

NPWS

**Cahore Polders and Dunes SAC
(site code: 000700)**

**Conservation objectives supporting document -
coastal habitats**

Version 1 - supplement 1

May 2026

IMPORTANT: This supplement, published in 2026, includes details relating to the EU habitat **2190 Humid dune slacks** which was added as a Qualifying Interest 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, 2016). Any references to this habitat in previously published Site-specific Conservation Objectives (SSCO), or SSCO supporting documents, including the mapping, are to be considered **superseded** by these updates.

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Coastal habitats	1
2.1 2190 Humid dune slacks	1
2.1.1 Site description of habitat	1
2.1.2 Overall objective.....	1
2.1.3 Area	1
2.1.4 Range	1
2.1.5 Structure and Functions	1
3. References	4
Appendix 1 – Distribution map of Humid dune slacks in Cahore Polders and Dunes SAC (000700)	
5	

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1. Introduction

2190 Humid dune slacks was added as a Qualifying Interest to Cahore Polders and Dunes SAC (site code: 000700) after the Site-Specific Conservation Objectives (Version 1) were published. This document sets out the SSCO for the newly listed Qualifying Interest for the site and acts as a supplement to the original SSCO Supporting Document.

2. Coastal habitats

2.1 2190 Humid dune slacks

2.1.1 Site description of habitat

Dune slacks have been recorded and assessed in Cahore Polders and Dunes Special Area of Conservation (SAC 000700) at Cahore Point North, an extensive sand dune site situated approximately 6km north-east of Kilmuckridge.

2.1.2 Overall objective

The overall objective for '*Humid dune slacks*' in Cahore polders and Dunes SAC (site code: 000700) 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 area recorded for the 2190 Humid dune slacks habitat is 3.91ha.

No loss of habitat due to human activities has been observed since the Coastal Monitoring Project (Delaney *et al.*, 2009)

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

2.1.4 Range

Habitat distribution

The 2190 Humid dune slacks habitat is represented across multiple locations within Cahore Point North. The distribution of this habitat extends throughout the site, with smaller dune slacks occurring in the northern section and transitioning to larger, more expansive slacks towards the central area of the site. This spatial distribution reflects the natural variability in dune slack morphology across the site.

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 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.

The assessment of the 2190 Humid dune slacks habitat at Cahore Point North found the habitat was in Unfavourable condition due to insufficient grazing, which has resulted in a rank sward and a broadleaved herb species composition of less than 10%, well below the target value of 30%. Several negative impacts were identified at the site. Drainage ditches adjacent to, and running through the sand dunes are depleting the local water table, increasing the risk of saltwater intrusion, with

evidence of drying out observed within the slacks. Tree planting in the vicinity is likely to compound this effect. Two dense stands of Sea Buckthorn (*Hippophae rhamnoides*) located in close proximity to the habitat pose a further threat, as this species accelerates drying and has the potential to invade the habitat. Recreational walking and tracks were noted as having a limited negative impact (Delaney *et al.*, 2013).

The Future prospects for the habitat were assessed as poor, and the overall conservation status of the habitat at the site was deemed Unfavourable (Delaney *et al.*, 2013).

3. References

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Appendix 1 – Distribution map of Humid dune slacks in Cahore Polders and Dunes SAC (000700)

