

# LIFE Natura 2000 Programme for Wales

December 2014



The LIFE Natura 2000 Programme is producing a strategic plan for the management and restoration of all Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) in Wales, both on land and at sea, for the period 2014 to 2020 and beyond. The project is run by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and is financially supported by the EU LIFE+ fund.

## Prioritised Improvement Plan: Engagement with Stakeholders

The LIFE N2K team are in the final stages of collating information from NRW Conservation Officers on the issues and risks affecting Natura 2000 (N2K) sites in Wales, and the prioritised and costed actions needed to address them. The data is being used to update the NRW Actions Database (Special Sites/Outcome 21 database), from which summarised Prioritised Improvement Plans (PIPs) will be produced.

The next stage is to gain feedback and contributions from others with an expertise or interest in N2K sites. The LIFE N2K team will contact NRW internal staff in December. This will be followed at the end of January, by liaison with external organisations which may lead on actions. In early spring, others with a more general interest will be invited to contribute.

PIPs will be made available as and when they are completed, and there will be a three week period in which to comment. Stakeholders are particularly welcome to suggest additional actions and provide any costs or funding sources if they are known.

This is an informal engagement process rather than a statutory consultation, so there will be no formal report or responses, but every effort will be made to reach a consensus on actions where needed.

## Prioritised Action Framework (PAF)

The PAF is a planning tool, required by the Habitats Directive, which sets out how member states of the EU propose to manage their Natura 2000 sites to bring the features into favourable condition.

The approach will indicate the priorities for co-funding from targeted instruments such as LIFE, and facilitate the integration of Natura 2000 needs into the various broader EU funding programmes such as Structural Funds and Rural Development Programmes.

The first version of the UK PAF was produced in 2013 and is available at: <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/consmanagement/conservationbiodiversity/habitatdirective/paf-for-natura-2000-sites>

The LIFE unit has asked for the Welsh element of the next version of the PAF to be completed by end August 2015 as part of the outputs of the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme.

## Social Media

The LIFE Natura 2000 Programme now has a

Facebook page open to all. This is a great way to keep informed of any news and developments. Why not go to [www.facebook.com/LIFEN2K](http://www.facebook.com/LIFEN2K) and like our page?

An external online discussion group has also been launched to enable project stakeholders to share, comment on and discuss topics as they develop. If you would like to join please email [life2000@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk](mailto:life2000@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk)

## Project Extension

The European Commission's LIFE Unit has confirmed that the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme will be extended until September 2015. Originally due to finish in December 2014, the extension will allow the Programme to complete all the required outputs, carry out a comprehensive engagement process and update the Prioritised Action Framework before the finish date.



## Thematic Action Plans

Action Plans are being produced for each of the dominant issues which affect Natura 2000 across Wales. They are focusing on actions which will be delivered at regional, national or even international level rather than at a site level.

On 16 October, the LIFE N2K team hosted a marine workshop where 24 NRW experts identified actions needed to address issues connected with flood and coastal erosion management, sea fisheries, access and recreation, invasive non-natives, litter and diffuse pollution. The results are forming the basis of the marine and coastal element of the action plans for those issues.

In February, we will be running a similar workshop in mid-Wales, centred around rivers and lakes (primarily covering the issues of diffuse pollution and man-made changes to hydraulic conditions).

Further workshops will focus on climate change, habitat fragmentation, air pollution, grazing, woodland management, wetland issues, terrestrial/freshwater invasive species, and access issues.

Internal and external partners are welcome to attend, contact us by emailing [life2000@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk](mailto:life2000@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk).

## Ecosystems Services provided by Natura 2000

Land Use Consultants have produced a draft inventory of ecosystem services provided by Natura 2000. The inventory enables users to easily identify benefits for people such as water storage and purification, food, carbon sequestration, tourism and recreation. The inventory will help those bidding for funds for N2K management from grants and schemes which are not focused on biodiversity but have wider social and economic objectives.

Comments and feedback on the draft would be welcome. It is available on our online discussion page (see social media article on page 1).

## Mission Visit

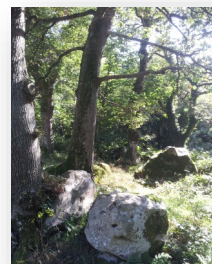
In September, the LIFE N2K team welcomed the technical and financial desk officers from the European Commission's LIFE Unit. An in-depth discussion of the progress of the project and a review of financial systems was followed by a site visit to Coedydd Aber Special Area of Conservation.



Senior reserves manager, Hywel Roberts gave an interesting tour and explained the various conservation issues and the work needed to address them.

## Focus on Features

### Western Acidic Oak Woodlands



#### *Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles*

- ⇒ This habitat thrives in areas with acid soils and high rainfall. Sites are often characterised by steep valleys and ravines.
- ⇒ Notable for rich communities of mosses, lichens, liverworts and ferns. Also supports acid-loving ground flora and a diverse range of invertebrates and birds.
- ⇒ Occurs on 15 Special Areas of Conservation across Wales. These include Coedydd Nedd a Mellte (370 ha) in the south; Coedydd Aber (340 ha) in the north (see picture); and Coedydd Derw a Safleoedd Ystlumod Meirion/Meirionnydd Oakwoods and Bat Sites (2800 ha), a prime example on the west coast.
- ⇒ Largely found only in the west of Britain, occurring in very few other places in Europe. Wales therefore has an important responsibility for its conservation.
- ⇒ Management can include grazed or ungrazed areas, minimum intervention or silviculture. This variety contributes to the high biological diversity of the habitat.
- ⇒ Dominant pressures are air pollution, inappropriate grazing, invasive non-native species, inappropriate woodland management and climate change.

To contact the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme for more information on any of the items in the newsletter, or to join our mailing list, please email: [life2000@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk](mailto:life2000@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk).

Alternatively go to our website: [www.naturalresources.wales/LIFEN2K](http://www.naturalresources.wales/LIFEN2K) or like our [Facebook](#) page.

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