

REPORT OF THE BIODIVERSITY OFFICER

SUBJECT: CONSERVATION REPORT 2020-2021

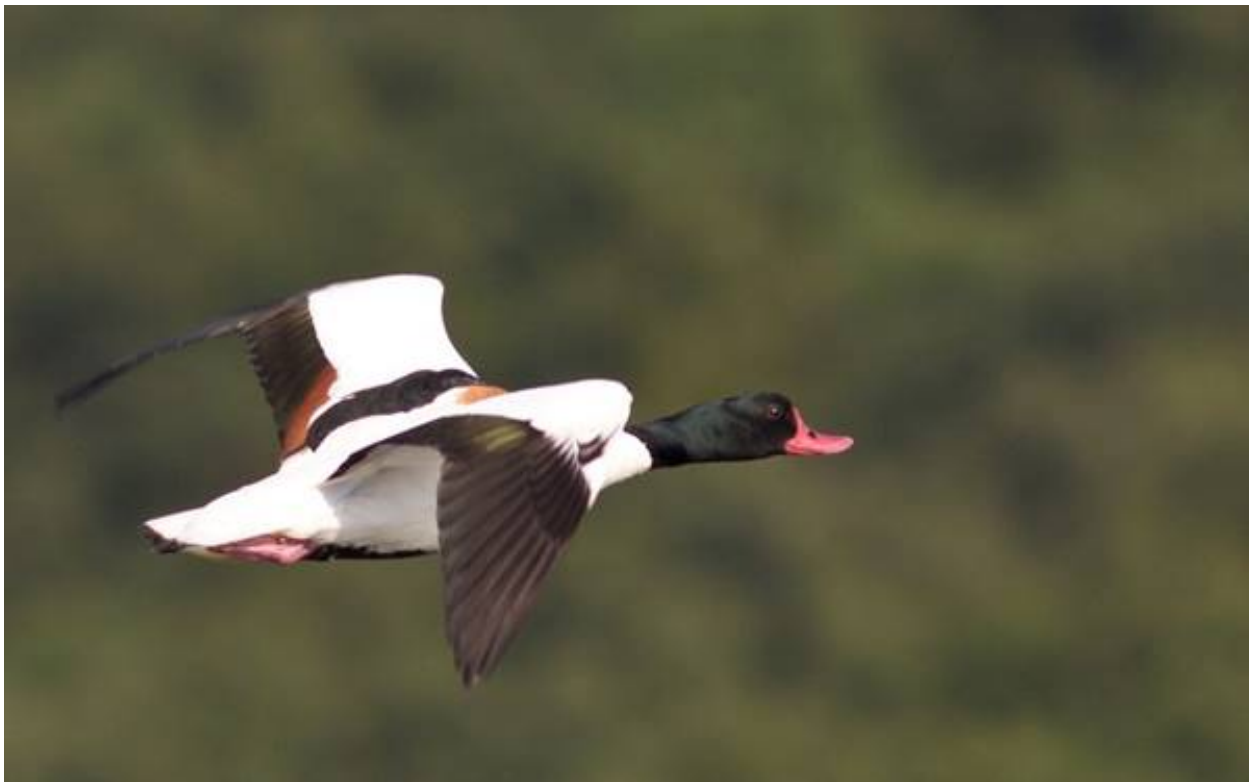
1. The attached reports set out the outcomes achieved for this National Park through our conservation work during the financial year 2020-2021.
2. The report sets out:
 - The land management monitoring results for 2020-2021.
 - Specific examples of achievements under the 'Conserving the Park' scheme
 - Progress made on the management of Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority owned sites
 - A report on partnership projects and collaboration
 - *Stitch in Time* progress
 - Species monitoring results and interpretation
3. The report illustrates the substantial amount of work the Authority undertakes across a range of activities. The main contributors internally are the officers in Park Direction, the Warden Teams and the Ranger Service.

RECOMMENDATION:

Members are requested to RECEIVE and COMMENT on the Report.

(For further information contact Sarah Mellor on extension 4829)

Conservation Report 2020 to 2021



Shelduck © Mike Camplin

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

**Operational Review Committee
1st Dec 2021**



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1. Conservation Land Management

1.1 Conservation across the Park

1.1.1 As part of Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority's (PCNPA) land management programme, conservation work is carried out on over one hundred sites aimed at benefitting priority habitats and species within Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. This is achieved through the management of the PCNPA's owned or leased estate and also through working in partnership with private landowners with our 'Conserving the Park' scheme.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/2021 ¹
Conservation work carried out on land aimed at benefiting priority species (hectares)	4323 (7% of National Park)	4501 (7.3% of National Park)	4585.69 (7.5% of National Park) 4596.75
Property owned or leased by PCNPA managed for biodiversity (hectares)	463	463	463
Land managed for biodiversity in partnership with private landowners (hectares)	1110	1288	1356.69
Access land where PCNPA supports common management partnerships (hectares)	2750	2750	2858.20

1 These figures are net and therefore take account of areas of land both entering and leaving the scheme.

1.1.2 In addition, we engage in specific projects, either through direct delivery or as part of a partnership. At any one time we may have a number of live projects aimed at engaging landowners in a particular aspect of land management, for example control of non-native invasive species through the 'Stitch in Time' project.

1.1.3 PCNPA's conservation work covers a diverse range of activities and is normally individually tailored to sites. The practical elements of our conservation work are carried out in partnership with the Warden and Ranger teams, including volunteers.

1.1.4 Typical activities include: -

- Ecological survey and monitoring.
- Vegetation management e.g. burning and cutting.
- Facilitation of conservation grazing.
- Management agreements with landowners.
- Capital projects associated with land management such as fencing, gates and water supply.
- Woodland management.

- Advice on conservation management and grant schemes including agri-environment schemes and burning plans.
- Practical assistance through the Warden and Ranger teams (for example assistance with tasks such as burning, cutting, fencing and scrub management).
- Feedback and on-going discussion with landowners regarding progress and challenges.

1.2 Active Work Programme Monitoring Results

1.2.1 The monitoring scheme covers sites under the Conserving the Park scheme as well as land owned by the Authority.

1.2.2 Normally conservation sites in the active work programme are subject to formal audit visits which are written up and recorded on file. During formal visits, sites are assigned a Red, Amber or Green category¹.

1.2.3 Due to Covid-19 and lockdowns the monitoring programme was suspended during this period and due the low number of sites monitored the summary results are not presented.

1.2.4 Multiple pressures on the Warden and Ranger teams and the absence of volunteers had implications for the annual conservation work programme. As a result, a number of annual operations were unable to take place. Any impact on sites will become more apparent during the 2021-2022 monitoring season, however it is predicted that impacts will be modest and temporary provided operations can be fully resumed in 2021-2022.

1.3 Conserving the Park

1.3.1 Conserving the Park facilitates practical conservation action on privately-owned sites across the National Park. It increases the resilience of key habitats and species by safeguarding a network of nature-rich sites. See Appendix 2 for more information.

New Agreements	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Comment
# new agreements made through Conserving the Park	2	3	0	Management agreement budget is at full capacity. Conserving the Park now has a waiting list and is closed to new agreements.
Hectares new agreements cover	6	21.94	0	
# new sites outside		11	24	

¹ See Appendix 1 for a description of the monitoring method

management agreements				
New sites outside management agreements (hectares)		67.03	189.79	
New pollinator habitat that has been created (hectares)	6	52.91	189.79	Funding from the Make More Meadows campaign, and contacts made through the new Pembrokeshire Meadows Group, have enabled us to take on 24 new sites to restore species-rich meadows. Providing grazing animals and helping with fencing, gates and water troughs has brought back a diversity of flowers for pollinators.

CASE STUDY - Swyn Y Don, Trefin

The new owners of this coastal holding have received advice and assistance through Conserving the Park. As at many other sites, when land changes hands the scheme provides a useful first point of contact when the new owners are looking for guidance on how to manage it. It's important for help to be available at this early stage, before any decisions are made.



At Swyn Y Don, advice on management has been given and then supported through the provision of crucial grazing, using Welsh mountain ponies belonging to a local grazier. Choughs are regularly seen in this area, so they will now find additional foraging habitat at this site. The aim is to create species-rich grassland, in the form of hay meadows and maritime slopes.

The photo of the site is taken from PCNPA land at Trwyn Llwyd, Trefin. This is a nice example of how sites managed for nature conservation can link up, creating habitat connectivity and enhanced habitat/species resilience.

CASE STUDY - Trevayne Farm, New Hedges



We began working this year with the owner/farmer of Trevayne Farm, which sits alongside the coast path and cliffs above Monkstone beach. We are assisting him with his vision of creating extensive hay meadows where shown on the photo above. Detailed advice has been given and help funding local wildflower seed will be provided. The works will create a considerable area of pollinator habitat and bring to life the recommendations of a report written for the farm by the Bumblebee Conservation Trust.

Other projects here include the involvement of Wardens in the management of species-rich grassland in an orchard adjacent to the Coast Path and the removal of invasive cotoneaster from the cliffs.

CASE STUDY – East Hook Farm, Hook

East Hook Farm overlooks the confluence of the Eastern and Western Cleddau rivers.

Trees and woodland line the foreshore. The owners have planted additional trees along the Sprinkle Pill creek under the Glastir scheme, but with this ending and a desire for another phase of new woodland, the owners have received grant-aid through Conserving the Park.

Over a hectare of native trees was planted to widen and extend the riverside woodland corridor.



CASE STUDY – Tan y Bryn, Brynberian

The landowner has transformed two fields of dense bracken into species-rich meadows with yellow-rattle, eyebrights, knapweed, yarrow, bluebells and violets in just a couple of years, but with a great deal of hard work. He cut the bracken by hand and removed it with a home-made 'clearing contraption' made from rakes and bicycle wheels.

He then scarified the fields and sowed Pembrokeshire native meadow seeds. He continues to cut bracken and bramble re-growth by hand whenever it appears. PCNPA have provided Welsh Mountain Ponies to graze the meadows at the end of the flowering period, ready for a new flush of flowers the following spring. The site is one of nine species-rich meadow sites within a kilometre of Brynberian village, which together make an invaluable contribution to biodiversity.





1.4 Management of Common Land

1.4.1 Common land covers an area of 5,310ha. Commons are a significant resource for nature conservation with 72% designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and 61% also being designated as Special Areas for Conservation under the EU Habitats Directive. They are the largest areas of both dry and wet heath in the county as well as providing the largest deposits of carbon in the form of peat in Pembrokeshire.

1.4.2 There has been a gradual decline in the number of heavier grazing animals (cattle and ponies) grazing the commons, leading to changes in vegetation and posing a threat to certain rare species of plants and invertebrates. There is also an increased 'fuel load' on many commons, putting them at greater risk of accidental fires.

1.4.3 The National Park Authority is actively involved in supporting the management of common land on around half the total area of common land resource. In addition to work cutting fire-breaks, PCNPA has obtained funding from Welsh Government to help with boundary fencing, where this will ensure that grazing can be reintroduced for the benefit of wildlife and graziers.

1.5 Traditional Boundaries Scheme

Traditional Boundaries	2018/19	2019/20	2020/2021
Length of Traditional Boundary Restored under Traditional Boundaries Grant Scheme (metres)	NA	NA	970

1.5.1 The pilot scheme was launched in September 2020. In a short application window just over 40 applications were received to the scheme with a total of 970m of boundary creation/management undertaken during the winter.

1.5.2 Options for the scheme offered support for the restoration and management of the main boundary types found within the National Park, as well as the creation of new boundaries.

1.5.3 The pilot will continue over the winter of 21/22.

1.6 Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority Owned Sites

Location	Example activities/impact
Carew Castle SN 045 038	Due to the presence of brown long-eared bats the replacement of the Mill roof was undertaken under a licence from Natural Resources Wales. Mitigation was installed in the form of bat access roof tiles. A survey this year confirmed continued use of the site by the bats suggesting the mitigation was successful.
Skrinkle Haven SS 078 974	The meadow was particularly rich this year and the seed was harvested to help create new meadows on National Trust land as part of the Magnificent Meadows project.
Graply End Fields SM 835 327	Purchase of a number of coastal fields adjacent to our coastal property Trywn Llwyd completed on the 1 st March 2021 as part of our Sequestration for the Nation project. A plan for restoration, management and monitoring will be drawn up over the coming year in partnership with the community.

CASE STUDY - Graply End Fields

The purchase of 11 ha of land adjacent to a thin strip of coast which was already owned by the Authority. The purchase consolidates our existing ownership into a more manageable parcel as well as offering a range of opportunities to deliver Park purposes through engagement with the community and enhancement of recreation and biodiversity.



1.6. Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority Project: Fritillaries and Damselflies

1.6.1 £69,329 of Welsh Government Sustainable Management Scheme Funding was allocated to PCNPA for works to bring parts of Gweunydd Blaencleddau and Preseli Special Areas of Conservation into favourable management, and to restore habitats around them. Essential infrastructure for grazing was provided, including fencing, gates, cattle crossings, water supplies and a mobile handling crush for livestock checks on common land. In total, 43.24 hectares of SACs have been brought into favourable management for marsh fritillaries and southern damselflies. In addition, 13.51ha marsh fritillary habitat and 29.49ha species-rich meadow on undesignated Conserving the Park sites have been restored. 3,319m fencing was completed despite the project taking place over a very wet winter on wetland sites, whilst adhering to Covid restrictions.

1.7. Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority Project: Stitch in Time

1.7.1 Invasive Non Native Species (INNS) are a key driver of biodiversity loss globally and locally. The Stitch in Time project pilots top-down catchment control of three target INNS, Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam and *Rhododendron ponticum*. Welsh Government grants (Enabling Natural Resources and Wellbeing; and Environmental Growth Fund) and a Pembrokeshire Nature Partnership grant

have allowed the project to expand from the Cwm Gwaun catchment and Afon Clydach (a sub-catchment of the Nevern) to the Ceibwr Bay area (Moylegrove) and Castlemartin Corse.

1.7.2 Best practice control is coordinated on the ground using volunteers, contractors and staff time for strategic use of resources in line with the catchment rationale of top-down progression. Community involvement, partnership working, landowner engagement and awareness raising amongst key stake holders are core aspects of the project.

1.7.3 Invasives in the Porthgain, Llanrhian and Cwm Gwaun catchments are now considered to be almost eradicated, and are now monitored regularly to ensure this status is maintained.

Stitch in Time Volunteer Days

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
# Stitch in Time - Volunteer Days	109.89	123	440	18.5

1.7.4 The lockdown impact all aspects of community and volunteer involvement in the project as it took place during the active control season and this is reflected in the volunteer hours which mostly relate to online training provided by the project officer to keep volunteers engaged.

1.7.5 Out of necessity the project best practice event was held over Zoom and attracted 60 participants from across Wales and is now available for viewing on You Tube.

1.7.6 With the support of landowners we were able to keep all contracts moving throughout the lockdown thereby continuing to support our local countryside management businesses throughout a very difficult time.

Invasive Species removed at source

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/2021
Hectares – Invasive Species removed at source/ injected	43.95	49.35	12	88.49

1.8 Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority Project: Local Places for Nature and Greening the Public Estate

1.8.1 A number of biodiversity projects were completed under these two Welsh Government Programmes. We purchased a Rytec Flail mower to enable restoration of our meadow at Manorbier and also received grant aid to create a species map for our historic orchard at St. Bride's.

1.8.2 In the wider Park, the grant also supported the management of an important new site for Marsh Fritillary at Trefach Country Club as well as supporting the community with INNS management at Moylegrove.

1.8.3 Projects were delivered collaboratively between Direction, Delivery and Discovery.

CASE STUDY - Case Study: St Brides Orchard



Heritage and unique varieties of fruit trees are in danger of being lost with a resulting loss of genetic diversity. For example St. Bride's orchard has medieval origins and many of the varieties are rare and due to the age of the trees are in danger of being lost.

The project received help from an expert volunteer to catalogue the 60 apple trees in the medieval orchard at St. Brides.

Using a professional grafting service the project has created 110 fruit tree grafts from St. Brides Orchard and other selected speciality species from around Pembrokeshire which are now being cared for at the

Mencap Stackpole Walled Gardens and will be ready for planting this winter.

The trees will be used to create a new orchard on the green at St. Brides and remaining trees will be provided to schools and community groups for planting.

Unfortunately due to Covid we were not able to offer the volunteer training element; however, the tools purchased will be used this winter to help with planting, subject to Covid regulations.

2. Collaboration and Joint Projects

2.1 Terrestrial Partnerships

<p>Pembrokeshire Nature Partnership</p>	<p>Pembrokeshire Nature Partnership administered a small grant fund to a value of £9,951 which supported 6 projects, drawing in partner contributions of £8,322. This included a PCNPA-led project to develop a strategy for marsh fritillary butterflies in Pembrokeshire. The Partnership drew in £16,000 from the electronics firm Siemens in corporate social responsibility funding for a tree planting project in Wolfscastle. Funds were secured under the Welsh Government Local Place for Nature scheme via a combination of allocated and competitive funds to a value of £215,957. These included schemes delivered by PCNPA.</p> <p>Membership remained stable at 21 organisational members signed up to the terms of reference. The number of subscribers across all mailing lists increased from 838 to 883 in the reporting period (although there is some duplication where people subscribe to multiple lists). Followers on Facebook increased from 501 to 660.</p> <p>374 enquiries were received and responded to. 25 public facing events and activities were run, such as landowner engagement visits and evening talks, including the National Federation of WIs and two local WI groups, Newport Area Environment Group and Snowdonia Nature Partnership.</p> <p>The Partnership Officer continued to input to strategic groups such as the WG run Nature Recovery Action Plan Refresh Group; WG Ecosystem Resilience Working Group; WG Green Recovery Task Force; and Area Statements as well as local policy development such as the PSB Climate Change Risk Assessment Group; the PCC LDP Allocations Ecological Assessment; the PCNPA Recreation Management Plan Group; and the Pembrokeshire Sustainable Agriculture Network.</p>
<p>Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust and Pembrokeshire Amphibian and Reptile Group</p>	<p>A joint project to locate and map hibernacula and to use radio tracking to investigate use of the coastal belt and coastal hinterlands by adders.</p>

Magnificent Meadows Project	130 people attended (online) the first meeting of the Pembrokeshire Meadows Group at the end of January. A second meeting in March led to the establishment of a steering group, which includes PCNPA staff, a large mailing list and a Facebook group.
Pembrokeshire Grazing Network	The Grazing Animals Project supported grazing on 447.3 ha of land across 56 sites in the Conserving the Park Scheme.
Butterfly Conservation	Development of a Marsh Fritillary Strategy for Pembrokeshire with the help of grant aid from the Pembrokeshire Nature Partnership.

CASE STUDY - A Strategy for Marsh Fritillary

The marsh fritillary requires landscape-scale management in order to maintain viable populations, and conservation of this species depends on both habitat quality and the conservation of habitats within a functional landscape.

The project identified the seven known Pembrokeshire meta-populations and mapped the marsh fritillary landscape across the county based around the accepted concept of 'core' and 'functional' landscapes for this butterfly.

The Marsh Fritillary is the subject of much recording, survey, monitoring and conservation effort by various partners within Pembrokeshire but this is the first time this information has been brought together in one place.

The report paints a picture of a very vulnerable population on the brink, and makes clear, targeted recommendations for practical management action as well as survey and monitoring.

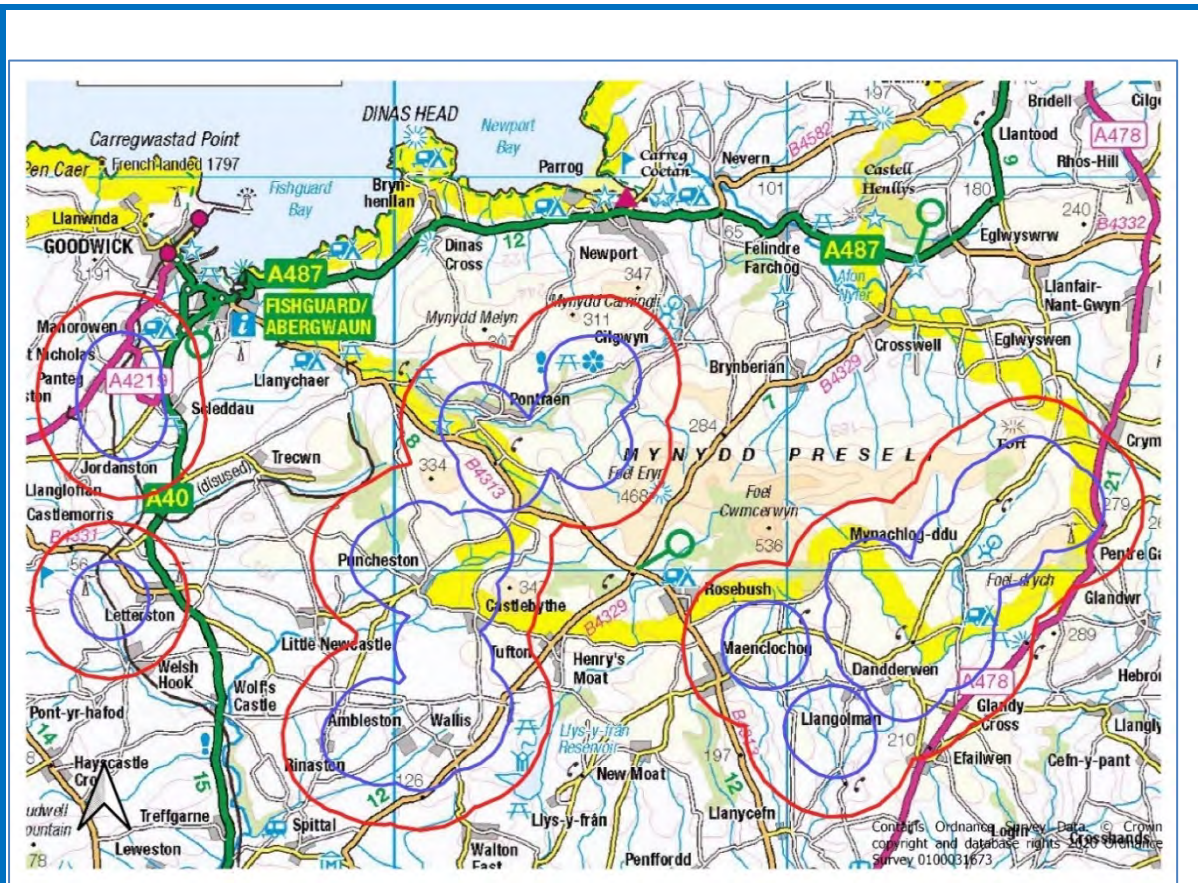


Fig 1 – Core (blue line) and Functional (red line) landscapes have been defined for Marsh Fritillary in Pembrokeshire.

2.2 Marine Partnerships

Welsh Government	The Authority continues to represent Pembrokeshire Coast and Snowdonia National Parks on the Welsh Government Marine Protected Area Management Steering Group.
Milford Haven Waterway Environmental Steering Group	The group was able to complete the planned rocky shore and shelduck surveys planned for the season around the lockdown rules. The group has recently commissioned a review of 30 years of shelduck data by the British Trust for Ornithology. https://www.mhwesg.org.uk/
Pembrokeshire Marine Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Cardigan Bay SAC and Carmarthen Bay and Estuaries European	The Authority continues to contribute to conservation of European Marine Sites via the Relevant Authority Groups for Pembrokeshire Marine Special Area of Conservation, Cardigan Bay Special Area of Conservation and Carmarthen Bay and Estuaries European Marine Sites.

Marine Sites Relevant Authorities Groups	All the European Marine Sites officers input to national work streams of relevance such as advising the Wales Marine Protected Areas Management Steering Group, contributing to NRW's condition improvement project and sharing information and experience on a UK level with other marine protected area practitioners. Some highlights are given below.
(Surveying the Waterway Environment for Pollution Threats) (SWEPT)	The Authority received funding from Welsh Government in December 2020 to support the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC Officer to undertake a further phase of the award-winning citizen science based SWEPT project and to support a similar initiative in the Nevern catchment - the Catchment Level Environmental Action Network (CLEAN). A second phase of the CLEAN project has been proposed.
Seagrass Ocean Rescue	<p>The Pembrokeshire Marine SAC Officer, with Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum, assisted Seagrass Ocean Rescue (a joint venture between Sky Ocean Rescue, WWF and Swansea University) with stakeholder planning and engagement for their pioneering seagrass regeneration project. Following intensive local community liaison and licensing, the project successfully planted 750,000 seeds in an agreed area in Dale Bay in late February/early March 2020.</p> <p>Swansea University continue to monitor the site in 2021 to assess overall germination success. Following a monitoring site visit in early September, reports are that good seagrass growth has been found and is on a path to successfully cover the planned area.</p> <p>A thorough report summarizing the lessons learnt from the project has been submitted to WWF who commissioned the stakeholder engagement work. The SAC Officer has also been working with Project Seagrass to help facilitate future seagrass restoration in Wales including setting up a Welsh Seagrass Network.</p>
Wildlife Trust for South and West Wales	Provision of guidance and awareness raising (funded by the Authority) to reduce the impacts of light pollution on Manx shearwaters, liaising with the Wildlife Trust for South and West Wales and industry. This contributes to wider discussions on the benefits of the Dark Skies initiative.
Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum	Contributing to marine and coastal recreation management including inputting to the Wales Activity Mapping project led by Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum mapping risks to marine conservation features from recreational activities, and delivering rocky shore training to outdoor providers as well as sitting on the recreation plan group.

Natural Resources Wales	Assisting NRW with their bait digging management review of The Gann (still underway). Feeding into native oyster regeneration planning within the Milford Haven waterway with NRW.
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3. Monitoring and research

3.1 Chough Monitoring and data analysis

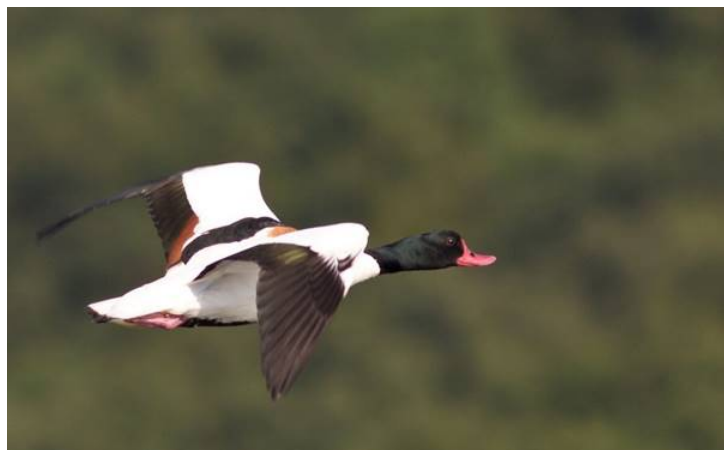
3.1.1 The annual chough monitoring programme was successfully carried out in full compliance with local lockdown measures, largely piecing together a picture from information collected by those who lived close to nests sites or those who had legitimate reasons for being out on the coast. The last full gap in the dataset is during the foot and mouth outbreak in 2001.

3.1.2 The RSPB carried out an analysis of the Pembrokeshire dataset alongside datasets for chough elsewhere in Wales. This is the first time this long-running dataset been statistically analysed. The picture for Pembrokeshire shows a stable population against a background of declines elsewhere in Wales. We are now looking at the feasibility of further analysis to help us ascertain the reasons for this, including whether our conservation land management impacts have played a role.

CASE STUDY - Long term datasets – Data on breeding shelduck

Surveys of summer shelduck populations were one of the first of a series of long running environmental projects to be funded by the Milford Haven Waterway Environmental Surveillance Group (MHWESG) back in the early 1990’s. Although there are many surveys of the wintering populations of shelduck around the UK the British Trust for Ornithology believe this dataset on breeding shelduck is unique to Wales.

The dataset was robust enough to produce trends in the numbers of ducklings broods and adults on the Waterway. The trends broadly matched each other with a large peak in number followed by a decline and then a smaller peak, and then a decline below initial count



figures followed finally by an increase returning to the approximate population size counted at the beginning of the records.

Trends were well correlated with national trends in overwintering shelduck populations however there is considerable interest in future analyses that may help to increase our poor level of knowledge and understanding of this species nationally.

Paul Howells (Dragon LNG Ltd and MHWESG chair) commented that “the study of summer shelduck in the estuary has created a lengthy dataset that will, if continued, allow future researchers to assess and interpret the impact of environmental change in the estuary. We are benefiting now from the foresight that members of the MHWESG had nearly 3 decades ago to understand the relevance of long-term monitoring.

4. Conservation Policy and the Future for Agriculture

4.1 In 2016, a representative range of habitats and species in Pembrokeshire was assessed for condition and likely trend. Those assessed as in good condition and / or with an improving trend had all been the subject of sustained conservation effort. The majority of habitats and species assessed were in poor or moderate condition and the overall trend is one of decline.

4.2 Most conservation effort is scalable, but resources are needed to influence the management of more agriculturally-productive farmland. Agricultural support schemes need to reward the production of public goods and widen participation in ecological restoration across Wales.

4.3 Welsh Government’s proposed Sustainable Farming Scheme will be critical to this, and would potentially contribute to impacts specified in the National Park Management Plan as well as providing a potential new income stream to land managers if Britain exits from the European Union.

4.4 Welsh Government has published a Summary of Responses and a [Policy Response](#) on the consultation on the Agriculture (Wales) White Paper. The latter proposes the following timeline:

- 2022 - Introduce the Agriculture Bill and a draft of the Sustainable Farming Scheme. Begin the next phase of co-design and launch a range of interventions which will run until the Sustainable Farming Scheme is launched in 2025. These interventions will help prepare farmers for Scheme entry and also pilot new processes to inform delivery. A new scheme to fund woodland creation will be launched, with separate funding to plan woodland projects.
- In Spring 2023, following co-design and subject to the Agriculture Bill receiving Royal Assent, Welsh Government will launch a final consultation on the Sustainable Farming Scheme and Welsh Government’s transitional plans to move from the Basic Payment Scheme. A final decision on implementation will be made once Welsh Government has considered the responses to this consultation.

- In 2024 Welsh Government will launch an outreach programme to engage with farmers on the Sustainable Farming Scheme through a range of demonstration events, workshops and surgeries. The process of entering farmers into the new Scheme will begin, with Farm Sustainability Reviews.
- It is Welsh Government's intention to open the Sustainable Farming Scheme in January 2025. This will be followed by a multi-year transition period to enable those farmers who receive payments through the Basic Payment Scheme to transfer into the Sustainable Farming Scheme.

Appendix 1 - Conservation Land Management Sites – Monitoring Methodology

Method

A formal assessment considers the species and habitats for which the site is being managed. Monitoring is different for each site depending on what we are trying to achieve through management. The timing of formal visits may be varied from year to year to assess a site with multiple features of interest.

Monitoring considers two things:

- i) The quality of the habitat which is discerned through the presence and abundance of typical positive indicator species (e.g. typical haymeadow flowers) and negative indicator species (e.g. nettles, docks) as recommended by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. We may also consider vegetation structure in terms of sward heights or the balance of scrub to grassland where these are critical to individual species. We carry out some selected specialist species monitoring for example skylark and marsh fritillary where appropriate.
- ii) Compliance with an on-going suitability of the management regime. This will include information on the appropriate timing of management interventions, the success of individual interventions for example bracken control, and physical audit of capital items.

Relying entirely on (i) above to provide a monitoring result is fraught with difficulty. Species can often 'hang on' in habitats of declining quality and natural population fluctuations driven by the weather, or other factors outside of our control can confound the interpretation of these results.

Therefore we combine the information provided by both (i) and (ii) with the professional judgement of experienced staff to assign the site to one of three categories (Red, Amber and Green). Adding a qualitative professional judgement element has been used very successfully in nature conservation scheme monitoring and this was used by the Countryside Council for Wales' (Natural Resources Wales legacy body) rapid review of SSSIs in 2006.

Explanation of Monitoring Categories

RED	AMBER	GREEN
<p>A site is judged to be Red if:</p> <p>A serious or repeated breach of management plan has taken place.</p> <p>Damaging activities have taken place or features of interest destroyed/partially destroyed.</p>	<p>A site is judged to be Amber if:</p> <p>Management is considered compliant and effective but the conservation value of the site will take time to improve.</p> <p>There is a positive direction of travel in terms of quality improvement but with minor deviations from the management plan which may slow recovery or improvement of conservation value.</p> <p>Management is compliant but our recommended management is not producing the expected results.</p>	<p>A site is judged to be Green when the management regime is compliant, the management is effective and the site is of high quality and with high ecological integrity.</p> <p>In the green category we are often 'running to stand still' as maintenance of good condition requires continued management.</p> <p>Such sites may slip back to Amber if the land changes hands or the owners' circumstances change.</p>

<p>Our response:</p> <p>The Authority will make a judgement on whether to continue involvement with the site.</p>	<p>Our response:</p> <p>In the first case, the positive feedback is provided to the landowner.</p> <p>In the second case we communicate with the landowner regarding ideal management practice and reasons for deviation, perhaps looking for alternatives.</p> <p>In the third case we would work with the landowner to experiment with management. This is standard practice in nature conservation management and is referred to as 'adaptive' management.</p>	<p>Our response:</p> <p>Green sites may stay with the scheme requiring smaller amounts of intervention. For example a site which had capital expenditure such as gates and scrub control may now only need a small amount of on-going assistance with grazing animals.</p> <p>For some sites continued support may be the only option for retaining the conservation interest of the site.</p>
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Some of the detail of these responses are only relevant to the Conserving the Park scheme, but the broad principles apply across all the Authority's conservation portfolio.

Appendix 2 ‘Conserving the Park’ Scheme

Background

‘Conserving the Park’ is Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority’s flagship scheme for working with private landowners within the National Park. It has proved a powerful tool in delivering practical land management for key habitats and species and is our key vehicle for delivering first purpose conservation objectives in the National Park Management Plan, the Authority’s Corporate and Resources Plan and the Pembrokeshire Nature Partnership’s Local Biodiversity Action Plan / Nature Recovery Action Plan.

Conserving the Park evolved from the highly successful ‘Conserving the Coastal Slopes’ project, which was the practical answer to the Authority’s Chough Conservation Strategy. Further background on this project can be obtained from the excellent project report, which neatly outlines the challenges for conservation management of semi-natural habitats within the National Park and which is as relevant today as it was in 2002.

Why is it needed?

Habitats such as flower-rich grasslands, marshy grasslands and woodlands and coastal slopes all contribute to the rich diversity of wildlife in the National Park. These semi-natural habitats suffer from a range of issues such as land abandonment, inappropriate stock, lack of grazing and lack of traditional vegetation management.

Outside of designated areas there are gaps in the support available to landowners who aspire to manage their land for the benefit of wildlife. The Conserving the Park scheme aims to fill these gaps, and also to facilitate access to other sources of support and to add value where possible. It is important to note that the scheme is not intended to compete with, or replace, existing schemes.

The scheme supports community spaces such as churchyards, which often hold remnants of ancient flower-rich grassland. Volunteers help out with the annual cut and rake which produces an abundance of spring and summer flowers and excellent pollinator habitat at Stackpole Churchyard.

How does the scheme work?

Landowners enter the scheme by two main avenues. They may see the scheme information on our flyers or on our website and contact us directly, or as is often the case they are referred to us by one of our partners, for example NRW.

Sites are visited and assessed for current conservation value and condition and their potential to deliver conservation outcomes for priority habitats and species.

The list of priority habitats and species has been taken from the Local Biodiversity Action Plan for Pembrokeshire which provides action plans for European Annex 1

habitats and Annex 2 species and UK Biodiversity Action Plan habitats and species in Pembrokeshire, as well as those of local concern.

The Pembrokeshire Nature Partnership consists of a wide range of statutory and non-governmental organisations and voluntary organisations. The Local Biodiversity Action Plan is regularly updated and reviewed by a core steering group of key partners including NRW, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, Pembrokeshire County Council and the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales - ensuring information is relevant and up to date. A list of priority habitats and species can be found in Appendix 1 of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Please click:

<https://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/biodiversity/pembrokeshire-nature-partnership-plans-and-guidance>

Process

Check the site is eligible by deciding whether it supports/is capable of supporting priority habitats and species.



Identify the ideal management regime.



Discuss management with the owner and identify barriers to management (such as lack of stock, inability to carry out work, lack of site infrastructure) and sources of alternative funding such as agri-environment schemes.



Barriers to management removed by selecting items from the toolkit (below).



Management and toolkit support agreed with the owner and site enters the scheme. Annual monitoring provides owners with ongoing support and progress updates on their management.

The Toolkit approach

The Toolkit approach was developed during the Conserving the Coastal Slopes Programme. It is highly effective as it can tailor solutions to site management issues and therefore offer highly targeted support.

