

Report of the Biodiversity Officer

Subject: Conservation Report 2021-2022

1. The attached report set out the outcomes achieved for this National Park through our conservation work during the financial year 2021-2022.
2. The report sets out:
 - The impact of conservation land management activities in 2021-2022.
 - 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.
4. After the presentation of last year's report members requested a discussion on achievements and a reflection on making a difference. I have set out below the key achievements as I see them for the last 8-10 years.
5. From its solid foundation in the Coastal Slopes programme the Conserving the Park Scheme has reach of the Conserving the Park Scheme has doubled and the team now influence the management of twice as much land for nature.
6. The areas in which we work have been diversified significantly to include whole new initiatives for nature and people, e.g., Invasive Non-Native Species, Naturally Connected, Traditional Boundaries, Make More Meadows, Wild About Woodlands and Commons Resilience.
7. In response to a drive for a greater emphasis on external funding the Conservation team have gradually increased from a near zero baseline to spending around 180k of external funding during 2021-2022.
8. We have raised our profile and drawn resources to Pembrokeshire through partnering national organisations on Wales wide projects including Plantlife, Butterfly Conservation, Natural Resources Wales, Gwynedd Council (Llyn AONB), Pembrokeshire County Council and Ceredigion Council.

9. Key long-term datasets invested in by the National Park Authority over the last 20 years have been secured, analysed and published and new areas of development and research have been initiated around key species such as Marsh Fritillary and Adder, establishing the National Park Authority as an evidence-based organisation.
10. The conservation team made a significant contribution to the development of ambitious large-scale projects and are now embarking on the delivery of these under the Wild Coast! and Greening Agriculture themes.

RECOMMENDATION:

Members are requested to RECEIVE and COMMENT on the Report.

(For further information contact Sarah Mellor on extension 4829)

Conservation Report

2021 to 2022



Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

Operational Review Committee
30th November 2022



Contents

1. Conservation Land Management	1
1.1 Conservation across the Park.....	1
1.2 Conserving the Park.....	3
1.3 Management of Common Land	9
1.4 Greening Agriculture	10
1.5 Traditional Boundaries Scheme	10
1.6 Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority Owned Sites	11
1.7 Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority Projects – A Stitch in Time.....	14
1.8 Local Places for Nature	15
2. Collaboration and Joint Projects	16
2.1 Terrestrial Partnerships	16
2.2 Marine Partnerships	18
3. Monitoring and Research	21
3.1 Adder radio tracking	21
3.2 Marsh Fritillary Habitat Condition Mapping	22
4. Agriculture & Conservation Policy	24

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 two hundred sites aimed at benefitting priority habitats and species within the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. This is achieved through the management of the PCNPA's owned or leased estate and through working in partnership with private landowners with our 'Conserving the Park' 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 several 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.

1.1.5 The headline figures in the table overleaf show a continued positive trend in the reach of our land management work through the 'Conserving the Park' scheme coupled with externally led projects. This year also saw the expansion of our owned estate through the acquisition of Grapley Fields near Trefin.

1.1.6 A report to the Conservation and Planning Review Committee on the 12th June 2012 shows the area of land in the Conserving the Park Scheme reported to members as 733.5 hectares showing that the Conservation Team have more than doubled the reach of the scheme over the last 10 years.

1.1.7 This can be explained by an increase in staffing resource with an additional 1 FTE Conservation Officer gained during this time as well as additional funding from external sources.

1.1.7 The Conservation Team have been successful at securing and spending external funding of around 180k from external sources during 2021-22.

	2019/20	2020/2021	2021-2022 ¹
Property owned or leased by PCNPA managed for biodiversity (hectares)	463	463	474.87
Land managed for biodiversity in partnership with private landowners (hectares)	1288	1356.69	1,483.62
Access land where PCNPA supports common management partnerships (hectares)	2750	2858.20	3183.25

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

1.2 Conserving the Park

1.2.1 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	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Comment
Conservation sites % managed in line with management objectives	100	100	100	
# new agreements made through Conserving the Park	3	0	1	The management agreement budget continues to operate at or near full capacity.
Hectares new agreements cover	21.94	0	2.93	
# new sites outside management agreements	11	24	49	Additional funding from the Make More Meadows and Wild about Woodlands campaigns has enabled us to undertake capital works on new sites and bring them into the scheme for long-term conservation management
New sites outside management agreements (hectares)	67.03	189.79	256.01	
New pollinator habitat created (hectares)	52.91	189.79	256.01	

CASE STUDY - Waun Isaf South

This common is part of Mynydd Preseli Special Area of Conservation and SSSI, designated in part for its marshy grassland and marsh fritillary butterflies. By 2019 the site was receiving little grazing and most of its area was classified as too rank. It was almost impossible to walk across the common because of the dense, tussocky vegetation. The marsh fritillary was presumed extinct there by the end of 2020.

During the winter of 20-21, PCNPA paid for fencing works so that regular cattle grazing by the Welsh Blacks at Coleg Plas Dwbl could be re-established.

Students with complex needs look after the cattle, gaining skills for employment. Following concerns over biosecurity with neighbouring cattle and potential conflicts with the public right of way, PCNPA bought No Fence collars for the cattle to keep them away from these areas.



Marsh fritillaries were seen again during the summer of 2021. A subsequent visit by the monitoring team of Natural Resources Wales concluded that the site was finally receiving favourable management.

✓ Designated site in Favourable Management

CASE STUDY - Dale Fort

The cliff land belonging to Dale Fort has received management assistance from PCNPA for more than a decade. The site had a history of overgrazing in the past, followed by several years of no management at all. Help was given in the provision of ponies and a regular grazing regime at the right times of year, combined with bramble and bracken control where it was encroaching.



The result has been a rich diversity of habitats in favourable condition. An exciting find this year was the appearance of Subterranean Clover, a scarce plant which hasn't been recorded here for 25 years. It needs the open conditions created by grazing animals.

- ✓ Designated site in Favourable Management
- ✓ New sites for scarce species – Increasing Ecological Resilience.

CASE STUDY - St David's

When land changes hands, we provide a valuable service to the new owner in terms of how best to manage it for wildlife, together with ways in which we can help them deliver it.

The new owner of a collection of small old fields above the Alun Valley in St David's came to us following a request to the new Pembrokeshire Meadows Group. Guidance led to the fields flowering to their potential the following spring and summer, with 100s of orchids on show, much to the owner's delight.

We can call on local experts to add additional support and advice. In this instance, knowing that there was an historic record of the rare Southern Damselfly at this site led us to inviting the local Odonata expert to carry out a survey. The historic nature of the fields also enabled us to invite the county plant recorder to do a full botanical survey. In this way, the scheme provides landowners with coordinated and comprehensive advice for the best possible outcomes.



- ✓ Pollinator habitat
- ✓ Supporting Citizen Science

CASE STUDY – Stop-and-Call, Goodwick

Part of the large tract of marshy grassland above Goodwick includes an area we have been helping the landowner summer-graze with ponies for 10 years.

Knowing that the area is a UK stronghold for the rare three-lobed water-crowfoot, which needs heavy animals creating patches of bare ground, we were delighted when it appeared on this site after 4 years, where it had never been recorded before. The plants are surveyed here every couple of years and so far, it seems to be doing well, adding to the resilience of the species in this important locality.



✓ New sites for scarce species – Increasing Ecological Resilience.

CASE STUDY – Ciliau, Goodwick

When landowners approach us wanting to plant trees on their land, we can offer them site-specific advice on the best places to plant them, how to plant them, where to source them etc., as well as funding and possible planting assistance from our rangers and volunteers.

The photo opposite shows the owners of Cilau West near Goodwick with their newly planted field, which incorporates wide rides within it to provide species-rich grassland and woodland edge habitat.



✓ New trees and Woodlands in the Landscape

CASE STUDY – School Meadows

Advice and assistance have been provided to several schools in the creation and management of meadows within the school grounds. Working alongside our Education staff, assistance has included the provision of meadow seed and plug plants, help with cutting and ongoing management advice. The purchase of wildflowers was assisted through our charitable trust's Make More Meadows campaign.

Pupils have also had the chance to visit meadows on Conserving the Park farms with our Education team. The photo below shows children from Johnston primary school visiting nearby East Hook Farm.



- ✓ New Green Infrastructure
- ✓ Education

1.3 Management of Common Land

1.3.1 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.



1.3.2 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. Rank ungrazed grasses and vegetation makes day-to-day management more difficult along with contributing to increasing the fuel load.

1.3.3 With the dry winter of 2021/22 and an increased fuel load on several Commons it came as no surprise that 18 different grassfires were witnessed during the burning season the largest of which burnt 131ha of the Preseli. As a result, officers attended numerous public meetings and have facilitated talks between Grazing Associations, NRW and MAWW Fire to re-introduce better management of the larger commons. In addition to this PCNPA will continue its programme of fire break cutting working closely with graziers to pinpoint areas of possible ignition.

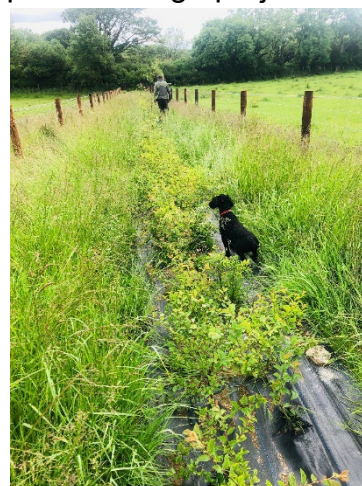


1.3.4 The PCNPA is actively involved in supporting the management of common land on around half the total area of common land resource. PCNPA has obtained funding from Welsh Government to help with boundary fencing, where this will ensure that grazing can be maintained and in some parts reintroduced for the benefit of wildlife and graziers. To date the Commons Resilience Fund has facilitated just over 5km of fencing on the Preseli, Carningli, Frenni and Gors Fawr Commons.

1.4 Greening Agriculture

This year a new pilot was launched with the emphasis on offering support to enable intensive dairy farms to become more sustainable. The Greening Agriculture Pilot opened a funding window in the Summer of 2021 and four expressions of interest (EOI) were received. All EOIs highlighted different projects that would make their enterprises greener either through reducing carbon or output or through projects to sequester carbon on farms.

Two projects focussed on Solar and Battery systems in Newport to lower the carbon footprint of their door to door milk delivery enterprise. The other was in the south of the County near Jameston, to power an ice bank system for cooling milk, therefore reducing water wastage and energy consumption. The theme of water wastage was mirrored in Fishguard with the third project installing a water harvesting system to lessen the burden on washing their bottling plant with mains water. While the last project near Martletwy focussed on a number of actions to sequester carbon from hedgelaying and creating permanent pasture. All projects were on-going in 2022.



1.5 Traditional Boundaries Scheme

Traditional Boundaries	2018/19	2019/20	2020/2021	2021/2022
Length of Traditional Boundary Restored under Traditional Boundaries Grant Scheme (metres)	NA	NA	970	2708

The successful pilot scheme has now end but funding has been successfully obtained to expand the work through the SLSP project.

The pilot included both the protection and restoration of existing boundaries such as that at Carn Fran as well as the creation of new hedgerows.



1.6 Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority Owned Sites

Location	Example activities/impact
Carew Castle SN 045 038	Specimen tree and shrub planting around the site to enhance the welcome and to mitigate for the loss of specimens due to ash die back.
Sychpant SN044350	A new hedgerow and parkland trees were planted at this SSSI to increase the amount of wood pasture habitat.
Grapley End Fields SM 835 327	Essential site infrastructure including gates and fencing were repaired or replaced over the winter. Habitat creation projects including scrub, woodland and new coastal slope have been completed using local volunteers. Access enhancements to the coast path have also been made.

CASE STUDY - Grapley End Fields

The purchase, restoration, and management of the land near Trefin provides a clear demonstration of the delivery of multiple benefits through conservation land management along the coast.

Conservation management objectives were mapped and included new areas of coastal grassland, scrub and meadow contributing to carbon sequestration and national and local biodiversity targets. The main tasks undertaken in 2021/22 were a haycut of all grasslands to reduce nutrient levels, a complete renewal and repair of ageing infrastructure including fences and gates and areas of native tree and shrub planting. Everything is now in place for the land to be let to a local agricultural tenant in 2022 for grazing and cutting.



The local community have been very involved in the site from several initial well attended consultation walks and talks, to tree and shrub planting over the winter months and a small group of botanical volunteers who received training in baseline meadow monitoring.

The coast path has been removed from its precarious narrow corridor along a very thin coastal strip where it was vulnerable to erosion. The new path, within an 8m wide strip is now a much more welcoming experience for walkers along this section of the National Trail and has been safeguarded from erosion for the future. The coastal fence which abuts sections of our land along our ownership at Trwyn Llywd has also been moved inland to allow more space and remove narrow pinch points and provide a wider coastal corridor.



- ✓ New coastal habitats – Increased Ecological Resilience
- ✓ Pollinator habitat
- ✓ New Trees and Woodlands in the landscape
- ✓ Enhanced Access
- ✓ Community and volunteer engagement
- ✓ New Green Infrastructure.

CASE STUDY – Tree Planting at National Park Sites

The Welsh Government has a target to plant 180,000 hectares of woodland across Wales by 2050. We assessed opportunities for an increase in tree cover on our owned estate and identified areas for tree planting which demonstrate a 'right tree in the right place' approach allowing us to contribute to tree planting ambitions whilst safeguarding open habitats of value and integrating trees successfully into the landscape.

Sychpant SSSI

At this SSSI site a new hedgerow and planting of specimen parkland trees created approx. 0.5ha of new sheltered wood pasture habitat and directly expanded the area of designated feature.



Carew Castle SSSI

A mixture of hedgerow trees, specimen trees and scrub were planted in various locations at Carew Castle. As well as helping to meet tree planting targets the new plantings will help to mitigate the loss of trees through ash die back and provide continued continuity of foraging flight lines for bats inhabiting the castle.



- ✓ New Trees and Woodlands in the landscape
- ✓ Designated site enhanced

1.7 Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority Projects – A Stitch in Time

1.7.1 March 2022 saw the successful conclusion of three years of activity funded under the Welsh Government Enabling Natural Resources and Wellbeing programme. We were also successful in funding a further year of activity under the Local Places for Nature fund with the new phase starting in April 2022.

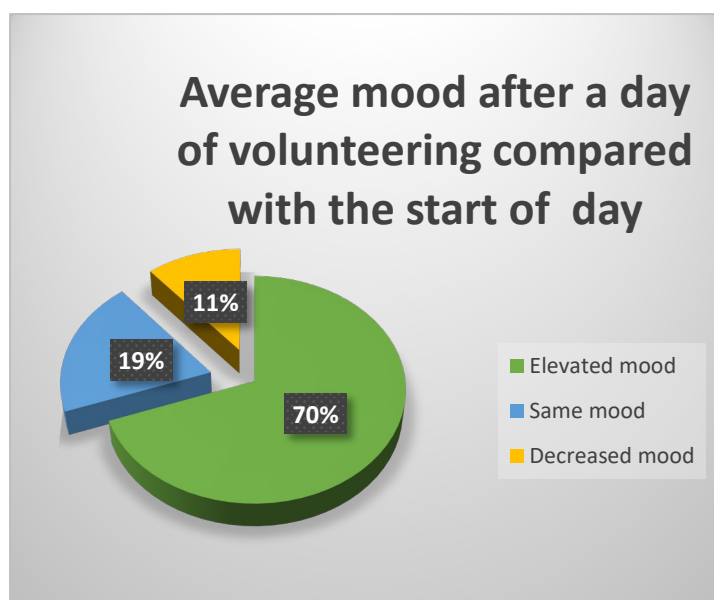


1.7.2 During the project 26 hectares of balsam was controlled across 2 catchments and a monitoring and maintenance plan produced and implemented to maintain the INNS free status of the Gwaun and Porthgain catchments which were tackled under earlier phases of the project.

1.7.2 The project also demonstrated significant involvement of volunteers and the community by involving a

total of 85 landowners, 9 community groups. Despite the interruptions of Covid restrictions the project still achieved the contribution of a total of 965 volunteer hours across 3 years.

1.7.3 Through a combination of and pre and post task check-ins and more detailed interviews we were able to show that 70% of volunteers got a short-term boost in mood from helping out with the project.



The more detailed interviews showed that longer term benefits could be significant and were often very unique to each person.

Two former volunteers of Stitch in Time actually set up a new business and were employed as contractors on the new project.

Other volunteers cited social connections, practicing their Welsh, the acquisition of new skills and knowledge and making a difference as benefits they saw from participating in the project.

1.7.4 One of the key successes of the project were connections made to new community groups who approached the project for advice on tackling infestations in their communities at Moylegrove, Pembroke, St. David's and on the Nevern. Stitch

in Time will be supporting these projects through the delivery of the next years Local Places for Nature Programme.

1.8 Local Places for Nature

A total of £50,000 of enhancements to publicly accessible green space was made through Welsh Government funding via the Local Places for Nature Programme. This included creation of new coastal grassland habitat, invasive species management and community tree planting at Trefin.

We also collaborated with the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Trust to offer small 'Force for Nature' grants to enable members of the community to apply for help enhancing their local green space. The Force for Nature Scheme delivered £14,500 of grants with the following outputs


- 12 community sites improved for nature conservation.
- People from 10 community groups (children and adults) involved in nature conservation actions.
- 2 community areas cleared regularly for rubbish and litter.
- Delivered activities including:
 - Wildflower meadow creation on community and sport fields and on school grounds
 - Tree planting
 - Butterfly Gardens created
 - Pollinator-friendly plants planted
 - Sensory planting in community play areas and sports fields
 - Clearing of community pond
 - Mini BioBlitz

Items purchased included gardening tools, bird boxes, bug hotels, equipment for raised beds, wildflower seeds, fruit trees, gloves and wellies.

2. Collaboration and Joint Projects

2.1 Terrestrial Partnerships

<p>Pembrokeshire Nature Partnership</p>	<p>PCNPA made a cash contribution of £6,864 to the core running costs of the Pembrokeshire Nature Partnership in the 2021/22 financial year. The Partnership administered a small grant fund to a value of £9,953 which supported 11 projects, drawing in partner contributions of £9,553. Funds were secured under the Welsh Government Local Places for Nature scheme via a combination of allocated and competitive funds to a value of £468,000. These included £27,500 by allocation to PCNPA and £125,000 competitive bid for habitat creation in and around the Northwest Pembrokeshire Commons SAC, within the National Park.</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 877 to 893 in the reporting period (although there is some duplication where people subscribe to multiple lists). Followers on Facebook increased from 660 to 822.</p> <p>345 enquiries were received and responded to. 17 public facing events and activities were run, such as landowner engagement visits and evening talks, including providing local input to the WWF-run Triple Challenge Stakeholder events, a trip to a rocky shore to look at inter-tidal conservation with PCC Planning Officers and tree planting days with PCNPA Rangers and volunteers.</p> <p>The Partnership Officer continued to input to strategic groups such as the PCNPA Recreation Plan Working Group; PCNPA Volunteering Strategy Review; PCNPA Draft Tree Strategy; PCC Verge and Amenity Grassland Mowing Seminar; PCC Extended Leadership Team Briefing on Biodiversity; PCC LDP Candidate Sites Assessment; Pembrokeshire Sustainable Agriculture Network; Pembrokeshire Meadows Group; PSB Climate Change Risk Assessment Group; Pembrokeshire Rural Crime Group; PSB Climate Adaption T&F Group; WG NRAP Implementation Group; WG Indicator 44 Workshop; WG Ecosystem Resilience and Restoration Working Group; WG Action Plan for Pollinators Taskforce; WG Place Based Approaches Working Group; National Nature Service Co-design Group.</p>
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Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust and Pembrokeshire Amphibian and Reptile Group	A joint project to radio track adders in the coastal belt with the aim of enhancing our knowledge of how adders use the habitat to enable us to better inform coastal managers.
Magnificent Meadows Project	<p>The new Pembrokeshire Meadows Group, started by Plantlife, has produced its own website Pembrokeshire Meadows Group, along with a mailing list and Facebook group. PCNPA assisted in liaison with suitable contractors whose details are now available on the website, so meadow owners can organise management works themselves. Numerous courses have been held, including Managing Meadows for Pollinators, Winter Grazing, Reptiles and Amphibians of Grassland and a Meadow Making workshop at Scolton Manor.</p> <p>A Meadows Open Day was held in July and several Conserving the Park meadow sites were included in the day's events.</p> <p>PCNPA commissioned artist Fran Evans to produce an engaging poster showing the wealth of wildlife in meadows. This has been provided to schools, visitor centres and tourist attractions with meadows.</p> 
Pembrokeshire Grazing Network	The Grazing Animals Project supported grazing on 468.52 ha of land across 62 sites in the Conserving the Park Scheme.
European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism (EFNCP)	With the development of a new subsidy payment structure due to be launched in 2025, there is an absence of information on how Common land will be included within the Sustainable Farming Scheme. The EFNCP would like to trial 'Payment for Outcomes' scheme on Welsh common lands. The Authority has

	facilitated meetings with Preseli, Carningli and Carn Llidi Graiziers with a view of funding a trial before the SFS Scheme begins in 2025.
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2.2 Marine Partnerships

Pembrokeshire Marine Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Cardigan Bay SAC and Carmarthen Bay and Estuaries European Marine Sites Relevant Authorities Groups	<p>The Authority continues to be represented on and contribute to funding Relevant Authority Groups for Pembrokeshire Marine SAC, Cardigan Bay SAC and Carmarthen Bay and Estuaries European Marine Sites.</p> <p><u><i>Pembrokeshire Marine SAC</i></u> New Pembrokeshire Marine website now live (https://www.pembrokeshiremarinesac.org.uk/). The work was commissioned and delivered by the SAC Officer and funded by PCNPA.</p> <p>The Port of Milford Haven commissioned a report on removing derelict vessels from the Waterway</p> <p>The SAC Officer made a submission on blue carbon to the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee which met on the 9th December 2021.</p> <p>Final report of "SWEPT 2" (Surveying the Welsh Environment for Pollution Threats - Pembrokeshire Open Coast Project 2020) was received from the SAC Officer in March 2022. This was funded by Addressing Key Pressures on Biodiversity Welsh Government funding 20/21, administered by PCNPA. Surveys (and water sample testing) were conducted in October 2020 by PCNPA Rangers, the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC Officer, and some volunteers. This work followed on from the SWEPT (Surveying the Waterway Environment for Pollution Threats) volunteer project 2018-19 which won the Park Protector Award 2019 for its contribution to national parks and its use of citizen science and successful awareness raising to link land and sea use. Survey results showed that polluting levels of nitrate were found at 51 (63%) of the 81 locations visited and tested, and polluting levels of phosphate were found at 8 locations (10%). From local knowledge and observations, agricultural run-off was considered to be the likely primary cause of the pollution recorded during the survey.</p> <p>The Pembrokeshire Marine SAC Officer was successful in a tender submission to act as Pembrokeshire coordinator for marine work under for the <i>Natur Am Byth!</i> project. This is for a concurrent 17-month post to work on the development</p>
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	<p>phase of the project. It would contribute to improving SAC feature condition and it significantly boost finances enabling comfortable maintenance of the Pembs Marine SAC Officer post into 2023. The first phase has involved workshops, document review, fieldwork, lots of engagement planning and events.</p>
Marine Protected Area Management Steering Group	<p>The Authority represents Pembrokeshire Coast and Snowdonia National Parks on the Welsh Government Marine Protected Area (MPA) Management Steering Group, contributing to appraisal of funding bids to implement the Welsh MPA action plan. The NPA is also represented on the Wales Marine Action and Advisory Group (which brings together a range of interested parties to engage on the delivery of marine and fisheries divisional priorities and wider marine and fisheries work, and is now known as the Wales Coasts and Seas Partnership), and on the Marine Planning Decision Makers Group (which helps public authorities understand and implement the Welsh National Marine Plan, adopted in 2019).</p>
Natural Resources Wales	<p>NRW is taking forward a number of projects over the next three years that will benefit the European Marine Sites relevant to the National Park. Project themes include invasive species, bait collection management and derelict vessels.</p>
Cleddau Nutrient Management Board	<p>The first meeting of the Cleddau Nutrient Management Board meeting was held in March (Pembrokeshire County Council lead). The Board's role is to identify and deliver a Nutrient Management Plan, which will assign actions to Board members so as to achieve NRW conservation targets. The boards will be supported by input from a technical group and a stakeholder group to help inform their decisions. The role of Nutrient Management Board Programme Manager (to be hosted by Carmarthenshire County Council) was advertised in August.</p>
Seagrass Ocean Rescue	<p>Seagrass Ocean Rescue is a joint venture between Sky Ocean Rescue, WWF and Swansea University and funded the Dale project - the first proper seagrass restoration project in the UK. Assistance on stakeholder planning and engagement was commissioned from the Pembrokeshire</p>

	<p>Coastal Forum and the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC Officer. Intensive local community liaison began in April 2019 and continued throughout the year to seek to secure community support for a trial planting project. Stakeholder liaison also helped to support the official licensing process. By the end of 2020 many mature seagrass plants were growing. Further seed planting took place in Autumn 2020 to complete the 2-hectare restoration trial. Aside from addressing the practicalities of planting, the restoration trial also prompted policy discussions regarding the status of restored seagrass and culminated in an addendum to the SAC management scheme to satisfy and reassure concerns about future management from local interests. Stakeholder liaison continues via the Dale Seagrass Stakeholder Group to discuss future management and monitoring. The Pembrokeshire Marine SAC Officer represents the Relevant Authorities Group on this group.</p> <p>Seagrass is included within the <i>Natur am Byth!</i> project which is allowing the Marine SAC Officer paid time to continue working on the Dale restoration trial. The three visitor moorings at Dale are proving very popular. A donation website is up and running for the visitor moorings with daily monitoring of use of the moorings. The Marine SAC Officer has also worked to secure maintenance of Longoar Bay seagrass buoys.</p> <p>A seagrass report by a marine ecology researcher for the Pembrokeshire Marine Special Area of Conservation Relevant Authorities group was received in May 2022. This was enabled by the Marine SAC Officer Sue Burton's joint working with Project Seagrass, and it provides a useful progression from the Milford Haven Waterway Environmental Surveillance Group's seagrass report in 2017. Of particular note is the finding that although there is a continued increase in seagrass meadow extent at Littlewick, there have been a decline in density and a wasting disease is present; the former, at least, may be attributable to phosphate and nitrate loading.</p>
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3. Monitoring and Research

3.1 Adder radio tracking

3.1.1 The adder is widespread on the Pembrokeshire coastal footpath mainly in areas of maritime heath and the less intensively grazed and managed headlands. Further inland across Pembrokeshire the species has a much more scattered and localised distribution. From current information the coast of Pembrokeshire provides a stronghold for adders which are in rapid decline in other areas of Wales and England.

3.1.2 However there is concern that many of our Pembrokeshire populations appear heavily reliant on a limited ribbon of coastal habitat with variable degrees of connectivity with other inland areas of habitat. Therefore, the study set out to increase our knowledge of the use of the coastal belt by adders.

3.1.3 A total of seven snakes (including two female) from the population, were tagged as they emerged in the spring from their winter hibernation. Teams of staff and volunteers then tracked the snakes every 2 to 3 days from the date the tags were attached in April to June when the tags were shed long with the adder skins.

3.1.4 The study confirmed the sedentary nature of females, both of whom spent the entire study within a relatively small area which contrasted with the males who were wide ranging with two individuals ranging over 1km.

3.1.5 The work clearly shows the importance of the coastal heaths as a suitable habitat which was not unexpected but also highlighted the importance of the Pembrokeshire hedge banks, double fenced lines of scrub as well as bracken, gorse and bramble scrub as being of critical importance for adders. Hedge banks, in particular, were important for connectivity allowing one male snake to move over 1km into an intensive dairy farm.



3.1.6 The work will now be used to produce guidance for coastal managers as part of the Dawnsio ar y Dibyn Project.

3.2 Marsh Fritillary Habitat Condition Mapping

Our work last year in mapping a strategic conservation landscape for Marsh Fritillary highlighted a major gap in our knowledge of habitat availability and condition within the Puncheston meta population.

This year we commissioned a habitat suitability survey which surveyed over 700 hectares. Of this 167 hectares habitat across the landscape was categorised as potentially suitable. This breaks down as 71.5ha of suitable and 5.45ha of Good Condition habitat and around 90 hectares with potential but in need of restoration.

This information is being used by a newly formed partnership group chaired by PCNPA and supported by Butterfly Conservation, PCC and NRW to facilitate a more strategic and coordinated approach to this species.

4.Agriculture & Conservation Policy

4.1 In July of this year the Outline Proposals for the Sustainable Farming scheme was published. It has three distinct layers, each supporting the farmer to achieve SLM outcomes, rewarding farmers who choose to do more. The first, a Universal layer of actions applicable to all farmers. The second and third are Optional and Collaborative layers which involve more complex, targeted actions or actions which need to be delivered collectively.

4.2 Since the publishing of the Outline Proposal, Wales has entered a period of Co-Design which will come to an end on the 21st of November. The Co-design comes in the form of a survey created to better understand how the actions and processes indicated in the outline proposals for the Sustainable Farming Scheme will work for farmers and their farm, and what type of support may be needed.

4.3 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:

- 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.