

HOUSE OF LORDS

Environment and Climate Change Committee

2nd Report of Session 2022–23

An extraordinary challenge: Restoring 30 per cent of our land and sea by 2030

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Environment and Climate Change Committee

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Evidence is published online at <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/7322/protected-areas/publications/> and available for inspection at the Parliamentary Archives (020 7219 3074).

Q in footnotes refers to a question in oral evidence.

SUMMARY

Nature is in decline in the UK.¹ 41 per cent of species have decreased in abundance since 1970 while 15 per cent of species have been classified as threatened with extinction. Threats abound from intensive agriculture, climate change and development. We therefore welcome that at COP15 in December 2022 the Government joined the international commitment to protecting 30 per cent of land and sea for nature by 2030 (the ‘30 by 30’ target).

With only seven years remaining, the extent of land in England which already meets the criteria for 30 by 30 sits at a maximum of just 6.5 per cent. This means 23.5 per cent of land in England remains to be protected in order to hit the target—amounting to more than three million hectares, equivalent to almost one and a half times the size of Wales.

But as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework agreed at COP15 Part II meetings in December 2022 makes clear, it’s not just the extent of land that matters. It’s the quality: sites need to be “effectively conserved and managed”. We have found protected sites in England are often in a poor condition and in many cases inadequately monitored, without which no management plans for improvement can be made. Evidence we received suggests that these failings must be corrected by sufficient government funding and harnessing alternative funding streams—including private finance. There is also a need to incentivise better management and effective monitoring to meet clear nature conservation objectives. Citizen science is an untapped resource which, if unleashed, could support increased monitoring and generate public engagement.

Achieving 30 by 30 requires more areas to be protected and those areas must comply with international criteria. Existing protected areas need to be better managed to achieve favourable condition and they need to be better monitored to enable effective management planning and to measure improvement. Protection should be afforded to areas in the long-term, which we conclude should be for more than 30 years. These issues around the quantity and quality of protected areas, as well as the monitoring and management of these areas are all magnified in the marine environment.

The Government is clearly not on course to meet 30 by 30. Achieving the target requires urgent action and we submit this report to the Government as they plan to launch later this year a map identifying sites counting towards 30 by 30. We conclude it must be accompanied by a delivery action plan.

Protected areas like Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are an important component of the suite of measures that the Government can use to protect nature, build its recovery and halt the decline in biodiversity. We heard evidence that threatened species in particular fare better in protected areas than the wider environment. In order to contribute to 30 by 30, protected areas should have a management plan in place based on an up-to-date condition assessment which must be updated every six years. This must apply to all sites included in existing designations of protected areas—and we conclude all existing designations should be kept—and for any new additional designations.

1 This report focuses on the progress towards 30 by 30 in England because environmental policy is a devolved matter. Some figures referred to in this report are based on data for the whole of the UK—it is noted when this is the case.

Giving National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) an explicit purpose for nature conservation would put them in a good position to contribute to nature recovery, though this may not be sufficient to ensure sites within them comply with the more particular requirements for designations to be included in the 30 by 30 target.

The Government is right to seize the opportunity presented by the new internationally agreed other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs), as well as Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs), which could be a vital tool in identifying and protecting nature. The forthcoming Land Use Framework will also be vital in helping to identify and prioritise land for the 30 by 30 target.

Nature friendly farming will play a potentially significant role in delivering nature recovery through Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS). The Government now needs to be clear which schemes could include sites that meet the 30 by 30 criteria. Moreover, land managers urgently need greater support in determining how they can deliver the schemes on their land, both those the Government determine are included in the 30 by 30 target and those which contribute to broader nature recovery goals.

The complexity of delivering the 30 by 30 target at sea is even greater than on land. Marine monitoring programmes are very limited in their extent, which has led to a paucity of condition assessment data at sea. There needs to be a significant expansion of marine monitoring, both inshore and offshore, to improve both the frequency and the quality of data collected at sea. Relevant bodies need to be sufficiently resourced and funded to deliver this uplift in monitoring.

The Government faces an extraordinary challenge to halt species decline and recover nature for the public good. The framework of protected areas and wider nature recovery outside of protected areas is a critical foundation to build from, but urgent action is needed on land and at sea if 30 by 30 is to be anything more than a valuable galvanising slogan for international political agreements.

An extraordinary challenge: Restoring 30 per cent of our land and sea by 2030

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Our inquiry

1. The UK was one of the co-chairs of the High Ambition Coalition (HAC) for Nature and People, an intergovernmental group of over 100 countries which championed a global deal for nature and people, with the central goal of protecting 30 per cent of the world's land and sea by 2030 (the '30 by 30' target).² The coalition was formed in the run up to the most recent Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity (COP15) meetings in Montreal which took place in December 2022. 30 by 30 was formally adopted as one of 23 global biodiversity targets in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) which was agreed at COP15. In the GBF, the target reads:

“Ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, recognizing indigenous and traditional territories, where applicable, and integrated into wider landscapes, seascapes and the ocean, while ensuring that any sustainable use, where appropriate in such areas, is fully consistent with conservation outcomes, recognizing and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, including over their traditional territories.”³

2. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has provided guidance on what counts towards 30 by 30 and is consistent with decisions of the parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at COP15. The definition of a protected area for land and sea which contributes to 30 by 30 is as follows:

“a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.”⁴

2 High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, 'Home': <https://www.hacfornatureandpeople.org/home> [accessed on 7 June 2023]
3 UN Convention on Biological Diversity, *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity framework, Target 3*: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/e6d3/cd1d/daf663719a03902a9b116c34/cop-15-1-25-en.pdf>
4 IUCN, 'Factsheet Conserving at least 30 per cent of the planet by 2030—what should count?': <https://www.iucn.org/resources/factsheet/conserving-least-30-planet-2030-what-should-count> [accessed on 22 June 2023]

3. The internationally agreed target under the CBD applies to the UK as a whole and some of its Crown Dependencies and overseas territories.⁵ However, in this short inquiry we have focused almost entirely on current progress toward meeting the 30 by 30 target in England, while also recognising that some of these issues will need to be subject to discussion and cooperation with the devolved administrations. This inquiry does not consider progress or activities in the devolved nations, nor does it cover activities in the overseas territories.
4. This report covers the 30 by 30 target on both land and sea. However, there are unique challenges in delivering 30 by 30 at sea compared to on land. As we discuss later in Chapter 5, there is a lack of reliable and regular monitoring data at sea. Carrying out monitoring and surveys at sea is often more challenging and resource intensive than on land.⁶ As a result, an understanding of site condition is difficult to ascertain.
5. We recognise that there are competing demands on land use in England. There is well-documented competition for land for a range of uses, including development, farming, tourism and leisure, flood alleviation schemes, accessible greenspaces and nature restoration.⁷ Stakeholders noted that many protected sites will be supporting multiple layers of activity and functionality, and that site management should take account of these factors.⁸

Structure of this report

- This introductory chapter provides an overview of the relevant targets and guidance and sets out different types of designations on land and at sea.
- Chapter 2 sets out the backdrop to 30 by 30 and current progress towards the target.
- Chapter 3 explores protected areas in England with a nature conservation purpose, focusing particularly on SSSIs, but also briefly looking at Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). It looks at the current status of SSSI monitoring and site condition and explores the role of partnership and collaborative working in meeting the 30 by 30 target, including the role which could be played by voluntary schemes such as citizen science.
- Chapter 4 looks at other designations, schemes and areas that could contribute to improving biodiversity and wider nature recovery, as well as examining what could be done to make these areas 30 by 30 compliant. It explores how National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS) and other areas could support nature recovery in England. The chapter also sets out information about Local Nature Partnerships and Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs) which could help to identify and support the delivery of new areas for nature recovery.

5 The Convention on Biological Diversity has been extended to Jersey and the Isle of Man and the following overseas territories: British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Gibraltar, St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha, Falkland Islands, and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.

6 Supplementary written evidence from Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) ([PAE0027](#))

7 Written evidence from Natural Cambridgeshire ([PEA0014](#))

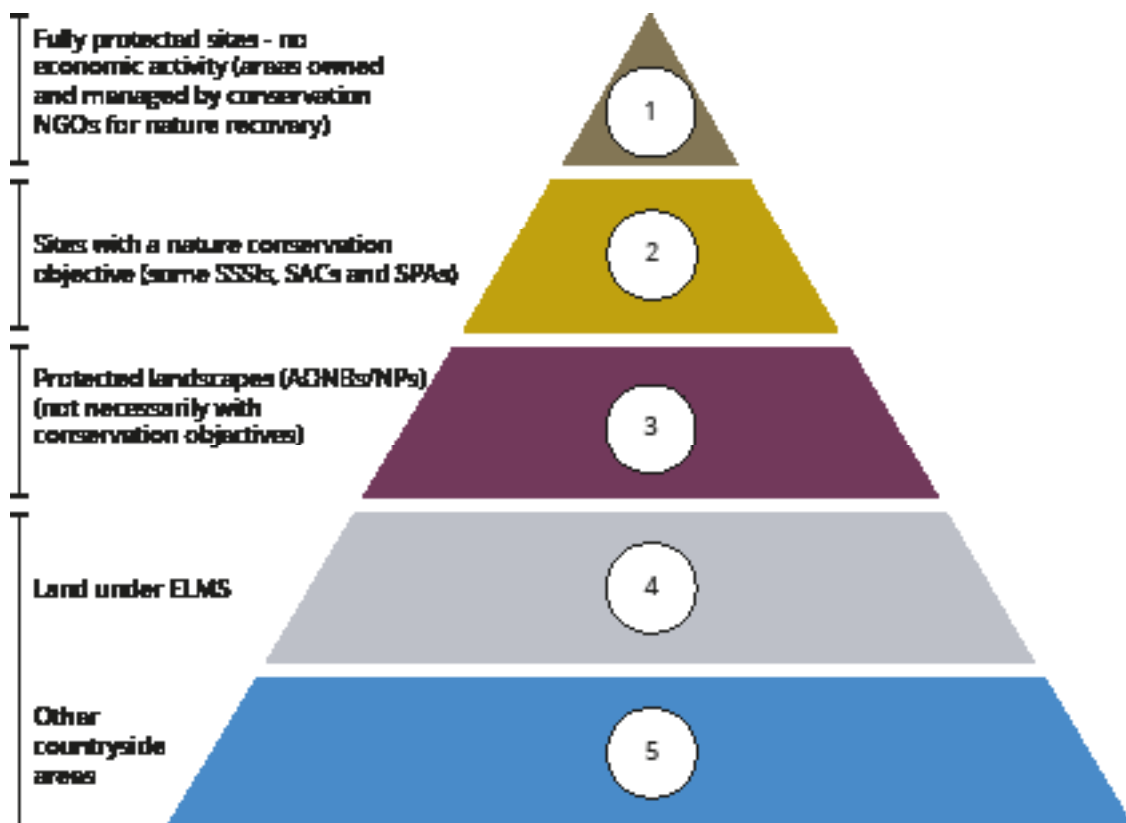
8 [Q 34](#) (Jenny Hawley)

- Chapter 5 explores 30 by 30 at sea and focuses on the current issues around marine monitoring and data availability for MPAs. It also looks at HPMAs.

Types of designations

6. Land in England is covered by a diverse range of protections. Protected areas and designations could be arranged hierarchically in terms of the protection afforded to them and their potential for inclusion in 30 by 30. However, as this report goes on to discuss, the quality of monitoring varies across designations and designations frequently overlap, so such a hierarchy could only be used to illustrate the relative positions of different designations and land uses in England in terms of their levels of protection (or lack thereof), rather than to depict the comparative scale and quality of designations. An illustrative diagram of the Committee's perception of the hierarchy of protection of the relevant designations and areas can be found below in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Illustrative diagram of the hierarchies of terrestrial protection



These categories are not mutually exclusive. The diagram is designed to illustrate the Committee's conclusions about the hierarchy of protections on land.

7. Some of the designation types considered in this report can be found both on land and at sea. SACs, SPAs and SSSIs are all protected areas that have been designated on land or at sea.
8. In this report we consider designations in three separate categories, two on land (i, ii) and one at sea (iii):

- (i) Current designations with a nature conservation purpose that could contribute towards meeting the 30 by 30 target, including SSSIs, SACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites (see Table 3 in Appendix 3).
 - (ii) Other types of designations and areas that are unlikely to meet the specific criteria for 30 by 30 at present are set out in Table 4 in Appendix 3. The other areas covered are protected landscapes (AONBs and National Parks), Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), National Nature Reserves (NNR), Local Nature Reserves (LNR), OECMs and sites contributing to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). Some of these sites may be suitable for inclusion if they meet the agreed criteria set out in Chapter 3.
 - (iii) For protected areas at sea, the designations of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs) are set out at Table 5 in Appendix 3.
9. The quantity and total area covered of designations on land considered in this report and relevant governance arrangements are set out below:

Table 1: Designations on land in England by area covered (hectareage figures quoted to the nearest 1,000 hectares)

Designation	Number and size of designation type in England	Governance
Designations with a nature conservation purpose		
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)	4,127 in England as of February 2023 ⁹ 1,088,000 hectares in total ¹⁰	Natural England designates sites. ¹¹ The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) lead the production of the guidelines for SSSIs. ¹²
Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)	242 designations in England (no cross-border areas) 1,069,000 hectares in total ¹³ (SAC site area figures relate to both terrestrial and inshore areas. No terrestrial-only figures are available) ¹⁴	Natural England designates sites. ¹⁵ JNCC advises the Government on aspects of the designation and management of SACs. ¹⁶

9 Natural England, *Designated Sites View*: <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SSSIGuidance.aspx> [accessed 26 June 2023]

10 Woodland Trust, 'SSSI Definition': <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2019/03/sssi-definition/> [accessed 26 June 2023]

11 Natural England, *Sites of special scientific interest: managing your land* (24 April 2013): <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protected-areas-sites-of-special-scientific-interest> [accessed 18 July 2023]

12 JNCC Written Evidence (PAE0021)

13 Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), *Special Areas of Conservation*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/special-areas-of-conservation/> [accessed 18 July 2023]

14 *Ibid.*

15 Natural England, *Sites of special scientific interest: managing your land* (24 April 2013): <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protected-areas-sites-of-special-scientific-interest> [accessed 18 July 2023]

16 JNCC, *SAC condition & reporting*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/special-areas-of-conservation/#sac-condition-reporting> [accessed 18 July 2023]

Designation	Number and size of designation type in England	Governance
Special Protection Areas (SPAs)	82 designations in England (no cross-border areas) 972,000 hectares in total ¹⁷ (SPA site area figures relate to both terrestrial and inshore areas. No terrestrial-only figures are available) ¹⁸	Natural England designates sites. ¹⁹ JNCC advises the Government on aspects of the designation and management of SPAs. ²⁰
Ramsar sites	68 in England 321,000 hectares in total ²¹	UK-wide coordination and guidance by JNCC, designations by Natural England and/or Defra. ²² Natural England is responsible for advising Government on the management of sites. ²³
Other types of designation		
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)	34 in England ²⁴ 1,957,000 hectares in total ²⁵	Natural England proposes areas and advises on designation, Defra designate. Local Planning Authorities manage planning proposals. ²⁶
National Parks	10 in England making up 9.3 per cent of the land areas of England 1,212,000 hectares in total hectares ²⁷	Natural England designates areas and advises, National Parks Authorities manage sites. ²⁸

17 JNCC, *Special Protection Areas, SPA Network Summary*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/special-protection-areas/#spa-network-summary> [accessed 22 June 2023]

18 *Ibid.*

19 JNCC, *SPA classification*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/special-protection-areas/#spa-classification> [accessed 18 July 2023]

20 JNCC, *Special Protection Areas*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/special-protection-areas/> [accessed 18 July 2023]

21 JNCC, *Ramsar Convention*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/ramsar-convention/#ramsar-site-network-summary> [accessed 26 June 2023]

22 Natural England, *Natura 2000: European wildlife sites*: https://consult.defra.gov.uk/natural-England/crouch-roach-estuaries/supporting_documents/European%20leaflet%20Natura%202000.pdf

23 Natural England (PAE0008)

24 Natural England, *Areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONBs): designation and management* (5 October 2018): <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/areas-of-outstanding-natural-beauty-aonbs-designation-and-management> [accessed 18 July 2023]

25 The National Association: *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, About Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty*: <https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/about-aonbs/about-aonbs> [Accessed 21 July 2023]

26 Natural England, *Areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONBs): designation and management* (5 October 2018): <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/areas-of-outstanding-natural-beauty-aonbs-designation-and-management> [accessed 18 July 2023]

27 UK National Parks, *What are National Parks For?*: <https://www.nationalparks.uk/app/uploads/2020/10/Key-Facts-and-Figures-for-the-15-UK-National-Parks.pdf>

28 Natural England, *Natural England's role with National Parks in England* (30 September 2014): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-parks-natural-Englands-role/natural-Englands-role-with-national-parks-in-England> [accessed 18 July 2023]

Designation	Number and size of designation type in England	Governance
Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs)	Approximately 43,000 in England ²⁹ More than 611,000 hectares in total ³⁰	Many owned privately by individuals, charities, schools, and estates. ³¹
National Nature Reserves (NNRs)	221 designations in England 105,000 hectares in total ³²	Natural England designate sites and manage some. Other sites managed by National Trust, Forestry England, RSPB, Wildlife Trust etc. ³³
Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)	1,666 designations in England 86,000 hectares in total as of February 2021 ³⁴	Designated by Local Authorities. ³⁵

10. There is considerable geographic overlap of many of the designations.³⁶ For example, many sites that are designated as SSSIs also carry an SAC and SPA designation. Many Ramsar sites also overlap with SSSI and SPA designations.³⁷ For this reason, data on the amount of area covered by protection cannot be easily aggregated.
11. Closing the gap between current progress towards 30 by 30 and the 30 per cent target on land will require the designation of significantly more land for the purpose of nature conservation on land that currently has different or complementary purposes. The UK Government's Land Use statistics published in 2022 list the following top land use groups in England:
- 'Agriculture' (63.1 per cent),
 - 'Forestry, open land and water' (20.1 per cent)
 - 'Residential gardens' (4.9 per cent),
 - 'Transport and utilities' (4.4 per cent),
 - 'Outdoor recreation' (2.1 per cent),
 - 'Other developed use' (1.9 per cent)

29 Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre, 'Local Wildlife Sites': <https://www.tverc.org/cms/content/local-wildlife-sites> [accessed 26 June 2023]

30 The Wildlife Trusts, 'Local Wildlife Sites': <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/local-wildlife-sites> [accessed 26 June 2023]

31 Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs & Northants, 'Local Wildlife Sites': <https://www.wildlifebcn.org/about-us/advice-landowners/local-wildlife-sites> [accessed 18 July 2023]

32 Natural England, *National Nature Reserves in England*: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-nature-reserves-in-england> [accessed 26 June 2023]

33 *Ibid.*

34 Urban Ecology Forum, *Local nature reserves—providing high-quality natural places and green spaces* (July/August 2021): <https://urbanecologyforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Local-Nature-Reserves-John-Box-2021.pdf> [accessed 26 June 2023]

35 Nottingham City Council, 'Local Nature Reserves' (31 March 2023): <https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/16f1fd72-5e6a-4809-b0cd-12cdac37ffac/local-nature-reserves> [accessed 18 July 2023]

36 JNCC, *Protected areas*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/ukbi-cl-protected-areas/> [accessed 26 June 2023]

37 *Ibid.*

- and ‘Residential’ (1.3 per cent).³⁸

12. The number of marine designations considered in this report and relevant governance arrangements are set out below:

Table 2: Protected areas at sea

Designation	Number of Sites	Governance
Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), including Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) and SACs, SPAs and SSSIs at sea	178 total number of designations in English waters. ³⁹	Inshore legislated by Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) in England. ⁴⁰ Marine Management Organisation license inshore and offshore waters in England. ⁴¹ Natural England advise Government for sea which is less than 12 nautical miles from the coast, while JNCC advise Government for sea which is greater than 12 nautical miles from the coast up to 200 nautical miles to extent of exclusive economic zone (EEZ). MCZs designated by Defra. ⁴²
Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs)	Three total designations in English waters. ⁴³	Defra designate sites. ⁴⁴ JNCC, Natural England, IFCAs, Marine Management Organisation (MMO), and Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) work together and/or provide advice on the management of HPMAs. ⁴⁵

38 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), *Land use statistics: England 2022* (27 October 2022). Only land uses exceeding 1 per cent of land in England are listed. The remaining 2.2 per cent is made up of Undeveloped land, Community services, Industry and commerce, Vacant land, Minerals and landfill and Defence: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/land-use-in-england-2022/land-use-statistics-england-2022> [accessed 19 July 2023]

39 Marine Management Organisation (MMO), *Marine protected areas background*: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/managing-fisheries-in-marine-protected-areas> [accessed 18 July 2023]

40 JNCC Written Evidence (PAE0021)

41 MMO, *Marine licensing—Definitions* (20 May 2019): <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/marine-licensing-definitions> [accessed 18 July 2023]

42 Defra, *Marine Conservation Zones Designation Explanatory Note* (November 2013): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/259972/pb14078-mcz-explanatory-note.pdf

43 Defra, *Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs)* (25 May 2023): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/highly-protected-marine-areas/highly-protected-marine-areas-hpmas> [accessed 18 July 2023]

44 JNCC, *Roles of Defra and its Arms-Length Bodies* (July 5 2023): <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/english-highly-protected-marine-areas/#roles-of-defra-and-its-arms-length-bodies> [accessed 18 July 2023]

45 JNCC, *English Highly Protected Marine Areas*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/english-highly-protected-marine-areas/> [accessed 18 July 2023]

CHAPTER 2: THE 30 BY 30 TARGET: CURRENT CONTEXT AND PROGRESS

Backdrop to 30 by 30

13. Greener environments are associated with better quality of life, wellbeing and improved health and resilience for both children and adults through multiple social, economic and environmental means.⁴⁶ Natural England estimate that parks and greenspaces in England deliver £6.6 billion annually of health, climate change and environmental benefits.⁴⁷ The Office for National Statistics tracks environmental improvements as an indicator for their data on quality of life in the UK and protected areas coverage forms part of the data for reporting this indicator.⁴⁸ The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP) also sets out the integral role that the natural environment plays in our everyday lives, our wellbeing and our prosperity.⁴⁹
14. Meeting 30 by 30 and wider nature recovery both require urgent action. The 2019 State of Nature Report states that 41 per cent of species in the UK have decreased in abundance since 1970 while 15 per cent of UK species have been classified as threatened with extinction.⁵⁰
15. Protected areas will play a vital role in delivering 30 by 30 and wider environmental targets. As set out in Chapter 1, protected areas are defined by the Convention on Biological Diversity as a “clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values”.⁵¹
16. We heard that biodiversity and threatened species fare better in protected areas than in the wider environment.⁵² Furthermore, there is clear evidence in support of the strength of higher levels of protection such as those provided by SPAs and SACs.⁵³ Unlike SSSIs, SPAs and SACs carry a legal requirement for developers to carry out a habitat regulations assessment to measure the potential impacts of their plans on the conservation objectives of the sites.⁵⁴
17. **It is clear from the we evidence received that designations with a nature conservation purpose are an important starting point for meeting 30**

46 Public Health England, *Improving access to greenspace: A new review for 2020* (March 2020): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/904439/Improving_access_to_greenspace_2020_review.pdf

47 Written evidence from Natural England (PAE0008)

48 Office for National Statistics, *Quality of life in the UK* (November 2022): <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/bulletins/qualityoflifeintheuk/november2022> [accessed on 22 June 2023]

49 Defra, *25 Year Environment Plan*, (11 January 2018): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf

50 State of Nature Partnership, a health check on how the UK's wildlife is faring put together using wildlife data from a group of 50 conservation organisations. *State of Nature Report* (2019): <https://nbn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/State-of-Nature-2019-UK-full-report.pdf>

51 United Nations, *Convention on Biological Diversity—Protected Areas*: <https://www.cbd.int/undb/media/factsheets/undb-factsheet-pa-en.pdf>

52 Q 8 (Professor Rick Stafford, Professor Jane Hill)

53 Written evidence from RSPB (PAE0002) and Wildlife Trusts (PAE0006), Defra, *Changes to the Habitats Regulations 2017* (1 January 2021): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-the-habitats-regulations-2017/changes-to-the-habitats-regulations-2017> [accessed 18 July 2023]

54 Defra, Natural England, Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales, *Habitats regulations assessments: protecting a European site* (24 February 2021): <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/habitats-regulations-assessments-protecting-a-european-site> [accessed 18 July 2023]

by 30. At present, protected areas are not sufficient in their extent and are often in poor condition, as we discuss in Chapter 3. Existing designations have a distinctive and valuable role and can be layered to allow an evolutionary approach to better nature protection. The Government is yet to clearly commit to retaining them.

18. *We recommend that all existing designations for nature conservation in England be retained as a basis for the 30 by 30 target. They will require investment in resources and incentives for better management to meet clear nature conservation objectives, in addition to investment in effective monitoring.*

Current progress towards 30 by 30

19. At present, progress towards 30 by 30 is difficult to assess and there are discrepancies between figures we have received from stakeholders regarding the amount of land currently protected for nature. We heard that at present the amount of land effectively contributing to restoring biodiversity is low.⁵⁵
20. The JNCC said in their written evidence that currently 6.5 per cent of land in England is covered by protected area designation.⁵⁶ This figure includes SSSIs, NNRs and Ramsar, SAC and SPA sites.⁵⁷ However, this figure refers to the extent of protected areas only and does not consider site condition.⁵⁸
21. The Wildlife and Countryside Link *2022 Progress Report on 30 x 30 in England* states that 3.22 per cent of land in England is effectively protected and managed for nature.⁵⁹ The figure of 3.22 per cent refers to the number of SSSIs in England that are in a favourable condition and is therefore an underestimate of the total protected land in England.⁶⁰
22. The gap between the amount of effectively protected land at present and the 30 per cent target is substantial and concerning. Taking the higher JNCC figure of 6.5 per cent of land in England covered by protected areas designation as the starting point for assessing progress, this still leaves a considerable gap of 23.5 per cent of land remaining to achieve the 30 by 30 target. When considered in terms of area, a further 3,066,000 hectares will need to be protected for nature to achieve the 30 by 30 target.⁶¹ This area equates to an area approximately one and a half times the size of Wales.⁶² Importantly, this does not consider the quality of the land protected, only the extent of current protected areas.

55 Q 1 (Professor Jane Hill)

56 Supplementary written evidence from the JNCC (PAE0026), Written evidence from Wildlife and Countryside Link (PAE0007)

57 JNCC, *Protected areas*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/ukbi-cl-protected-areas/> [accessed 26 June 2023]

58 Supplementary evidence from the JNCC (PAE0028)

59 Written evidence from Wildlife and Countryside Link (PAE0007)

60 Wildlife and Countryside Link, *2020 Progress report on 30x30 in England* (October 2022): https://www.wcl.org.uk/assets/uploads/img/files/WCL_2022_Progress_Report_on_30x30_in_England.pdf

61 Calculated using the UK Government's land area of value of 13,046,000 hectares in the 2022 HM Government, 'Land Use Statistics: England 2022': <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/land-use-in-england-2022/land-use-statistics-england-2022> [accessed 26 June 2023]

62 The figure is 1.46 times the size of Wales using the UK Government's land area of value of 13,046,000 hectares in the DLUHC, *Land Use Statistics: England 2022* (27 October 2022): <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/land-use-in-england-2022/land-use-statistics-england-2022> [accessed 26 June 2023] and the Welsh Government figures for land area from the Welsh Government, *Farming, Facts and Figures, Wales 2020*: <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2020-07/farming-facts-and-figures-2020-658.pdf>

23. There has been limited discussion of a significant increase in new designations between now and 2030.⁶³ Evidence received during the inquiry underscored the need for a systematic data-driven spatial assessment of areas which could provide opportunities for further conservation and protection or where damaging activities could be prevented to drive nature recovery.⁶⁴ The forthcoming Land Use Framework will also be vital in helping to identify and prioritise land for the 30 by 30 target.⁶⁵
24. Defra told us that they plan to publish a map of what counts towards 30 by 30 by the end of 2023.⁶⁶ In oral evidence, Ed Barker, Director for Natural Environment, Trees and Landscapes at Defra, said that the Government intends to include some detail alongside the map that addresses how the Government intends to achieve 30 by 30.⁶⁷
25. **At present it is not clear which sites are intended to count towards 30 by 30, or how the Government plans to achieve the target. We welcome Defra’s plan to publish a map of what will count towards 30 by 30 before the end of 2023. However, with only 6.5 per cent of land in England currently covered by Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserve (NNR), Ramsar, Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Area (SPA) site designations and a lack of clarity about the level of nature conservation protections for some of these sites, an urgent step change is needed to ensure that the 30 by 30 target will be met.**
26. *We are pleased to see that the Government will be publishing a map this year on what counts towards 30 by 30. We recommend that alongside the map, the Government produce an action plan addressing the extent, condition, management and monitoring of areas to achieve the target. This must address how the significant gap between current designations and the 30 per cent target on land will be addressed.*

EU Habitats Regulations

27. Stakeholders reported concern about the impact the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 could have on SACs and SPAs protected by the retained Habitats Regulations.⁶⁸ When the UK left the EU in 2020, EU law was converted into UK domestic law and preserved as “retained EU law” (REUL). The REUL Bill proposed to revoke all REUL at the end of 2023 unless specifically saved. During passage of the Bill the Government changed its approach so that only specific pieces of REUL would be revoked at the end of 2023 if listed in the legislation. However, the Act confers powers on Ministers to modify REUL. Evidence the Committee received reported that SACs and SPAs are England’s strongest protections for nature.⁶⁹ The

63 [Q 48](#) (Trudy Harrison MP)

64 [Q 29](#), [Q 30](#) (Professor Mark Kibblewhite), Written evidence from Wildlife and Countryside Link ([PAE0007](#)) and Marine Conservation Society (MCS) ([PAE0017](#))

65 Defra, *Government food strategy* (June 2022): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1082026/government-food-strategy.pdf. The intention to publish a Land Use Framework in 2023 is set out at page 11.

66 Written evidence from Defra ([PAE0009](#))

67 [Q 57](#) (Edward Barker)

68 [Retained EU Law \(Revocation and Reform\) Act 2023](#); Written evidence from RSPB ([PAE0002](#)), Wildlife Trusts ([PAE0006](#)), Wildlife and Countryside Link ([PAE0007](#)) and MCS ([PAE0017](#))

69 Written evidence from Wildlife and Countryside Link ([PAE0007](#))

Committee heard that weakening the protection provided to these sites by diluting or revoking the Habitats Regulations would undermine the Government's ability to meet its 30 by 30 commitment on both land and sea.⁷⁰

28. **We heard from stakeholders that the designations covered by the EU Habitats Regulations are the sites with the highest strength of protection in England. They will be critical for achieving the 30 by 30 target and supporting nature recovery.**
29. *We are pleased the Habitats Regulations were not included in the list of retained EU law which will be revoked by 31 December 2023 under the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023, but there is still a possibility of their substantial dilution. We recommend that the Habitats Regulations are retained and are not subject to amendment without an appropriate degree of parliamentary scrutiny or where the protections afforded by the regulations are weakened.*

Protection and monitoring approach

30. The current approach to designating terrestrial and marine protected areas is to identify features for protection and then create designations or sites that protect those features. This allows for assessment of population trends for important species.
31. Professor Rick Stafford noted that feature-based monitoring on both land and sea needs to be complemented with a whole-ecosystem approach. Whole-ecosystem monitoring can deliver more accurate information on the overall condition of terrestrial and marine ecosystems.⁷¹
32. A feature-based approach can mean that meaningful protection is of a small area that corresponds to a protected feature, such as an area of protected worms at sea, in the middle of an area where bottom trawling is permitted.⁷² This is because this approach focuses on conserving the specific habitats and species within an area's boundaries for which it has been designated, rather than whole ecosystems.
33. In the 25 Year Environment Plan, the Government set out an intention to move to a whole-site approach to protect sites of greatest biodiversity interest.⁷³ We received considerable evidence to suggest that feature-based protection and monitoring should be complemented with a whole-site approach.⁷⁴ At sea, whole-site protection from surface to seabed would provide more protection and generate more recovery.⁷⁵ This more holistic approach could provide analysis of the overall condition of the ecosystems and ecological resilience to withstand stress, which is likely to become increasingly important as the impacts of climate change are felt in protected areas.⁷⁶ The Marine

70 Written evidence from RSPB ([PAE0002](#))

71 Written evidence from Professor Rick Stafford ([PAE0004](#))

72 [Q 10](#) (Professor Callum Roberts)

73 Defra, *25 Year Environment Plan* (11 January 2018): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf

74 Written evidence from Country and Land Business Association (CLA) ([PAE0016](#)), Professor Rick Stafford ([PAE0004](#)), JNCC ([PAE0021](#)), MSC8 ([PAE0017](#)), [Q 10](#) (Professor Callum Roberts)

75 [Q 10](#) (Professor Callum Roberts)

76 Written evidence from MCS ([PAE0017](#))

Conservation Society (MCS) and the JNCC recommended a move towards more whole-site or ecosystem-focused approach to MPA management.⁷⁷

34. On land, the Country Land and Business Association (CLA) argued that feature-based protection does not consider the multiple functions delivered by a given site or that land often needs to deliver multiple benefits.⁷⁸ They noted that as nature recovers, there needs to be scope to seek more dynamic and flexible approaches that include management for ecological process and ecosystem function.⁷⁹ The CLA argued that this would also help to attract funding from environmental markets, which is currently difficult with a feature-based approach.
35. **We heard that a whole-site approach for protection and monitoring, including the collection of site-level details, in combination with the current approach focused on species monitoring and counting, would be a more effective approach. It would allow an understanding of site condition, taking in factors beyond a single feature and would develop a greater understanding of ecological resilience in response to stress such as climate change. It would also consider the multiple, overlapping functions delivered by individual sites.**
36. *We recommend that the Government develops a whole-site protection and monitoring approach to protected areas on land, in addition to the feature-based monitoring and assessment that is currently used.*

77 Written evidence from MCS ([PAE0017](#)) and the JNCC ([PAE0021](#))

78 Written evidence from CLA([PAE0016](#))

79 *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 3: PROTECTED AREAS ON LAND AND 30 BY 30

37. This chapter examines the protected areas and designations on land that could count towards 30 by 30. Protected areas and designations at sea are considered separately in Chapter 5. Marine protection is being considered separately because the situation at sea is more complicated and much less is known about site condition due to the cost and challenge of monitoring at sea.
38. This chapter focuses particularly on SSSIs, the current status of SSSI monitoring and what is known about SSSI site condition. The focus on SSSIs is due to the significant amount of evidence and concerns we received about this designation type. Monitoring systems and condition statuses for designations on land with a nature conservation purpose are set out at Table 6 in Appendix 3.

Monitoring of SSSIs

39. Monitoring is critical to establishing and maintaining a baseline of condition assessment data for SSSIs.⁸⁰ The JNCC, in their ‘Common Standards Monitoring for Designated Sites’ report note that “the intention is that every feature on every designated site in the United Kingdom should be assessed over a period of six years in a rolling monitoring cycle”.⁸¹ Following monitoring, the condition of the site is graded against a set of published criteria to assess the relative health of the site and whether the management in place is sufficient to conserve the site.⁸² At present, the lack of available data on monitoring and condition assessment is a significant concern and has generated a challenging data gap.⁸³ Stakeholders reported that only 22 per cent of SSSI sites have been monitored in the last six years.⁸⁴ Regular monitoring is important in order to understand conservation outcomes and the progress and success of current management methods and efforts.⁸⁵
40. The Environment Improvement Plan (EIP), published in January 2023, includes a new target for all SSSIs to have an up-to-date condition assessment by 31 January 2028.⁸⁶ The monitoring target is a welcome announcement but comes after a sustained period of funding cuts to the bodies responsible for monitoring between 2010 and 2019 which curtailed pro-active work on SSSIs and has created a paucity of monitoring data.⁸⁷ Re-establishing effective monitoring will be critical to meeting 30 by 30.⁸⁸ An up-to-date assessment target of 31 January 2028 leaves less than two years between achieving a full assessment of the state of SSSIs and the 30 by 30 deadline.
41. Stakeholders noted that a statutory duty on Natural England for monitoring could complement the current statutory duty to maintain and enhance SSSIs,

80 [Q 19](#) (Baroness Willis of Summertown)

81 JNCC, *Common Standards Monitoring for Designated Sites: First Six Year Report*: <https://data.jncc.gov.uk/data/15967de5-9da9-4d1f-b067-a8e76549bdca/CSM-1-Summary-2006.pdf>

82 JNCC, *Common Standards Monitoring*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/common-standards-monitoring/> [accessed 23 June]

83 Written evidence from Rick Stafford ([PAE0004](#))

84 Written evidence from Wildlife and Countryside Link ([PAE0007](#)), [Q 1](#) (Professor Rick Stafford)

85 [Q 4](#) (Professor Rick Stafford)

86 Defra, *Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 (31 January 2023)*: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan> [accessed 26 June 2023]

87 Written evidence from Natural England ([PAE0008](#)) and the RSPB ([PAE0002](#))

88 Written evidence from Wildlife and Countryside Link ([PAE0007](#)) and Campaign for National Parks ([PAE0001](#))

in addition to other statutory duties it already has, including to notify and confirm SSSIs, the issuing of consents and ensuring positive management.⁸⁹ It would ensure monitoring is safeguarded as an integral part of nature recovery so that precipitous drops in monitoring activity, such as those seen in 2010–2019, can be protected against in future.⁹⁰ It would also ensure that we have a good understanding of site condition ahead of and beyond the 30 by 30 target.

42. **We received substantial evidence regarding the patchiness of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) monitoring data. Poor monitoring data limits the understanding of the current condition of sites across the SSSI network and makes effective planning for targeted action very challenging. We heard about the impact of funding cuts to Natural England between 2010–2019 which has led to only 22 per cent of SSSI sites having been monitored in the last six years. Sustained funding support and clear, stable policy with regards to monitoring with a focus on the delivery of 30 by 30 is required to attain a clearer, data-driven picture of the site condition across the SSSI network in England.**
43. *While the Committee recognises the challenges posed by a constrained budget, the Government needs to develop an effective policy with a sustained funding commitment to deliver regular monitoring of SSSIs and for each site to be monitored every six years. The monitoring should produce transparent and accessible data and the Government should also seek to make use of voluntary contributions to data collection and monitoring, such as citizen science programmes.*
44. **The Committee heard from a number of stakeholders that a lack of a statutory duty for SSSI monitoring has, due to implementation of past budget cuts, meant monitoring has become a casualty of resource constraints. A statutory monitoring duty would help deliver the funding for a priority activity to achieve the 30 by 30 target.**
45. *We recommend that the Government use the next legislative opportunity to place a statutory duty on Natural England for monitoring of SSSIs and that the resulting data is made publicly available.*

Condition of SSSIs

46. Monitoring data is used to generate an assessment of the condition of the protected feature at the site. The condition of a site is described using the Common Standards Monitoring (CSM) set out by the JNCC, which is used for SSSIs as well as SACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites.⁹¹ The details of condition status for the main designated sites considered in this report are set out at Table 6 in Appendix 3. At present there is a data gap due to inadequate monitoring which makes accurate condition assessment for many sites very challenging.⁹²

89 Written evidence from Natural England ([PAE0008](#)) and RSPB ([PAE0002](#))

90 Written evidence from RSPB ([PAE0002](#))

91 JNCC, *Common Standards Monitoring*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/common-standards-monitoring/> [accessed 23 June]

92 Written evidence from Professor Rick Stafford ([PAE0004](#))

47. In the EIP the Government set an interim target that by 31 January 2028, 50 per cent of SSSIs should have actions on track to achieve favourable condition.⁹³ Furthermore, the Environment Act 2021 includes biodiversity targets to restore 75 per cent of SSSIs by area to favourable condition by 2042.⁹⁴
48. Written evidence from Natural England indicated that progress on the SSSI target is slow.⁹⁵ For SSSIs, Natural England reports that 37 per cent are currently in a “favourable condition”, while 49.4 per cent are in an “unfavourable but recovering” condition.⁹⁶ In 2010, 37.2 per cent of SSSIs were in a favourable condition, revealing that no meaningful progress has been made on SSSI site condition in the last 13 years.⁹⁷ Natural England said that the recent investment and uptick in monitoring is currently revealing a decline in favourability rating due to the sustained period of lower funding.⁹⁸ This is evidenced by the drop in sites in a favourable condition from 38.7 per cent in 2020 to 37 per cent at present.⁹⁹
49. **We welcome the Government target to meet the goal of 75 per cent of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) to be in a favourable condition by 2042 and the interim target that 50 per cent of SSSIs should have actions on track to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028. The evidence shows that the condition of SSSI sites is poor, and the Government has made no progress in improving the condition and quality of SSSIs over the last 13 years, with current data revealing a small decrease in site condition. A step change is required to deliver tangible progress on site condition and to deliver the interim target set out in the Environment Improvement Plan.**
50. *Alongside the publication of the map, the Government should indicate what proportion of sites are currently in adequate condition to count towards 30 by 30. The Government should publish a clear plan with realistic targets to deliver steady progress on moving more SSSIs into favourable condition. Future progress should be clearly evidenced and publicly available.*

Criteria for meeting 30 by 30

51. Trudy Harrison MP, Defra Minister for Natural Environment and Land Use, noted in oral evidence the Government’s intention for all sites that are counted in 30 by 30 to meet international guidance, but there remains a lack of clarity around which protected areas are intended to be included.¹⁰⁰ We heard concerns from stakeholders about the recently published EIP, in particular the suggestion to include ELMS such as the Sustainable Farming

93 Written evidence from Environment Agency (PAE0022)

94 [Environment Act 2021](#); Defra, *New legally binding environment targets set out* (16 December 2022): <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-legally-binding-environment-targets-set-out> [accessed 19 July 2023]; Defra, *Land use report and condition of England’s Sites of Special Scientific Interest* (23 January 2020): <https://deframedia.blog.gov.uk/2020/01/23/land-use-report-and-condition-of-englands-sites-of-special-scientific-interest/> [accessed 19 July 2023]

95 Written evidence from Natural England (PAE0008)

96 *Ibid.*

97 *Ibid.*

98 *Ibid.*

99 *Ibid.*

100 [Q 36](#) (Trudy Harrison MP)

Incentive (SFI) and the Landscape Recovery scheme which do not meet IUCN guidance.¹⁰¹

52. Ms Harrison noted an intention for specific sites or parts of National Parks and AONBs to be included in the map of what counts towards 30 by 30 as “bespoke designations”, which is due to be published later this year.¹⁰² A number of stakeholders communicated their concerns around the inclusion of National Parks and AONBs without sufficient uplift in protection to meet international guidance.¹⁰³ Written evidence from National Parks England pointed to concerns around the suggestion that a stronger duty for protected landscapes could be delivered by the general biodiversity duty, created by the Environment Act 2021, without a need for further legislation.¹⁰⁴
53. **Stakeholders expressed concern about the inclusion of designated areas in the 30 by 30 target which do not meet International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) guidance. We share this concern. Additionally, any new designations contributing to 30 by 30 will need to be assessed against international criteria. Robust selection criteria for which areas count towards 30 by 30 should be in place to ensure that sites are high-quality and protected for nature.**
54. *We recommend that areas contributing towards 30 by 30 should comply with the guidance set out by the IUCN which requires that protected areas are “clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values”. Further, we recommend that the longevity criteria for ‘long-term’ conservation be set at more than 30 years.*
55. *Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) on land and at sea and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) should have been monitored in the last six years or in the six years preceding the target date of 2030, as is consistent with the JNCC common standards monitoring for designated sites. Sites that achieve a condition status other than “destroyed” could be included in the 30 by 30 target. They should have a management plan and actionable timeframe for delivery. Sites that are declared to be “destroyed” do not meet the criteria for 30 by 30 and should not be included.*

Threats to SSSI condition

56. Protected areas on land play a vital role in safeguarding natural heritage and conserving biodiversity. However, these areas encounter numerous threats and challenges that can undermine their integrity and the ecosystems they protect. As the Committee heard in oral evidence: “just because [the area is] an SSSI, that does not automatically stop the decline in rare and threatened species we have on the site”.¹⁰⁵

101 Written evidence from the RSPB ([PAE0002](#)); Defra, *Environment Improvement Plan* (31 January 2023): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan>

102 [Q 41](#) (Trudy Harrison MP)

103 [Q 4](#) (Professor Jane Hill), Written evidence from Wildlife and Countryside Link ([PAE0007](#)), RSPB ([PAE0002](#)), The Wildlife Trusts ([PAE0006](#)) and the Campaign for National Parks ([PAE0001](#))

104 [Environment Act 2021](#); Written evidence from National Parks England ([PAE0015](#))

105 [Q 35](#) (Jenny Hawley)

57. Evidence submitted by Natural England stated that more than 25 per cent of SSSIs are affected by off-site pressures—those that are outside the immediate control of the SSSI land manager.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, although there may be on-site management strategies to protect certain features or species, these protections may not be enough to protect areas from external threats.¹⁰⁷
58. Nitrogen deposition is now the most significant and widespread pollutant and has led to significant habitat changes and impacts on associated dependent species in England.¹⁰⁸ Over 97 per cent of sensitive habitat areas and 89 per cent of SSSIs are predicted to exceed critical nitrogen deposition thresholds, impacting biodiversity objectives.¹⁰⁹ Climate change will have a major impact on species, their movement and their habitats. Both oral and written evidence indicated that types of protections and designations will need to evolve to account for the impact of climate change and the potential shift of habitats and populations.¹¹⁰

Connecting protected areas

59. Evidence from the Environment Agency suggests that habitats and species remain increasingly isolated and at risk in protected areas.¹¹¹ A critical component of meeting 30 by 30 will be developing connectivity between the current network of protected areas through establishing nature corridors and new sites which will help to join up areas of rich biodiversity in the UK.¹¹² We received evidence which suggested that the linking up of SSSIs is what makes many of them work for nature recovery.¹¹³ Stakeholders said that establishing connectivity requires a data-driven approach, using open and transparent datasets, to identify key areas and sites to develop corridors.¹¹⁴
60. Developing connectivity will require an expansion of sites and the development of a network of rich habitats.¹¹⁵ Professor Jane Hill said on connectivity:
- “When we come back to questions about connectivity, if that protected area is not large enough to support that population, or that species is shifting, having smaller patches of Protected Areas can provide corridors and so-called stepping-stone habitats. They may not be large enough for the population to persist there in isolation but they act as conduits to allow species to move through the landscape.”¹¹⁶
61. The 25 Year Environment Plan sets out aims to ensure that landscapes are transformed by connecting habitats into larger corridors for wildlife and to extend some wildlife corridors into towns and cities.¹¹⁷ We are pleased to see that the Government intends to develop the “Nature Recovery Network”, a

106 Written evidence from Natural England ([PAE0008](#))

107 [Q 29](#) (Jenny Hawley)

108 Written evidence from Natural England ([PAE0008](#))

109 *Ibid.*

110 [Q 2](#) (Professor Rick Stafford), [Q 30](#) (Jenny Hawley), Written evidence from Professor Rick Stafford ([PAE0004](#))

111 Written evidence from the Environment Agency ([PAE0022](#))

112 [Q 39](#) (Trudy Harrison MP and Edward Barker), Written evidence from Wildlife and Countryside Link ([PAE0007](#))

113 [Q 23](#) (Baroness Willis of Summertown)

114 [Q 27](#) (Baroness Willis of Summertown), [Q 30](#) (Professor Mark Kibblewhite)

115 Written evidence from Natural England ([PAE0008](#)) and Wildlife and Countryside Link ([PAE0007](#))

116 [Q 7](#) (Professor Jane Hill)

117 Defra, *25 Year Environment Plan* (11 January 2018): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan> [accessed 19 July 2023]

network of wildlife-rich places, stretching across the country and connected through wildlife corridors.¹¹⁸ It is expected to form a web of areas that will support and connect identified 30 by 30 sites.¹¹⁹

62. We heard that ELMS and engagement with land managers (discussed in Chapter 4) could play an important role in improving connectivity, working with land managers to identify priority areas to develop set-asides such as field edges and corridors on farmland.¹²⁰ Baroness Willis of Summertown said:
- “We need be driven by data to start off with and use a data approach to say, ‘This is your land. This part of your landscape would be really important because it links up this SSSI with that SSSI. Would you be interested in creating a corridor there? If so, we will pay you to do that.’”¹²¹
63. We are aware that Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs) will be key in identifying areas to achieve greater connectivity between protected sites.¹²²
64. **We were pleased to hear that developing connectivity between various designations is a priority for the Government. Evidence we have received points to the critical role of connectivity and corridors across the wider landscape and urban areas to provide conduits for species to move, particularly to support the development of a systems approach to nature restoration and move away from siloed forms of protection.**
65. *We welcome the resourcing of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs), but for them to deliver on the creation of sites to achieve connectivity, not just identify them, they must be given sufficient weight in the planning system as described further at paragraph 129.*

Collaborative approach to 30 by 30

Partnership working

66. We heard evidence from a number of stakeholders regarding the complexity of nature recovery, and the central role that partnerships and collaboration will play in delivering 30 by 30 and other national biodiversity targets and managing a myriad of threats.¹²³ The Environment Agency reports that effective partnership working has significantly increased the scale of their outcomes for nature while also delivering other benefits for society.¹²⁴
67. The Committee received evidence about the need for effective coordination between relevant government departments statutory bodies, devolved nations and overseas territories, all of whom will play an important role in delivering domestic and international biodiversity and protection targets.¹²⁵

118 Written evidence from Natural England ([PAE0008](#))

119 *Ibid.*

120 [Q 23](#) (Baroness Willis of Summertown)

121 [Q 27](#) (Baroness Willis of Summertown)

122 Written evidence from Natural England ([PAE0008](#)); Defra, *Local nature recovery strategy guidance* (March 2023): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1146160/Local_nature_recovery_strategy_statutory_guidance.pdf

123 Written evidence from Defra ([PAE0009](#)), Natural England ([PAE0008](#)), the Environment Agency ([PAE0022](#))

124 Written evidence from the Environment Agency ([PAE0022](#))

125 [Q 12](#) (Dr James Robinson)

68. **The impact of threats to the environment are managed by a wide range of policies and corresponding government departments and devolved administrations. Achieving 30 by 30 will be a collaborative goal and will require effective and joined up working beyond Defra and beyond Whitehall. It will require commitment, coordination and funding from Government to ensure delivery.**
69. **Delivering 30 by 30 will require investment of time, resources and coordination led by Defra to work in partnership with other bodies. The target will not be delivered by Defra alone.**
70. *We recommend that alongside the publication of the map, the Government make clear the relationships and other partners whom they will work alongside to deliver 30 by 30. This should recognise the roles of—as well as the partnerships between—the statutory bodies, volunteer and other relevant organisations, and government departments in delivering, managing and monitoring the range of designations and mechanisms to be used for nature recovery.*

Devolved nations and the overseas territories

71. The scope of this inquiry is to consider protected areas in England, as environmental policy is a devolved matter. However, meeting 30 by 30 will require effective collaboration and coordination between the devolved nations, and the whole of the UK is a signatory to the GBF. The Committee heard that collaboration has thus far been well facilitated by the Four Countries Biodiversity Group (4CBG), a group which is led by Defra, co-chaired by each devolved administration in turn, and with the JNCC acting as secretariat.¹²⁶ This forum is vital as devolved nations often work using different protected area designations and do not always have comparable data sets, which means that understanding management approaches and progress can be complex.¹²⁷ From the Scottish Government we heard that despite environment policy and implementation being devolved, the individual nations were keen to interact through 4CBG to ensure that, for example, all nations agree upon common standards, definitions and approaches.¹²⁸ Whilst overall positive evidence was received with regards to the 4CBG, we heard that its purpose could be further enhanced by more regular meetings and earlier sharing of information for consideration by devolved administrations.¹²⁹
72. Whilst legislation and policy will inherently differ between each devolved nation, one area in which there is scope to reach a common standard or definition is regarding OECMs, which could count towards the delivery of the protected areas target.¹³⁰ OECMs are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. A set of common principles for OECMs has been established through a series of workshops, and countries continue to share their approaches to developing criteria for OECMs with the guiding aim of ensuring sufficient consistency across all devolved statutory bodies.¹³¹

126 Written evidence from the Welsh Government ([PAE0011](#)) and the Northern Ireland Government ([PAE0012](#))

127 [Q 1](#) (Professor Rick Stafford)

128 Written evidence from the Scottish Government ([PAE0010](#))

129 Written evidence from the Welsh Government ([PAE0011](#))

130 Written evidence from the Scottish Government ([PAE0010](#))

131 Written evidence from the JNCC ([PAE0021](#))

73. The Committee acknowledges the Government is working closely with the UK Overseas Territories (OTs) to develop a new UK OT Biodiversity Strategy.¹³² However, there is an issue of coordination, with each of the UK OTs having different protected area designations and different ways of monitoring, resulting in data that is very difficult to compare. The OTs require support to help them deliver, and yet the Committee received evidence that they receive limited resources to do so.¹³³
74. **Effective collaboration and partnership working will play an important role in working constructively with the devolved administrations to develop criteria and share best practice. It will also be important for supporting the UK Overseas Territories to deliver successful management of protected areas and the contribution they can make towards 30 by 30.**
75. *We recommend that the Government prioritise establishing effective partnership working with the devolved administrations and the UK Overseas Territories. This will require an investment of time and the sufficient allocation of resources to support activities in the UK Overseas Territories and effective collaborative working with the devolved administrations.*

Citizen science

76. Ms Harrison outlined the importance of the public having a greater understanding about why sites are designated as protected areas and enabling members of the public to be more informed and involved in protected areas.¹³⁴ We received evidence that suggested that citizen science programmes could make a useful contribution to monitoring, as well as achieving wider community and educational benefits.¹³⁵ Citizen science approaches could provide valuable data on a more regular timeframe than statutory monitoring programmes.¹³⁶ However, to be effective, programmes need to be set up specifically to understand how biodiversity is changing, with robust data collection and storage methods.¹³⁷
77. Citizen science schemes are already in place for the monitoring of some species such as birds, bats, butterflies and plants, some of which have been in place over the long term and have made a substantial contribution to the statistical robustness of monitoring schemes.¹³⁸ The JNCC works in partnership with a range of research institutes and NGOs to run a number of long-term schemes to monitor and survey a range of species.¹³⁹
78. Standardised monitoring protocols would be needed as unstructured data is of minimal use.¹⁴⁰ The UK Environmental Observation Framework, in collaboration with the Natural History Museum and the Biological Records

132 Written evidence from Defra ([PAE0009](#))

133 [Q 12](#) (Dr James Robinson)

134 [Q 39](#), [Q 46](#) (Trudy Harrison MP)

135 [Q 6](#) (Professor Rick Stafford), Written evidence Professor Rick Stafford ([PAE0004](#))

136 Written evidence Professor Rick Stafford ([PAE0004](#))

137 [Q 5](#) (Professor Jane Hill)

138 Written evidence from JNCC ([PAE0021](#))

139 JNCC, *Citizen science and partnerships in monitoring*, <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/citizen-science-and-partnerships-in-monitoring/> [accessed 22 June 2023]

140 Written evidence Professor Rick Stafford ([PAE0004](#))

Centre put together a “Guide to Citizen Science” which outlines best practice around designing and implementing citizen science schemes.¹⁴¹

79. **We acknowledge that a significant increase in Government-administered monitoring is both staff and resource intensive at a time when there are significant competing demands on public finances. Citizen science data-gathering could play an important role in augmenting and strengthening the monitoring and management of SSSIs and other protected sites. A number of stakeholders reported the critical role that voluntary citizen science does and could play in supplementing monitoring data, if the methodologies used were robust and standardised. We conclude that, if managed effectively, citizen science programmes could make a worthwhile contribution to site and species monitoring efforts. This would serve to both enhance public awareness and engagement in the 30 by 30 initiative and support the delivery of robust datasets.**
80. *We recommend that the Government expand the role of robust citizen science programmes in protected areas to support monitoring and condition assessment programmes.*

Public engagement

81. Public-friendly tools and accessible data on the status of protected areas will be necessary to meet government commitments stated in the EIP, such as connecting children and nature and stimulating more engagement in protected areas and nature.¹⁴² Ms Harrison noted that the Defra-hosted interactive “Magic Map Application” to search for information about the natural environment is not user-friendly for the purpose of public consumption.¹⁴³ We agree. Professor Rick Stafford also expressed concerns regarding the accessibility of data in relation to protected areas.¹⁴⁴
82. **Public buy-in and understanding of the aims and benefits of protected areas will be critical to their success. There is more that could be done to raise awareness about the 30 by 30 targets and the benefits protected areas can deliver for society.**
83. *We recommend that the Government enable and resource Natural England to develop and publicise accessible digital and offline tools and communications to enable members of the public to learn about and engage with their local protected areas.*

141 Natural History Museum, *UK Environmental Observation Framework Guide to Citizen Science*: <https://www.ceh.ac.uk/sites/default/files/citizenscienceguide.pdf>

142 Defra, *Environmental Improvement Plan 2023* (31 January 2023): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan> [accessed 19 July 2023]

143 [Q 54](#) (Trudy Harrison MP)

144 Written evidence from Professor Rick Stafford ([PAE0004](#))

CHAPTER 4: OTHER AREAS AND MECHANISMS THAT COULD CONTRIBUTE TO NATURE RECOVERY AND BIODIVERSITY

84. The wider countryside, including landscapes, seascapes and well-managed farmland has a significant role to play in improving biodiversity, buffering protected areas and providing connectivity for threatened species populations. The Environment Agency said in written evidence:

“It is critical that there are effective measures to promote nature recovery in the wider countryside/seascape. Without these any protected areas network will always be limited in what it can achieve.”¹⁴⁵

85. At present the areas and sites discussed in this Chapter cannot contribute to the 30 by 30 target because they are not sufficiently protected for nature and do not meet IUCN guidance (as set out in Chapter 1). We consider the contribution they could make to the 30 by 30 target if their protection was strengthened and also the contribution they could make to broader nature recovery. We outline how additional mechanisms should be brought in to join up existing and proposed 30 by 30 compliant sites to ensure the benefits of larger connected areas and corridors. Such mechanisms, including OECMs may be identified through LNRSs.

National Parks and AONBs

86. In England, 25 per cent of the landscape is designated for ‘protected landscapes’: around 10 per cent as National Parks and 15 per cent as AONBs.¹⁴⁶ At present, as set out in the Environment Act 1995, National Parks have a statutory purpose to “conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of National Parks” and to “promote opportunities for the public understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Parks”.¹⁴⁷ AONBs have a statutory purpose to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area.¹⁴⁸ National Parks and AONBs do not currently meet IUCN guidance to be included in 30 by 30 because they do not have a statutory purpose to protect nature in the long-term. In the Nature Recovery Green Paper, the Government recognised that “under their current statutory purposes, [the] level of protection and management [of National Parks and AONBs] cannot be said to contribute towards 30 by 30 at this time.”¹⁴⁹
87. In response to a question about whether National Parks and AONBs without a statutory nature duty could meet international guidelines and thus count towards 30 by 30, Ms Harrison told the Committee:

“National Parks in their entirety, for the reasons I alluded to earlier, I doubt will be able to achieve that. It will require more bespoke designations for parts of those National Parks in some instances. Perhaps

145 Written evidence from the Environment Agency ([PAE0022](#))

146 Defra, *Landscape Review*: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/833726/landscapes-review-final-report.pdf

147 The Environment Act 1995, [Purposes of National Parks](#)

148 Defra, *AONB landscape protection and enhancement support scheme (England) 2019 to 2020* (24 April 2019): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/aonb-landscape-protection-and-enhancement-state-aid-re-registration/aonb-landscape-protection-and-enhancement-support-scheme-england-2019-to-2020> [accessed 22 June 2023]

149 Defra, *Nature Recovery Green Paper: Protected Sites and Species* (11 May 2022): <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/nature-recovery-green-paper/nature-recovery-green-paper/> [accessed 22 June 2023]

in other National Parks, which are smaller, it might be more achievable to have the entirety within a boundary. That would be my view.”¹⁵⁰

88. A number of submissions noted that if the purpose of National Parks and AONBs was strengthened for nature then it could help sites within those designations to make a greater contribution to the 30 by 30 target, but stakeholders acknowledged that they are unlikely to contribute in their entirety.¹⁵¹ We heard evidence that investing in protected landscapes is an efficient and cost-effective way of achieving nature recovery when compared to the wider countryside, simply because protected landscapes have a higher proportion of semi-natural habitats within their boundaries.¹⁵²
89. The Landscapes Review (also known as the Glover Review) was commissioned to consider the next steps for National Parks and AONBs and was published in May 2018.¹⁵³ The Government has published their response to the Review and subsequently consulted (from January to April 2022) on the implementation of the Landscapes Review and the required changes in legislation, but it has not yet published the outcome of this consultation.¹⁵⁴
90. In the Government’s initial response to the Glover Review, it acknowledged that the UK would rely upon improvements in how National Parks and AONBs are protected and managed for nature recovery to meet the 30 by 30 target.¹⁵⁵ The Government also agreed with Proposal 1 of the Landscape’s Review that “the current statutory purpose [of protected landscapes] to ‘conserve and enhance’ is not strong enough”. The Committee was pleased to read in the Government’s response to the Landscapes Review that this purpose would be strengthened to deliver nature recovery in these areas.¹⁵⁶
91. In the 2023 EIP the Government pledged to “provide new guidance to strengthen Protected Landscapes’ management plans” in promotion of nature recovery, whilst jointly supporting the rebrand of National Parks and AONBs to National Landscapes, advocated by the Landscapes Review.¹⁵⁷ The EIP reiterated a commitment to implement proposals set out in the Landscapes Review, and again restated the importance of protected landscapes contributing to the UK meeting its 30 by 30 commitments.
92. Despite this, the general biodiversity duty created by the Environment Act 2021 does not commit to delivery of protected landscape statutory purposes, nor the requirement for relevant authorities to further such

150 [Q 41](#) (Trudy Harrison MP)

151 Written evidence from Campaign for National Parks ([PAE0001](#)), RSPB ([PAE0002](#)), Wildlife Trusts ([PAE0006](#)), Wildlife and Countryside Link ([PAE0007](#)), National Parks England ([PAE0015](#)), [Q 9](#) (James Robinson)

152 [Q 30](#) (Ben McCarthy)

153 Defra, *Landscapes review: National Parks and AONBs* (23 May 2018): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designated-landscapes-national-parks-and-aonbs-2018-review> [accessed 18 July 2023]

154 Defra, *Landscapes review (National Parks and AONBs): implementing the review* (15 January 2022): <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/landscapes-review-national-parks-and-aonbs-implementing-the-review> [accessed 18 July 2023]

155 Defra, *Landscapes review (National Parks and AONBs): government response* (15 January 2022): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscapes-review-national-parks-and-aonbs-government-response> [accessed 18 July 2023]

156 *Ibid.*

157 Defra, *Environment Improvement Plan 2023* (31 January 2023): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan> [accessed 18 July 2023]

statutory purposes.¹⁵⁸ This concern was echoed throughout our inquiry, with the Committee consistently hearing from stakeholders that National Parks and AONBs must have their statutory purposes and duties extended to include a stronger emphasis on nature recovery if they are to play any role in contributing towards the England's 30 by 30 target.¹⁵⁹

93. **The Landscapes Review was published in May 2018, and the Government responded to it in January 2022. The implementation of some aspects of the Government's response would require changes to legislation, so the Government launched a consultation. The Landscapes Review consultation closed in April 2022, but the findings of the consultation and the Government response are yet to be published.**
94. *The Government should publish the findings and its response to the consultation on implementing the Landscapes Review as a priority and in advance of the publication of the map that details what will count towards 30 by 30.*
95. **The Committee recognises that there are competing and valid demands to live, work and enjoy the countryside, including within protected landscapes. Giving National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) a statutory nature conservation objective, in addition to their other statutory duties, as set out in the Landscapes Review will not mean they automatically contribute to the 30 by 30 target: that will require designation of particular sites within National Parks and AONBs. These sites will require a specific nature conservation objective alongside management, monitoring and assurance of longevity beyond 30 years to ensure the IUCN eligibility criteria for 30 by 30 is met. Giving an additional statutory duty to protect nature would encourage the overall protection of these important areas but would not alone enable them to count towards the 30 by 30 target.**
96. *We recommend that:*
- (i) *National Parks and AONBs are given at the next legislative opportunity an additional statutory duty to protect nature to sit alongside their existing purposes.*
 - (ii) *Sites within National Parks and AONBs should be identified for specific nature conservation potential, for which nature conservation objectives are developed and appropriate levels of protection and management agreed to deliver these objectives.*

158 [Environment Act 2021](#); Defra, *World-leading Environment Act becomes law* (10 November 2021): <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/world-leading-environment-act-becomes-law> [accessed 18 July 2023], Written evidence from National Parks England ([PAE0015](#))

159 Written evidence from the Campaign for National Parks ([PAE0001](#)), RSPB ([PAE0002](#)), [Q_9](#) (Dr James Robinson), Wildlife Trusts ([PAE0006](#))

OECMs and Local Wildlife Sites

97. OECMs are a relatively new type of protected areas, yet to be used in England, which were defined by the CBD. A definition of OECMs was agreed by parties to the CBD at COP14 in 2018:
- “A geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values.”¹⁶⁰
98. In the Nature Recovery Green Paper the Government set out the broad criteria for what could be classified as an OECM, should they be introduced in England:
- “the area must not be an existing designated protected area (in England, this would exclude those areas comprising the protected area biodiversity indicator) and must have geographically defined boundaries;
 - there must be sustained governance and management;
 - the area must have biodiversity values for which the area is considered important; and
 - the sustained governance and management must deliver the effective and long-term in-situ conservation of biodiversity.”¹⁶¹
99. The Committee was pleased to hear from Ms Harrison about the role of OECMs in achieving the Government’s conservation objectives.¹⁶² OECMs have the potential to deliver sustainable nature recovery and improvement outside of the core of protected areas in the wider countryside and at sea.¹⁶³ We heard from stakeholders that OECMs can play a role in delivering protection to contribute to 30 by 30, but that any OECMs identified will need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis to ensure that they are achieving long term and effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity.¹⁶⁴
100. Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) are areas of land selected and designated for their importance for wildlife and biodiversity.¹⁶⁵ Local authorities may also refer to LWSs as Sites of Biological Importance (SBI) or Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC). LWSs are non-statutory designations, however, the South East Nature Partnership said they are of high quality and hold substantial nature conservation value.¹⁶⁶ Government guidance

160 Biodiversity information system for Europe, ‘Other effective area-based conservation measures’: <https://biodiversity.europa.eu/europes-biodiversity/protected-areas/other-effective-area-based-conservation-measures> [accessed 22 June 2023]

161 Defra, *Nature recovery green paper: protected sites and species* (March 2022): https://consult.defra.gov.uk/nature-recovery-green-paper/nature-recovery-green-paper/supporting_documents/Nature_per_cent20Recovery_per_cent20Green_per_cent20Paper_per_cent20Consultation_per_cent20_per_cent20Protected_per_cent20Sites_per_cent20and_per_cent20Species.pdf

162 Q 48 (Trudy Harrison MP)

163 Q 11 (Professor Rick Stafford), written evidence from Natural England (PAE0008)

164 Written evidence from Wildlife and Countryside Link (PAE0007)

165 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, *National Planning policy Framework* (2021): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005759/NPPF_July_2021.pdf

166 Written evidence from South East Nature Partnership (PAE0003)

says that LWSs are identified at a local level for their important biodiversity, and as such are granted protection from inappropriate development or land use change.¹⁶⁷ However, we received evidence stating that at present LWSs do not have adequate protections against development, and such protections must be furthered and strengthened if such sites are to count in 30 by 30 targets.¹⁶⁸

101. LWSs can contribute to a coherent ecological network and need effective protection and mechanisms to help fund appropriate management. The Committee received evidence acknowledging the contributions that LWSs could make to the UK achieving its 30 by 30 targets.¹⁶⁹ LWSs currently cover five per cent of England, and some sites could be eligible for designation as an OECM and potentially meet the criteria for 30 by 30 inclusion.¹⁷⁰
102. At Paragraph 129 we recommend that LNRSs be given a statutory underpinning to afford them due weight in the planning system. If LNRSs are sufficiently strong, this could help give LWSs—which will be identified in LNRSs spatial maps—more protection from inappropriate development.
103. **We accept that other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) could have an important role to play in meeting 30 by 30 and make a positive contribution to the current set of designations. This is particularly important given the current considerable gap between land that is sufficiently protected and the 30 by 30 target. However, we are concerned to see that there are thus far no OECMs in England and there is slow progress in setting out their potential role, and a lack of guidance as to how they could be established.**
104. *We recommend that the Government launch a consultation to identify and classify potential OECMs in England and the contribution they could make to 30 by 30.*

Environmental Land Management Schemes

105. Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS) have been developed as part of the transition away from the EU Common Agricultural Policy and the Government’s reform of agricultural policy and subsidy.¹⁷¹ ELMS consists of three headline schemes, the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI), Countryside Stewardship (CS) and Landscape Recovery.¹⁷²
106. The SFI will “pay farmers to adopt and maintain sustainable farming practices that can help protect and enhance the natural environment

167 Defra, *Local nature recovery strategy statutory guidance, What a local nature recovery strategy should contain* (March 2023): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1146160/Local_nature_recovery_strategy_statutory_guidance.pdf

168 Written evidence from South East Nature Partnership (PAE0003)

169 *Ibid.*

170 Written evidence from The Wildlife Trusts (PAE0006)

171 Defra, *Environmental Land Management update: how government will pay for land-based environment and climate goods and services* (January 2023): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1136855/Environmental-Land-Management-Update-January-2023-Accessible-Final.pdf

172 Defra, *Environmental Land Management (ELM) update: how government will pay for land-based environment and climate goods and services* (21 June 2023): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-land-management-update-how-government-will-pay-for-land-based-environment-and-climate-goods-and-services/environmental-land-management-elm-update-how-government-will-pay-for-land-based-environment-and-climate-goods-and-services> [accessed 18 July 2023]

alongside food production”.¹⁷³ The CS “will pay for more targeted actions relating to specific locations, features, and habitats”.¹⁷⁴ ‘CS plus’ will also encourage farmers to join up across local areas to deliver better results. The Landscape Recovery scheme “will pay for bespoke, longer-term, larger scale projects to enhance the natural environment”.¹⁷⁵

107. Land managers and farmers will play a potentially significant role in delivering nature recovery if the right opportunities to work in partnership are available and if the right support for landowners is in place. ELMS and their use of public money for public goods will make a contribution to nature recovery, and some sites could be included in the 30 by 30 target.¹⁷⁶
108. We heard from stakeholders that ELMS could be a good route to create better connectivity in protected areas and improve biodiversity through sustainable farming and landscape-style approaches.¹⁷⁷ Some of the ELMS have more potential to improve biodiversity metrics than others.¹⁷⁸ In oral evidence, Professor Jane Hill said about ELMS:

“Now you have new schemes coming in where agricultural landscapes could be managed through the three different schemes in ELMS. They have the potential to address different components of biodiversity, whether it be through more sustainable farming, having better hedgerows, or doing activities on the farm that help to improve the matrix, to much larger-scale landscape approaches, which will, I hope, support species’ persistence in the much wider landscape. Some of those activities will be permanent—or however we deem permanent: for decades rather than just a few years when the farming is taking place and the rotation is happening.”¹⁷⁹

Professor Jane Hill also said:

“Out of those [schemes], I would imagine that the landscape one, because it is operating at a wider landscape level, is likely to be more effective by producing more permanent areas of natural and semi-natural habitat for biodiversity.”¹⁸⁰

109. Professor Rick Stafford cautioned that at present the majority of ELMS are probably too short-term to be classed as protected areas and counted towards 30 by 30.¹⁸¹ Currently the SFI agreements last for three years and the CS scheme gives farmers and land managers three years to complete capital works activity and submit claims.¹⁸²

173 Defra, *Environmental Land Management update: how government will pay for land-based environment and climate goods and services* (January 2023): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1136855/Environmental-Land-Management-Update-January-2023-Accessible-Final.pdf

174 *Ibid.*

175 *Ibid.*

176 [Q 23](#) (Baroness Willis of Summertown), [Q 30](#) (Andrea Meanwell)

177 [Q 23](#) (Baroness Willis of Summertown), [Q 10](#) (Professor Jane Hill)

178 [Q 10](#) (Professor Jane Hill)

179 *Ibid.*

180 *Ibid.*

181 [Q 11](#) (Professor Rick Stafford)

182 Defra, *Environmental Land Management update: how government will pay for land-based environment and climate goods and services* (January 2023): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1136855/Environmental-Land-Management-Update-January-2023-Accessible-Final.pdf

110. **Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS) have a strong potential for nature recovery. If participating sites meet international guidelines to protect nature for the long term, they could be included in the 30 by 30 target.**
111. *We recommend that the Government set out those ELMS they believe have the best potential to identify sites to count towards the 30 by 30 target in line with international guidance and ensure protection for more than 30 years.*

Farming in Protected Landscapes & beyond

112. We are pleased to see the pivot towards environmental stewardship in land management policy and funding as we move away from the Common Agricultural Policy, and the implementation of schemes such as Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) as part of the Agricultural Transition Plan.¹⁸³ This programme will fund projects in National Parks, AONBs and the Broads that support nature recovery and mitigate the impacts of threats such as climate change.¹⁸⁴
113. Stakeholders reported issues with support for accessing and determining how to deliver ELMS for farming businesses.¹⁸⁵ A lack of proactive engagement with land managers and limited access to effective guidance, support and advice with regards to ELMS is proving to be an obstacle for many land managers in protected areas and beyond.¹⁸⁶ They need access to data and advisory support to determine which areas of their land could be improved and how to deliver nature recovery and maximum benefit for biodiversity.¹⁸⁷
114. We heard that farmers in protected areas could struggle to find the time and resources to develop an understanding of what natural capital options are available on their land and that this may lead many to disengage with the process.¹⁸⁸ Witnesses emphasised the importance of high-quality and coordinated advice.¹⁸⁹ We also heard that feedback from statutory bodies following site condition assessments is patchy and not all land managers are receiving advice and information on how to improve management of land already in protected areas.¹⁹⁰
115. Witnesses noted the need for regional centres with sufficient expertise to carry out spatial analysis and provide the basis for an efficient and effective way of delivering advice and support to land managers.¹⁹¹ Evidence received by the Committee indicated that only areas in the higher tier target areas are eligible for access to an adviser provided by Natural England and that currently upland farmers do not have options to access advice within the scheme.¹⁹²

183 Defra, *Get funding for farming in protected landscapes* (24 June 2021): <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/funding-for-farmers-in-protected-landscapes> [accessed 18 July 2023]

184 *Ibid.*

185 Written evidence from The Exmoor Society ([PAE0005](#)), Natural Cambridgeshire ([PAE0014](#))

186 [Q 29](#), [Q 35](#) (Rupert Hanbury-Tenison), Written evidence from National Parks England ([PAE0015](#)), Natural Cambridgeshire ([PAE0014](#)), National Farming Union ([PAE0023](#)), CLA ([PAE0016](#))

187 Written evidence from CLA ([PAE0016](#)), [Q 26](#) (Baroness Willis of Summertown), [Q 29](#) (Rupert Hanbury-Tenison, Professor Mark Kibblewhite)

188 [Q 29](#) (Professor Mark Kibblewhite)

189 [Q 32](#) (Ben McCarthy)

190 [Q 30](#) (Rupert Hanbury-Tenison)

191 [Q 31](#) (Professor Kibblewhite)

192 [Q 35](#) (Andrea Meanwell)

116. **We received considerable evidence from stakeholders and land managers regarding the challenge of accessing and understanding Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS) in protected areas. Achieving 30 by 30 and upgrading England’s countryside for nature recovery will require working in partnership effectively with land managers and farmers to improve farming practices and establish new areas of land that can be conserved to improve biodiversity and connectivity.**
117. *We recommend that the Government work with Natural England to design and implement an advisory mechanism that will support farmers in navigating ELMS to maximise the amount of land that is currently or may in the future be able to contribute to 30 by 30. This will require resources to help deliver. This mechanism should include:*
- (a) *A named advisory officer for each key farm; and*
 - (b) *A free advisory service for land managers.*

Biodiversity Net Gain

118. As of November 2023, all planning permissions granted in England under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 will need to deliver a minimum 10 per cent ‘Biodiversity Net Gain’ (BNG).¹⁹³ This requirement will deliver contributions to the recovery of nature where land is being developed, and ensure that land managers, developers, and Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) leave nature in a better state than it was prior to development.¹⁹⁴ BNG is measured using the “Biodiversity Metric”, which uses the extent and quality of habitats as a proxy for “nature”. The metric will be applied prior and post-development to measure if biodiversity is in a “measurably better state than before development took place”.¹⁹⁵
119. There is a potential role of BNG in identifying, funding, and implementing nature management measures.¹⁹⁶ BNG may help to secure some new areas for nature, and there is the potential for some off-site BNG areas to contribute to 30 by 30. However, these off-site areas must be effectively managed for biodiversity, and this should be evidenced.¹⁹⁷ Offsite BNG sites will also need to guarantee longevity for a longer period than the 30 years required in the BNG regime if they are to meet the 30 by 30 criteria for longevity.¹⁹⁸ Despite their potential for integration with land management and planning mechanisms, it is not expected that BNG in isolation will be able to contribute significantly to 30 by 30.¹⁹⁹
120. **Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) could play a small but important role in contributing to 30 by 30 and delivering nature recovery and identifying, funding and implementing nature management measures in some**

193 [Town and Country Planning Act 1990](#); Defra, *Understanding Biodiversity Net Gain* (23 February 2023) <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/understanding-biodiversity-net-gain> [accessed 22 June 2023]

194 Defra, *Biodiversity net gain* (21 February 2023): <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/biodiversity-net-gain> [accessed 22 June 2023]

195 Natural England, *Biodiversity Net Gain*: https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/183/2022/04/BNG-Brochure_Final_Compressed-002.pdf

196 Written evidence from Wildlife and Countryside Link (PAE0007)

197 Written evidence from South East Nature Partnership (PAE0003) and Natural England (PAE0008)

198 The Environment Act 2021 [Schedule 14](#)

199 Written evidence from Natural England (PAE0008)

new areas. This will require BNG to be well regulated and managed for biodiversity and the gains will need to be well-evidenced.

121. *We recommend that any BNG sites that contribute to 30 by 30 must have specific nature conservation objectives, effective management to deliver these, proper monitoring and a guarantee of sufficient longevity beyond the normal requirement of the BNG regime (more than 30 years).*

Local Nature Partnerships

122. Stakeholders noted that Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) can play several roles in relation to 30 by 30. They have an important role in working collaboratively to help develop LNRs with strong stakeholder buy-in.²⁰⁰ Stakeholders also said that LNPs have demonstrated they can play a supportive role for responsible authorities bringing together collective expertise and building cross-sectoral links and partnerships, and their strength is in their wide representation.²⁰¹ They also champion LWSs which are often the only form of protected site in urban areas.²⁰² Stakeholders are concerned though that LNPs need more support, primarily resourcing. Although they presently have no statutory role or formalised funding mechanisms, the South East Nature Partnership said that LNPs should be considered for additional support from the Government because they could provide an additional contribution to the achievement of targets for nature and the achievement of 30 by 30.²⁰³
123. **We recognise the valuable role that Local Nature Partnerships play as a mechanism to convene stakeholders and experts to identify potential sites for nature recovery as part of local nature recovery strategies (LNRs).**
124. *We recommend that Local Nature Partnerships be appropriately resourced for their role in helping deliver LNRs.*

Local Nature Recovery Strategies

125. Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRs) will play an important role in bringing stakeholders together to work in partnership to agree and manage protected areas and delivery broader nature recovery goals.²⁰⁴ This collaborative working across sectors will be key to delivering on the 30 by 30 target as discussed in Chapter 3. LNRs will support spatial planning for nature recovery, both areas contributing to the 30 by 30 target and those best placed to provide buffering and connectivity beyond them.²⁰⁵
126. We heard that there is a current lack of clarity as to how LNRs will be considered in the planning system. At the moment, LNRs are to be drawn up at the upper tier of local government (principally county level), whereas local development plans, which will be required to have regard to LNRs, are drawn up by planning authorities at the lower level (boroughs and districts). The Southeast Nature Partnership noted that “the current lack of clarity about how LNRs will be considered within the planning system is already

200 Written evidence from the Natural Cambridgeshire ([PAE0014](#))

201 Written evidence from the South East Nature Partnership ([PAE0003](#))

202 *Ibid.*

203 *Ibid.*

204 *Ibid.*

205 Written evidence from Natural England ([PAE0008](#))

affecting stakeholder engagement as their role in protection of core areas of importance for nature is not known”.²⁰⁶

127. At present, public bodies will be required to “have regard” for LNRs.²⁰⁷ The South East Nature Partnership noted the need to integrate LNRs into local plans to ensure their effective delivery.²⁰⁸ Whilst we welcome plans from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to work with Defra to develop guidance specifically for local planning authorities on how LNRs align with the planning system, guidance alone will not be sufficient.²⁰⁹
128. **For Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRs) to be effective, it is important that there is a strong link between LNRs and development plans, with a statutory requirement on local planning authorities to incorporate policies and proposals in their development plans to deliver the objectives of LNRs.**
129. *The Government should ensure that LNRs will be considered and given due weight in the planning system, including through statutory underpinning at the next legislative opportunity. Local authorities should be required to deliver the objectives of the LNRs as part of their development plans.*

206 Written evidence from the South East Nature Partnership (PAE0003)

207 Defra, *Local nature recovery strategy statutory guidance* (March 2023) https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1146160/Local_nature_recovery_strategy_statutory_guidance.pdf [accessed 12 July 2023]

208 Written evidence from the South East Nature Partnership (PAE0003)

209 Written evidence from the Department of Levelling up, Housing and Communities (PAE0024)

CHAPTER 5: PROTECTED AREAS AT SEA AND 30 BY 30

130. We are pleased to see the Government’s recent pledge to establish a legally binding target to restore 70 per cent of designated features in our MPAs to a favourable condition by 2042, with the remainder in a recovering condition by this deadline.²¹⁰ This will be critical to meeting 30 by 30 at sea. However, the rate of the establishment of new areas and protections is slow, and we have heard significant concerns about the current state of marine monitoring programmes.²¹¹ Types and number of protected areas at sea are set out in Table 5 in Appendix 3.
131. The JNCC report that currently 40.3 per cent of English seas are covered by protected areas designation.²¹² This figure covers extent only. Defra reported in written evidence that 44 per cent of MPAs in English seas are currently in a favourable condition.²¹³ Therefore, 17.7 per cent of English waters are covered by MPAs that are in a favourable condition.²¹⁴
132. Wildlife and Countryside Link (WCL) in their written evidence and *2022 Progress Report on 30 x 30 in England* outline that a maximum of 8 per cent of English waters were well protected and managed in 2022, compared with 4 per cent in 2021, an increase of 4 per cent.²¹⁵ These figures from WCL consider the extent of sea that is covered by MPA designation where byelaws have been implemented to stop damaging activities such as bottom trawling.²¹⁶ To date, a plan for how MPAs will meet 30 by 30 at sea has yet to be established.²¹⁷
133. **We welcome Defra’s plan to publish a map of the land and sea that will count towards 30 by 30 before the end of 2023. We are concerned about the lack of clarity around progress towards 30 by 30 at sea due to reported discrepancies in the extent of English waters that are effectively protected and the paucity of monitoring data. It is critical that the Government provide clarity on how 30 by 30 will be met at sea.**
134. *We recommend that alongside the map of what will count towards 30 by 30 the Government produce an action plan for achieving 30 by 30 at sea.*

210 Defra, *New legally binding environment targets set out* (16 December 2022): <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-legally-binding-environment-targets-set-out> [accessed 18 July 2023]

211 **Q 1** (Professor Callum Roberts)

212 JNCC, *Protected areas*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/ukbi-cl-protected-areas/> [accessed 22 June 2023]

213 Written evidence from Defra (**PAE0009**)

214 This is calculated using the 40.3 per cent of English seas covered by MPAs and the 44 per cent of MPAs in a favourable condition, figures that were provided by Defra and the JNCC.

215 Written evidence from Wildlife and Countryside Link (**PAE0007**); Wildlife and Countryside Link ‘2022 Progress Report on 30x30 in England’: <https://wcl.org.uk/2022-progress-report-30x30-in-england.asp> [accessed 22 June 2023]

216 Wildlife and Countryside Link, *Nature 2030 Habits: 2022 Progress report on 30 by 30 in England* (October 2022): https://www.wcl.org.uk/assets/uploads/img/files/WCL_2022_Progress_Report_on_30x30_in_England.pdf

217 Written evidence from MCS (**PAE0017**)

Current monitoring processes at sea

135. Natural England has statutory responsibility for monitoring sites up to 12 nautical miles out to sea in territorial waters and the JNCC has responsibility for monitoring beyond 12 nautical miles in offshore waters.²¹⁸
136. While views differ on how much management MPAs require, we received considerable evidence indicating that MPAs are not being monitored and managed effectively to meet domestic and international targets.²¹⁹
137. The current monitoring and assessment approach is a mixture of “direct evidence” or by a vulnerability assessment.²²⁰ Direct evidence is usually physical evidence, such as sediment coring, visual (e.g., deployment of underwater cameras), or remote approaches such as oceanographic buoys or acoustic surveys.²²¹ Vulnerability assessments are based on the “occurrence and exposure of [protected] features to human activities to which they are known to be sensitive to predict the feature condition”.²²² Defra noted that the vast majority of assessments will be done by vulnerability assessments due to limited data being available and the high cost of marine surveys.²²³
138. At present, Natural England carry out one to two MPA surveys per year in English waters up to 12 nautical miles out to sea in territorial waters.²²⁴ The JNCC carry out approximately two MPA surveys per year in UK offshore waters.²²⁵ The JNCC told us that they usually complete one survey in English waters and one in Scottish waters each year, but some years they have completed two surveys in English waters.²²⁶
139. The JNCC told us that of the total 76 offshore UK MPAs, they have identified nine “sentinel sites” which cover the range of factors needed for extrapolation to assess the UK network of 76 sites as a whole. At present, the JNCC carries out surveys of approximately two of these nine sites each year, meaning the data for all nine sentinel sites is entirely renewed in four or five yearly cycles. The JNCC notes that this approach:
- “is designed to obtain the most useful information within the limited resources available. If greater resources were available, we would consider adjusting our monitoring activity to allow us to increase the confidence of our assessment of the condition of the MPAs across the UK.”²²⁷
140. Some stakeholders argued that the current monitoring approach presents a very partial picture of site condition at sea with issues around extrapolation bias.²²⁸ Additionally, the JNCC reported in their written evidence that “there is no current driver nor policy instrument for coherent or consistent reporting

218 Written evidence from Natural England ([PAE0008](#)) and the JNCC ([PAE0021](#))

219 Written evidence from JNCC ([PAE0021](#)), Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) ([PAE0019](#)), Wildlife and Countryside Link ([PAE0007](#)), MCS ([PAE0017](#)), Natural England ([PAE0008](#)), Professor Rick Stafford ([PAE0004](#))

220 Supplementary written evidence from Defra ([PAE0027](#))

221 Supplementary written evidence from Defra ([PAE0027](#))

222 *Ibid.*

223 *Ibid.*

224 Supplementary written evidence from Defra ([PAE0027](#)), Natural England ([PAE0008](#))

225 Written evidence from JNCC ([PAE0021](#)) and Supplementary written evidence from the JNCC ([PAE0026](#))

226 Supplementary written evidence from the JNCC ([PAE0029](#))

227 Supplementary written evidence from the JNCC ([PAE0021](#))

228 Written evidence from Professor Rick Stafford ([PAE0004](#)) and MCS ([PAE0017](#))

on MPA extent and condition covering the full breadth of designation types in any one of the four countries of the UK, nor at a UK-level”.²²⁹

141. We were told that monitoring of the marine environment can be costly and that budgets for monitoring can be difficult to maintain.²³⁰ As a result of this, a sub-set of MPAs across the UK are subject to monitoring at the required frequency to make conclusions over time on the protected feature condition. There is currently insufficient budget for effective monitoring outside of MPAs meaning that it is not possible to compare the relative health of marine biodiversity inside and outside MPAs.²³¹
142. The Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS), which is responsible for the Secretary of State MPA Monitoring Programme, acquires both physical samples and remote sensing data as part of the programme.²³² They reported that the current programme budget supports monitoring and sample collection at approximately four to six MPAs across offshore and inshore areas per year, out of a network of a total of 178 MPAs in English waters.²³³ On current timelines, it can take more than two years for these samples to be processed and fed into condition assessments. CEFAS reported a significant drop in funding over the past 10 years that has not increased over the last two years of the current spending review period, with further reductions planned for the final year of the current spending review period in 2024–25.²³⁴ This is while the cost of monitoring surveys has been rising. Additionally, they reported that there are currently no specific monitoring commitments associated with the target for 70 per cent of MPAs to be restored to a favourable condition by 2042.²³⁵
143. Defra reported to us that monitoring and assessment plans for MPAs are currently being developed to meet the reporting requirements set out as part of the statutory MPA target detailed above.²³⁶

Availability of marine monitoring data

144. Monitoring data for MPAs is currently difficult to access or is incomplete in many cases, and evidence the Committee received also noted the lack of information about monitoring frequency for MPAs in the public realm.²³⁷ The JNCC lists 32 surveys of offshore sites since 2014 and 19 in the last six years, with no information about the condition of the surveyed sites.²³⁸
145. In their report, *Progress in improving the natural environment in England, 2021/2022*, the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) noted that the condition of offshore MPAs could not be assessed because only “30 per cent

229 Written evidence from the JNCC (PAE0021)

230 *Ibid.*

231 *Ibid.*

232 Written evidence from CEFAS (PAE0019)

233 Written evidence from CEFAS (PAE0019); JNCC, *UK Marine Protected Area network statistics*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/uk-marine-protected-area-network-statistics/> [accessed 22 June 2023]

234 Written evidence from CEFAS (PAE0019)

235 *Ibid.*

236 Written evidence from Defra (PAE0009); Defra, *Delivering on the Environment Act: new targets announced and ambitious plans for nature recovery* (16 March 2022): <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/delivering-on-the-environment-act-new-targets-announced-and-ambitious-plans-for-nature-recovery> [accessed 18 July 2023]

237 Written evidence from the MCS (PAE0017) and Professor Rick Stafford (PAE0004)

238 Written evidence from Professor Rick Stafford (PAE0004)

of offshore MPAs have accessible condition monitoring survey data”.²³⁹ The OEP reported they were “unable to assess progress towards meeting the target of 70 per cent of the designated features in the MPA network to be in favourable condition by 2042” due to limited monitoring data.²⁴⁰ They noted that the limited monitoring of MPAs makes the assessment of progress towards a target based on feature conditions particularly problematic.²⁴¹

146. Monitoring at sea presents different challenges to those on land and we are pleased to hear that Defra is developing an assessment and monitoring plan to reach the MPA target, including both remote and direct survey methods.²⁴² Evidence we received suggested that remote electronic monitoring should be rapidly introduced to ensure enforcement of recently introduced byelaws by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) to protect MPAs from bottom-towed fishing gear.²⁴³
147. Reliable and adequate condition monitoring is necessary to design successful policy interventions, monitor progress and adapt to new priorities. A failure to deliver adequate condition monitoring will put meeting the 30 by 30 target at sea at risk.²⁴⁴
148. **We received substantial written evidence detailing the challenging lack of transparent and reliable monitoring data for Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). As on land, this makes establishing a robust baseline of data to use to target resources very difficult. Rigorous monitoring data must be established quickly to inform effective marine management and decision making to achieve 30 by 30 at sea.**
149. *We recommend that the Government expand the current marine monitoring programme both inshore and offshore to develop a robust baseline of data that should be made publicly available. This programme should increase the frequency of monitoring and limit data extrapolation by ensuring that a larger sub-section of sites is being monitored on a more regular basis than the current ‘sentinel’ approach. The Government should also explore the option of remote electronic monitoring in the marine monitoring programme. The data produced from the monitoring should be easily accessible and understandable for all to track progress and demonstrate recovery of marine ecosystems.*
150. **The Committee heard that the current resources available for marine monitoring are not sufficient to generate repeated and statistically robust time-series sampling points which are necessary for tracking and forming a baseline understanding of site conditions. Multiple stakeholders reported the need for an uplift in funding to establish an effective monitoring regime which is an essential early step in effective marine protection and management.**

239 Written evidence from MCS ([PAE0017](#)); Office for Environmental Protection (OEP), *Progress in improving the natural environment in England, 2021/2022* (19 January 2023): <https://www.theoep.org.uk/report/progress-improving-natural-environment-england-20212022> [accessed 18 July 2023]

240 OEP, *Progress in improving the natural environment in England, 2021/2022* (19 January 2023): <https://www.theoep.org.uk/report/progress-improving-natural-environment-england-20212022> [accessed 18 July 2023]

241 *Ibid.*

242 Written evidence from Defra ([PAE0009](#))

243 Written evidence from MCS ([PAE0017](#))

244 *Ibid.*

151. *We recommend an uplift in funding for marine monitoring to ensure more rigorous data collection at sea.*

Threats at sea

152. We received evidence suggesting the most significant stressors for offshore marine areas include overfishing and energy generation.²⁴⁵ Overfishing directly depletes fish stocks beyond sustainable levels and is a significant driver of marine biodiversity loss, whilst fishing methods such as bottom trawling or dredging hinder nature recovery and conservation.²⁴⁶ Fishing using bottom-contacting gears, sometimes also referred to as ‘bottom trawling’, which still occurs in the majority of MPAs, is widely understood to be the most damaging activity to marine seafloor environments.²⁴⁷ Industrial fishing and bottom trawling close to the seabed has significantly degraded marine seabed and related habitats.²⁴⁸
153. Energy generation—oil and gas, but increasingly wind turbines and potentially tidal and wave energy—and carbon storage can have significant impacts on marine biodiversity, but are also critical for meeting UK net zero targets.²⁴⁹ It is essential to understand how marine energy and marine biodiversity can “co-exist in a way that is beneficial to both achieving net zero by 2050 and fulfilling the nature recovery agenda”.²⁵⁰ Marine areas face further threats including water pollution (from agricultural practices and water discharges), recreation-induced disturbances or degradation, and invasive species.²⁵¹ The OEP report *Progress in improving the natural environment in England, 2021/2022* recommended that the Government strengthen the MPA target to “halt damaging activities by 2024 and the decline in the condition in designated features in the MPA network”, in addition to achieving 70 per cent with ‘good status’ by 2042.²⁵²

Strength of protection at sea

154. We heard evidence that MPAs as they are currently designed can be limited in their ability to restore nature because they only conserve protected features as discussed in Chapter 2, and they do not ban damaging activities such as bottom trawling.²⁵³
155. A critical component of effective management of MPAs will be the implementation of management of activities such as trawling and dredging.²⁵⁴ The first tranche of byelaws introduced by the MMO should support the protection of MPAs from damaging bottom-towed fishing gear in four

245 Written evidence from the JNCC ([PAE0021](#))

246 Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, *Marine, Protected Areas and Highly Protected Marine Areas*, [POSTnote 698](#), 28 June 2023; Written evidence from the MMO ([PAE0018](#)); [Q 10](#) (Professor Callum Roberts)

247 Written Evidence from CEFAS ([PAE0019](#))

248 Written Evidence from MCS ([PAE0017](#))

249 Written evidence from MCS ([PAE0017](#)) and the JNCC ([PAE0021](#))

250 Written evidence from the JNCC ([PAE0021](#))

251 Written evidence from Natural England ([PAE0008](#))

252 OEP, *Progress in improving the natural environment in England, 2021/2022* (19 January 2023): <https://www.theoep.org.uk/report/progress-improving-natural-environment-england-20212022> [accessed 18 July 2023]

253 Written evidence from Wildlife Trusts ([PAE0006](#)); [Q 1](#) (Professor Callum Roberts); Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology *Marine, Protected Areas and Highly Protected Marine Areas*, [POSTnote 698](#), 28 June 2023

254 Written evidence from MCS ([PAE0017](#)), [Q 1](#) (Professor Callum Roberts)

offshore sites.²⁵⁵ There have been moves by Defra in places such as the Dogger Bank to create no-trawl and no-dredge zones, however, further progress on establishing no-trawl zones has been slow.²⁵⁶

156. **We received considerable evidence regarding the damaging nature of fishing using bottom-contacting gears which occurs across English waters, including within Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). This type of activity is some of the most damaging to marine ecosystems and species and achieving 30 by 30 will require careful management of these activities.**
157. *We recommend that the Government better regulate the use of bottom trawling at sea, particularly in MPAs and move to a more holistic site management approach at sea.*

Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs)

158. Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs) are areas of sea that allow the protection and full recovery of marine ecosystems.²⁵⁷ They protect all habitats, species and ecological processes within their boundaries from activities such as bottom-towed gear and cable trench building. There is however concern about the speed of roll out of these designations.²⁵⁸ There are currently only three sites that have been adopted covering less than 0.5 per cent of seas.²⁵⁹ This is compared to a minimum of five sites which was recommended by the 2022 Benyon Review.²⁶⁰ Additionally, there is limited clarity on how designation of HPMAs will progress from here.
159. **We welcome the adoption of three Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs) in English waters, but more progress is needed. The 2022 Benyon Review into HPMAs called for five pilot sites to be established as a minimum and for these sites to cover different environments and activities with sufficient geographic spread to cover nearshore, inshore and offshore areas. We are disappointed that only three sites will be protected rather than five, which would have covered a broader range of environments and activities and therefore helped with learning for future sites. However, we recognise the need to commit time and resources to work in partnership with local communities and stakeholders to identify further sites.**
160. *We endorse the recommendation of the 2023 report of the House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, Protecting Marine Mammals in the UK and Abroad, published on 28 June 2023:*

255 Written evidence from MMO ([PAE0018](#))

256 [Q 1](#) (Professor Callum Roberts)

257 Defra, *Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs)* (25 May 2023): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/highly-protected-marine-areas/highly-protected-marine-areas-hpmas> [accessed 18 July 2023]

258 Written evidence from the Wildlife Trusts ([PAE0006](#)), MCS ([PAE0017](#)), Wildlife and Countryside Link ([PAE0007](#))

259 Written evidence from Wildlife Trusts ([PAE0006](#)); MCS ([PAE0017](#)); HC Deb 6 July 2023, [col 919–921](#) [Commons Chamber]

260 Defra, *Benyon review Into Highly Protected Marine Areas: Final report—executive summary* (17 August 2022): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/highly-protected-marine-areas-hpmas-review-2019/benyon-review-into-highly-protected-marine-areas-final-report-executive-summary> [accessed 18 July 2023]

“We call on the Government to publish an ambitious timescale for the designation of HPMAs and to outline their monitoring and enforcement strategy by the end of 2023.”²⁶¹

²⁶¹ House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, *Protecting Marine Mammals in the UK and Abroad Report* (Sixth report, Session 2022–2023, HC 697)

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 2: The 30 by 30 target: current context and progress

1. It is clear from the evidence received that designations with a nature conservation purpose are an important starting point for meeting 30 by 30. At present, protected areas are not sufficient in their extent and are often in poor condition, as we discuss in Chapter 3. Existing designations have a distinctive and valuable role and can be layered to allow an evolutionary approach to better nature protection. The Government is yet to clearly commit to retaining them. (Paragraph 17)
2. *We recommend that all existing designations for nature conservation in England be retained as a basis for the 30 by 30 target. They will require investment in resources and incentives for better management to meet clear nature conservation objectives, in addition to investment in effective monitoring.* (Paragraph 18)
3. At present it is not clear which sites are intended to count towards 30 by 30, or how the Government plans to achieve the target. We welcome Defra's plan to publish a map of what will count towards 30 by 30 before the end of 2023. However, with only 6.5 per cent of land in England currently covered by Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserve (NNR), Ramsar, Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Area (SPA) site designations and a lack of clarity about the level of nature conservation protections for some of these sites, an urgent step change is needed to ensure that the 30 by 30 target will be met. (Paragraph 25)
4. *We are pleased to see that the Government will be publishing a map this year on what counts towards 30 by 30. We recommend that alongside the map, the Government produce an action plan addressing the extent, condition, management and monitoring of areas to achieve the target. This must address how the significant gap between current designations and the 30 per cent target on land will be addressed.* (Paragraph 26)
5. We heard from stakeholders that the designations covered by the EU Habitats Regulations are the sites with the highest strength of protection in England. They will be critical for achieving the 30 by 30 target and supporting nature recovery. (Paragraph 28)
6. *We are pleased the Habitats Regulations were not included in the list of retained EU law which will be revoked by 31 December 2023 under the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023, but there is still a possibility of their substantial dilution. We recommend that the Habitats Regulations are retained and are not subject to amendment without an appropriate degree of parliamentary scrutiny or where the protections afforded by the regulations are weakened.* (Paragraph 29)
7. We heard that a whole-site approach for protection and monitoring, including the collection of site-level details, in combination with the current approach focused on species monitoring and counting, would be a more effective approach. It would allow an understanding of site condition, taking in factors beyond a single feature and would develop a greater understanding of ecological resilience in response to stress such as climate change. It would also consider the multiple, overlapping functions delivered by individual sites. (Paragraph 35)

8. *We recommend that the Government develops a whole-site protection and monitoring approach to protected areas on land, in addition to the feature-based monitoring and assessment that is currently used. (Paragraph 36)*

Chapter 3: Protected areas on land and 30 by 30

9. We received substantial evidence regarding the patchiness of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) monitoring data. Poor monitoring data limits the understanding of the current condition of sites across the SSSI network and makes effective planning for targeted action very challenging. We heard about the impact of funding cuts to Natural England between 2010–2019 which has led to only 22 per cent of SSSI sites having been monitored in the last six years. Sustained funding support and clear, stable policy with regards to monitoring with a focus on the delivery of 30 by 30 is required to attain a clearer, data-driven picture of the site condition across the SSSI network in England. (Paragraph 42)
10. *While the Committee recognises the challenges posed by a constrained budget, the Government needs to develop an effective policy with a sustained funding commitment to deliver regular monitoring of SSSIs and for each site to be monitored every six years. The monitoring should produce transparent and accessible data and the Government should also seek to make use of voluntary contributions to data collection and monitoring, such as citizen science programmes. (Paragraph 43)*
11. The Committee heard from a number of stakeholders that a lack of a statutory duty for SSSI monitoring has, due to implementation of past budget cuts, meant monitoring has become a casualty of resource constraints. A statutory monitoring duty would help deliver the funding for a priority activity to achieve the 30 by 30 target. (Paragraph 44)
12. *We recommend that the Government use the next legislative opportunity to place a statutory duty on Natural England for monitoring of SSSIs and that the resulting data is made publicly available. (Paragraph 45)*
13. We welcome the Government target to meet the goal of 75 per cent of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) to be in a favourable condition by 2042 and the interim target that 50 per cent of SSSIs should have actions on track to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028. The evidence shows that the condition of SSSI sites is poor, and the Government has made no progress in improving the condition and quality of SSSIs over the last 13 years, with current data revealing a small decrease in site condition. A step change is required to deliver tangible progress on site condition and to deliver the interim target set out in the Environment Improvement Plan. (Paragraph 49)
14. *Alongside the publication of the map, the Government should indicate what proportion of sites are currently in adequate condition to count towards 30 by 30. The Government should publish a clear plan with realistic targets to deliver steady progress on moving more SSSIs into favourable condition. Future progress should be clearly evidenced and publicly available. (Paragraph 50)*
15. Stakeholders expressed concern about the inclusion of designated areas in the 30 by 30 target which do not meet International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) guidance. We share this concern. Additionally, any new designations contributing to 30 by 30 will need to be assessed against international criteria. Robust selection criteria for which areas count towards

30 by 30 should be in place to ensure that sites are high-quality and protected for nature. (Paragraph 53)

16. *We recommend that areas contributing towards 30 by 30 should comply with the guidance set out by the IUCN which requires that protected areas are “clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values”. Further, we recommend that the longevity criteria for ‘long-term’ conservation be set at more than 30 years. (Paragraph 54)*
17. *Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) on land and at sea and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) should have been monitored in the last six years or in the six years preceding the target date of 2030, as is consistent with the JNCC common standards monitoring for designated sites. Sites that achieve a condition status other than “destroyed” could be included in the 30 by 30 target. They should have a management plan and actionable timeframe for delivery. Sites that are declared to be “destroyed” do not meet the criteria for 30 by 30 and should not be included. (Paragraph 55)*
18. We were pleased to hear that developing connectivity between various designations is a priority for the Government. Evidence we have received points to the critical role of connectivity and corridors across the wider landscape and urban areas to provide conduits for species to move, particularly to support the development of a systems approach to nature restoration and move away from siloed forms of protection. (Paragraph 64)
19. *We welcome the resourcing of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs), but for them to deliver on the creation of sites to achieve connectivity, not just identify them, they must be given sufficient weight in the planning system as described further at paragraph 129. (Paragraph 65)*
20. The impact of threats to the environment are managed by a wide range of policies and corresponding government departments and devolved administrations. Achieving 30 by 30 will be a collaborative goal and will require effective and joined up working beyond Defra and beyond Whitehall. It will require commitment, coordination and funding from Government to ensure delivery. (Paragraph 68)
21. Delivering 30 by 30 will require investment of time, resources and coordination led by Defra to work in partnership with other bodies. The target will not be delivered by Defra alone. (Paragraph 69)
22. *We recommend that alongside the publication of the map, the Government make clear the relationships and other partners whom they will work alongside to deliver 30 by 30. This should recognise the roles of—as well as the partnerships between—the statutory bodies, volunteer and other relevant organisations, and government departments in delivering, managing and monitoring the range of designations and mechanisms to be used for nature recovery. (Paragraph 70)*
23. Effective collaboration and partnership working will play an important role in working constructively with the devolved administrations to develop criteria and share best practice. It will also be important for supporting the UK Overseas Territories to deliver successful management of protected areas and the contribution they can make towards 30 by 30. (Paragraph 74)

24. *We recommend that the Government prioritise establishing effective partnership working with the devolved administrations and the UK Overseas Territories. This will require an investment of time and the sufficient allocation of resources to support activities in the UK Overseas Territories and effective collaborative working with the devolved administrations. (Paragraph 75)*
25. We acknowledge that a significant increase in Government-administered monitoring is both staff and resource intensive at a time when there are significant competing demands on public finances. Citizen science data-gathering could play an important role in augmenting and strengthening the monitoring and management of SSSIs and other protected sites. A number of stakeholders reported the critical role that voluntary citizen science does and could play in supplementing monitoring data, if the methodologies used were robust and standardised. We conclude that, if managed effectively, citizen science programmes could make a worthwhile contribution to site and species monitoring efforts. This would serve to both enhance public awareness and engagement in the 30 by 30 initiative and support the delivery of robust datasets. (Paragraph 79)
26. *We recommend that the Government expand the role of robust citizen science programmes in protected areas to support monitoring and condition assessment programmes. (Paragraph 80)*
27. Public buy-in and understanding of the aims and benefits of protected areas will be critical to their success. There is more that could be done to raise awareness about the 30 by 30 targets and the benefits protected areas can deliver for society. (Paragraph 82)
28. *We recommend that the Government enable and resource Natural England to develop and publicise accessible digital and offline tools and communications to enable members of the public to learn about and engage with their local protected areas. (Paragraph 83)*

Chapter 4: Other areas and mechanisms that could contribute to nature recovery and biodiversity

29. The Landscapes Review was published in May 2018, and the Government responded to it in January 2022. The implementation of some aspects of the Government's response would require changes to legislation, so the Government launched a consultation. The Landscapes Review consultation closed in April 2022, but the findings of the consultation and the Government response are yet to be published. (Paragraph 93)
30. *The Government should publish the findings and its response to the consultation on implementing the Landscapes Review as a priority and in advance of the publication of the map that details what will count towards 30 by 30. (Paragraph 94)*
31. The Committee recognises that there are competing and valid demands to live, work and enjoy the countryside, including within protected landscapes. Giving National Parks and AONBs a statutory nature conservation objective, in addition to their other statutory duties, as set out in the Landscapes Review will not mean they automatically contribute to the 30 by 30 target: that will require designation of particular sites within National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). These sites will require a specific nature conservation objective alongside management, monitoring and assurance of longevity beyond 30 years to ensure the IUCN eligibility

criteria for 30 by 30 is met. Giving an additional statutory duty to protect nature would encourage the overall protection of these important areas but would not alone enable them to count towards the 30 by 30 target. (Paragraph 95)

32. *We recommend that:*

(i) National Parks and AONBs are given at the next legislative opportunity an additional statutory duty to protect nature to sit alongside their existing purposes.

(ii) Sites within National Parks and AONBs should be identified for specific nature conservation potential, for which nature conservation objectives are developed and appropriate levels of protection and management agreed to deliver these objectives. (Paragraph 96)

33. We accept that other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) could have an important role to play in meeting 30 by 30 and make a positive contribution to the current set of designations. This is particularly important given the current considerable gap between land that is sufficiently protected and the 30 by 30 target. However, we are concerned to see that there are thus far no OECMs in England and there is slow progress in setting out their potential role, and a lack of guidance as to how they could be established. (Paragraph 103)

34. *We recommend that the Government launch a consultation to identify and classify potential OECMs in England and the contribution they could make to 30 by 30. (Paragraph 104)*

35. Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS) have a strong potential for nature recovery. If participating sites meet international guidelines to protect nature for the long term, they could be included in the 30 by 30 target. (Paragraph 110)

36. *We recommend that the Government set out those ELMS they believe have the best potential to identify sites to count towards the 30 by 30 target in line with international guidance and ensure protection for more than 30 years. (Paragraph 111)*

37. We received considerable evidence from stakeholders and land managers regarding the challenge of accessing and understanding Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS) in protected areas. Achieving 30 by 30 and upgrading England's countryside for nature recovery will require working in partnership effectively with land managers and farmers to improve farming practices and establish new areas of land that can be conserved to improve biodiversity and connectivity. (Paragraph 116)

38. *We recommend that the Government work with Natural England to design and implement an advisory mechanism that will support farmers in navigating ELMS to maximise the amount of land that is currently or may in the future be able to contribute to 30 by 30. This will require resources to help deliver. This mechanism should include:*

(a) A named advisory officer for each key farm; and

(b) A free advisory service for land managers. (Paragraph 117)

39. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) could play a small but important role in contributing to 30 by 30 and delivering nature recovery and identifying, funding and implementing nature management measures in some new areas. This will require BNG to be well regulated and managed for biodiversity and the gains will need to be well-evidenced. (Paragraph 120)
40. *We recommend that any BNG sites that contribute to 30 by 30 must have specific nature conservation objectives, effective management to deliver these, proper monitoring and a guarantee of sufficient longevity beyond the normal requirement of the BNG regime (more than 30 years).* (Paragraph 121)
41. We recognise the valuable role that Local Nature Partnerships play as a mechanism to convene stakeholders and experts to identify potential sites for nature recovery as part of LNRs. (Paragraph 123)
42. *We recommend that Local Nature Partnerships be appropriately resourced for their role in helping deliver LNRs.* (Paragraph 124)
43. For Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRs) to be effective, it is important that there is a strong link between LNRs and development plans, with a statutory requirement on local planning authorities to incorporate policies and proposals in their development plans to deliver the objectives of LNRs. (Paragraph 128)
44. *The Government should ensure that LNRs will be considered and given due weight in the planning system, including through statutory underpinning at the next legislative opportunity. Local authorities should be required to deliver the objectives of the LNRs as part of their development plans.* (Paragraph 129)

Chapter 5: Protected areas at sea and 30 by 30

45. We welcome Defra's plan to publish a map of the land and sea that will count towards 30 by 30 before the end of 2023. We are concerned about the lack of clarity around progress towards 30 by 30 at sea due to reported discrepancies in the extent of English waters that are effectively protected and the paucity of monitoring data. It is critical that the Government provide clarity on how 30 by 30 will be met at sea. (Paragraph 133)
46. *We recommend that alongside the map of what will count towards 30 by 30 the Government produce an action plan for achieving 30 by 30 at sea.* (Paragraph 134)
47. We received substantial written evidence detailing the challenging lack of transparent and reliable monitoring data for Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). As on land, this makes establishing a robust baseline of data to use to target resources very difficult. Rigorous monitoring data must be established quickly to inform effective marine management and decision making to achieve 30 by 30 at sea. (Paragraph 148)
48. *We recommend that the Government expand the current marine monitoring programme both inshore and offshore to develop a robust baseline of data that should be made publicly available. This programme should increase the frequency of monitoring and limit data extrapolation by ensuring that a larger sub-section of sites is being monitored on a more regular basis than the current 'sentinel' approach. The Government should also explore the option of remote electronic monitoring in the marine monitoring programme. The data produced from the monitoring should*

be easily accessible and understandable for all to track progress and demonstrate recovery of marine ecosystems. (Paragraph 149)

49. The Committee heard that the current resources available for marine monitoring are not sufficient to generate repeated and statistically robust time-series sampling points which are necessary for tracking and forming a baseline understanding of site conditions. Multiple stakeholders reported the need for an uplift in funding to establish an effective monitoring regime which is an essential early step in effective marine protection and management. (Paragraph 150)
50. *We recommend an uplift in funding for marine monitoring to ensure more rigorous data collection at sea. (Paragraph 151)*
51. We received considerable evidence regarding the damaging nature of fishing using bottom-contacting gears which occurs across English waters, including within Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). This type of activity is some of the most damaging to marine ecosystems and species and achieving 30 by 30 will require careful management of these activities. (Paragraph 156)
52. *We recommend that the Government better regulate the use of bottom trawling at sea, particularly in MPAs and move to a more holistic site management approach at sea. (Paragraph 157)*
53. We welcome the adoption of three Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs) in English waters, but more progress is needed. The 2022 Benyon Review into HPMAs called for five pilot sites to be established as a minimum and for these sites to cover different environments and activities with sufficient geographic spread to cover nearshore, inshore and offshore areas. We are disappointed that only three sites will be protected rather than five, which would have covered a broader range of environments and activities and therefore helped with learning for future sites. However, we recognise the need (Paragraph 159)
54. *We endorse the recommendation of the 2023 report of the House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, Protecting Marine Mammals in the UK and Abroad, published on 28 June 2023:*

“We call on the Government to publish an ambitious timescale for the designation of HPMAs and to outline their monitoring and enforcement strategy by the end of 2023.” (Paragraph 160)

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF MEMBERS AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members

Baroness Boycott
 Baroness Bray of Coln
 Lord Bruce of Bennachie
 Lord Duncan of Springbank
 Lord Grantchester
 Baroness Jones of Whitchurch
 Lord Lilley
 Lord Lucas
 Bishop of Oxford
 Baroness Parminter (Chair)
 Duke of Wellington
 Lord Whitty
 Baroness Young of Old Scone

Declarations of interest

Baroness Boycott
No relevant interests to declare

Baroness Bray of Coln
No relevant interests to declare

Lord Bruce of Bennachie
No relevant interests to declare

Lord Duncan of Springbank
Chair of the National Forest
Chair of the Confederation of Forest Industries

Lord Grantchester
Land and property in Cheshire but not within any Protected Area Designation

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch
Member of the South Downs National Park Authority

Lord Lilley
No relevant interests to declare

Lord Lucas
I live in Eastbourne, next to the South Downs National Park, and am active in promoting projects for public involvement in the regeneration of nature within the Park.

Bishop of Oxford
No relevant interests to declare

Baroness Parminter (Chair)
Member of the Surrey Wildlife Trusts
Member of the National Trust

Duke of Wellington
Family land holding in Hampshire
Family land holding in south Ayrshire

Lord Whitty
Member of the National Trust
Member of the Woodland Trust

Baroness Young of Old Scone
Chair of the Woodland Trust

Vice-President of the RSPB, Birdlife International, Fauna and Flora International

Commissioner on the Commission for Food, Farming and the Countryside

Chair of the Labour Climate and Environment Forum

Patron of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Management

A full list of Members' interests can be found in the Register of Lords Interests:
<https://members.parliament.uk/members/lords/interests/register-of-lords-interests>

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF WITNESSES

Evidence is published online at <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/7322/protected-areas/publications/> and available for inspection at the Parliamentary Archives (020 7219 3074).

Evidence received by the Committee is listed below in chronological order of oral evidence session, and then in alphabetical order. Those witnesses marked with ** gave both oral evidence and written evidence. Those marked with * gave oral evidence and did not submit any written evidence. All other witnesses submitted written evidence only.

Oral evidence in chronological order

- * Professor Jane K Hill, Research Theme Leader for Resilient Ecosystems in York Environmental Sustainability Institute, and Department of Biology, University of York [QQ 1–12](#)
- * Professor Callum Roberts, Professor of Marine Conservation in the Centre for Ecology and Conservation, The University of Exeter [QQ 1–12](#)
- * Dr James Robinson, Chair, IUCN UK Protected Areas Working Group, and Director of Conservation, the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust [QQ 1–12](#)
- ** Professor Rick Stafford, Chair of the British Ecological Society’s Policy Committee and Professor of Marine Biology and Conservation, Bournemouth University [QQ 1–12](#)
- * Professor Baroness Willis of Summertown CBE, Professor of Biodiversity, University of Oxford [QQ 18–28](#)
- * Ben McCarthy, Head of Nature Conservation & Restoration Ecology, The National Trust [QQ 29–35](#)
- * Jenny Hawley, Policy Manager, Plantlife [QQ 29–35](#)
- * Andrea Meanwell, upland farmer, the Howgills [QQ 29–35](#)
- * Rupert Hanbury-Tenison, landowner, Bodmin Moor [QQ 29–35](#)
- * Professor Mark Kibblewhite [QQ 29–35](#)
- ** Trudy Harrison MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Natural Environment and Land Use), Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs [QQ 36–57](#)
- * Edward Barker, Director, Natural Environment, Trees & Landscapes, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs [QQ 36–57](#)

Alphabetical list of witnesses

- * Edward Barker, Director, Natural Environment, Trees & Landscapes, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs ([QQ 36–57](#))
Campaign for National Parks [PAE0001](#)

- * Professor Baroness Willis of Summertown CBE, Professor of Biodiversity, University of Oxford ([QQ 18–28](#))
Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) [PAE0019](#)
CLA (Country Land and Business Association) [PAE0016](#)
- ** Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs ([QQ 36–57](#)) [PAE0009](#)
- ** Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs ([QQ 36–57](#)) [PAE0027](#)
Department of Levelling up, Housing and Communities [PAE0024](#)
Environment Agency [PAE0022](#)
The Exmoor Society [PAE0005](#)
- * Rupert Hanbury-Tenison, landowner, Bodmin Moor ([QQ 29–35](#))
- * Jenny Hawley, Policy Manager, Plantlife ([QQ 29–35](#))
- * Professor Jane K Hill, Research Theme leader for Resilient Ecosystems in York Environmental Sustainability Institute, and Department of Biology, University of York ([QQ 1–12](#))
Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) [PAE0021](#)
Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) [PAE0026](#)
Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) [PAE0028](#)
Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) [PAE0029](#)
- * Professor Mark Kibblewhite ([QQ 29–35](#))
Knepp [PAE0013](#)
Marine Conservation Society (MCS) [PAE0017](#)
Marine Management Organisation (MMO) [PAE0018](#)
- * Ben McCarthy, Head of Nature Conservation & Restoration Ecology, The National Trust ([QQ 29–35](#))
- * Andrea Meanwell, upland farmer, the Howgills ([QQ 29–35](#))
National Farming Union (NFU) [PAE0023](#)
National Parks England [PAE0015](#)
Natural Cambridgeshire [PAE0014](#)
Natural England [PAE0008](#)
Natural England [PAE0020](#)
Natural England [PAE0025](#)
Northern Irish Government [PAE0012](#)
- * Professor Callum Roberts, Professor of Marine Conservation in the Centre for Ecology and Conservation, The University of Exeter ([QQ 1–12](#))

- * Dr James Robinson, Chair, IUCN UK Protected Areas Working Group, and Director of Conservation, the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust ([QQ 1-12](#))
 - Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) [PAE0002](#)
 - Scottish Government [PAE0010](#)
 - South East Nature Partnership [PAE0003](#)
- ** Professor Rick Stafford ([QQ 1-12](#))
 - Welsh Government [PAE0011](#)
 - Wildlife and Countryside Link [PAE0007](#)
 - Wildlife Trusts [PAE0006](#)

APPENDIX 3: PROTECTED AREAS TABLES

Table 3: Designations on land with a nature conservation purpose

Designation	No of Sites	Hectarage	Legislative Basis	Governance	Monitoring Arrangements	Favourability Status
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	4,127 in England ²⁶²	1,088,000 hectares in total ²⁶³	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 ²⁶⁴ EU Habitats Directive, and the Environmental Protection Act 1990 ²⁶⁵	Natural England designates sites as a country nature conservation body (CNCB). ²⁶⁶ JNCC lead the production of the guidelines for SSSIs ²⁶⁷	Natural England monitors periodically ²⁶⁸	Common Standards Monitoring (CSM)– assessment of feature condition for protected sites (SSSI, SAC, SPA, Ramsar, etc). ²⁶⁹

262 Natural England, *Designated Sites View*: <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SSSIGuidance.aspx> [accessed 18 July 2023]

263 Woodland Trust, 'How many SSSIs are there?': <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2019/03/ssi-definition/> [accessed 18 July 2023]

264 Natural England, *Sites of special scientific interest: managing your land* (24 April 2013): <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protected-areas-sites-of-special-scientific-interest> [accessed 18 July 2023]

265 Natural England, *Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England)* (22 June 2023): <https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/5b632bd7-9838-4ef2-9101-ea9384421b0d/sites-of-special-scientific-interest-england> [accessed 18 July 2023]

266 Natural England, *Sites of special scientific interest: managing your land* (24 April 2013): <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protected-areas-sites-of-special-scientific-interest> [accessed 18 July 2023]

267 JNCC Written Evidence (PAE0021)

268 Natural England, *Natural England Standard, SSSI Monitoring and Reporting (NESTND035)* (30 January 2020): <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6232097035386880>

269 JNCC, *Common Standards Monitoring*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/common-standards-monitoring/> [accessed 18 July 2023]

Designation	No of Sites	Hectarage	Legislative Basis	Governance	Monitoring Arrangements	Favourability Status
Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)	256 in England ²⁷⁰	1,069,000 hectares in total ²⁷¹	Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 in England (including the adjacent territorial sea); Habitats Directive ²⁷²	Natural England designates sites as a CNCB. ²⁷³ JNCC advises the Government on aspects of the designation and management of SACs ²⁷⁴	JNCC and Natural England monitor sites every 6 years ²⁷⁵	Common Standards Monitoring (CSM)
Special Protected Areas (SPA)	82 in England ²⁷⁶	9,702,000 hectares in total ²⁷⁷	Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 in England (including the adjacent territorial sea); Birds Directive ²⁷⁸	Natural England designates sites as a CNCB. ²⁷⁹ JNCC advises the Government on aspects of the designation and management of SPAs ²⁸⁰	JNCC and Natural England monitor sites every 6 years ²⁸¹	Common Standards Monitoring (CSM)

270 JNCC, *SACs in England*: <https://sac.jncc.gov.uk/site/england> [accessed 18 July 2023]

271 JNCC, 'Special Areas of Conservation (SCAs)': <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/special-areas-of-conservation/> [accessed 18 July 2023]

272 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, *Government Circular: Biodiversity and geological conservation—statutory obligations and their impact within in the planning system* (16 August 2005): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7692/147570.pdf

273 Natural England, *Sites of special scientific interest: managing your land* (24 April 2013): <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protected-areas-sites-of-special-scientific-interest> [accessed 18 July 2023]

274 JNCC, *SAC condition & reporting*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/special-areas-of-conservation/#sac-condition-reporting> [accessed 18 July 2023]

275 JNCC, *SAC condition & reporting*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/special-areas-of-conservation> [accessed 18 July 2023]

276 JNCC, *Special Protection Areas (SPAs)*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/special-protection-areas/> [accessed 18 July 2023]

277 *Ibid.*

278 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, *Government Circular: Biodiversity and geological conservation—statutory obligations and their impact within in the planning system* (16 August 2005): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7692/147570.pdf

279 JNCC, *SPA classification*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/special-protection-areas/#spa-classification> [accessed 18 July 2023]

280 JNCC, *Special Protection Areas (SPAs)*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/special-protection-areas/> [accessed 18 July 2023]

281 JNCC, *SAC condition & reporting*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/special-areas-of-conservation/>. [accessed 18 July 2023]

Designation	No of Sites	Hectarage	Legislative Basis	Governance	Monitoring Arrangements	Favourability Status
Ramsar Sites	68 in England ²⁸²	321,000 hectares in total ²⁸³	Legal basis in Ramsar Convention. ²⁸⁴ Implemented in the UK through the Wildlife and Countryside Act. ²⁸⁵	UK-wide coordination and guidance by JNCC, designations by Natural England and/or Defra. ²⁸⁶ Natural England is responsible for advising Government on the management of sites. ²⁸⁷	UK report to Ramsar Secretariat every three years ²⁸⁸	Common Standards Monitoring (CSM)

282 JNCC, *Ramsar Site network summary*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/ramsar-convention/#ramsar-site-network-summary> [accessed 18 July 2023]

283 *Ibid.*

284 JNCC, *Ramsar Sites in the UK and the UK's Overseas Territories & Crown Dependencies*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/ramsar-sites/> [accessed 18 July 2023]

285 JNCC, *Implementation in the UK, Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/ramsar-convention/#implementation-in-the-uk-overseas-territories-and-crown-dependencies> [accessed 18 July 2023]

286 Natural England, *Natura 2000: European wildlife sites*: https://consult.defra.gov.uk/natural-england/crouch-roach-estuaries/supporting_documents/European%20leaflet%20Natura%202000.pdf

287 Natural England (PAE0008)

288 JNCC, *Ramsar reporting*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/special-areas-of-conservation/> [accessed 18 July 2023]

Table 4: Other types of designations and areas on land

Designation	No of Sites	Hectarage	Legislative Basis	Governance	Monitoring Arrangements	Favourability Status
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	34 in England ²⁸⁹	1,957,000 hectares in total ²⁹⁰	Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 ²⁹¹	Natural England proposes areas and advises on designation, Defra designate. Local Planning Authorities manage planning proposals. ²⁹²	Various: citizen-science based biodiversity monitoring schemes, surveys led by the England Ecosystem Survey, National Trust, RSPB etc. ²⁹³	N/A

289 Natural England, *Areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONBs): designation and management*: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/areas-of-outstanding-natural-beauty-aonbs-designation-and-management> [Accessed 21 July 2023]

290 The National Association, *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, About Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty*: <https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/about-aonbs/about-aonbs> [Accessed 21 July 2023]

291 Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 [Explanatory Notes](#)

292 Natural England, *Areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONBs): designation and management* (5 October 2017): <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/areas-of-outstanding-natural-beauty-aonbs-designation-and-management> [accessed 18 July 2023]

293 JNCC Written Evidence ([PAE0021](#))

Designation	No of Sites	Hectarage	Legislative Basis	Governance	Monitoring Arrangements	Favourability Status
National Parks	10 in England ²⁹⁴	1,212,000 hectares in total ²⁹⁵	National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 ²⁹⁶	Natural England designates areas and advises, National Parks Authorities manage sites ²⁹⁷	Various: National citizen-science based biodiversity monitoring schemes, professional surveys led by the England Ecosystem Survey, National Trust, RSPB etc. ²⁹⁸	N/A
Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)	Approximately 43,000 in England ²⁹⁹	611,000 hectares in total ³⁰⁰	Non-Statutory. Protected in the National Planning Policy Framework ³⁰¹	Many owned privately by individuals, charities, schools, and estates. ³⁰²	Various monitoring and studies carried out locally ³⁰³	N/A

294 National Parks, *Key Facts and Figures for all 15 UK National Parks*: <https://www.nationalparks.uk/app/uploads/2020/10/Key-Facts-and-Figures-for-the-15-UK-National-Parks.pdf>

295 *Ibid.*

296 [National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949](#)

297 Natural England, *Natural England's role with National Parks in England* (20 September 2014): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-parks-natural-englands-role/natural-englands-role-with-national-parks-in-england> [accessed 18 July 2023]

298 JNCC Written Evidence ([PAE0021](#))

299 Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre, 'Local Wildlife Sites': <https://www.tverc.org/cms/content/local-wildlife-sites> [accessed 18 July 2023]

300 The Wildlife Trusts, *Local Wildlife Site*: <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/local-wildlife-sites> [accessed 13 July 2023]

301 Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, *National Planning Policy Framework* (2001): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005759/NPPF_July_2021.pdf

302 Wildlife Trusts for Beds, Cambs and Northants, 'Local Wildlife Sites': <https://www.wildlifebcn.org/about-us/advice-landowners/local-wildlife-sites> [accessed 18 July 2023]

303 Wildlife Trusts for Beds, Cambs and Northants, 'Local Wildlife Sites, Northamptonshire': <https://www.wildlifebcn.org/about-us/advice-landowners/local-wildlife-sites> [accessed 18 July 2023]

Designation	No of Sites	Hectarage	Legislative Basis	Governance	Monitoring Arrangements	Favourability Status
National Nature Reserves (NNR)	221 designations in England ³⁰⁴	105,000 hectares in total ³⁰⁵	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 ³⁰⁶ National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 ³⁰⁷	Natural England designate sites and manage some. Other sites managed by National Trust, Forestry England, RSPB, Wildlife Trust etc. ³⁰⁸	Various: carried out in-house, by contractors, universities, volunteers, amateur experts, and others ³⁰⁹	Common Standards Monitoring (CSM) ³¹⁰

304 Natural England, *National Nature Reserves in England* (4 January 2009): <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-nature-reserves-in-england> [accessed 18 July 2023]

305 *Ibid.*

306 [Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981](#)

307 Natural England, *Natural England Standard: National Nature Reserve Management Standards (NESTND029)* (18 July 2013): <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5642141770448896> [accessed 18 July 2023]

308 Natural England, *National Nature Reserves in England* (4 January 2009): <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-nature-reserves-in-england> [accessed 18 July 2023]

309 Natural England, *Natural England Standard: National Nature Reserve Management Standards (NESTND029)* (18 July 2013): <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5642141770448896> [accessed 18 July 2023]

310 *Ibid.*

Designation	No of Sites	Hectarage	Legislative Basis	Governance	Monitoring Arrangements	Favourability Status
Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)	1,666 designations in England ³¹¹	86,000 hectares in total ³¹²	National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 ³¹³	Designated by Local Authorities. ³¹⁴	Various: outlined in LWS management plans ³¹⁵	N/A

311 Town and Country Planning, *Local nature reserves—providing high-quality natural places and green spaces (July/August 2021)*: <https://urbanecologyforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Local-Nature-Reserves-John-Box-2021.pdf>

312 *Ibid.*

313 Natural England, *Local Nature Reserves (England)* (31 March 2023): <https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/acdf4a9e-a115-41fb-bbc9-603c819aa7f7/local-nature-reserves-england> [accessed 18 July 2023]

314 Nottingham City Council, ‘Local Nature Reserves’ (31 March 2023): <https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/16f1fd72-5e6a-4809-b0cd-12cdac37ffac/local-nature-reserves> [accessed 18 July 2023]

315 Natural England, *Local Nature Reserves in England: A guide to their selection and declaration*: https://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/sites/default/files/pdf/LNRs_in_England_A_guide_to_their_selection_and_declaration_2010.pdf

Table 5: Designations at sea with a nature conservation purpose

Designation	No of Sites	Hectarage	Legislative Basis	Governance	Monitoring Arrangements	Favourability Status
Marine Protected Areas (including SACs, SPAs, and SSSIs at sea; including MCZ)	178 total designations in English waters ³¹⁶	51 per cent of inshore and 37 per cent of offshore English waters ³¹⁷	SACS Habitats Directive ³¹⁸ SPAs Birds Directive ³¹⁹ SSSIs Wildlife and Countryside Act ³²⁰ MCZ Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 ³²¹	Inshore legislated by Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) in England. ³²² Marine Management Organisation license inshore and offshore waters in England. ³²³ Natural England and JNCC advise Government at <12 nautical miles and >12 nautical miles from the coast to extent of exclusive economic zone (EEZ) respectively. MCZs designated by Defra. ³²⁴	JNCC undertake approximately two offshore MPA surveys per year. Natural England has statutory responsibility for monitoring to 12 nautical miles out to sea in territorial waters and the JNCC has responsibility for monitoring beyond 12 nautical miles in offshore waters. ³²⁵	Common Standards Monitoring (CSM)

316 MMO, *Marine protected areas background*: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/managing-fisheries-in-marine-protected-areas> [accessed 18 July 2023]

317 *Ibid.*

318 JNCC, *SACs with marine components*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/sacs-with-marine-components/> [accessed 18 July 2023]

319 *Ibid.*

320 JNCC, *Defining ASSI/SSSIs with ‘marine biological components’ and setting out a process for determining their contribution to the UK MPA network*: <https://data.jncc.gov.uk/data/2cde282c-2358-4d3f-9072-b1f4f4086545/Defining-SSSIs-ASSIs-with-marine-components.pdf>

321 JNCC, *Marine Conservation Zones*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/marine-conservation-zones/> [accessed 18 July 2023]

322 JNCC Written Evidence (PAE0021)

323 MMO, *Marine licensing—Definitions*: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/marine-licensing-definitions> [accessed 18 July 2023]

324 Defra, *Marine Conservation Zones Designation Explanatory Notes* (November 2013): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/259972/pb14078-mcz-explanatory-note.pdf

325 Written evidence from Natural England (PAE0008) and the JNCC (PAE0021)

Designation	No of Sites	Hectarage	Legislative Basis	Governance	Monitoring Arrangements	Favourability Status
Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs)	3 total designations in English waters ³²⁶	99,000 ha total coverage of English waters ³²⁷	Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009) ³²⁸	Defra designate sites. ³²⁹ JNCC, Natural England, IFCAs, MMO, and CEFAS work together and/or provide advice on the management of HPMAs. ³³⁰	Not yet established ³³¹	N/A

326 Defra, *Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs)* (25 May 2023): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/highly-protected-marine-areas/highly-protected-marine-areas-hpmas> [accessed 18 July 2023]

327 *Ibid.*

328 JNCC, *English Highly Protected Marine Areas*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/english-highly-protected-marine-areas/> [accessed 18 July 2023]

329 JNCC, *Roles of Defra and its Arms-Length Bodies*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/english-highly-protected-marine-areas/#roles-of-defra-and-its-arms-length-bodies> [accessed 18 July 2023]

330 JNCC, *English Highly Protected Marine Areas*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/english-highly-protected-marine-areas/> [accessed 18 July 2023]

331 JNCC, *Roles of Defra and its Arms-Length Bodies*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/english-highly-protected-marine-areas/#roles-of-defra-and-its-arms-length-bodies> [accessed 18 July 2023]

Table 6: Monitoring systems and condition statuses for designations on land with a nature conservation purpose

Designation	Monitoring System	Condition Status Guidelines
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)	Common Standards Monitoring (CSM) ³³²	<p>Favourable. Favourable condition is met when defined targets for each attribute of the interest feature are met.³³³ This can include features such as biological (species and habitats), geological and geomorphological features.</p> <p>Unfavourable. An interest feature is determined to be in an unfavourable condition when the condition objectives for the feature are not being met.³³⁴</p> <p>Partially destroyed. Sections or areas of features may become degraded and destroyed. This can be irreversible in some cases if the habitat or processes essential to support the feature are removed or permanently altered. In these cases, it is usual for a condition assessment to be carried out on the remaining, intact feature(s).³³⁵</p> <p>Destroyed. If a feature is recorded as destroyed, this will indicate that the entirety of the feature has been degraded or lost to the point where recovery is not possible. As above, this may be the result of the habitat or processes essential to support the feature being removed or permanently altered.³³⁶</p>
Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)		
Special Protected Areas (SPAs)		
Ramsar Sites		

332 JNCC, *Commons Standards Monitoring*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/common-standards-monitoring/> [accessed 18 July 2023]

333 JNCC, *How do we decide if a feature is in a favourable or unfavourable state*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/key-aspects-of-common-standards-monitoring-csm/#how-do-we-decide-if-a-feature-is-in-favourable-or-unfavourable-state> [accessed 18 July 2023]

334 JNCC, *Commons Standards Monitoring*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/common-standards-monitoring/> [accessed 18 July 2023]

335 JNCC, *How do we decide if a feature is in a favourable or unfavourable state*: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/key-aspects-of-common-standards-monitoring-csm/#how-do-we-decide-if-a-feature-is-in-favourable-or-unfavourable-state> [accessed 18 July 2023]

336 *Ibid.*

In addition to the described condition guidelines outlined in Table 6, Country Nature Conservation Bodies (CNCBs) in each nation in the UK can opt to use additional statuses to describe features.³³⁷ These are as follows:

- Favourable—maintained: A feature may be recorded as favourable and maintained when the specific conservation objectives continue to be met, and following a favourable status being recorded on the previous assessment.
- Favourable—recovered: A feature may be recorded as recovered if it was previously recorded as unfavourable on the previous assessment and has since gained favourable condition.
- Favourable—declining: Although this status was not originally part of Common Standards Monitoring (CSM), it may be used to reflect cases where all targets are being met but identified pressures may result in an unfavourable condition of the feature if pressures are not mitigated.
- Unfavourable—recovering: A feature may be recorded as recovering if data demonstrates a positive trend towards a favourable condition and feature targets could in time be achieved.
- Unfavourable—no change: A feature may remain in a consistent unfavourable state in which it is neither declining further nor recovering. For example, a feature may not recover to its original condition following degradation or loss of parts of the feature, however a new, stable (albeit reduced) state is maintained.
- Unfavourable—declining: Decline is another possible consequence of degradation or loss of parts of the feature. Here, recovery may be possible if suitable management input is made. In rare cases, spontaneous recovery may occur.³³⁸

In addition to designations on land with a nature conservation purpose, areas within NNRs and some MPAs also use the CSM approach for monitoring protected features.³³⁹ LWSs use similar terminology to the CSM, however as many are privately owned monitoring is sparse (only 3.6 per cent monitored in 2017) and monitoring systems vary between sites and organisations.³⁴⁰ LNRs may also use the CSM approach in areas where there is an overlay of SSSI and LNR designation boundaries.³⁴¹

For protected landscapes, the CSM is not usually applied at the landscape level. We heard in written evidence that:

“The new outcomes framework for Protected Landscapes will set targets for their contributions to national environment and climate commitments. Progress will be tracked through indicators. Monitoring

337 JNCC, *A Statement on Common Standards for Monitoring Protected Sites* (2022): <https://data.jncc.gov.uk/data/0450edfd-a56b-4f65-aff6-3ef66187dc81/csm-statement-2022-v-2-1.pdf>

338 JNCC, *A Statement on Common Standards for Monitoring Protected Sites* (2022): <https://data.jncc.gov.uk/data/0450edfd-a56b-4f65-aff6-3ef66187dc81/csm-statement-2022-v-2-1.pdf>

339 Natural England, *Natural England Standard: National Nature Reserve Management Standards (NESTND029)* (18 July 2013): <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5642141770448896> [accessed 18 July 2023]

340 The Wildlife Trusts, *The status of England’s Local Wildlife Sites 2018*: https://www.essexwtrecords.org.uk/sites/default/files/Status_of_LWS_systems_report_2018.pdf

341 Natural England, *Local Nature Reserves in England: A guide to their selection and declaration*: https://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/sites/default/files/pdf/LNRs_in_England_A_guide_to_their_selection_and_declaration_2010.pdf

will also be supported by our England-wide Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment (NCEA).”³⁴²

For AONBs and National Parks, although monitoring reports may be produced—such as State of the Park reports—they do not necessarily follow the CSM approach.³⁴³

Likewise, for HPMA the CSM approach is not used. As stated in the Benyon Review, “to establish comparative baselines, the monitoring and evaluation of biological, social and economic processes and effects of HPMA must begin before designation and continue long term”.³⁴⁴ It is unclear what monitoring approach or feature classification system (if any) HPMA monitoring will use.

342 Written evidence from Defra ([PAE0009](#))

343 Lake District National Park Partnership, *State of the Park 2018*: https://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/151038/SOTP-Report-2018-V6-FINAL-02.05.19.docx.pdf

344 Richard Benyon, *Benyon Review into Highly Protected Marine Areas*: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/890484/hpma-review-final-report.pdf

APPENDIX 4: GLOSSARY

25 YEP	25 Year Environment Plan
4CBG	Four Countries Biodiversity Group
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEFAS	Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science
CLA	Country Land and Business Association
COP15	Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity
CSM	Common Standards Monitoring
CS	Countryside Stewardship
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DLUHC	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
EIP	Environmental Improvement Plan
ELMS	Environmental Land Management Schemes
FiPL	Farming in Protected Landscapes
GBF	Global Biodiversity Framework
HAC	High Ambition Coalition
HPMA	Highly Protected Marine Areas
IFCAS	Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
LNP	Local Nature Partnerships
LNRS	Local Nature Recovery Strategies
LNR	Local Nature Reserves
LPA	Local Planning Authorities
LWS	Local Wildlife Sites
MCS	Marine Conservation Society
MCZ	Marine Conservation Zones
MMO	Marine Management Organisation
MPA	Marine Protected Area
NNR	National Nature Reserves
NP	National Park
OEP	Office for Environmental Protection
OECM	Other effective area-based conservation measures
OT	Overseas Territories

SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SBI	Sites of Biological Importance
SFI	Sustainable Farming Incentive
SINC	Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation
SPA	Special Protection Area
SSSI	Sites of Special Scientific Interest