NPWS

Slieve Tooey/Tormore Island/Loughros Beg Bay SAC (site code: 000190)

Conservation objectives supporting document - coastal habitats

Version 1 - supplement 1

April 2026

IMPORTANT: This supplement, published in 2026, includes details relating to the EU habitats **1330 Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae), 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi), 2130 Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)*, 2170 Dunes with *Salix repens* ssp. *argentea* (Salicion arenariae) and 2190 Humid dune slacks** which were added as Qualifying Interests for the site after the Site-Specific Conservation Objectives (Version 1) were published. This document should be read in conjunction with the Version 2 Site-Specific Conservation Objectives (NPWS, 2026), and with the Conservation objectives supporting document - Coastal habitats Version 1 (NPWS, 2015). Any references to these habitats in previously published Site-specific Conservation Objectives (SSCO), or SSCO supporting documents, including the mapping, are to be considered **superseded** by these updates.

Contents

Citation: NPWS (2026) Slieve Tooey/Tormore Island/Loughros Beg Bay SAC (site code 000190) Conservation objectives supporting document - coastal habitats V1 - supplement 1. Conservation Objectives Supporting Document Series. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Dublin, Ireland.

1. Introduction

1330 Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae), 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi), 2130 Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)*, 2170 Dunes with *Salix repens* ssp. *argentea* (Salicion arenariae) and 2190 Humid dune slacks were added as Qualifying Interests to Slieve Tooey/Tormore Island/Loughros Beg Bay SAC (site code: 000190) after the Site-Specific Conservation Objectives (Version 1) were published. This document sets out the SSCOs for the newly listed Qualifying Interests for the site and acts as a supplement to the original SSCO Supporting Document.

The information on the condition of the habitats was primarily derived from surveys of Maghera, located close to the town of Ardara in West Donegal, and Glen Bay just north-west of Glencolumbkille, Co. Donegal.

2. Coastal habitats

2.1 1330 Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae)

2.1.1 Site description of habitat

SlieveTooey/Tormore/Loughros Beg Bay SAC contains a wide diversity of habitat types including 1330 Atlantic salt meadows **(**McCorry & Ryle, 2009). Several sections have a typical saltmarsh topography including small pans and drainage creeks. The boundary with fixed dune along the upper boundary at Maghera Sand Hills provide a good example of the natural transition to that habitat.

2.1.2 Overall objective

The overall objective for *'Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae)'* in Slieve Tooey/Tormore Island/Loughros Beg Bay SAC (site code: 000190) is to *restore the Favourable conservation condition*.

This objective is based on an assessment of the recorded condition of the habitat(s) under a range of attributes and targets. The assessment is divided into three main headings: (a) Area (b) Range and (c) Structure and Functions. This conservation objective applies to the total extent of this habitat within the SAC, including but not limited to the mapped areas of this habitat.

2.1.3 Area

Habitat area

Coastal habitats are generally dynamic and increase and decrease in area due to natural processes. These natural changes are not taken into account in conservation status assessments. Changes associated with human activities including destruction and restoration do contribute to the assessment of conservation status.

The total area of saltmarsh recorded at the site is 17.98 ha. Loss of 0.073ha due to infilling has been recorded at the site (Ryle *et al*., 2009) and no restoration works have been completed to reverse this loss.

Target: Area stable or increasing, subject to natural processes, including erosion and succession.

2.1.4 Range

Habitat distribution

The habitat primarily occurs at two locations (Maghera and Glen Bay), and the distribution is considered to be the result of natural processes.

Target: No decline in the distribution of this habitat, unless it is the result of natural processes.

2.1.5 Structure and Functions

Structure and Functions for Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) are assessed on the basis of:

Physical structure: hydrology

Target: Natural hydrology and processes of erosion and succession intact, no disturbance to creek and pan structure, as compared to baseline data.

Disturbed ground

Target: Less than 5% disturbed ground at 75% of stops or more.

Signs of negative activities *e.g.* infilling, reclamation, turf-cutting, pollution

Target: None recorded.

Vegetation structure: zonation

Target: Adequate number of zones present, depending on geographical type of saltmarsh.

Vegetation structure: spatial transitions

Target: No loss of natural transitions relative to baseline.

Vegetation structure: plant height

Target: Standard deviation of median plant height in monitoring stops is greater than 5cm.

Vegetation composition: typical species (positive indicators)

Target: Minimum of 12 typical species recorded across all plots.

Vegetation composition: negative indicator species

Target: Percentage *Spartina* spp. cover, or other negative species, within 5m radius of stop less than/equal to SMP baseline at 75% of stops or more.

Vegetation composition: negative indicator species: presence of *Spartina* spp. within vicinity of habitat

Target: Not present where not recorded by baseline.

Indicators of local distinctiveness: site-specific target features (including rare and notable species)

Target: No evidence of decline since designation.

The 1330 Atlantic salt meadows habitat at Maghera was found to be in poor condition due to localised grazing pressure. Some of the vegetation showed signs of some damage including poaching (McCorry and Ryle, 2009).

At Glen Bay, Structure and Functions were affected by cattle and sheep grazing which has reduced the halophyte species richness and the zonation. The 1330 Atlantic salt meadow habitat at Glen Bay was assessed as in poor condition by Brophy *et al.* (2019).

2.2 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi)

2.2.1 Site description of habitat

SlieveTooey/Tormore/Loughros Beg Bay SAC contains a wide diversity of habitat types including 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows. The Mediterranean salt meadows occupies the greatest portion of the saltmarsh recorded at Glen Bay **(**McCorry & Ryle, 2009). The locally distinctive Sea Couch (*Elytrigia atherica)* is present at Glen Bay within the 1410 habitat (Brophy *et al*., 2019).

2.2.2 Overall objective

The overall objective for '*Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi)'* in Slieve Tooey/Tormore Island/Loughros Beg Bay SAC (site code: 000190) is to *restore 'the Favourable conservation condition'*.

This objective is based on an assessment of the recorded condition of the habitat(s) under a range of attributes and targets. The assessment is divided into three main headings: (a) Area (b) Range and (c) Structure and Functions. This conservation objective applies to the total extent of this habitat within the SAC, including but not limited to the mapped areas of this habitat.

2.2.3 Area

Habitat area

Coastal habitats are generally dynamic and increase and decrease in area due to natural processes. These natural changes are not taken into account in conservation status assessments. Changes associated with human activities including destruction and restoration do contribute to the assessment of conservation status.

The area recorded for 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows habitat is 22.83ha.

No loss of habitat due to human activities has been observed on the site and restoration is not required.

Target: Area stable or increasing, subject to natural processes, including erosion and succession.

2.2.4 Range

Habitat distribution

The habitat primarily occurs at two locations (Maghera and Glen Bay), and the distribution is considered to be the result of natural processes.

Target: No decline in the distribution of this habitat, unless it is the result of natural processes.

2.2.5 Structure and Functions

Structure and Functions for Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) are assessed on the basis of:

Physical structure: hydrology

Target: Natural hydrology and processes of erosion and succession intact, no disturbance to creek and pan structure, as compared to baseline data.

Vegetation structure: spatial transitions

Target: No loss of natural transitions relative to baseline.

Disturbed ground

Target: Less than 5% disturbed ground at 75% of stops or more.

Signs of negative activities *e.g*. infilling, reclamation, turf-cutting, pollution

Target: None recorded.

Vegetation composition: typical species (positive indicators)

Target: At least six species recorded in the habitat and at least two species occur at a frequency of at least 25% of plots (excluding *Juncus maritimus*).

Vegetation composition: negative indicator species

Target: Percentage *Spartina* spp. cover, or other negative species, within 5m radius of stop less than/equal to baseline at 75% of stops or more.

Vegetation composition: negative indicator species: presence of *Spartina* spp. within vicinity of habitat

Target: Not present where not recorded by baseline.

Indicators of local distinctiveness: site-specific target features (including rare and notable species)

Target: No evidence of decline since designation.

At Maghera, the Mediterranean salt meadows habitat was assessed as being in good condition. The species composition is typical, with transitions to modified blanket bog increasing site diversity. Grazing remains the main pressure, causing poaching and trail formation, but the habitat's large extent and mosaic with other communities enhance its structural diversity (McCorry & Ryle, 2009).

At Glen Bay, the habitat was assessed as being in poor condition (Brophy *et al*., 2019), mainly due to grazing pressure and poaching. Historical peat cutting and land-use changes have altered the structure, leaving drains and peat banks, but the extensive saltmarsh and its complex transitional mosaics contribute to its ecological value. The locally distinctive Sea Couch (*Elytrigia atherica)* is present in the north-western part of this site (Brophy et al., 2019).

2.3 2130 Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)*

2.3.1 Site description of habitat

SlieveTooey/Tormore/Loughros Beg Bay SAC contains a considerable diversity of Annex I sand dune habitats including 2130 Fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)*. The sand dunes occur in a network of coastal habitats of high conservation value. There are mature acidic dune slacks within the dune heath which is particularly well-developed here, occurring on old fixed dunes which have become decalcified through leaching (Delaney *et al*., 2013)

2.3.2. Overall objective

The overall objective for *'Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)*'* in Slieve Tooey/Tormore Island/Loughros Beg Bay SAC (site code: 000190) is to '*restore the Favourable conservation condition*'.

This objective is based on an assessment of the recorded condition of the habitat(s) under a range of attributes and targets. The assessment is divided into three main headings: (a) Area (b) Range and (c) Structure and Functions. This conservation objective applies to the total extent of this habitat within the SAC, including but not limited to the mapped areas of this habitat.

2.3.3. Area

Habitat area

Coastal habitats are generally dynamic and increase and decrease in area due to natural processes. These natural changes are not taken into account in conservation status assessments. Changes associated with human activities including destruction and restoration do contribute to the assessment of conservation status.

At Glen Bay, loss of habitat has been noted in surveys and this was associated with amenity grassland created within the Special Area of Conservation at Glen Bay (Ryle *et al*., 2009). No restoration has been carried out to date.

At Maghera, the habitat area has increased since the baseline survey (Delaney *et al*., 2013), and no loss due to human impacts has been noted.

The area of 2130 Fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)* recorded at this site is 37.63ha.

Target: Area should be stable or increasing, subject to natural processes, including erosion and succession.

2.3.4. Range

Habitat distribution

The 2130 Fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)* at Maghera include both dunes which have been deposited on flat coastland and sand that has been deposited over rocky outcrops (Delaney *et al*., 2009).

At Glen Bay the sand dunes are small and the front, west-facing edge of the dunes extends over approximately 300m.

Target: No decline in the distribution of this habitat, unless it is the result of natural processes.

2.3.5 Structure and Functions

Structure and Functions for Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)* are assessed on the basis of:

Physical structure: functionality and sediment supply

Target: Natural circulation of sediment and organic matter, absence of physical obstructions or evidence of sediment extraction from the beach and its environs. Physical obstructions that have been in place and are unchanged since prior to 1994 are excluded from this target, unless they have a current adverse impact on sediment circulation.

Disturbance

Target: No more than 20% of the habitat should be subject to disturbance *e.g.* trampling, vehicle damage, removal of substrate.

Bare sand

Target: Bare sand is present but does not exceed 10% of fixed dune habitat, subject to natural processes.

Vegetation structure: sward height

Target: Sward height is varied across the habitat. Between 30 and 70% of stops have an average height between 2-10cm. The remaining stops have taller sward, except for tracks, disturbed ground and by bare sand areas.

Flowering and fruiting of any positive indicator species

Target: Present in 40% or more of stops.

Vegetation composition: typical species (positive indicators)

Target: At least eight of the positive species occur with a frequency of more than 20% of stops and every stop contains at least four positive indicator species.

Vegetation composition: native negative indicator species

Target: No negative indicator species occurs at a frequency of more than 60% of stops and the total combined cover of all negative indicator species across the habitat is 5% or less and highest % cover of any negative indicator species within any stop is 25% or less.

Vegetation composition: non-native species

Target: No non-native species occurs at a frequency of more than 20% of stops and no evidence that % cover is increasing.

Vegetation composition: scrub/trees other than Juniper (*Juniperus communis*)

Target: Trees and scrub do not occur at a frequency of more than 60% of stops and combined cover across the habitat is 5%.

Vegetation composition: trees/saplings from adjacent plantations

Target: Present in or close to (*i.e.* within 20m) no more than 20% of stops.

Indicators of local distinctiveness: site-specific target features (including rare and notable species)

Target: No evidence of decline since designation.

At Maghera, the 2130 Fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)* habitat was assessed as being in poor condition due to excessive cover of negative indicator species and especially Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*). Identified pressures included low-intensity sheep grazing, Bracken encroachment, trampling from walking, and the installation of a boardwalk (Delaney *et al*., 2013).

At Glen Bay, negative indicator species were largely absent or present only at low levels within transects, typically limited to species such as Creeping Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) and Common Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*). However, the site was influenced by relatively extensive agriculturally improved areas, where grasses like Perennial Rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*) and Cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*) dominated, along with nearby patches characterised by Bracken or other weedy species. The cultivation plots and loss of quality in some areas due to recreation is causing the site to be in poor condition. The future prospects were considered poor also (Ryle *et al*., 2009).

2.4 2170 Dunes with *Salix repens* ssp. *argentea* (Salicion arenariae)

2.4.1 Site description of habitat

There is a considerable diversity of sand dune habitats at Slieve Tooey/Tormore/Loughros Beg Bay SAC. In Maghera 2170 Dunes with *Salix repens* ssp*. argentea* (Salicion arenariae) occurs within a network of habitats of high conservation value.

2.4.2 Overall objective

The overall objective for '*Dunes with Salix repens ssp. argentea (Salicion arenariae)'* in Slieve Tooey/Tormore Island/Loughros Beg Bay SAC (site code: 000190) is to *restore the Favourable conservation condition*'.

This objective is based on an assessment of the recorded condition of the habitat(s) under a range of attributes and targets. The assessment is divided into three main headings: (a) Area (b) Range and (c) Structure and Functions. This conservation objective applies to the total extent of this habitat within the SAC, including but not limited to the mapped areas of this habitat.

2.4.3 Area

Habitat area

Coastal habitats are generally dynamic and increase and decrease in area due to natural processes. These natural changes are not taken into account in conservation status assessments. Changes associated with human activities including destruction and restoration do contribute to the assessment of conservation status.

The area of 2170 Dunes with *Salix repens* ssp*. argentea* (Salicion arenariae) recorded at this site is 2.96ha (Delaney *et al*., 2013).

No loss of habitat due to human activities has been observed on the site and restoration is not required.

Target: Area stable or increasing, subject to natural processes, including erosion and succession.

2.4.4 Range

Habitat distribution

Their range is confined to areas where moisture levels remain high between fixed dunes and wetter dune slack communities. The patches of 2170 habitat are distributed in the western part of the site at Maghera (Delaney *et al*., 2013).

Target: No decline in the distribution of this habitat, unless it is the result of natural processes.

2.4.5 Structure and Functions

Structure and Functions for *Salix repens* ssp. *argentea* (Salicion arenariae) are assessed on the basis of:

Physical structure: functionality and sediment supply

Target: Natural circulation of sediment and organic matter, absence of any physical obstructions or evidence of sediment extraction from the beach and its environs. Physical obstructions that have been in place and are unchanged since prior to 1994 are excluded from this target, unless they have a current adverse impact on sediment circulation

Disturbance

Target: No more than 20% of the habitat should be subject to disturbance *e.g*. trampling, vehicle damage, removal of substrate.

Bare sand

Target: Bare sand is present but does not exceed 10% of the habitat, subject to natural processes.

Physical structure: hydrological and flooding regime

Target: Hydrological regime supports typical seasonal fluctuations.

Vegetation composition: typical species (positive indicators)

Target: At least two of the positive species occur with a frequency of more than 40% of stops and another two species occur with a frequency of more than 20% of stops and every stop contains at least two positive species.

Vegetation composition: native negative indicator species

Target: No negative indicator species occurs at a frequency of more than 60% of stops and the total combined cover of all negative indicator species across the habitat is 5% or less and highest % cover of any negative indicator species within any stop is 25% or less.

Vegetation composition: non-native species

Target: No non-native species occurs at a frequency of more than 20% of stops and no evidence that % cover has increased.

Vegetation composition: rank grasses

Target: Total combined cover of *Dactylis glomerata* and *Arrhenatherum elatius* less than 10%.

Vegetation structure: height of *Salix repens*

Target: *Salix repens* height 5-30cm for all stops.

Vegetation composition: trees/scrub other than *Salix repens*

Target: Present at no more than 40% of stops and combined cover across the habitat of 5% or less.

Indicators of local distinctiveness: site-specific target features (including rare and notable species)

Target: No evidence of decline since designation.

The Structure and Functions of 2170 Dunes with *Salix repens* ssp*. argentea* (Salicion arenariae) were assessed as in poor condition. Creeping Willow (*Salix repens)* in one of the eight stops was taller than the target height and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum)* affected over 10% of the habitat (Delaney *et al*., 2013).

2.5 2190 Humid dune slacks

2.5.1 Site description of habitat

The dune slacks are of interest at Maghera as they are very varied in character. Some areas contain a typical 2190 Humid dune slacks vegetation community, while others are more acidic in character with Purple Moor Grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Bog Myrtle (*Myrica gale*), Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) and Ling (*Calluna vulgaris*) (Delaney *et al*., 2013).

2.5.2 Overall objective

The overall objective for *'Humid dune slacks'* in Slieve Tooey/Tormore Island/Loughros Beg Bay SAC (site code: 00190) is to '*maintain the Favourable conservation condition*'.

This objective is based on an assessment of the recorded condition of the habitat(s) under a range of attributes and targets. The assessment is divided into three main headings: (a) Area (b) Range and (c) Structure and Functions. This conservation objective applies to the total extent of this habitat within the SAC, including but not limited to the mapped areas of this habitat.

2.5.3 Area

Habitat area

Coastal habitats are generally dynamic and increase and decrease in area due to natural processes. These natural changes are not taken into account in conservation status assessments. Changes associated with human activities including destruction and restoration do contribute to the assessment of conservation status.

The Area for 2190 Humid dune slacks was recorded as 1.08ha by Delaney *et al*. (2013).

No loss of habitat due to human activities has been observed on the site and restoration is not required.

Target: Area stable or increasing, subject to natural processes, including erosion and succession.

2.5.4 Range

Habitat distribution

2190 Humid dune slacks are restricted to Maghera, where they are distributed in small areas within the dunes. This distribution is considered to reflect the natural conditions of this site.

Target: No decline in the distribution of this habitat, unless it is the result of natural processes.

2.5.5 Structure and Functions

Structure and Functions for Humid dune slacks are assessed on the basis of:

Physical structure: functionality and sediment supply

Target: Natural circulation of sediment and organic matter, absence of any physical obstructions or evidence of sediment extraction from the beach and its environs. Physical obstructions that have been in place and are unchanged since prior to 1994 are excluded from this target, unless they have a current adverse impact on sediment circulation.

Disturbance

Target: No more than 20% of the habitat should be subject to disturbance *e.g.* trampling, vehicle damage, removal of substrate.

Physical structure: hydrological and flooding regime

Target: Hydrological regime supports typical seasonal fluctuations.

Bare ground

Target: Bare ground should be present but should not exceed 5% of dune slack habitat, with the exception of pioneer slacks which can have up to 20% bare ground.

Vegetation composition: typical species (positive indicators)

Target: At least four of the positive species occur with a frequency of more than 40% of stops and another two species occur with a frequency of more than 20% of stops and every stop contains at least three positive species.

Vegetation composition: bryophytes

Target: Present in more than 20% of stops.

Vegetation composition: native negative indicator species

Target: No negative indicator species occurs at a frequency of more than 60% of stops and the total combined cover of all negative indicator species across the habitat is 5% or less and highest % cover of any negative indicator species within any stop is 25% or less.

Vegetation composition: non-native species

Target: No non-native species occurs at a frequency of more than 20% of stops and no evidence that % cover has increased.

Vegetation composition: trees/scrub

Target: Present at no more than 40% of stops and combined cover of 5% or less.

Vegetation composition: forb:grass ratio

Target: Forb (herbaceous flowering plant) cover over 30% and grass cover below 70%.

Vegetation composition: cover of *Salix repens*

Target: Less than 40% cover of *Salix repens.*

Indicators of local distinctiveness: site-specific target features (including rare and notable species)

Target: No evidence of decline since designation.

Structure and Functions were assessed as being in good condition at Maghera. One of the slacks contains the fern-ally Adders Tongue (*Ophioglossum azoricum*), which, although not currently protected, is nationally scarce. There were some issues recorded such as non-intensive sheep grazing, fencing, dumping, salt-water intrusion and drying out (Delaney *et al*., 2013).

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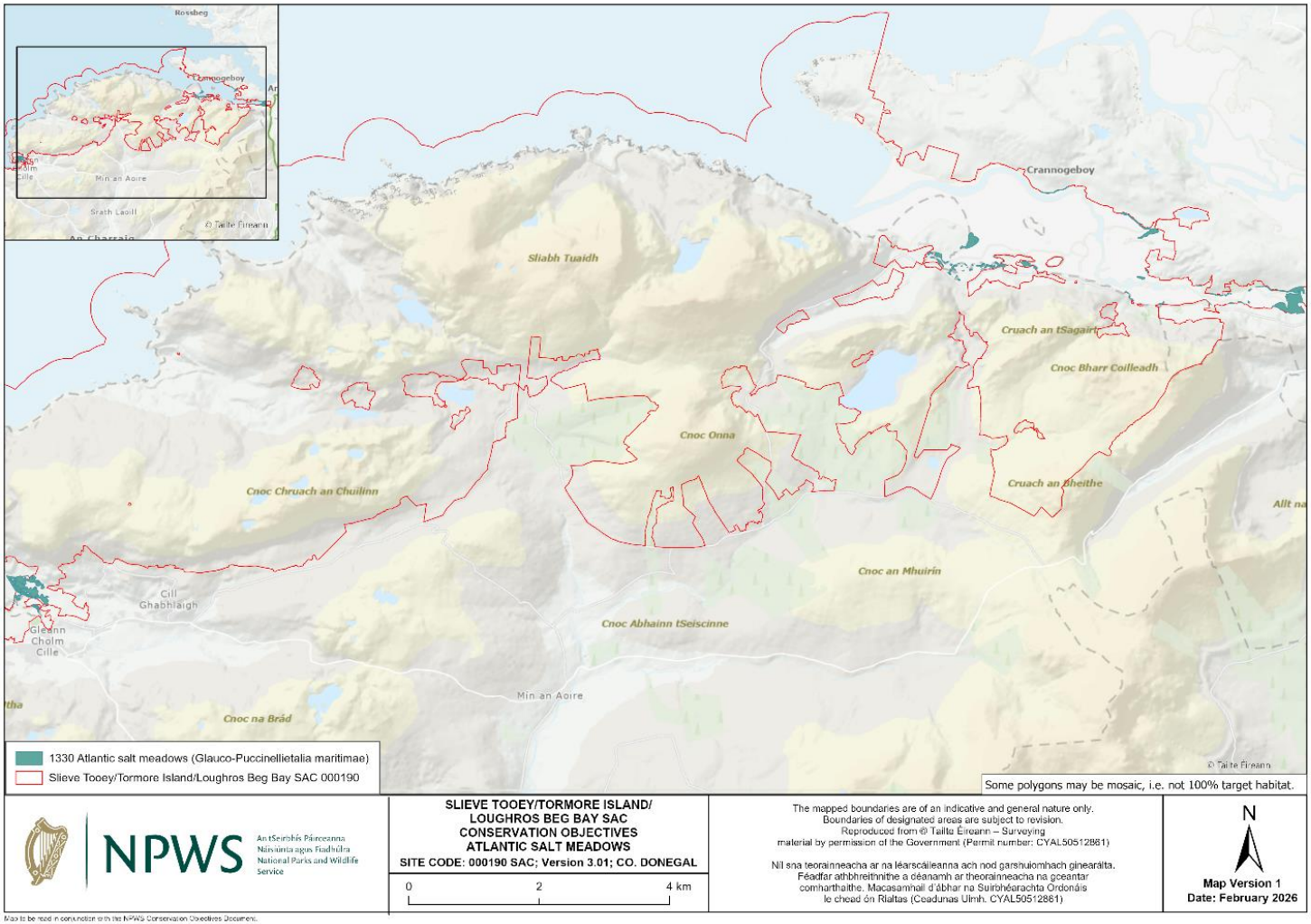
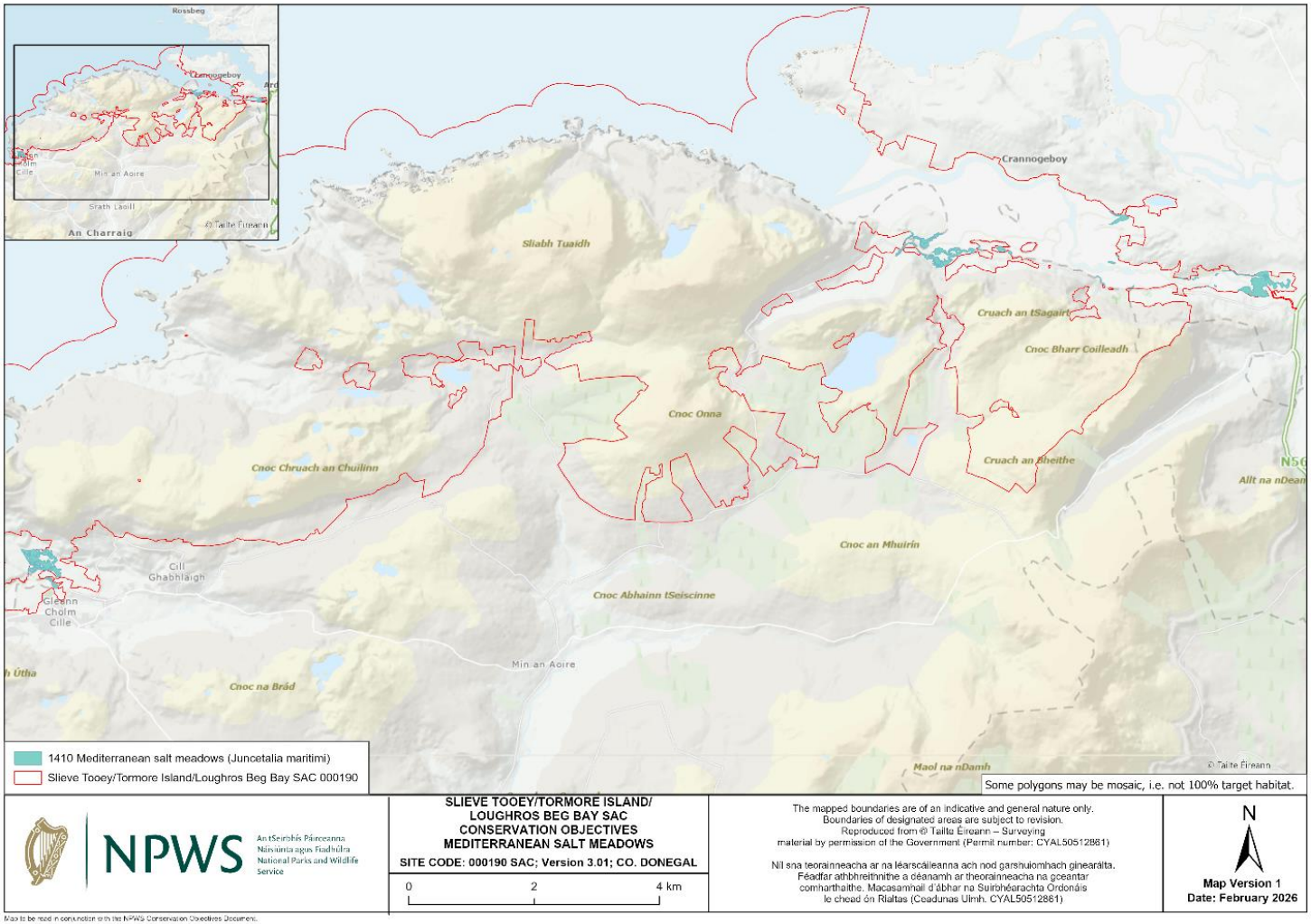
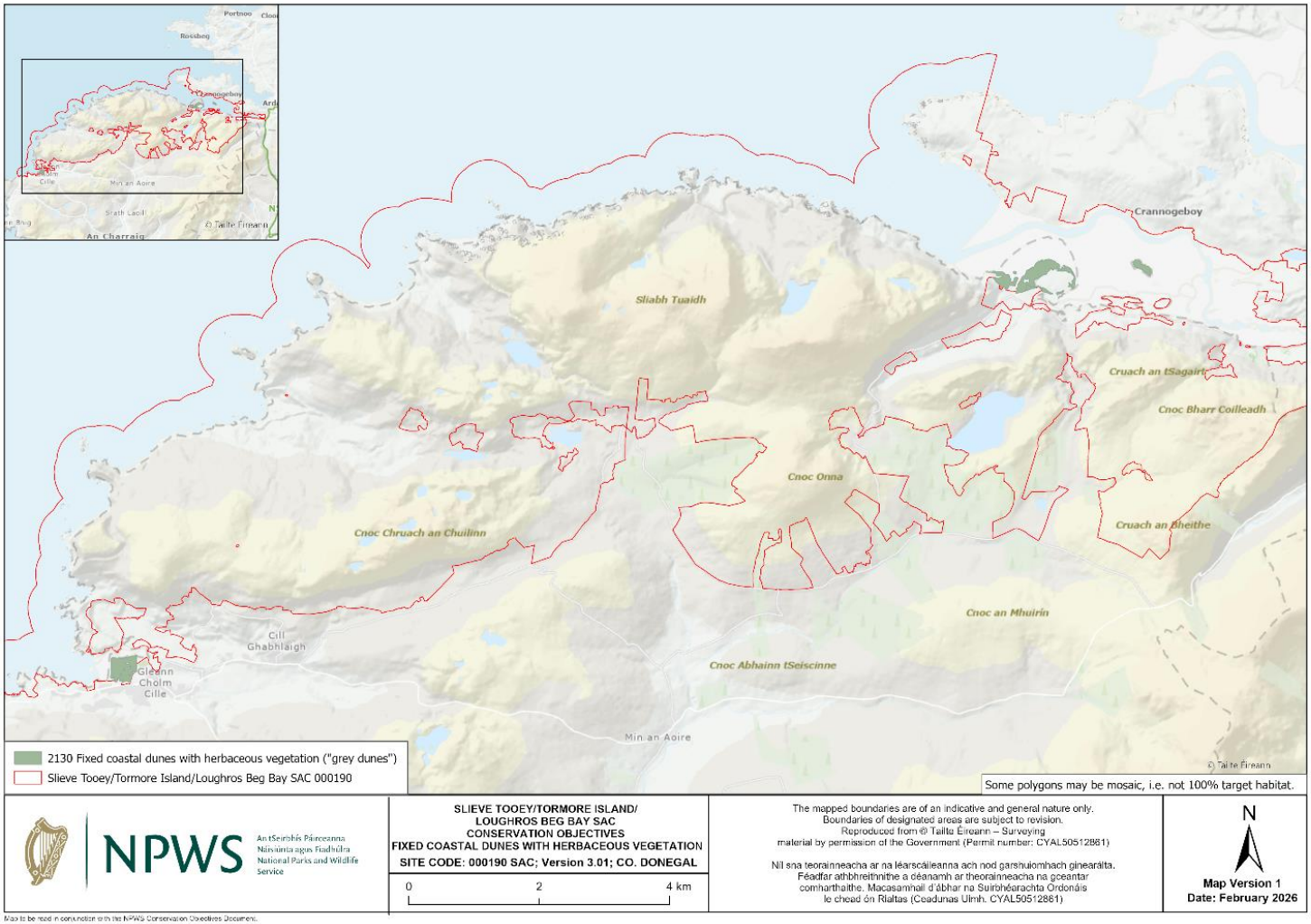
Appendix 1 – Distribution map of Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) in Slieve Tooey/Tormore Island/Loughros Beg Bay SAC (000190)



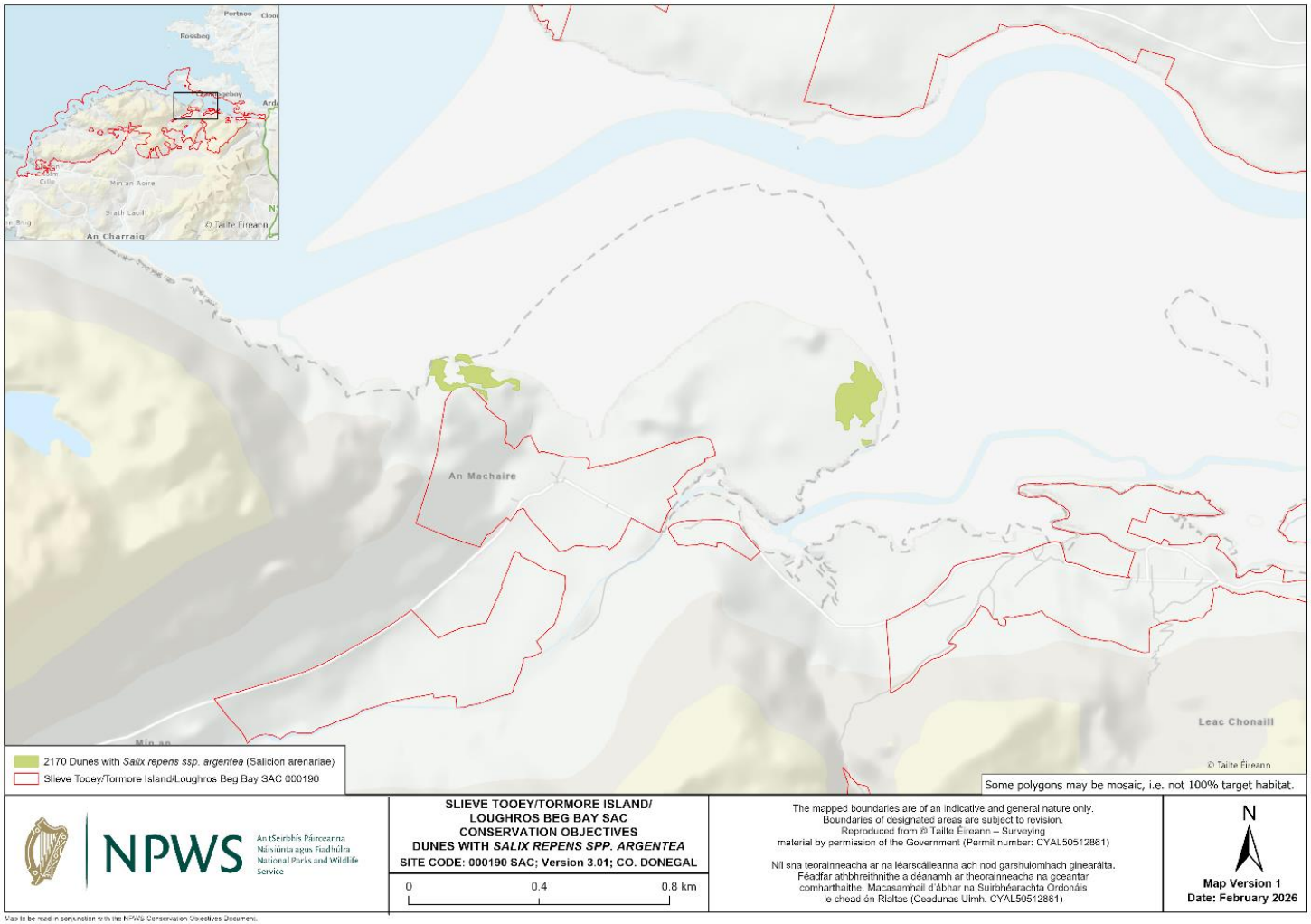
Appendix 2 – Distribution map of Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) in in Slieve Tooey/Tormore Island/Loughros Beg Bay SAC (000190)



Appendix 3 – Distribution map of Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)* in in Slieve Tooey/Tormore Island/Loughros Beg Bay SAC (000190)



Appendix 4 – Distribution map of Dunes with *Salix repens* ssp. *argentea* (Salicion arenaria) in in Slieve Tooey/Tormore Island/Loughros Beg Bay SAC (000190)



Appendix 5 – Distribution map of Humid dune slacks in in Slieve Tooey/Tormore Island/Loughros Beg Bay SAC (000190)