

APPENDIX 3 SITE VULNERABILITES AND CONDTION ASSESSMENT

Habitats Regulations Appraisal - Gathering information about European Sites (sites, conditions, pressures, vulnerability to future change likely to result from the Plan)

European Site Name	Vulnerabilities (from SAC SPA standard data forms)	SSSI Condition Assessment for sites in plan area (NE website data as available)	Reasons for adverse Condition
River Wye SAC	<p>Water quality impacts arising from changing agricultural land-use within the catchment are having direct and indirect effects on the SAC interests through effects of diffuse pollution such as nutrient run-off and increased siltation. English Nature and the Countryside Council for Wales are seeking to address such issues through improved targeting of existing and new agri-environment schemes and through improvements in compliance with agricultural Codes of Practice.</p> <p>Water quality is also affected by synthetic pyrethroid sheep-dips and by point-source discharges within the catchment. The impact of sewage treatment works on the SAC is being addressed through the Asset Management Plan process and review under the Habitats Regulations. Loss of riparian habitat is occurring as a result of changes in agricultural land-use practices and other factors, including riverside development and the loss of alder tree-cover through disease. These impacts and concerns over water quality will be identified and actions recommended within the joint English Nature/Environment Agency/Countryside Council for Wales conservation strategy for the river.</p> <p>Fishing activities are implicated in the decline of the salmon; initiatives such as the Wye Salmon Action Plan will help to address this issue.</p> <p>There is increasing demand for abstraction from the river for agriculture and potable water. The impact of this is still being investigated by the Environment Agency, but maintenance of water levels and flow will be addressed under the review of consents under the Habitats Regulations.</p>	<p>12.72% Favourable. 87.28% Unfavourable Recovering.</p> <p>Units in District Tidal river to Brockweir bridge. Condition favourable</p> <p>Brockweir Bridge to Monmouth Unfavourable - recovering.</p> <p>Monmouth to Ross. Unfavourable - recovering.</p>	<p>Agriculture - fertiliser use. Invasive species, siltation. Water pollution</p>

	<p>Demand for increased recreational activities is a source of potential concern for the future. Regularisation of the functions of the competent authorities, currently being sought, should reduce the risk of damage to the SAC as a result of developments for such activities.</p>		
<p>Wye Valley Woodland SAC</p>	<p>A significant proportion of the SAC is already managed sympathetically by Forest Enterprise (now the Forestry Commission), Natural England (as one of the owners*) the Woodland Trust and county Wildlife Trusts. Principal pressures are from lack of management (particularly traditional management, e.g. coppice), increasing deer numbers and inappropriate management proposals which would alter the recognised woodland stand types. Felling license approval and Forestry Commission consultation with Natural England/Countryside Council for Wales are adequate in addressing the latter issue. Positive management is being promoted through management plans (CCW), Site Management Statements (EN) and management agreements, and the Woodland Grant Scheme (including specialised targeting) is being encouraged where possible and appropriate to return some woods to active management. *'Highbury' and 'The Hudnails' are both National Nature Reserve sites in the Wye Valley Woodlands.</p>	<p>Astridge Wood – 100% favourable.</p> <p>Bigswear wood: - 11.9% favourable; 88.10% unfavourable - no change.</p> <p>Highbury Wood 100% favourable.</p> <p>Lower Wye Gorge 100% favourable</p> <p>Shorn Cliff and Caswell Woods Condition 100% favourable.</p> <p>Swanpool and Furnance grove Condition unfavourable and declining 100%</p> <p>The Hudnalls 63.77%</p>	<p>The majority of the identified threat to condition status in these woodlands is from high levels of deer browsing. Some of the woodlands suffer from varying levels of invasive non-native species being present and the need to control these species has been identified. Some changes in management practices are identified as recommended in the woodlands such as changes to coppicing to increase open space and structural diversity.</p>

		<p>favourable. 36.23% unfavourable recovering.</p> <p>Upper Wye Gorge 37.44% favourable. 62.56% unfavourable recovering</p>	
<p>Walmore Common SPA Ramsar</p>	<p>Bewick's swans are attracted for feeding and roosting by the grassland, which is maintained by grazing and the natural winter flooding which is in turn determined by rainfall, run-off and river levels. A water level management plan, currently in preparation, will ensure appropriate conditions are retained for wintering bird interest.</p> <p>The marshy grassland and ditches will be maintained and enhanced by maintaining high water levels from spring to autumn through the implementation of a water level management plan.</p>	<p>Condition 100% unfavourable - No change.</p> <p>Adverse conditions reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undergrazing • Freshwater pollution – agricultural run-off • Discharge (diffuse pollution and septic tanks) 	<p>Ditch features have elevated concentrations of nitrate and phosphate (exceeding the SSSI threshold of annual Total P 0.1mg/l). Also evidence of diffuse pollution and septic tanks within the catchment.</p>

<p>The Severn Estuary/SAC/SPA/Ramsar</p>	<p>The conservation of the site features is dependent on the tidal regime. The tidal range in the Severn Estuary is the second-highest in the world and the scouring of the seabed and strong tidal streams result in natural erosion of the habitats and the presence of high sediment loads. The estuary is therefore vulnerable to large-scale interference, mainly as a result of human actions. These include land-claim, aggregate extraction, physical developments such as barrage construction and other commercial construction activities, flood defences, industrial pollution, oil spillage and tourism-based activities and disturbance.</p> <p>There are several management mechanisms that seek to secure sustainable management of the Severn Estuary and its wildlife interest. Under the 1994 Habitats Regulations, a management scheme under Regulation 34 was established in 2004 in relation to the international bird interest that underpins designation as a Special Protection Area (SPA). Conservation advice has been provided under Regulation 33 for the Severn Estuary Special Area of Conservation (SAC), SPA and Ramsar site. Under the 2010 Habitat Regulations the management scheme previously produced is being reviewed and expanded to cover the not only the SPA but also the SAC and Ramsar site. The Severn Estuary Partnership is a long-standing partnership whose remit and membership extends beyond the designated area. It predates the European designations and seeks to deliver holistic management of the uses of the estuary. In Wales, Community Strategies and Local Biodiversity Action Plans also contribute to achieving the conservation aims for the Estuary.</p>	<p>Severn Estuary - 95.88% favourable 0.08% Unfavourable – recovering 2.43% Unfavourable – no change 1.69% Unfavourable declining</p> <p>Upper Severn Estuary 96.69% favourable 3.31% unfavourable recovering</p>	<p>Adverse conditions Reason Agricultural - undergrazing Agricultural – overgrazing Coastal – Coastal squeeze Public access/ disturbance</p>
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<p>The Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites SAC</p>	<p>The site is composed of parts of a number of buildings in everyday use (mainly roof-spaces) used by the bats for breeding and a series of mines used by bats for hibernation. Within the roost the bats are vulnerable to disturbance at critical times, structural alteration and changes in the characteristic ventilation patterns. The designated sites only cover the major maternity and over-wintering roosts. The bats also depend on features outside the designated sites including intermediate roosts, foraging grounds and hedgerows/tree belts that the bats use as commuting routes. Impact on these features can also affect the integrity of the site. Any proposed changes which are likely to have an impact on the bat populations within the breeding roosts will be discussed with the relevant owners and occupiers. Where appropriate to any populations potentially damaging works will be addressed through appropriate planning regulation, management agreements and monitoring of individual roosts. Regular liaison takes place with site-owners.</p> <p>The human use of the mine systems (continued mineral working and recreational caving/research) is regulated by Forest Enterprise in consultation with Natural England where appropriate. Site Management Statements have been agreed with the owners of working mines to secure conservation of the populations alongside continued working. In addition, the preparation of Cave Conservation Plans will be promoted to maintain and enhance the underground environment for bats.</p>	<p>All SSSI component sites recorded as Favourable</p> <p>Blaisdon Hall SSSI</p> <p>Caerwood & Ashberry Goose House SSSI</p> <p>Sylvan House Barn SSSI</p> <p>Dean Hall Coach House and Cellar SSSI</p> <p>Devil's Chapel Scowles SSSI</p> <p>Old Bow and Old Ham Mines SSSI</p> <p>Wigpool Ironstone Mine SSSI</p> <p>Buckshaft Mine and Bradley Hill Railway Tunnel SSSI</p> <p>Westbury Brook Ironstone Mine SSSI</p>	
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