

# National Parks and Wildlife Service

## *Conservation Objectives Series*

Howth Head Coast SPA 004113



**NPWS**

An tSeirbhís Páirceanna  
Náisiúnta agus Fiadhúlra  
National Parks and Wildlife  
Service

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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*

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004113	Howth Head Coast SPA
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A188	Kittiwake <i>Rissa tridactyla</i>
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**Please note that this SPA overlaps with North-West Irish Sea SPA (004236), Howth Head SAC (000202), Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC (003000). 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](http://www.npws.ie/Publications)

### NPWS Documents

Year :	2007
Title :	Seabird Productivity at East and South coast colonies in Ireland in 2007: Site accounts
Author :	Trewby, M.; Burt E.; Newton, S.
Series :	Unpublished report to NPWS
Year :	2021
Title :	Estimated foraging ranges of the breeding seabirds of Ireland's marine special protected area network
Author :	Power, A.; McDonnell, P.; Tierney, T.D.
Series :	Published NPWS report

### Other References

Year :	1991
Title :	The status of seabirds in Britain and Ireland
Author :	Lloyd, C., Tasker, M.L. and Partridge, K.
Series :	Poyser Monographs Volume: 50
Year :	2003
Title :	Implications for seaward extensions to existing breeding seabird colony Special Protection Areas
Author :	McSorley, C.A.; Dean, B.J.; Webb, A.; Reid J.B.
Series :	JNCC Report No. 329
Year :	2004
Title :	Seabird populations of Britain and Ireland
Author :	Mitchell, P.I.; Newton, S.F.; Ratcliffe, N.; Dunn, T.E.
Series :	Poyser, London
Year :	2017
Title :	Productivity of the Black-legged Kittiwake <i>Rissa tridactyla</i> required to maintain numbers
Author :	Coulson, J.C.
Series :	Bird Study 64: 84-89
Year :	2019
Title :	Desk-based revision of seabird foraging ranges used for HRA screening
Author :	Woodward, I.; Thaxter, C.B.; Owen, E.; Cook, A.S.C.P.
Series :	BTO Research Report No. 724
Year :	2020
Title :	Black-legged Kittiwake ( <i>Rissa tridactyla</i> ), version 1.0. In Birds of the World (S. M. Billerman, Editor)
Author :	Hatch, S. A.; Robertson, G. J.; Baird, P. H.
Series :	Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY, USA
Year :	2023
Title :	Seabirds Count: a census of breeding seabirds in Britain and Ireland (2015-2021)
Author :	Burnell, D.; Perkins, A.J.; Newton, S.F.; Bolton, M.; Tierney, T.D.; Dunn, T.E.
Series :	Lynx Nature Books, Barcelona

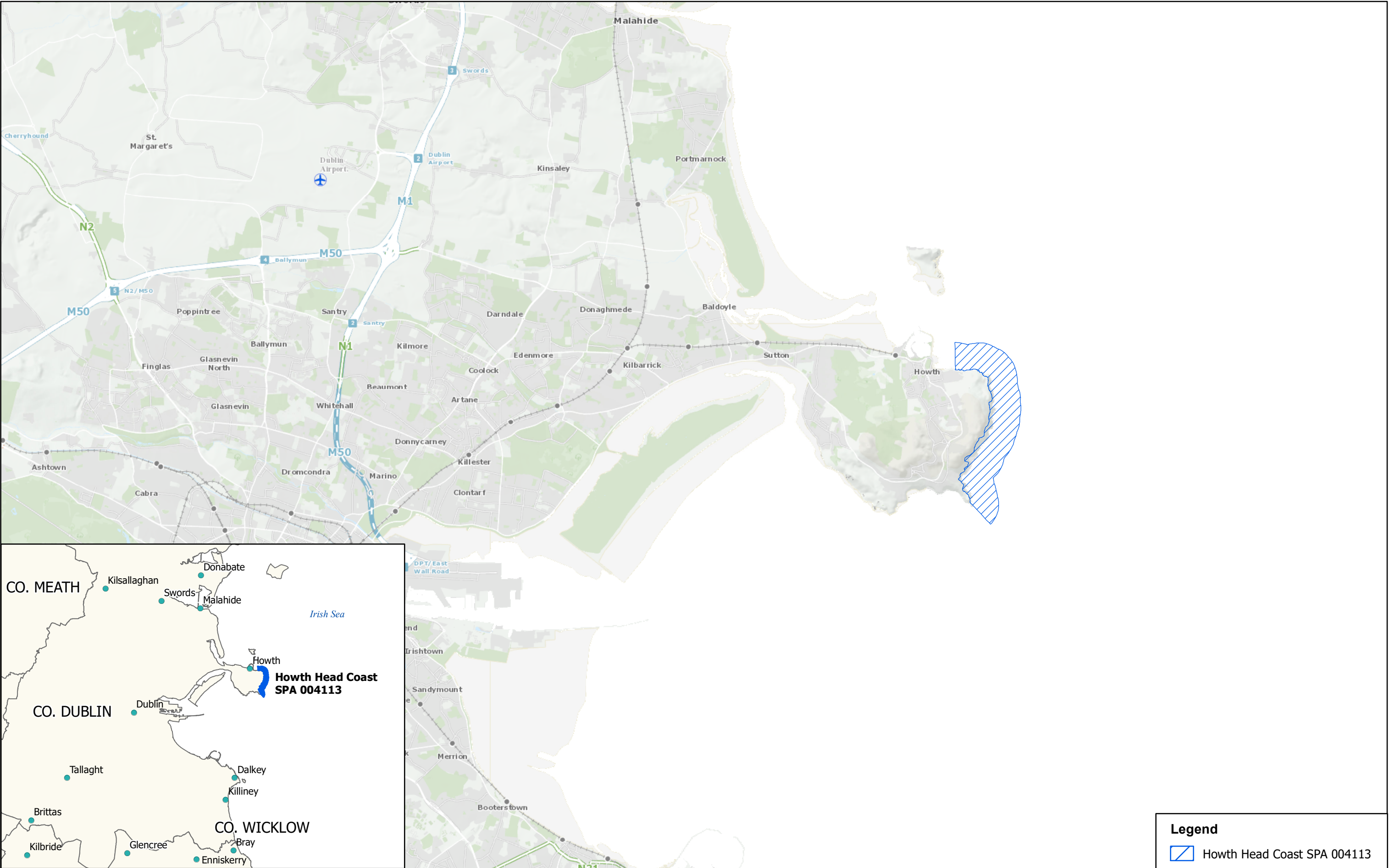
**A188 Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla***

**To restore the Favourable conservation condition of Kittiwake in Howth Head Coast SPA, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:**

Attribute	Measure	Target	Notes
Breeding population size	Number of Apparently Occupied Nests (AON)	Long term SPA population trend is stable or increasing	A 1987 survey recorded an estimate of 1,700 pairs of Kittiwake breeding at this site (Lloyd et al., 1991). A repeat survey in 1999 recorded 2,269 AONs equating to a 33.5% increase (Mitchell et al., 2004). Breeding numbers continued to increase and by 2007 the population was estimated to stand at 2,612 AONs, which then dipped to 1,773 AONs by 2015 (Trewby et al., 2007; Burnell et al., 2023). Based on these metrics, longer-term (1987-2015) and shorter-term (2007-2015) population trends of 4.3% and -32.1% are estimated
Productivity rate	Number of fledged young per breeding pair	Sufficient to maintain a stable or increasing population	In 2007 and based on 12 non-randomly selected plots ranging in size from 43 to 157 AONs (amounting to 41% of the breeding population), Trewby et al. (2007) reported a Kittiwake productivity estimate of 0.62 ( $\pm$ 0.06) fledglings per pair for this SPA. Coulson (2017) established, based on data from UK Kittiwake colonies during the period 1985-2015, that 0.80 fledglings per pair were needed to maintain the size of these colonies
Distribution: extent of available nesting options within the SPA	Numbers and spatial distribution	Sufficient availability of suitable nesting sites throughout the SPA to maintain a stable or increasing population	Distribution encapsulates the number of locations and area of potentially suitable nesting habitat for the breeding population and its availability for use. The suitability and availability of habitat across the SPA may vary through time. This will affect the spatio-temporal patterns of use of the habitats by Kittiwake. Typically this species establishes nest sites on cliff ledges of offshore islands, sea stacks, or along inaccessible areas of coastal mainland (Hatch et al., 2020)
Forage spatial distribution, extent, abundance and availability	Location and hectares, and forage biomass	Sufficient number of locations, area of suitable habitat and available forage biomass to support the population target	Kittiwake is a surface feeding seabird and primarily piscivorous (e.g. sandeels, herring, gadoids) with some invertebrates (e.g. euphausiids, amphipods) in the diet also recorded (Hatch et al., 2020). Woodward et al. (2019) provides estimates (i.e. overall mean, mean of maximum distances across all studies, and maximum distance recorded) of Kittiwake foraging ranges from the nest site during the breeding season, which are 55km, 156km, and 770km respectively (see Power et al., 2021)
Disturbance at the breeding site	Intensity, frequency, timing and duration	Disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact on birds at the breeding site	Disturbance events at the nest site/breeding colony level can result in a reduction of overall productivity and even lead to the abandonment of the breeding colony. The impact of any significant disturbance (direct or indirect) to the breeding population will ultimately affect the achievement of targets for population size and/or spatial distribution. Disturbance contributes to increased energetic expenditure which can result in increased likelihood of mortality or reduced fitness (if energy expenditure is greater than energy gain) and, in turn, negatively impact population trends. Factors such as intensity, frequency, timing and duration of a (direct or indirect) disturbance source must be taken into account to determine the potential impact upon the targets for population size and spatial distribution
Disturbance at areas ecologically connected to the colony	Intensity, frequency, timing and duration	Disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact on breeding population	Seabird species can make extensive use of the marine waters adjacent to their breeding colonies for non site-specific maintenance behaviours (e.g. courtship, bathing, preening) as defined in McSorley et al. (2003)

Barriers to connectivity	Number; location; shape; area (hectares)	Barriers do not significantly impact the population's access to the SPA or other ecologically important sites outside the SPA	Seabirds, particularly during the breeding season, require regular and efficient access to marine waters ecologically connected to the colony in order to forage as well as to engage in other maintenance behaviours. Woodward et al. (2019) provides estimates (i.e. overall mean, mean of maximum distances across all studies, and maximum distance recorded) of Kittiwake foraging ranges from the nest site during the breeding season, which are 55km, 156km, and 770km respectively (see Power et al., 2021)
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**Legend**

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