



Cynllun Gweithredu Thematig Natura 2000 Rheoli Mynediad a Hamdden

Natura 2000 Thematic Action Plan Access and Recreation Management

Rhaglen Natura 2000 LIFE yng Nghymru
LIFE Natura 2000 Programme for Wales



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October 2015

1. Cyflwyniad

Rhaglen Natura 2000 LIFE yng Nghymru

Mae 92 Ardal Cadwraeth Arbennig (ACA) ac 20 Ardal Gwarchodaeth Arbennig (AGA) Cymru'n cynnwys 123 o nodweddion cynefinoedd a rhywogaethau dynodedig. Gyda'i gilydd, y rhain yw rhwydwaith Natura 2000.

Mae Rhaglen Natura 2000 LIFE yng Nghymru wedi datblygu blaen-gynllyn strategol i reoli ac adfer Natura 2000 yng Nghymru. Drwy weithio â rhanddeiliaid mae wedi pennu'r prif heriau sy'n wynebu'r safleoedd, y rhywogaethau a'r cynefinoedd hyn a warchodir gan Ewrop, a nodi'r camau gweithredu sydd eu hangen, y blaenoriaethau, y costau a'r cyfleoedd cyllido i fynd i'r afael â nhw. Cafodd y rhaglen ei chynnal gan Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru a'i hariannu gan gynllun LIFE+ Nature yr Undeb Ewropeaidd.

Y pwrpas yw galluogi Cymru i wneud cynnydd sylweddol tuag at sicrhau bod rhywogaethau a chynefinoedd Natura 2000 mewn cyflwr ffafriol a helpu i gyflawni ei hymrwymiaadau o dan Gyfarwyddeb Cynefinoedd ac Adar yr Undeb Ewropeaidd. Mae'r Rhaglen yn ceisio darparu llwyfan hefyd i sicrhau rhagor o gyllid ar gyfer prosiectau sy'n gysylltiedig â Natura 2000 o bob ffynhonnell bosibl, ac i integreiddio cyllid Natura 2000 mewn offerynnau ariannol a meysydd polisi eraill.

Mae manylion llawn Rhaglen Natura 2000 LIFE a rhwydwaith Natura 2000 yng Nghymru yn Ffeithiau a Ffigurau, Rhaglen Natura 2000 LIFE yng Nghymru: Adroddiad 1.

Cynlluniau Gweithredu Thematig

Mae Rhaglen Natura 2000 LIFE wedi creu 11 Cynllun Gweithredu Thematig, pob un yn ymdrin â chamau gweithredu strategol blaenoriaeth i fynd i'r afael â'r prif broblemau a'r risgiau¹ a nodwyd fel y rhai sy'n cael effaith andwyol ar nodweddion Natura 2000 ledled y rhwydwaith.

Y Cynlluniau Gweithredu Thematig yw:

- Mynediad a hamdden
- Llygredd aer: Gwaddodi nitrogen
- Newid yn yr hinsawdd a chwalu cynefinoedd
- Llygredd dŵr gwasgaredig
- Rheoli perygl llifogydd ac erydu arfordirol
- Rheoli pori a da byw
- Rhywogaethau a phathogenau estron goresgynnol
- Newidiadau gan ddyn i amodau hydrologig
- Sbwriel y môr
- Pysgodfeydd morol
- Rheoli coetiroedd

¹ Problemau (neu bwysau) yw adweithiau andwyol i nodweddion Natura 2000 sy'n digwydd ar hyn o bryd ar neu yng nghyffiniau ACA neu AGA sy'n rhwystro'r rhywogaeth neu'r cynefin dynodedig rhag cyrraedd cyflwr ffafriol.

Risgiau (neu fygythiadau) i nodweddion Natura 2000 sy'n debygol o ddigwydd erbyn 2020.

Y brif gynulleidfa ar gyfer y Cynlluniau Gweithredu yw rheolwr, pobl sy'n gwneud penderfyniadau a chyllidwyr yn Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru, Llywodraeth Cymru a sefydliadau partner allweddol.

Mae'r camau gweithredu i'w gweld yn y tabl yn Adran 9. Camau yw'r rhain y gellir eu cyflawni ar lefel genedlaethol neu ranbarthol, i ategu camau gweithredu ar safleoedd o fewn Cynlluniau Gwella â Blaenoriaeth. Maent yn ceisio mynd i'r afael â rhwystrau sylfaenol, a'u hachosion lle bo'n bosibl, a datblygu fframwaith strwythurol sy'n cefnogi ac yn hyrwyddo trefniadau rheoli priodol yn lleol. Mae'r camau gweithredu'n cynnwys y rhai sydd eu hangen i fynd i'r afael â bylchau mewn tystiolaeth sy'n atal dealltwriaeth lawn o anghenion rheoli.

Gall rhai camau gweithredu strategol gynnig ffrydiau gwaith newydd a mentrau mawr; mae eraill yn cyd-fynd i raddau helaeth â pholisïau, strategaethau a rhaglenni gwaith sy'n bodoli eisoes neu sydd wrthi'n cael eu datblygu.

Cafodd y camau gweithredu strategol eu nodi yn ystod gweithdai a gynhaliwyd gyda gweithwyr proffesiynol arbenigol yn y maes, o Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru a sefydliadau eraill. Roeddynt yn seiliedig hefyd ar grynodedau o gamau gweithredu ar safleoedd a oedd yn deillio o'r Cynlluniau Gwella â Blaenoriaeth a'r Gronfa Ddata Camau Gweithredu (gweler isod). Cafodd y rhain eu hadolygu a'u dilysu gan weithgor bychan a buont yn destun proses ymgysylltu a thrafod gyda rhanddeiliaid hefyd. Gweler Adran 8 am ragor o fanylion.

Y camau gweithredu strategol yw'r rhai a nodwyd sydd eu hangen i gael y nodweddion i gyflwr ffafriol. Maent yn amodol ar y graddau y mae adnoddau ar gael ac ar gytundeb rhanddeiliaid. Nid ydynt yn cynrychioli cynllun gweithredol sydd wedi'i ariannu'n llawn nac wedi ymrwymo'n llawn iddo. Fodd bynnag, y bwriad yw defnyddio'r camau gweithredu i lywio amrywiaeth o gynlluniau gweithredol a rhaglenni gwaith yn y dyfodol.

Er bod y camau gweithredu strategol yn canolbwyntio ar gyfres Natura 2000, gellir defnyddio llawer ohonynt yn eang a gallent fod o fudd i Safleoedd o Ddiddordeb Gwyddonol Arbennig a helpu i warchod bioamrywiaeth a chryfhau'r ecosystem yn yr amgylchedd ehangach.

Cynlluniau Gwella â Blaenoriaeth a Chronfa Ddata Camau Gweithredu

Mae Rhaglen Natura 2000 LIFE wedi cynhyrchu Cynlluniau Gwella â Blaenoriaeth ar gyfer pob safle Natura 2000 yng Nghymru. Mae'r cynlluniau hyn yn nodi'r prif broblemau a risgiau sy'n effeithio ar nodweddion Natura 2000 ac yn disgrifio'r camau gweithredu â blaenoriaeth, wedi'u costio, sydd eu hangen i gael a chynnal nodweddion y safle mewn cyflwr ffafriol. Mae'r cynlluniau'n defnyddio gwybodaeth o Gronfa Ddata Camau Gweithredu Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru sy'n cynnwys yr holl gamau gweithredu (blaenoriaeth uchel, canolig, isel) ar gyfer safleoedd Natura 2000. Datblygwyd y camau gweithredu gan Swyddogion Cadwraeth Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru ar y cyd â rhanddeiliaid a phartneriaid. Cafodd cynnwys y Gronfa Ddata ei ymestyn a'i ddiweddarau'n llawn yn ystod 2014/5.

2. Introduction

LIFE Natura 2000 Programme for Wales

There are 123 designated habitat and species features on the 92 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and 20 Special Protection Areas (SPAs) in Wales. Together these comprise the Natura 2000 network.

The LIFE Natura 2000 Programme for Wales has developed a strategic forward plan to manage and restore Natura 2000 in Wales. Working with stakeholders it has determined the key challenges facing these European protected sites, species and habitats and identified the actions required, priorities, costs and funding opportunities to address them. The Programme was run by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and funded by the European Union scheme LIFE+ Nature.

The purpose is to enable Wales to make significant progress towards bringing Natura 2000 species and habitats into favourable condition and help meet its commitments under the European Habitats and Birds Directives. The Programme also aims to provide a platform to seek further funding for Natura 2000 related projects from all potential sources, and to integrate Natura 2000 funding into other financial instruments and policy areas.

Full details about the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme and the Natura 2000 network in Wales can be found in the *LIFE Natura 2000 Programme for Wales: Fact and Figures Report 1*.

Thematic Action Plans

The LIFE Natura 2000 Programme has created 11 Thematic Action Plans, each of which detail priority strategic actions to address major issues and risks² which have been identified as having an adverse impact on Natura 2000 features across the network.

The Thematic Action Plans are as follows:

- Access and recreation
- Air pollution: Nitrogen deposition
- Climate change and habitat fragmentation
- Diffuse water pollution
- Flood and coastal erosion risk management
- Grazing and livestock management
- Non-native invasive species and pathogens
- Man-made changes to hydraulic conditions
- Marine litter
- Marine fisheries
- Woodland management

² Issues (or pressures) are adverse impacts to Natura 2000 features which are currently taking place on or around SACs or SPAs which act as barriers to the designated habitat or species features reaching favourable condition. Risks (or threats) are adverse impacts to Natura 2000 features which are likely to occur by 2020.

The primary audience for the Actions Plans are managers, decision makers and fund holders within Natural Resources Wales, Welsh Government and key partner organisations.

The strategic actions are set out in the table in Section 9. These are actions which may be delivered at national or regional level, to complement the site-level actions within Prioritised Improvement Plans (PIPs). They seek to address fundamental barriers and where possible their root causes, and to develop a structural framework which supports and promotes appropriate management at a local level. Actions include those needed to address evidence gaps which are hindering full understanding of management needs. Some strategic actions may propose new work streams and larger-scale initiatives; others align closely to existing or developing policies, strategies and work programmes.

The strategic actions were identified during workshops held with professionals with expertise in the field, from Natural Resources Wales and other organisations. These were also informed by summaries of site level actions derived from the PIPs and Actions Database (see below). These were reviewed and validated by a small working group and also subject to a process of engagement and discussion with stakeholders. See Section 8 for more details.

The strategic actions are those which have been identified as being required to bring features into favourable condition. They are subject to resource availability and stakeholder agreement. They do not represent a fully funded or committed operational plan. However, the intention is that the actions will be used to inform a range of operational plans and work programmes in the future.

While the strategic actions are focused on the Natura 2000 series, many have a broad applicability and may also be of benefit to Sites of Special Scientific Interest and other biodiversity conservation and ecosystem resilience work in the wider environment.

Prioritised Improvement Plans and Actions Database

The LIFE Natura 2000 Programme has produced Prioritised Improvement Plans (PIPs) for all Natura 2000 sites in Wales. The PIPs identify the main issues and risks affecting the Natura 2000 features on the site and describe costed, prioritised actions required to achieve and maintain the site features in favourable condition.

The PIPs draw information from the Natural Resources Wales Actions Database which hold all actions (high, medium, low priority) for Natura 2000 sites. Actions were developed by Natural Resources Wales Conservation Officers in association with stakeholders and partners. The content of the Database was fully extended and updated during 2014/5.

3. Background

Work carried out by the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme for Wales in 2014/15 has identified impacts from access and recreation activities as a priority issue/risk affecting Natura 2000 features in Wales³. This is consistent with the most recent round of UK level biodiversity reporting; the 10th UK 'Article 12 report'⁴ and the 3rd 'Article 17 report'⁵ show that recreational disturbance is having or has the potential to have adverse impacts on the condition status of a variety of SAC and SPA features in both terrestrial and marine environments.

This Thematic Action Plan covers damage and disturbance to Natura 2000 sites and habitats and species features caused by recreational activities and public access for enjoyment. The plan does not address the effects of access for uses other than recreation, such as commercial fishing or bait collection (see the Marine Fisheries Thematic Action Plan); nor does it cover other potential causes of disturbance, such as civil or military aircraft or the direct disturbance effects of development.

While inappropriately managed access and recreation can result in adverse effects on Natura 2000 sites, the wider value of outdoor activities are fully recognised. Good access and recreation provision allows the public to enjoy and appreciate these important areas; inspiring people to value and protect them. Walking, cycling, riding and other outdoor activities promotes physical and mental health, and visits by tourists and residents can generate income for local economies.

Although there is a body of legislation which requires that Natura 2000 sites and features are fully protected, there is also a well-established raft of legislation which safeguards access to the countryside and coast. This legislation often gives legal effect to long-standing traditions of access along particular routes or over certain types of land. Therefore, it is essential that actions proposed in this Thematic Action Plan, are in line with this legislation.

In the majority of cases and with careful management, access and recreation provision can be delivered without compromising the Natura 2000 site's conservation objectives. Therefore, the Thematic Action Plan is written in the context that the principle of public access to Natura 2000 sites is fully supported and that any action on sites will seek to preserve legitimate access and recreation wherever possible.

³ Natural Resources Wales, 2015. *LIFE Natura 2000 Programme for Wales Summary Report*.

⁴ Joint Nature Conservation Committee 2013 *10th Report by the United Kingdom under Article 12 on the implementation of the Directive on the conservation of wild birds (2009/147/EC) from January 2008 to December 2012*. JNCC, Peterborough.

⁵ Joint Nature Conservation Committee 2013 *Summary of conclusions & qualifiers – 3rd UK Habitats Directive Reporting 2013*.

4. Issues and risks

The LIFE Natura 2000 Programme data shows that access and recreational activities have (or are likely to have) an impact on 86 out of 123 habitat or species features (70%) on 59 out of 112 Natura 2000 sites in Wales (53%). These issues and risks are related to actual or suspected damage to habitats or species or to disturbance of species. Table 1 provides a list of features most frequently affected. For a full list of sites and features affected see Appendices A and B respectively.

187 issues and risks related to access and recreation were recorded across the Natura 2000 series (on individual units or on whole sites), out of a total of 3,090 records (for all types of issue and risk) (6%).

Upland SACs including Berwyn and South Clwyd Mountains, Eryri, Brecon Beacons and Rhinog have issues and risks associated with footpath erosion due to high numbers of walkers, runners and climbers. This causes deterioration of designated habitats, such as wet and dry heath, with bog habitats being particularly vulnerable. Off-road motoring can also cause significant damage in the uplands, again particularly to vulnerable heath and blanket bog habitats.

Other sites with issues and risks associated with recreational activities are woodlands such as Coedydd Nedd a Mellte and Cardiff Beech Woods SACs where high numbers of walkers, climbers, mountain bikers and gorge walkers contribute to damage to footpaths and adjacent land, particularly on slopes where the ground is easily eroded and adjacent to rivers where mosses and liverworts are vulnerable. Caving activity may disturb hibernating bats on sites with bat roosts in disused mines and shafts, such as Mwyngloddiau Fforest Gwydir SAC.

Marine and coastal Natura 2000 sites such as Pen Llyn a'r Sarnau and Pembrokeshire Marine SAC have a number of issues and risks associated recreation on a wide range of habitats and species. For instance, bottlenose dolphin and grey seals are thought to be disturbed by recreational boating and intertidal habitats such as mudflats and reefs are noted as being trampled by recreational hand gatherers and walkers. Similarly dune habitats are frequently listed due to damage and erosion when people stray from waymarked footpaths.

While the frequency of issues and risks seems low on marine sites this reflects the fact that there are a small number of large marine sites in Wales and that issues and risks were mainly identified at the site level. For example, while the estuary feature in Table 1 has only been identified as having six instances of the feature being affected, this refers to the whole site and since there are only seven estuaries designated in Wales, this represents a high proportion of the feature in Welsh waters.

It should also be recognised that not all human-induced erosion or damage is harmful to nature conservation. In some cases, the creation and maintenance of bare ground in dunes creates valuable open habitat for invertebrates and initiates active cycles of erosion and recolonization in otherwise over-stabilised dunes. Trampled pathways can produce valuable small scale firebreaks on heaths. Some highly specialised species, rely on high levels of disturbance, for example *Juncus capitatus* which only survives in Wales in ruts and poached ground caused by off-road vehicles and horses.

Table 1. Natura 2000 features most frequently adversely affected by public access and recreation activities

Feature (common name)	Number of instances feature affected		
	Unit level	Site level	Total
Dry heaths	43	4	47
Lesser horseshoe bat	16	6	22
Blanket bog	18	1	19
Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes	10	4	14
Atlantic salt meadows	5	6	11
Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath	9	1	10
Humid dune slacks	7	3	10
Reefs	5	5	10
Alpine and subalpine heaths	7	2	9
Grasslands on soils rich in heavy metals	7	2	9
Beech forests on neutral to rich soils	6	3	9
Intertidal mudflats and sandflats	6	2	8
Shifting dunes with marram	6	2	8
Western acidic oak woodland	6	2	8
Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone	5	3	8
Estuaries	2	6	8
Otter	1	7	8
Dunes with creeping willow	5	2	7
Shallow inlets and bays	3	4	7
Atlantic salmon	2	5	7
Petalwort	7	-	7
Glasswort and other annuals colonising mud and sand	3	3	6
Grey seal	2	4	6

**The 'number of instances' indicates the number of times access and recreation activities are logged as an issue or risk for the feature at either a detailed management unit level or whole site level, on SACs and SPAs in Wales. This includes high, medium and low priority issues/risks.*

Management units are sub-divisions of Natura 2000 sites based on landownership or ecological differences. Issues and risks are recorded as either at a 'site level' (if the affects occur across the site) or 'unit level' (if the impacts are localised).

The information is derived from the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme data held in the NRW Actions Database. Sourced September 2015.

See Appendix B for a full list of features affected.

5. Policy and legislative context

There is a broad framework of policy and legislation at the international, UK and Welsh level which drives and supports the management of Natura 2000. The primary European legislation is the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive which promote the conservation and management of natural habitats and wild species. Key UK legislation includes the Habitats Regulations, Wildlife and Countryside Act, and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act. Wales is developing a new approach to integrated and sustainable natural resource management, through for example, the Environment (Wales) Bill and the Nature Recovery Plan. Further information is provided in the *LIFE Natura 2000 Programme Facts and Figures Report 1*.

The legislative context that governs access and recreation in Wales focuses on two key areas. The first defines rights, duties and powers relating to public access to land and water and the second places duties on public bodies in Wales to make appropriate recreation opportunities as accessible as possible, to maximise the benefits to society.

Primary legislation associated with public rights of access

In England and Wales public rights of access to land are mapped as linear routes (Public Rights of Way) or wider areas of access land. Marine and intertidal areas have an assumed de-facto right of access under common law and inland waters have a limited number of areas that have a public right of navigation. The main pieces of legislation that currently govern these rights are as follows:

- **National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949** - established protected landscapes, and gives local authorities the duty to survey and map existing rights of way and established long distance routes.
- **Crown Estate Act 1961** - although marine and intertidal areas owned by the Crown are considered to have a common law right of public access, this act gave the Crown Estate Commission the power to exclude access in some cases.
- **Transport Act 1961** - gives certain inland waterways public navigation rights.
- **Countryside Act 1968** - clarifies certain duties and powers relating to the provision of signposts and maintenance of structures on public rights of way and gives the public rights to cycle on bridleways.
- **Highways Act 1980** – updates the duties and powers for creating, altering, maintaining and protecting public rights of way.
- **Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981** - provides duties, powers and procedures for the recording of public rights of way. It places local authorities under a duty to keep their Definitive Map under continuous review.
- **Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000** - makes over 300,000 ha of land in Wales accessible by virtue of it either being Open Country or Registered Common Land. This allows people to access the land “for the purposes of open-air recreation” on foot. In

addition much of the Welsh Government woodland estate, managed by NRW, has been dedicated as access land. The Act also gives NRW a duty to promote responsible use of these areas. The Act also created a new status of right of way “restricted byways”.

The Act requires local authorities to produce Rights of Way Improvement Plans setting out their strategic approach to managing their networks and also included a requirement for decision makers to have regard to “*the desirability of conserving flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features*” when considering legal changes to public rights of way.

- **Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006** - significantly limited the opportunities for the recording of new public rights with motor vehicles. It provides for a blanket extinguishment of such rights where they were existing, but unrecorded, unless they fulfilled specific exceptions.
- **Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009** – the access provisions of this act do not apply in Wales.

Primary legislation associated with recreation and public health and well-being

Welsh Government have recognised the benefits that outdoor recreation and the exposure to high quality green spaces makes to the health and well-being of the population. To help promote more opportunities for people to receive the benefits of outdoor recreation Welsh Government have implemented legislation, as outlined below:

- **Equality Act 2010** - states that public bodies should ensure that all provision that they deliver, facilitate or fund will adhere to the principles of least restrictive access across the protected characteristics.
- **Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** - identifies goals to improve the well-being of Wales and its people and introduces national indicators that will measure the difference being made.

In addition to this legislation, Welsh Government have published the following strategies to build positive links between the people and the natural environment:

- **Vibrant and Viable Places** – sets out Welsh Government’s vision for sustainable development and community regeneration.
- **Woodlands for Wales** – Welsh Government’s strategic vision for the management of woodlands in Wales.
- **Climbing Higher** – Welsh Government’s vision for sport and outdoor recreation.
- **Partnership for Growth** – Welsh Government’s strategy for sustainable tourism.

Natural Resources Wales’ duties in relation to access and recreation, reflects its priorities regarding the public benefits derived from accessing the natural environment. Welsh Government gave NRW a statutory duty to ‘...*promote the provision and improvement of opportunities for:*

- a) *access to, and enjoyment of, the countryside and open spaces;*
- b) *open-air recreation; and*
- c) *the study, understanding and enjoyment of the natural environment.*

This duty needs to be considered in any work that NRW undertakes on land that is accessible to the public. In addition in 2015 it was agreed that NRW would take on the responsibility for the management and promotion of the Wales Coast Path.

6. Current mechanisms and planned actions on sites to 2020

The LIFE Natura 2000 Programme identified and costed actions to address issues and risk relating to access and recreation on Natura 2000 sites during 2014/15 for the period to 2020. These actions are held in full in the NRW Actions Database and summarised in Prioritised Improvement Plans.

Actions, expressed in terms of the delivery mechanism, are shown below in Table 2. It shows the number of times mechanisms are identified against an action on a Natura 2000 site or management unit within a site and also specifies estimated costs and staff time. This includes high, medium and low priority actions.

Table 2. Mechanisms identified in the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme data to address issues and risks associated with access and recreation activities on SACs and SPAs in Wales

Mechanism	Total number of instances of mechanism	Total cost*	Total NRW staff days*
Direct management	95	£1,822,315	421
Investigation	76	£288,500	290
Enforcement	36	£0	38
Targeted education, awareness raising and liaison	29	£254,000	229
Risk surveillance	15	£125,000	59
NRW Management Agreement	10	£638,755	86
Planning permission / Byelaws	4	£0	19
Develop/review NRW policy and recommendations	3	£0	12
Develop/review forest design plan or access and recreation plan	3	£6,500	98
Changes to policy and/or legislation	1	£0	0

**The costs are broad estimated costs to deliver the action(s), rounded to the nearest thousand. In most cases the costs are calculated to 2020 except where longer term funding would be needed. The number of NRW staff days is the number of annual staff days x 5 (for number of years until 2020) which would be needed, plus the number of one-off staff days until 2020. Note that there are a number of uncosted actions, due to the difficulty of estimating costs where more in depth action specific information is required.*

Significant investment is already made in the management of recreational activities, using a variety of management mechanisms as shown above in Table 2. Strategies vary from signposting and footpath maintenance to keep people to certain routes, through voluntary agreements and codes of conduct to more formal approaches.

The primary mechanisms used to manage access and recreation on Natura 2000 sites are described in more detail below:

- **Direct management** is the most frequently identified mechanism in the LIFE Natura 2000 data which is needed to address impacts from recreational activities. It includes a range of work on the ground, typically footpath maintenance, boardwalk repair and signage. This category can include zoning and access agreements which are temporal and spatial restrictions (voluntary or formal) to reduce pressure on sites or features.
- **Investigation/Risk surveillance** involves undertaking surveys or studies to find out more about the impact activities are having on features. The PIPs show that in many cases where disturbance of features has been observed on SPAs and SACs, systematic research to investigate the issue has not yet taken place and the significance of the disturbance effect on feature condition is not known. For instance, on some sites, wintering or breeding SPA bird numbers are lower than expected and public access-related disturbance is one of a number of possible reasons, so further investigation of the reasons behind the decline is needed to ascertain the action that needs to be taken.
- **Enforcement** is used if other methods have been ineffective or are inappropriate but tends to be a last resort. For example, those driving illegal off-road can be prosecuted under the Road Traffic Act but this can be a relatively lengthy and time-consuming process.
- **Targeted education, awareness raising and liaison** includes undertaking projects to educate and inform people about the impact activities can have and ways to reduce these impacts in order to change behaviour. This could be activities such as developing or implementing a specific code of conduct or a series of consultation/open meetings with local communities.

Some specific examples of good practice in managing recreational activities are as follows:

British Mountaineering Council (BMC) voluntary agreements on climbing routes - <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/modules/RAD/> The BMC negotiates and co-ordinates a series of agreements between climbers and landowners over where and when climbing should be avoided in order to prevent disturbance to habitats and species. These are promoted through their Regional Access Database.

The Cwm Idwal Winter Information Project - <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/idwal> This project was developed by BMC in partnership with Natural Resources Wales, and is designed around the needs of climbers. Live air and ground temperature readings in Cwm Idwal NNR are made available identify when conditions are suitable for climbing, in order reduce the risk of damage the protected alpine flora found on climbing routes.

The Pembrokeshire Marine Code - <http://www.pembrokeshiremarinecode.org.uk> The Marine Code is a good example of a stakeholder developed voluntary agreement. The Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum produced a code of conduct for water recreation in the region to reduce disturbance to key Natura 2000 features. The code is accompanied by maps that identify sensitive sites and times and training to help disseminate the message amongst recreational users.

The iSee Booklets Project - <http://www.northwalesoutdoorforum.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/aonb-booklet-v84-lo-final.pdf> The North Wales Environmental Outdoor Charter Group, uses recreation professionals as a delivery mechanism for information about protecting environmental features by giving them bespoke field guides to help them make better decisions and educate participants.

The Gorge Walking Concordat - <http://www.swoapg.org.uk/index.php/projects/fcw-concordat/> The Concordat is a partnership project between NRW, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and the South Wales Outdoor Activity Providers Group. Activity providers are asked to sign up to a concordat and code of conduct before they can access the site.

7. Rationale for strategic actions

In line with Welsh Government priorities and its statutory duties, Natural Resources Wales has developed an Enabling Plan (2015-20)⁶ to guide recreation and access work. The primary aim of this plan is to see a Wales with '*more people participating in and benefitting from outdoor recreation more often*'. It will do this to increase people's appreciation of and care for the environment, improve social equity and cohesion of people and communities, increase the economic benefits of recreation to Wales and to improve people's health and wellbeing.

The plan seeks to deliver benefits by ensuring that access opportunities are provided and improved, meeting users needs, and that information on these opportunities is widely available in appropriate formats. It also aims to increase understanding of how to act responsibly in the natural environment. Effective planning and development of mechanisms to allow successful delivery of sustainable recreational activity are also key to the plan.

The needs of Natura 2000 features are integral to the delivery of the Enabling Plan and have been considered in its actions. However, there is still a need to better integrate recreation management into wider policies, strategies and work programmes in NRW and elsewhere, at all spatial scales in order to ensure that Natura 2000 features are in favourable condition.

Through the Prioritised Improvement Plans and the Actions Database conservation officers and site managers have identified a significant number of site-based actions. In particular, these have highlighted the need for improved understanding of impacts and better communication with recreational users. While much good work can be delivered at a local level, full integration, investigation, communication and dissemination of good practice requires action at a regional or Wales level. Therefore, a set of strategic actions have been identified as shown in Section 9.

The aim of the strategic actions is to promote closer working between site managers and policy-makers and researchers ensuring that the needs of Natura 2000 sites are considered in both a national and local context and that any learning can benefit other Natura 2000 sites. One key ethos that runs through the actions is the need to shape management interventions around the behaviour of the recreation user it is targeting. Better understanding of the requirements of the audience will help site managers engage with recreational users more effectively.

⁶ Outdoor Recreation and Access Enabling Plan 2015 – 2020, Natural Resources Wales.
<https://naturalresources.wales/out-and-about/recreation-and-access-policy-advice-and-guidance/recreation-and-access-enabling-plan/?lang=en>

8. Development of strategic actions

The strategic actions to address impacts arising from recreational activities and access have been developed through a process of consultation in combination with analysis of the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme data. Summary outputs of the data from Natura 2000 sites was used to provide contextual background for a workshop held as part of the National Access Forum on 7 July 2015 in Welshpool, attended by representatives of recreational organisations and interests.

Participants were asked to consider existing management methods and to identify new ones which could address impacts regionally or at a Welsh or UK level. These contributions were then reviewed by a small working group comprising access and recreation specialists as well as terrestrial and marine habitat and species specialists from within NRW.

The draft strategic actions were made available for comment to a wider audience through a series of three workshops during the summer of 2015. The first workshop was open to sector leads from Welsh Government, while the second and third workshops (held on the 19 and 25 August 2015, in Garwnant and Bangor respectively) were attended by representatives of interested organisations in Wales, from, for example, the third sector, local authorities, farming unions and other user groups. There was a total of 84 attendees. The consultation drafts were also available to others unable to attend these events on request. Feedback on the strategic actions was used by the working group to finalise the strategic actions.

The strategic actions are intended to be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Assignable, Realistic and Time-related) and therefore provide information about costs and time-scales, how they link with existing work programmes and which organisations could be involved. It is proposed that the strategic actions will be used to guide work programmes and that the Recreation and Access team in Natural Resources Wales will lead on taking these actions forward.

9. Strategic actions for Natura 2000 in Wales: Access and Recreation Management

The following represent a list of proposed actions which are needed to make progress towards favourable condition of Natura 2000 features. They do not represent a fully funded or committed operational plan.

	Action	Detail	Priority	Link to NRW's Outdoor Recreation and Access Enabling Plan 2015 - 2020	Link to existing work programmes	Proposed lead organisation	Potential partner organisation (s)	Estimated cost (£)	Proposed timetable
1	Develop a consistent methodology for site-based survey of recreation users and visitors on terrestrial and marine N2K sites.	<p>As an integral part of NRW's wider Social Monitoring Review of site-based user surveys:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop consistent definitions for recreation types, participant numbers and impact mechanisms to ensure that evidence can feed into a national knowledge pool. • Identify priority questions for site-based surveys. • Review and agreed appropriate, repeatable methods (including costs). • Determine appropriate data collation. • Consider and recommend options for delivery (e.g. shared methodology, call-off contract etc). 	High	5.2. We will use existing evidence...ensure our decisions are evidenced based...identified knowledge gaps	NRW Social Monitoring Review	Natural Resources Wales	Universities Contractor	Scoping project – £30,000	Initial scoping project 1 year
2	<p>Develop evidence on impacts of access and recreational activities on N2K habitats and species.</p> <p>Focus on N2K features identified as high and medium priority for further action for access and recreation issues in the LIFE N2K Programme data.</p>	<p>To include subject areas where the need for more evidence has already been identified (for example through the site Prioritised Improvement Plans):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts of recreational bait collecting. • Boating pressure on Common scoter. • SPA bird disturbance on the Dee Estuary, Burry Inlet and the Severn Estuary considering activity type and species' response. • Disturbance of Bottlenose dolphin by recreational activity in Cardigan Bay. • Long term impact of disturbance activities on SPA bird energetics and mortality. • Disturbance impacts for river-based activities. 	High	5.2. We will use existing evidence...ensure our decisions are evidenced based...identified knowledge gaps	<p>Literature review of impacts of different mechanisms on broad habitat categories</p> <p>Seasonal mapping of habitat vulnerability report</p> <p>Strategic Action 4 in LIFE N2K Marine Fisheries Thematic Action Plan (review of unregulated activities targeting marine living resources)</p>	Natural Resources Wales	Stakeholders Contractors National Park Authorities AONB partnerships RSPB	<p>Bird disturbance - £50,000</p> <p>Bird energetics- £80,000</p> <p>BND study- £50,000</p> <p>River based study- £50,000</p>	<p>Bird disturbance-field work 2 seasons Sept-May</p> <p>Bird energetics- 3 years</p>

3	Use evidence from strategic actions 1 and 2 to develop a decision-making framework for interventions around access and recreational activities on N2K features.	<p>The decision-making framework should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand on the learning from the Wales Seasonal Habitat Vulnerability Mapping project, FishMap Mon's fishing activity mapping, Wales Activity Mapping Project and the Good For People recreation planning tool to create spatial plans that help consider wider spatial context and ensure overall national consistency in approach. Include best practice and case studies that address: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximising the benefits of N2K sites for people and the environment. Assessing the possible impact of recreation on N2K features achieving favourable conservation status. Identifying appropriate recreation management interventions across terrestrial and marine habitats. Understanding the consents/appropriate assessment process. Build in audience profiling and behaviour change principles to help integrate with other management interventions and improve results monitoring. 	High	<p>3.3 ...develop and deliver... appropriate advice and guidance</p> <p>3.5... develop and build our evidence base... understanding behaviour change...</p> <p>4.6 ...use spatial planning and related methods...</p> <p>3.4 ...develop our approach to helping the public...use our sites...</p>		Natural Resources Wales	<p>National Governing Bodies</p> <p>Regional recreational groups e.g. Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum</p> <p>Local Access Forums</p> <p>National Park Authorities</p> <p>AONBs</p> <p>Local authorities</p> <p>RSPB</p> <p>National Access Forum Sports Wales</p>	£50,000	Work to begin after the initial phase of Action 1 complete – 2 years to develop
4	Feed in specific information about access and recreation impacts to SAC/SPA Core Management Plans and Regulation 35 advice and European Marine Site Management Schemes for marine sites as appropriate (see action 2).	<p>Core Management Plans and Management Schemes should recognise the nature of positive and negative impacts on site features, types of recreation involved, user groups associated with these activities and their legal rights of access to the site if relevant.</p> <p>Changes to Management Plans and Management Schemes should follow an agreed framework for decision making (see action 3) and link to wider NRW access and recreation planning.</p>	High	4.2 ...produce recreational plans for NRW managed sites...	<p>NRW operations work</p> <p>Forest Resource Plans (if woodland sites)</p>	Natural Resources Wales		Staff time only	Once Action 3 is complete

5	Continue to develop, facilitate and promote a strategic suite of activity-based guidance and training to help recreational users minimise their impacts on N2K features.	<p>To focus on sites where access and recreational issues/risks are listed as high and medium priority in the LIFE N2K Programme data.</p> <p>This action interfaces with existing codes and guidance to ensure overall national consistency in approach to avoid duplication. New guidance should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be developed in conjunction with stakeholders and partners. • Be promoted via social media e.g. Facebook, twitter, almanacs, websites etc as appropriate • Raise awareness about recreation impacts among relevant local authority staff and other key staff likely to come into contact with recreational site users. 	High	<p>3.1 ...develop, maintain and promote the family of countryside codes...</p> <p>3.2 ...continue to develop our suite of guidance...</p>	NRW access & recreation policy work	Natural Resources Wales	<p>National governing bodies</p> <p>Regional recreational groups e.g. Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum</p> <p>National Access Forum</p> <p>Local Access Forums</p> <p>Visit Wales</p>	£20,000 p/a	Ongoing
6	<p>Produce outdoor education resources which promote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible recreation; • The value of N2K sites; • Citizen science. 	For use by recreational leaders and trainers, particularly those working with school children, e.g. Guides, Scouts, Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.	Medium	<p>5.19...support implementation of a training programme for recreational leaders...</p> <p>(Education and Skills Enabling Plan)</p> <p>1.8: Develop NRM training and CPD opportunities for education professionals</p> <p>1.9: Develop NRM training for outdoor learning providers</p>	NRW education/communication work	Natural Resources Wales	<p>National governing bodies</p> <p>Outdoor Education Advisory Panel</p> <p>Local authorities</p> <p>National Park Authorities</p> <p>AONBs</p> <p>Visit Wales</p> <p>Regional recreational groups e.g. Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum</p>	£20,000 p/a	Ongoing
7	Expand the Pembrokeshire Marine Code's mapping model to cover all marine N2K sites.	For details of this mapping model see: http://www.pembrokeshiremarinecode.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/marine_code_maps.pdf	Medium			Welsh Government	<p>Natural Resources Wales</p> <p>National governing bodies</p> <p>Regional recreational groups e.g. Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum</p> <p>Key landowners</p>	£50,000	3 years

8	<p>Promote a clear and effective legal framework for managing access on N2K sites by feeding into Welsh Government's review of legislation relating to PRow and public access.</p> <p>Produce guidance for site staff and recreation managers on using this framework to manage recreation on N2K sites.</p>	<p>To include assessment of impact of recreation on N2K features, working with user groups to create voluntary management agreements and a guide to the consents/appropriate assessment process.</p>	Medium	<p>1.17... We will work with Welsh Government... on reviewing the legislation related to PRow and access...</p>	<p>NRW Access and recreation policy advice work</p>	<p>Welsh Government</p>	<p>Natural Resources Wales</p>	<p>Staff time only</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
9	<p>Run a series of projects at N2K sites, based on outcomes from tool developed in action 3.</p>	<p>E.g. Targeted projects to deal with disturbance to grey seals and pups at Cardigan Bay SAC and Ynys Enlli in Pen Llyn a'r Sarnau SAC.</p>	Medium	<p>1.12... Learning from research and previous initiatives... rolling out staff guidance on managing crime and anti-social behaviour...</p>		<p>Partners - e.g. Pen Llyn a'r Sarnau partnership, National Trust</p>	<p>Natural Resources Wales National governing bodies Wildlife Trusts</p>	<p>£20,000</p>	<p>1 year running from the implementation of Action 3</p>

Appendix A: Natura 2000 sites recorded as having access and recreation as an issue or risk adversely affecting (or having the potential to adversely affect) features of that site

Data was derived from the NRW Actions Database following work by the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme. High, medium and low priority current issues and potential future risks are included. Instances may be recorded for the whole site or at a more detailed 'management unit' (sub-site) level.

Data from September 2015.

Site name	SAC/SPA	Number of instances site affected		
		Unit level	Site level	Total
Berwyn a Mynyddoedd De Clwyd / Berwyn and South Clwyd Mountains	SAC	22	-	22
Mwyngloddiau Fforest Gwydir / Gwydyr Forest Mines	SAC	19	1	20
Pen Llyn a'r Sarnau / Lleyen Peninsula and the Sarnau	SAC	12	2	14
Eryri / Snowdonia	SAC	11	1	12
Morfa Harlech a Morfa Dyffryn	SAC	7	2	9
Cardiff Beech Woods	SAC	6	1	7
Rhinog	SAC	5	1	6
Coedydd Nedd a Mellte	SAC	5	-	5
Halkyn Mountain / Mynydd Helygain	SAC	4	1	5
Johnstown Newt Sites	SAC	4	1	5
Brecon Beacons / Bannau Brycheiniog	SAC	3	1	4
Cadair Idris	SAC	4	-	4
Pembrokeshire Marine / Sir Benfro Forol	SAC	3	1	4
Afon Teifi / River Teifi	SAC	2	1	3
Cardigan Bay / Bae Ceredigion	SAC	2	1	3
Carmarthen Bay Dunes / Twyni Bay Caerfyrddin	SAC	2	1	3
Gower Ash Woods / Coedydd Ynn Gwyr	SAC	3	-	3
Great Orme's Head / Pen Y Gogarth	SAC	2	1	3
Kenfig / Cynffig	SAC	3	-	3
Llangorse Lake / Llyn Syfaddan	SAC	1	2	3
Aberbargoed Grasslands	SAC	-	2	2
Afon Eden-Cors Goch Trawsfynydd	SAC	-	2	2
Alyn Valley Woods / Coedwigoedd Dyffryn Alun	SAC	1	1	2
Bae Caerfyrddin / Carmarthen Bay	SPA	-	2	2
Carmarthen Bay and Estuaries / Bae Caerfyrddin ac Aberoedd	SAC	-	2	2
Cors Fochno	SAC	2	-	2
Corsydd Mon / Anglesey Fens	SAC	2	-	2
Elenydd	SAC	1	1	2
River Dee and Bala Lake / Afon Dyfrydwy a Llyn Tegid	SAC	1	1	2
Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites / Safleoedd Ystumod Dyffryn Gwy	SAC	1	1	2
Afon Gwyrfai a Llyn Gwellyn	SAC	-	1	1

Burry Inlet	SPA	-	1	1
Coed Y Cerrig	SAC	-	1	1
Coedwigoedd Dyffryn Elwy / Elwy Valley Woods	SAC	-	1	1
Coedwigoedd Penrhyn Creuddyn / Creuddyn Peninsula Woods	SAC	1	-	1
Coedydd Aber	SAC	-	1	1
Coedydd Derw a Safleoedd Ystumod Meirion / Meirionnydd Oakwoods and Bat	SAC	1	-	1
Craig yr Aderyn (Bird's Rock)	SPA	1	-	1
Cwm Clydach Woodlands / Coedydd Cwm Clydach	SAC	-	1	1
Cwm Doethie - Mynydd Mallaen	SAC	-	1	1
Dyfi Estuary / Aber Dyfi	SPA	-	1	1
Glannau Aberdaron ac Ynys Enlli / Aberdaron Coast and Bardsey Island	SPA	-	1	1
Glannau Ynys Gybi / Holy Island Coast	SAC	1	-	1
Glynllifon	SAC	-	1	1
Gower Commons / Tiroedd Comin Gwyr	SAC	1	-	1
Migneint-Arenig-Dduallt	SAC	1	-	1
Montgomery Canal	SAC	-	1	1
Mynydd Cilan, Trwyn y Wylfa ac Ynysoedd Sant Tudwal	SPA	-	1	1
Mynydd Epynt	SAC	-	1	1
River Wye / Afon Gwy	SAC	-	1	1
Severn Estuary	SPA	-	1	1
Severn Estuary / Mor Hafren	SAC	-	1	1
St David's / Ty Ddewi	SAC	-	1	1
Sugar Loaf Woodlands	SAC	-	1	1
Tanat and Vyrnwy Bat Sites / Safleoedd Ystumod Tanat Ac Efyrynwy	SAC	-	1	1
The Dee Estuary	SPA	-	1	1
Usk Bat Sites / Safleoedd Ystumod Wysg	SAC	-	1	1
Wye Valley Woodlands / Coetiroedd Dyffryn Gwy	SAC	-	1	1
Ynys Seiriol / Puffin Island	SPA	1	-	1
Total		135	52	187

Appendix B: Natura 2000 features recorded as being adversely affected (or having the potential to be adversely affected) by access and recreation on sites

Data was derived from the NRW Actions Database following work by the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme. High, medium and low priority current issues and potential future risks are included. Instances may be recorded for the whole site or at a more detailed 'management unit' (sub-site) level.

Data from September 2015

Feature (common name)	Number of instances feature affected		
	Unit level	Site level	Total
Dry heaths	43	4	47
Lesser horseshoe bat	16	6	22
Blanket bog	18	1	19
Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes	10	4	14
Atlantic salt meadows	5	6	11
Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath	9	1	10
Humid dune slacks	7	3	10
Reefs	5	5	10
Alpine and subalpine heaths	7	2	9
Grasslands on soils rich in heavy metals	7	2	9
Beech forests on neutral to rich soils	6	3	9
Intertidal mudflats and sandflats	6	2	8
Shifting dunes with marram	6	2	8
Western acidic oak woodland	6	2	8
Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone	5	3	8
Estuaries	2	6	8
Otter	1	7	8
Dunes with creeping willow	5	2	7
Shallow inlets and bays	3	4	7
Atlantic salmon	2	5	7
Petalwort	7	-	7
Glasswort and other annuals colonising mud and sand	3	3	6
Grey seal	2	4	6
Great crested newt	4	1	5
Plants in crevices in base-rich rocks	3	2	5
Plants in crevices on acid rocks	3	2	5
Purple moor-grass meadows	3	2	5
Shifting dunes	3	2	5
Tall herb communities	3	2	5
Acidic scree	3	1	4
Lagoons	2	2	4
Fen orchid	2	2	4
Pintail	-	4	4

Dunlin	-	4	4
Oystercatcher	-	4	4
Shelduck	-	4	4
Dune grassland	2	1	3
Montane acid grasslands	2	1	3
Brook lamprey	1	2	3
Chough	1	2	3
Naturally nutrient-rich lakes or lochs which are often dominated by pondweed	1	2	3
Vegetated sea cliffs	1	2	3
Redshank	-	3	3
Bottlenose dolphin	-	3	3
Calcium-rich fen dominated by great fen sedge -saw sedge	2	-	2
Yew-dominated woodland	1	1	2
Teal	-	2	2
Gadwall	-	2	2
Russian white-fronted goose	-	2	2
Knot	-	2	2
Bewick's swan	-	2	2
Marsh fritillary butterfly	-	2	2
River lamprey	-	2	2
Freshwater pearl mussel	-	2	2
Curlew	-	2	2
Sea lamprey	-	2	2
Grey plover	-	2	2
Subtidal sandbanks	-	2	2
Sea caves	-	2	2
Rivers with floating vegetation often dominated by water-crowfoot	-	2	2
Active raised bogs	1	-	1
Base-rich scree	1	-	1
Calcium-rich springwater-fed fens	1	-	1
Cormorant	1	-	1
Degraded raised bogs	1	-	1
Geyer`s whorl snail	1	-	1
Southern damselfly	1	-	1
Floating water-plantain	1	-	1
Allis shad	-	1	1
Twaite shad	-	1	1
High-altitude plant communities associated with areas of water seepage	-	1	1
Shoveler	-	1	1
Wigeon	-	1	1
Greenland white-fronted goose	-	1	1
Turnstone	-	1	1
Beech forests on acid soils	-	1	1

White-clawed (or Atlantic stream) crayfish	-	1	1
Caves not open to the public	-	1	1
Bullhead	-	1	1
Black-tailed godwit	-	1	1
Clear-water lakes or lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient levels	-	1	1
Manx shearwater	-	1	1
Greater horseshoe bat	-	1	1
Little tern	-	1	1
Common tern	-	1	1
Sandwich tern	-	1	1