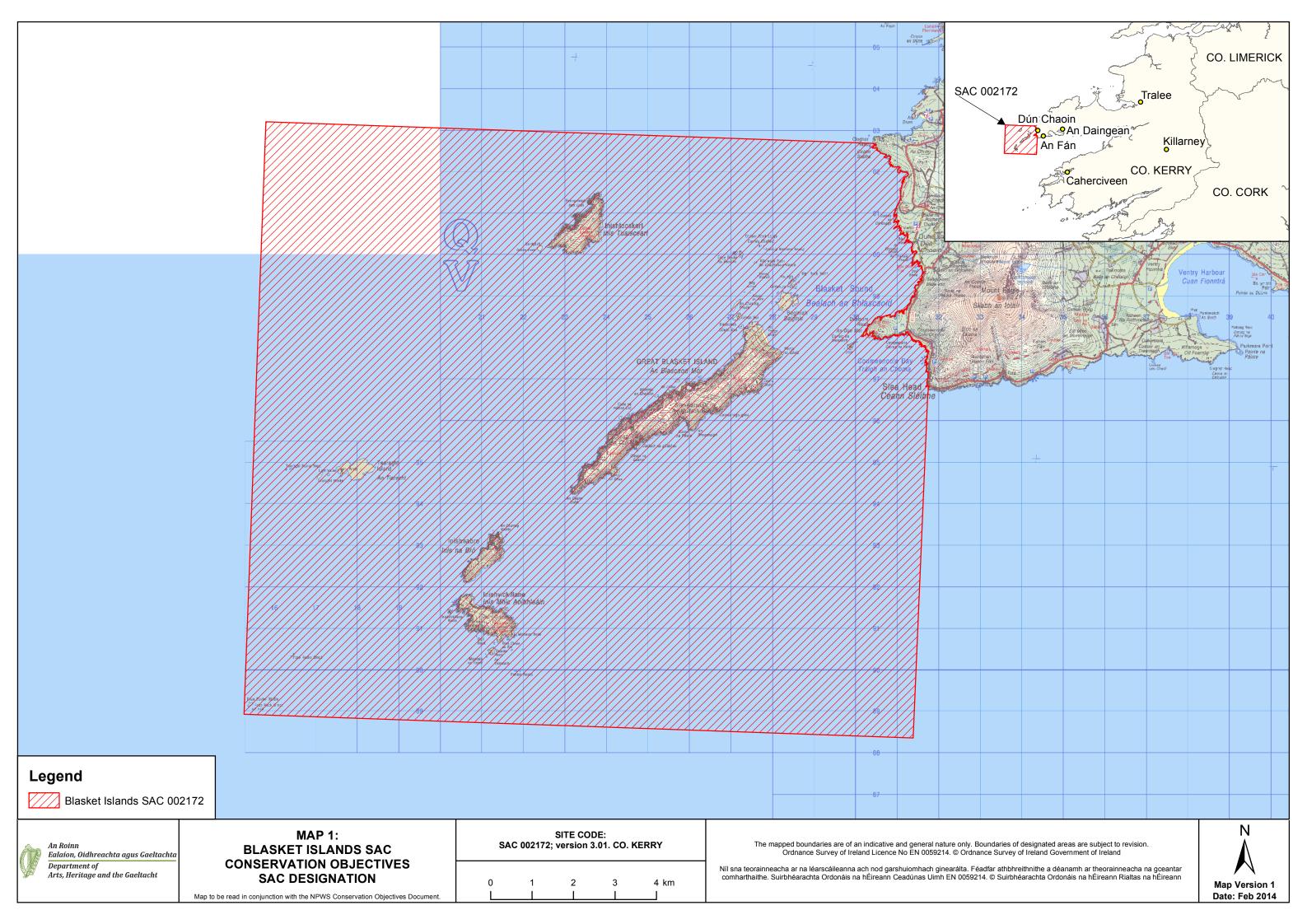
### **Conservation Objectives for: Blasket Islands SAC [002172]**

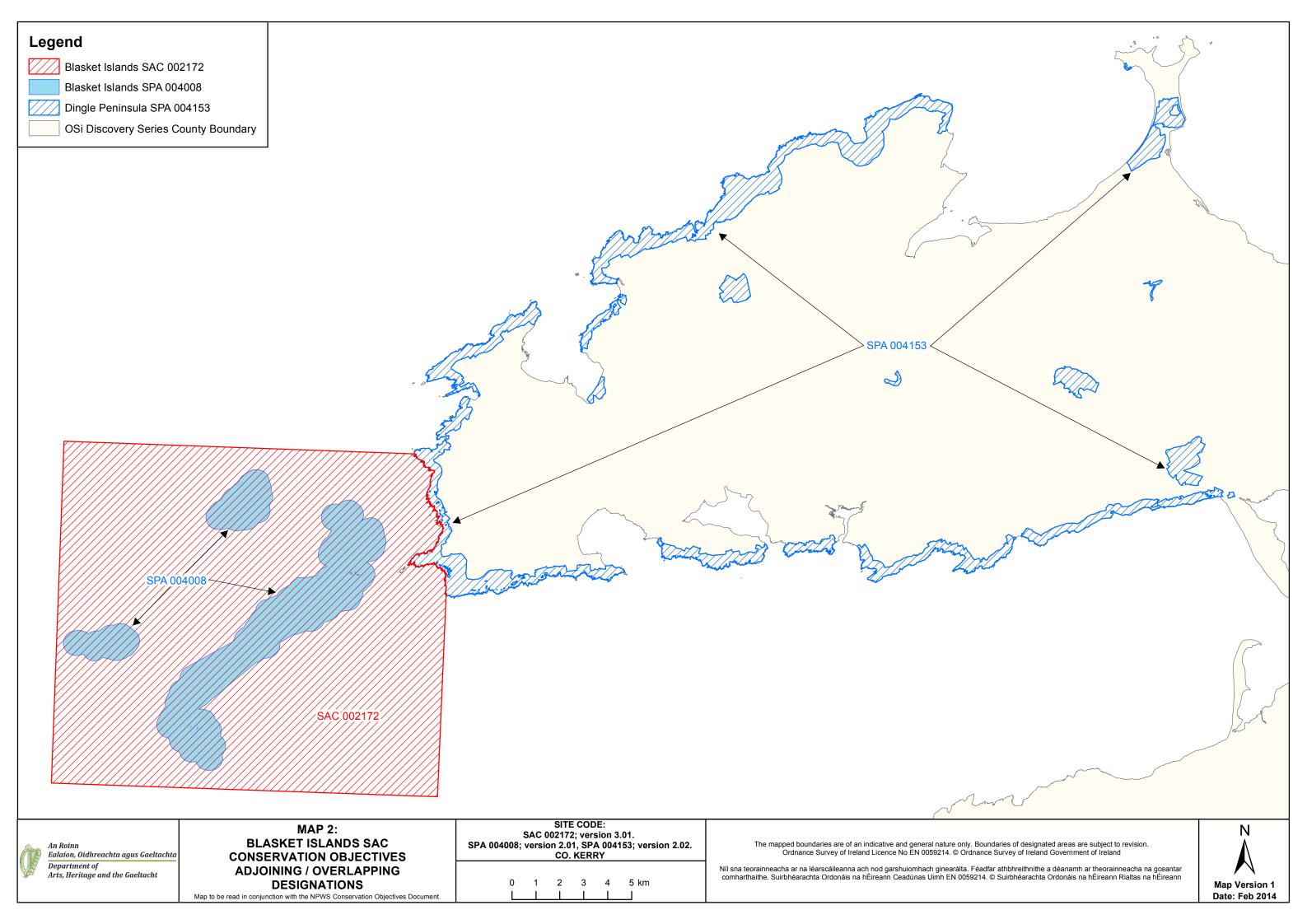
### 1364 Grey seal *Halichoerus grypus*

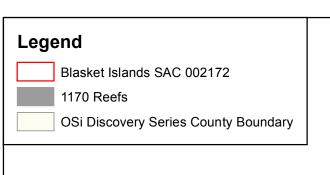
To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Grey Seal in Blasket Islands SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

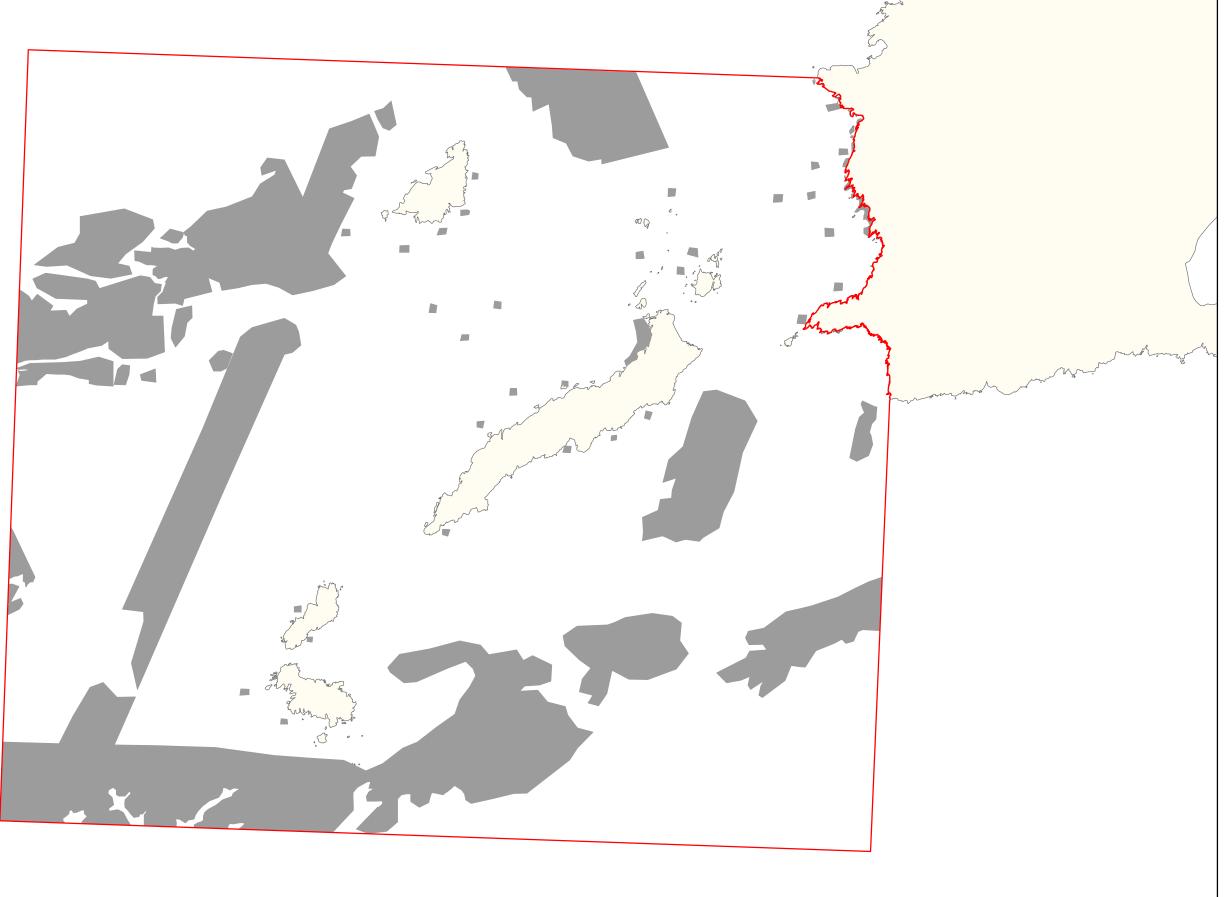
Attribute	Measure	Target	Notes
Access to suitable habitat	Number of artificial barriers	Species range within the site should not be restricted by artificial barriers to site use. See map 9	See marine supporting document for further details
Breeding behaviour	Breeding sites	Conserve the breeding sites in a natural condition. See map 9 for known sites	Attribute and target based on background knowledge of Irish breeding populations, comprehensive breeding surveys in 1996 (Kiely, 1998; Kiely and Myers, 1998), 2003 (Cronin and Ó Cadhla, 2004; Cronin et al., 2007), and 2005 (Ó Cadhla et al., 2008) and 2011 (Ó Cadhla et al., 2013) and unpublished NPWS records including those reported by Lyons (2004). 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 9 for known sites	Attribute and target based on background knowledge of Irish populations, on review of data from Kiely (1998) and Lyons (2004), a national moult survey (Ó Cadhla and Strong, 2007) and unpublished NPWS records. See marine supporting document for further details
Resting behaviour	Resting haul-out sites	Maintain the resting haul- out sites in a natural condition. See map 9 for known sites	Attribute and target based on review of data from Kiely (1998), Lyons (2004), Cronin et al. (2004), Ó Cadhla et al. (2008), Duck and Morris (2013) and unpublished NPWS 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

07 Apr 2014 Version 1 Page 14 of 14











MAP 3: BLASKET ISLANDS SAC CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES REEFS

Map to be read in conjunction with the NPWS Conservation Objectives Document.

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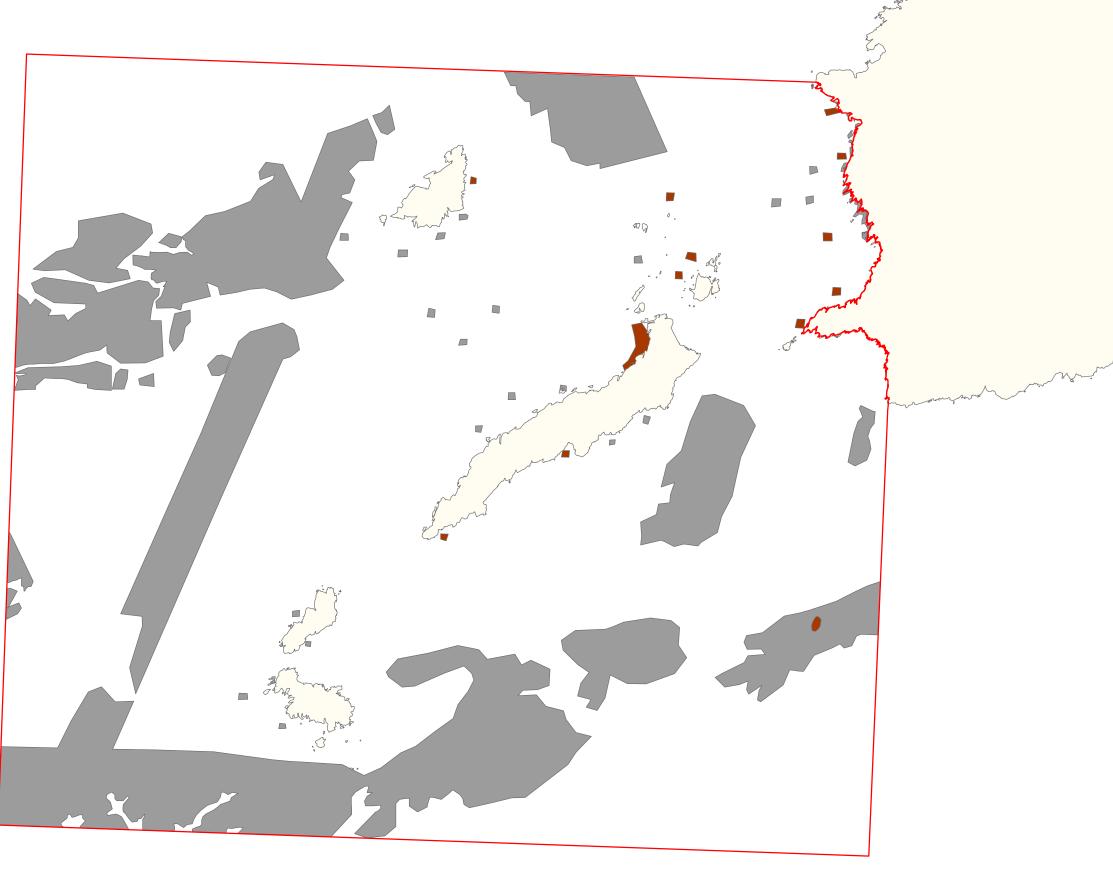
0 1 2 3 4 km L I I I The mapped boundaries are of an indicative and general nature only. Boundaries of designated areas are subject to revision.

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Níl sna teorainneacha ar na léarscáileanna ach nod garshuiomhach ginearálta. Féadfar athbhreithnithe a déanamh ar theorainneacha na gceantar comharthaithe. Suirbhéarachta Ordonáis na hÉireann Ceadúnas Uimh EN 0059214. © Suirbhéarachta Ordonáis na hÉireann Rialtas na hÉireann



# Legend Blasket Islands SAC 002172 OSi Discovery Series County Boundary Marine Community Types Laminaria-dominated community Reef with faunal turf and echinoderms community complex





MAP 4: BLASKET ISLANDS SAC CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES MARINE COMMUNITY TYPES

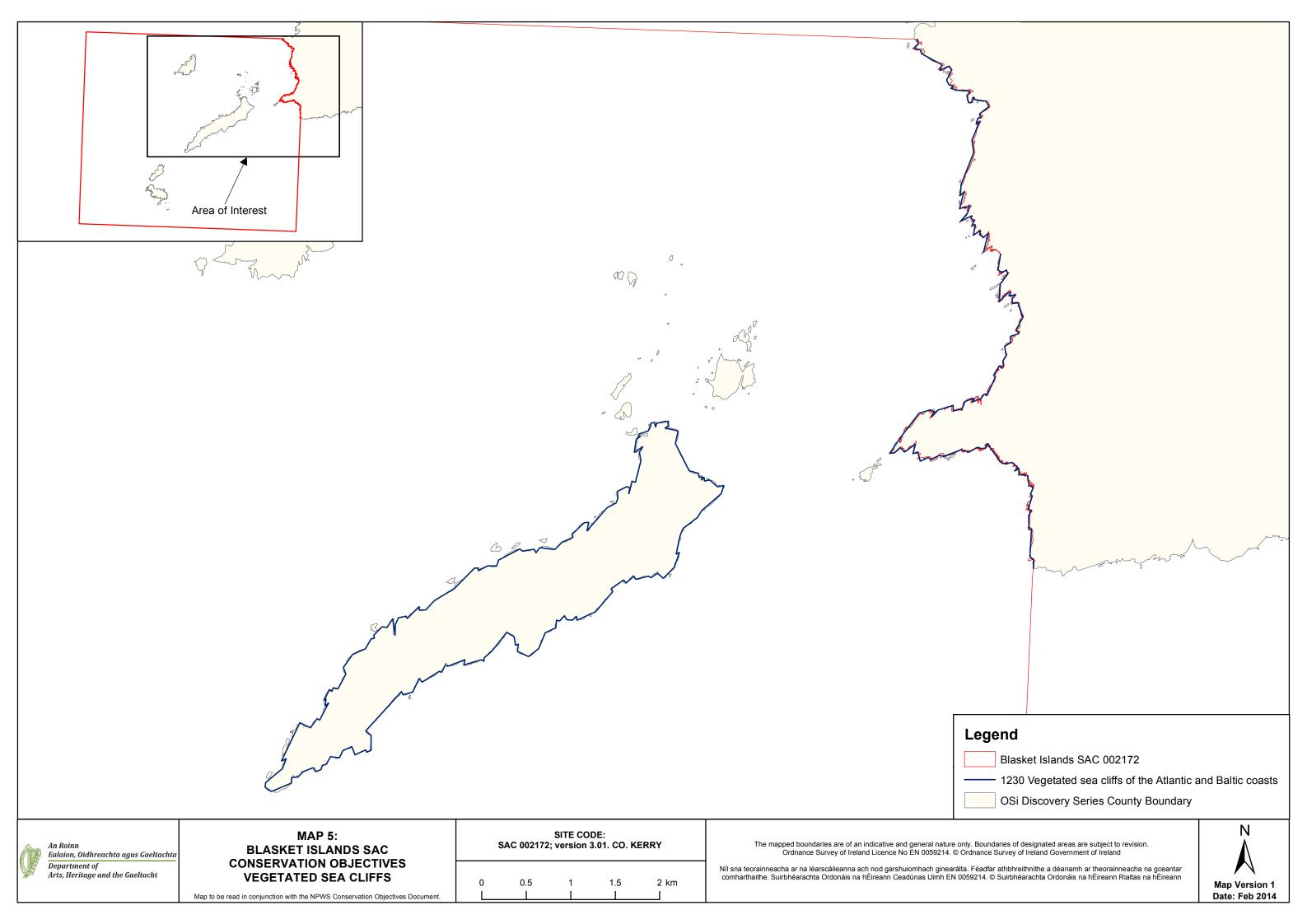
Map to be read in conjunction with the NPWS Conservation Objectives Document.

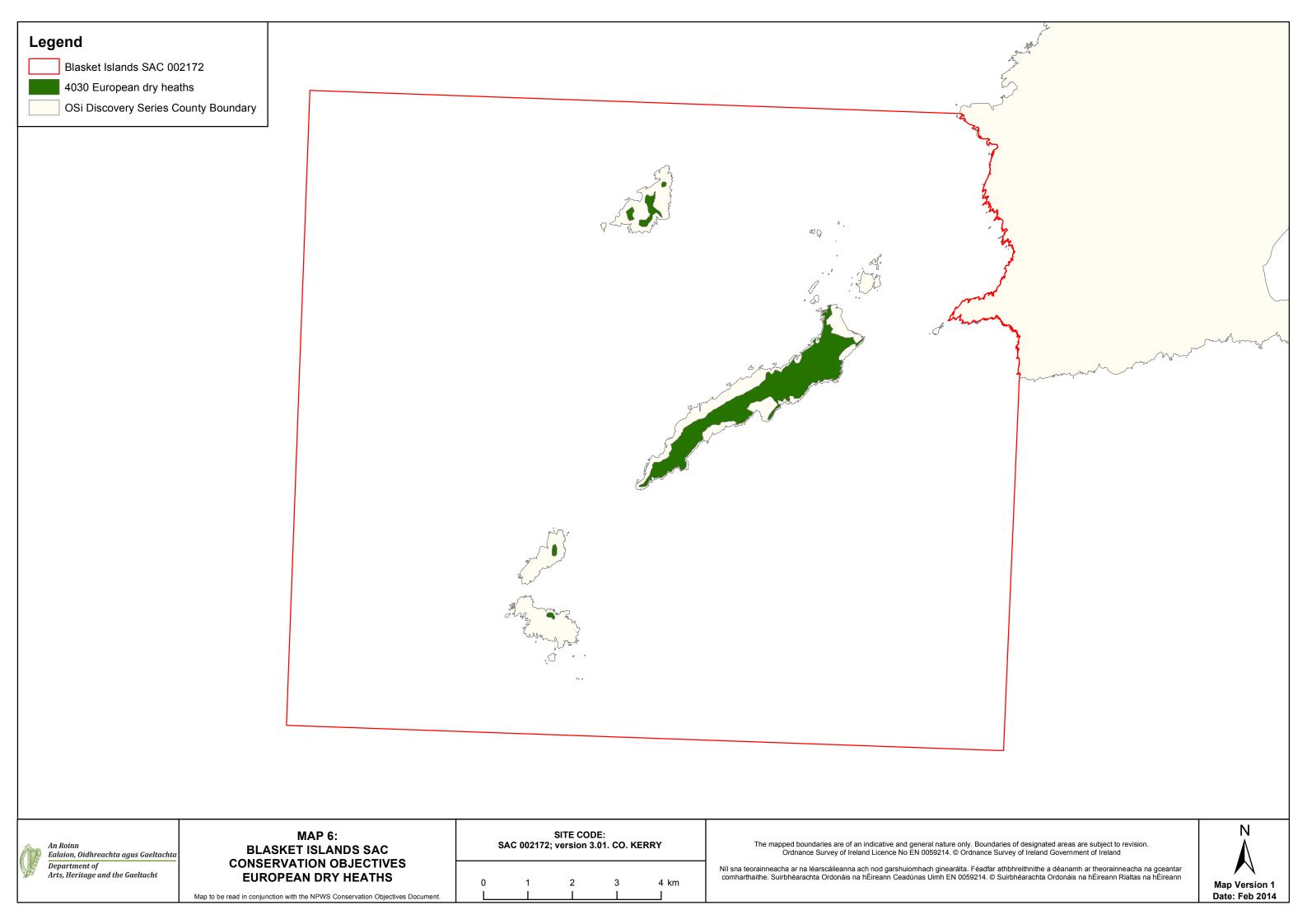
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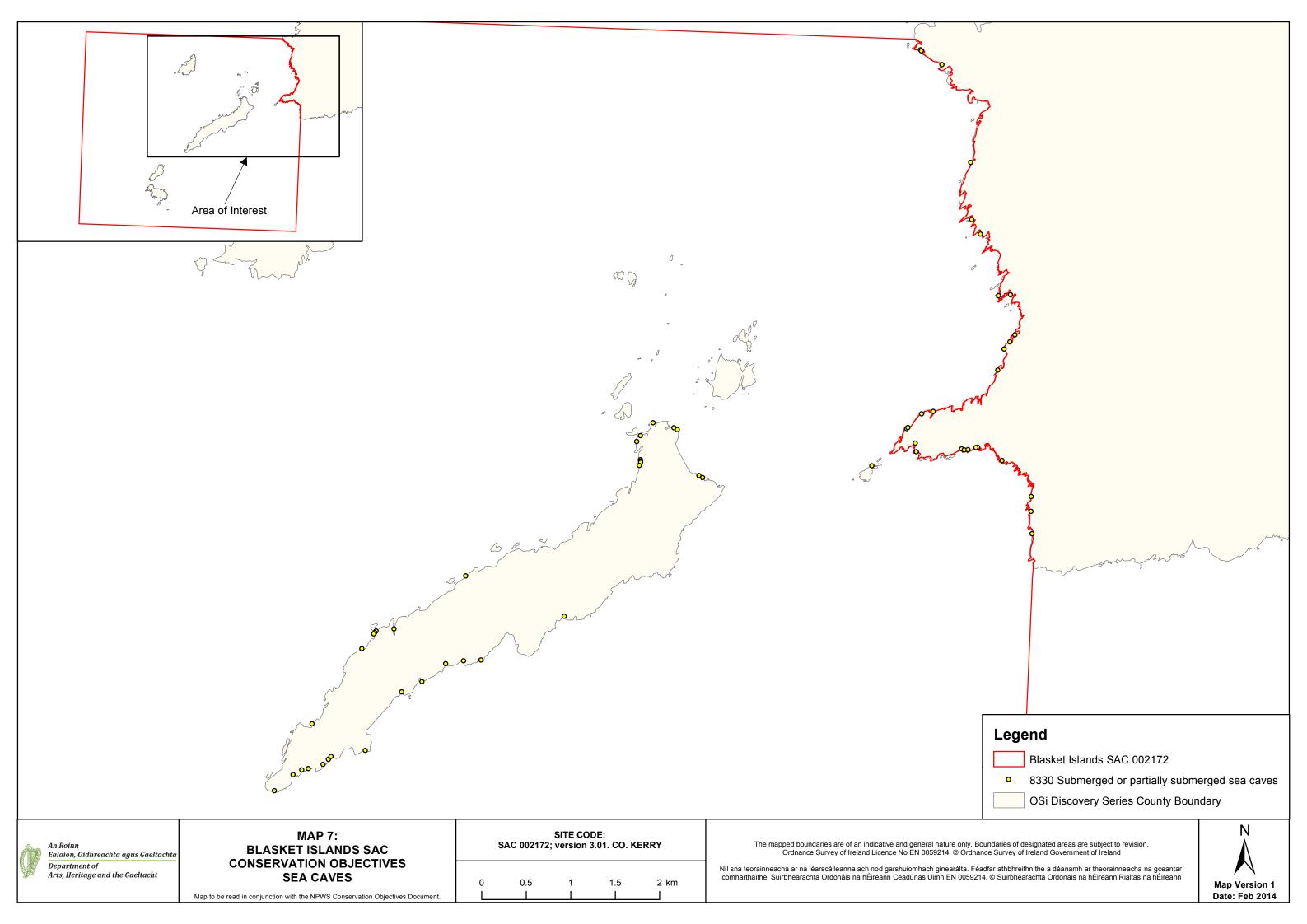
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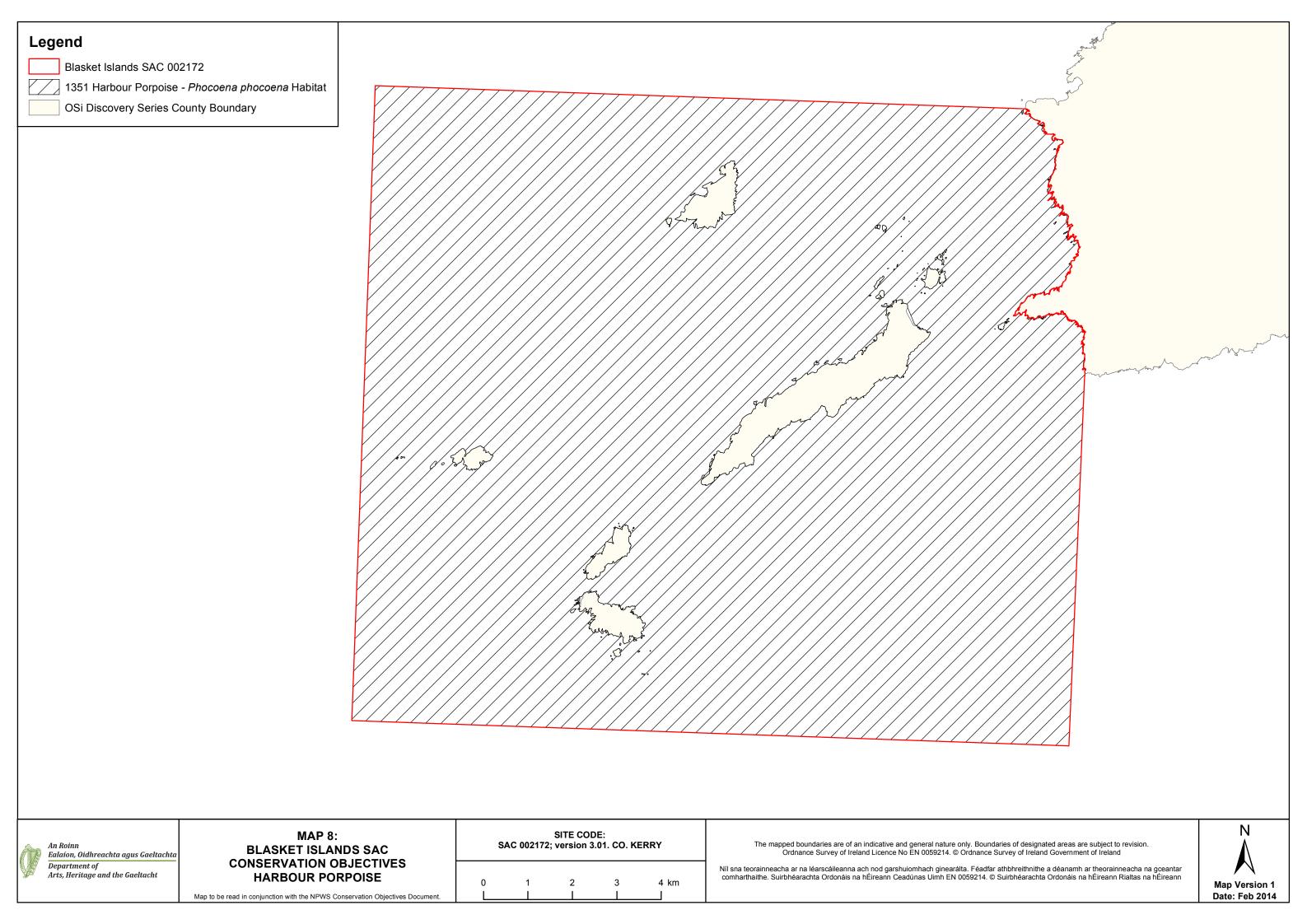
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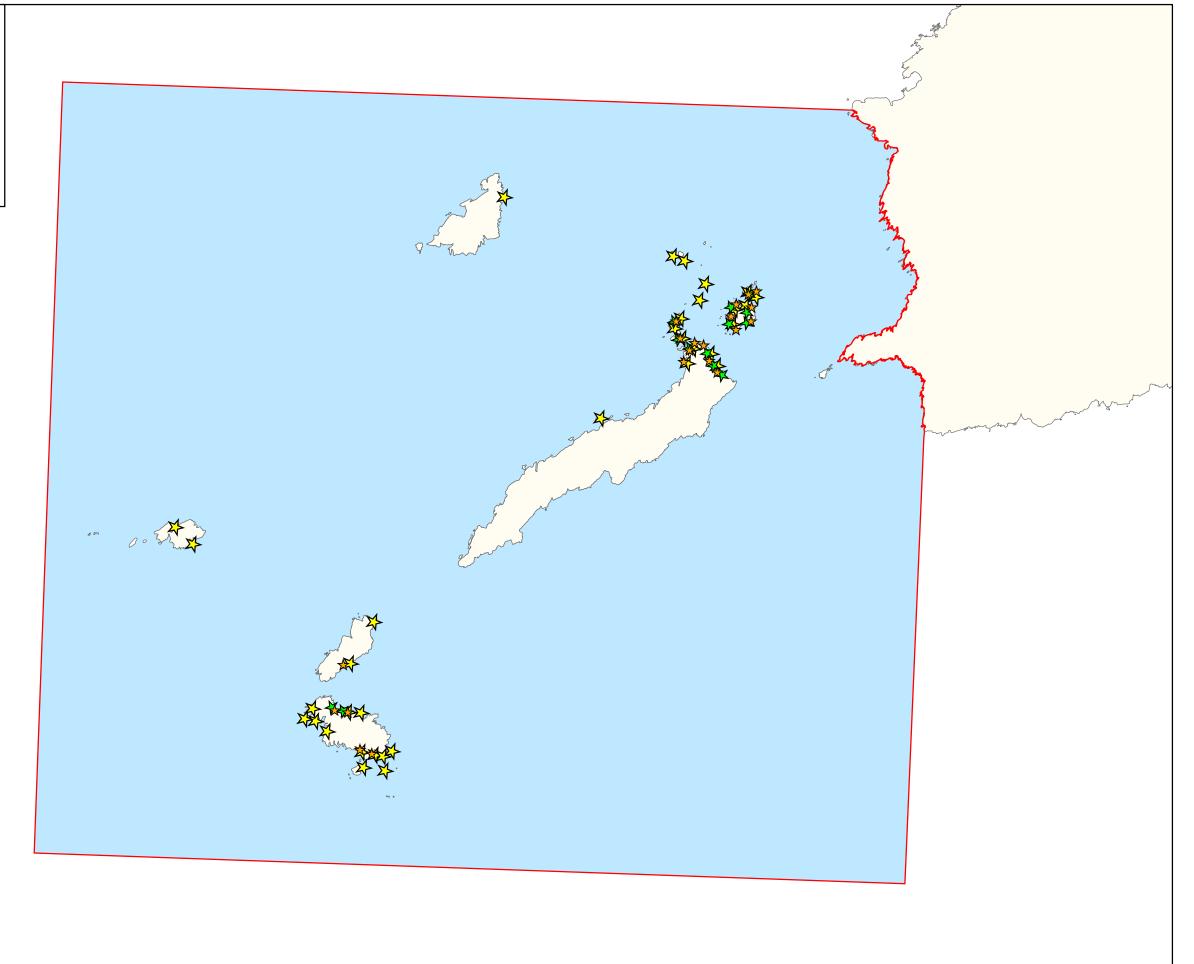








# Legend Blasket Islands SAC 002172 ★ 1364 Grey Seal - Halichoerus grypus breeding sites 1364 Grey Seal - Halichoerus grypus moulting sites 1364 Grey Seal - Halichoerus grypus resting sites 1364 Grey Seal - Halichoerus grypus habitat OSi Discovery Series County Boundary





MAP 9: BLASKET ISLANDS SAC CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES GREY SEAL

Map to be read in conjunction with the NPWS Conservation Objectives Document.

SITE CODE: SAC 002172; version 3.01. CO. KERRY

) 1 2 3 4 km I I I I I The mapped boundaries are of an indicative and general nature only. Boundaries of designated areas are subject to revision.

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