

JOINT REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PARK DIRECTION AND HEAD OF PARK DELIVERY

SUBJECT: LAND MANAGEMENT OUTCOMES ACHIEVED WITH LANDOWNERS IN THE NATIONAL PARK

Purpose of this report

1. This report considers what outcomes are being achieved for this National Park through our work with landowners in the National Park. There are other ways in which this Authority engages with landowners, for example planning, but this report covers the following areas of the Authority's work:
 - Conservation of land
 - National Park Authority grant schemes
 - advice and support
 - Practical on site work
 - Pembrokeshire Wildfire Group
 - Pembrokeshire Grazing Animals Network
 - Recreation Management
 - Rights of Way
 - Coast Path
 - Access Land
 - Beach Access
 - Access Agreements
 - Ranger contact with landowners

Background

2. National Park purposes can be achieved only through sympathetic forms of land management which, in turn, are closely aligned to land ownership. Apart from the ownership of individual houses, gardens and industrial and commercial premises (which are not discussed here) private ownership, public ownership and ownership by voluntary conservation bodies are the most extensive owners. For the Edwards Review in 1990 the following figures were included for this National Park (Private 87%, Ministry of Defence 5%, National Trust 4%). In addition, common land extends over all these forms of ownership.
3. A number of mechanisms are used by this Authority to promote better conservation and access.

Land Management – the Toolkit approach (please see Appendix 1)

4. This means that, depending on the site circumstances, solutions can be tailored and targeted:
 - Grant advice and assistance
 - Pembrokeshire Grazing Animals Network
 - Pembrokeshire Wildfire Group
 - Capital works and site infrastructure
 - Management agreements
 - Practical assistance
 - Invasive Non Native Species Control
5. As part of our land management programme conservation work is carried out on over one hundred sites, a total of approximately 3,981 hectares¹ (6.5% of the National Park) aimed at benefitting priority habitats and species within Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. This is achieved through the management of the National Park Authority's owned estate and also through working in partnership with private landowners through our 'Conserving the Park Scheme'.
6. 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 on non-native invasive species through the 'Stitch in Time project' and catchment management through the Castlemartin Nature Fund Project.
7. **Pembrokeshire Wildfire Group:** Burning heather and grass is a traditional and ancient land management practice. It is an important part of maintaining palatable and accessible vegetation for grazing animals, sustains a diversity of plants which benefits nature and prevents large scale uncontrolled wildfires. Park Authority staff has had an involvement on the following sites over the 2014/15 burning season which ended on the 31st March:
 - Banc Du/ Waun Mawn
 - Bedd yr Afanc
 - Craig Rhos y Felin
 - Rhos Miriannog
 - Foel Drygarn
 - Talfynydd/Cors Tewgyl
 - Pantmaenog Boundary
 - Carn Ingli

¹ Break down:

- Approximately 529 hectares is managed by formal agreement with private land owners (currently 34) under sections 39 or 41 of the [Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981](#).
- Approximately 3,032 hectares is comprised of land where there is no formal agreement with landowners and the services provided range from practical support onsite to advice on e.g. grazing, to the setting up of steering groups to help direct the conservation management strategy for large areas such as Preseli and Castell Blythe Common. At present this figure represents our best estimate as to the total area where the National Park Authority provides informal support for conservation management, the extent of the National Park Authority's influence is likely to be greater.
- At present 420 hectares of land owned by the National Park Authority is under sympathetic management.

- Gelli Deg
 - Parc Mawr/Mynydd Dinas
 - Mynydd Melyn/Trellwyn
 - Castleblythe Common
 - Morvil Farm
 - Strumble Head
 - Hill Farm Manorbier
8. The group offers assistance to farmers and landowners:
- Information on the legal requirements of controlled burning
 - Advice in planning a controlled burn
 - Assistance with the preparation of a controlled burn
 - Practical assistance with site preparation and with the burn on the day.
9. **Invasive Non Native Species Control:** The Authority has for some years sought to tackle alien invasive species which pose one of the greatest threats to biodiversity worldwide because they can alter the relationships in ecosystems and drive native species to extinction. Areas where treatment has taken place recently include:
- Rhododendron – Rosebush land above the reservoir (significant commitment over an extended period)
 - Japanese Knotweed – Gwaun Valley various sites
 - Winter heliotrope – Freshwater East
 - Japanese Knotweed – Manorbier Church, Penally Court Farm & Bentlass.
 - Rhododendron, Stena Land, Fishguard Harbour
 - Cemaes Head – Himalayan Balsam – assisting a local group
10. Most recently the Authority has also drawn down funding from the Sustainable Development Fund for an Invasive Non-Native Species Co-ordinator. The focus of the work will be with landowners in the Gwaun Valley and results and outcomes should be available to Members when the project ends in 15 to 18 months' time. The Co-ordinator is about to make contact with landowners in the Valley at the beginning of June 2015 to instigate work for clearance with volunteers in some instances.
11. **Community scale land management:** is carried out by the Rangers, supported by our volunteer workforce. For example, restoration or management of cultural, heritage or landscape features such as gate jambs, hedgebanks, ponds or kilns. The team support schools and communities to improve their grounds and open spaces for wildlife, recreation and education. The recent Heritage Orchard Project funded by Natural Resources Wales in 2014 provided practical help, advice and training to orchard owners and has produced a resource of fruit trees for future community planting schemes.
12. **Access Land, Coast Path, Public Rights of Way and Access Agreements:** The National Park Authority manages the Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail (300km) and an extensive network of 782km of public rights of way (PROW). There are also 5712 ha of designated Access Land in the National

Park. In addition there is a range of permissive access opportunities both on a formal and informal basis whereby landowners permit some form of access over their land for the long term. This represents an additional 90km of routes.

13. Access Land and public rights of way evolved to provide access over privately owned land. The management of Public Rights of Way, including the Coast Path, by necessity therefore relies on working with a great many individual landowners. In the National Park most Public Rights of Way cross land in some form of agriculture or forestry where various land uses have to coexist with access and recreation. Park Authority staff are therefore in constant engagement, of some form or other, with landowners, occupiers and farmers as part of their activities in the maintenance and improvement of Public Rights of Way.
14. The Coast Path alone affects 180 separate landholdings and while the National Trust and Ministry of Defence are major landowners, most other landholdings are in some form of private ownership. A good working relationship with landowners is therefore key to the efficient management of Public Rights of Way, whether it is arranging for access over land to undertake path cutting or store equipment and materials; agreeing improvements such as the replacement of stiles with gates to provide ease of access or swiftly realigning the Coast Path following a landslip. Permissive access often provides the missing links to form circuit walks and creates much needed opportunities for cycling and horse riding in the countryside. The popular multi-user access opportunities created at Pantmaenog forestry and Toch Wood come with their respective landowners' consent.
15. Formal liaison with landowners regarding countryside access takes the form of the **Pembrokeshire Local Access Forum**. This is a statutory body established in 2002, jointly administered with the County Council. Landowners and farming interests make up half the membership.
16. The whole structure of the Delivery Team Warden and Ranger service is arranged into three area teams to ensure that work carried out by Delivery staff on the ground takes full account of the needs of local communities and landowners. Managing sites and the path network with long serving Warden staff allows a build-up of trust and confidence in the quality of work done and in the way the work is done, (for example in crossing farmed land to access the Coast Path). While the Authority may in theory have statutory powers of entry to maintain paths, it is in practice much more effective to build on good relationships and a good reputation.
17. We have three Warden Teams who work largely to priorities set by the Park Direction Team through the commissioning process. The teams divide their time between different priority areas of work. Appendix 2 provides a ready reckoner on the allocation of Warden resources in an average year but this allocation may vary significantly as new priorities arise – for example storm response work or the support for the Origins project at Castell Henllys last year. This calculation is helpful in understanding what resources the Authority is using to deliver Park purposes on the ground in times of budget change.

18. The Ranger Team provides advice and support for landowners to deal with issues arising from recreational activity, such as sledging on the hills, management of dogs, fly-tipping and litter. The team also provides advice and training to recreational user groups such as the Pembrokeshire Outdoor Charter Group members; while this is mainly targeted at environmental good practice, there is also an emphasis on working with landowners and respecting rights of others on the land while carrying out their activities.
19. Staffing overall involves contributions from the three area teams each with a Warden Manager. There are 5 Wardens in the South and West, with 9 in the north as there are more inland paths, woodland and conservation sites. There are Rangers in 4 areas; 1.5 in the north, 1 in each of the north-west, south-west and south areas plus a Castlemartin ranger based with the Ministry of Defence. All of these would be in very regular contact with landowners to deal with permissions to cross land, agreement to make changes to paths, carry out conservation tasks, dealing with neighbours of National Park Authority properties about fencing etc.
20. In Park Direction six members of staff (two part time) are directly involved usually on a day to day basis with this work. The Coast Path Officer post, and Invasive Species Co-ordinator post (a Sustainable Development Fund post) have also been recently added to the team.

RECOMMENDATION:

Members are requested to RECEIVE and COMMENT on the Report.

(For further information contact Martina Dunne or Charles Mathieson on extensions 4820 or 4848 respectively)

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority



Conservation Land Management Report 2014-2015



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Introduction

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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 on non-native invasive species through the 'Stitch in Time project' and catchment management through the Castlemartin Nature Fund Project.
3. This report details the work and outcomes for the financial year 2014-15.

¹ Break down:

- Approximately 529 hectares is managed by formal agreement with private land owners under sections 39 or 41 of the [Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981](#).
- Approximately 3,032 hectares is comprised of land where there is no formal agreement with landowners and the services provided range from practical support onsite to advice on e.g. grazing, to the setting up of steering groups to help direct the conservation management strategy for large areas such as Preseli and Castell Blythe Common. At present this figure represents our best estimate as to the total area where the National Park Authority provides informal support for conservation management, the extent of the National Park Authority's influence is likely to be greater.
- At present 420 hectares of land owned by the National Park Authority is under sympathetic management.

Land Management Monitoring Results

4. The Authority'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 Delivery team, including volunteers. Typical activities include:
 - a) Ecological Survey and monitoring.
 - b) Vegetation management through burning and cutting.
 - c) Facilitation of conservation grazing.
 - d) Management agreements with landowners.
 - e) Capital projects associated with land management such as fencing gates and water supply.
 - f) Woodland management.
 - g) Advice on conservation management and grant schemes including agri-environment schemes and burning plans.



Abandonment of traditional vegetation management such as cutting and grazing is one of the biggest threats to the diversity of our native flora.

How do we monitor our success?

5. All conservation sites in the active work programme are subject to one formal annual audit visit which is written up and recorded on file. In addition many sites receive informal management checks at various critical points throughout the year. This might include checking that grazing animals have arrived or left at the specified time or that a capital item such as scrub control, or installation of a water trough has taken place.

Method

6. The 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

7. 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 JNCC (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 skylarks and marsh fritillary butterflies 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.
8. Relying entirely on 7(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.



© Getmapping (2013).

Detail from marsh fritillary larval web monitoring at Allt y Gog which was carried out in partnership with a local recorder. This data is shared with the local group and contributes to the annual Marsh Fritillary monitoring report for the county.

9. Therefore we combine the information provided by both these elements with the professional judgement of experienced staff to assign the site to one of three categories for reporting purposes. Adding a qualitative professional judgement element has been used very successfully in monitoring nature conservation schemes for example in a regional agri-environment scheme in the Burren in Western Ireland and this method formed part of Countryside Council for Wales (now Natural Resources Wales) rapid review of Sites of Special Scientific Interest in 2006.



Mrs Lye accompanying NPA staff on the monitoring visit to her Marsh Fritillary Meadow.

Explanation of Monitoring Categories

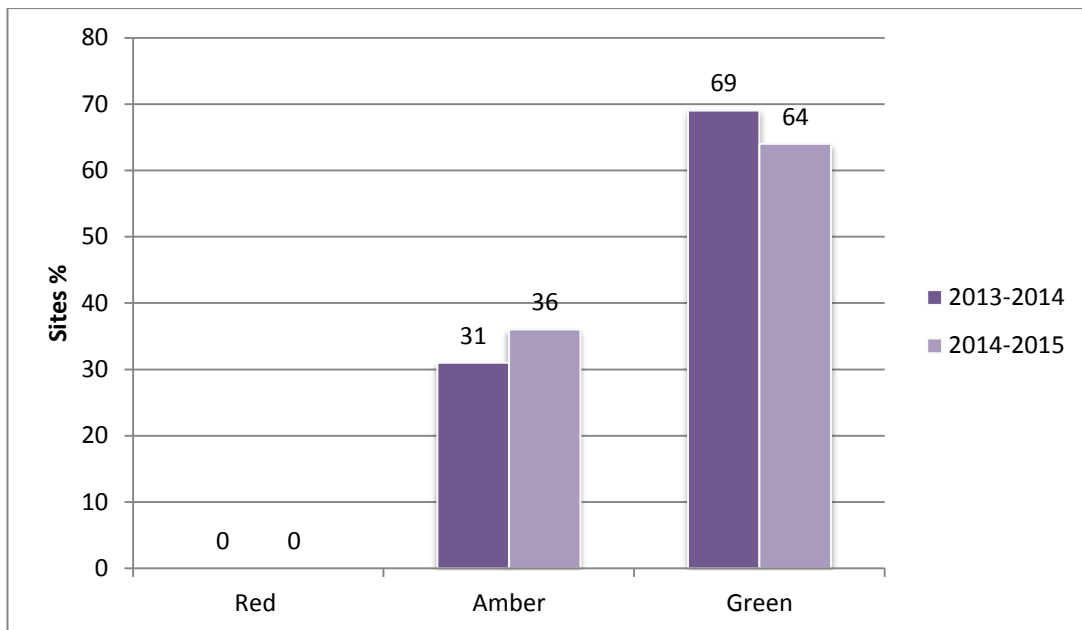
RED	AMBER	GREEN
<p>A site is judged to be Red if:</p> <p>A serious or repeated breach of management plan has taken place.</p> <p>Damaging activities have taken place or features of interest destroyed/partially destroyed.</p>	<p>A site is judged to be Amber if:</p> <p>Management is considered compliant and effective but the conservation value of the site will take time to improve.</p> <p>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>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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10. Some of the detail of these responses are only relevant to the 'Conserving the Park Scheme', but for Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority land the broad principles of the response are the same.

Monitoring Results

11. During the monitoring period of 2014-15; 92 sites on the conservation work programme were subject to formal monitoring visit and assessment. These sites cover a total area of 1160 hectares, and 740 hectares of these are managed in partnership with private landowners.
12. The graph below shows the monitoring results for 2014-15. Results from 2013-14 are included for comparative purposes.
13. No sites were considered to be in Red condition. The proportion of Green and Amber sites has changed by a very small percentage. This is not considered to be a significant change.



14. No sites within the scheme have regressed during 2014-15 and the small differences illustrated above can be explained by scheme turnover, with sites leaving and being added to the scheme. In a successful scheme you would expect to see a recurring see-saw between Amber and Green as new sites recruited to the scheme will almost always be classed as Amber.
15. To help with interpretation of results some explanation is necessary on why we cannot expect to see a simple clear cut progression of sites from Amber to Green. Firstly the transition from Amber to Green is not a one way trajectory, the management of sites in Green condition can be a case of 'running to stand still' and changes of owner circumstances, land sale and other factors may cause a site to slip back to Amber.
16. In addition these monitoring results are not cumulative, so when sites are no longer actively receiving support through the scheme we do not report on them, although we may informally keep up with a sites progress through our wider biodiversity networks and local knowledge.



Woodlands can take decades to respond to positive conservation management

17. The speed with which a site would transition from Amber to Green is dependent on habitat type and the starting point. Woodland habitats can take in excess of 50 years of positive management to achieve green status because they are slow to change. Restoring a heathland or creating a new species-rich grassland can take in excess of 10 years, whereas a site with excellent underlying quality which has simply being neglected for a few years may reach target condition very quickly with appropriate management.

External Reporting

18. The outcomes of the our land management programme are reported to the Wales Biodiversity Partnership through the Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS)² which is widely accessible to the general public, policymakers and decision makers alike.



Ponies winter grazing sand dunes.

² [Biodiversity Action Reporting System \(BARS\)](#)

Conserving the Park

Background

19. '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, our Corporate Improvement Plan and Pembrokeshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan targets.
20. 'Conserving the Park' evolved from the highly successful 'Conserving the Coastal Slopes' Project which was the practical answer to Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority's Chough 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 Park and is as relevant today, as in 2002.

Why is it needed?

21. 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
22. 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.



23. 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?

24. 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 Natural Resources Wales.
25. 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 are taken from the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) for Pembrokeshire which provides action plans for European Annex 1 and Annex 2 and UK Biodiversity Action Plan habitats and species in Pembrokeshire, as well as those of local concern.
26. The Local Biodiversity Action Plan partnership comprises a wider range of statutory and non-governmental organisations, voluntary organisations and individuals. The Local Biodiversity Action Plan is regularly updated and reviewed by a core steering group of key partners including, Natural Resources Wales, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, Pembrokeshire County Council and the Wildlife Trusts 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 [here](#).

Help ar gyfer bywyd gwyllt ar eich tir **Help for wildlife on your land**

Os ydych chi berchen ar unrhyw dir ac am weld bywyd gwyllt yn fflur yno, yna fe allwch chi helpu gyda'n nod o atgyfainio rhydwylt a gordonau sy'n hybu bywyd gwyllt a fawr y Parc Cenedlaethol. Yn gyfnewid am hyn, fe allwn ni ddarparu:

- Cyngor
- Gwybodaeth a grantiau a mathau eraill o gymorth
- Help ymarferol rhad ac am ddim gyda staff ac offer arbennigol
- Help gyda gwaith cyflaf fel ffensiô gwltau cyllwsi dŵr
- Tâlodau am reoli trwy gynddaru rhododdi
- Help i gael hyd i'r stoc parhau a'i peiriauwrth iawn
- Cefnogaeth barhau hyd yn oed pan fydd y rheolwr mewn lle

Am fwy o wybodaeth, ffonwch 0845 345 7275 neu a-lloswch julia@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk

Key habitats:

- Grasslands
- Heathlands
- Coastal shapans
- Scrub
- Woodlands
- Woodland edges

Cynffwrdd allweddol:

- Glaswelltiroedd
- Rhestriroedd
- Gardiroedd
- Ffyrdd
- Cefnirdd
- Gwyltiroedd
- Tynllan coediroedd

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

Process

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



Identify the ideal management regime.



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



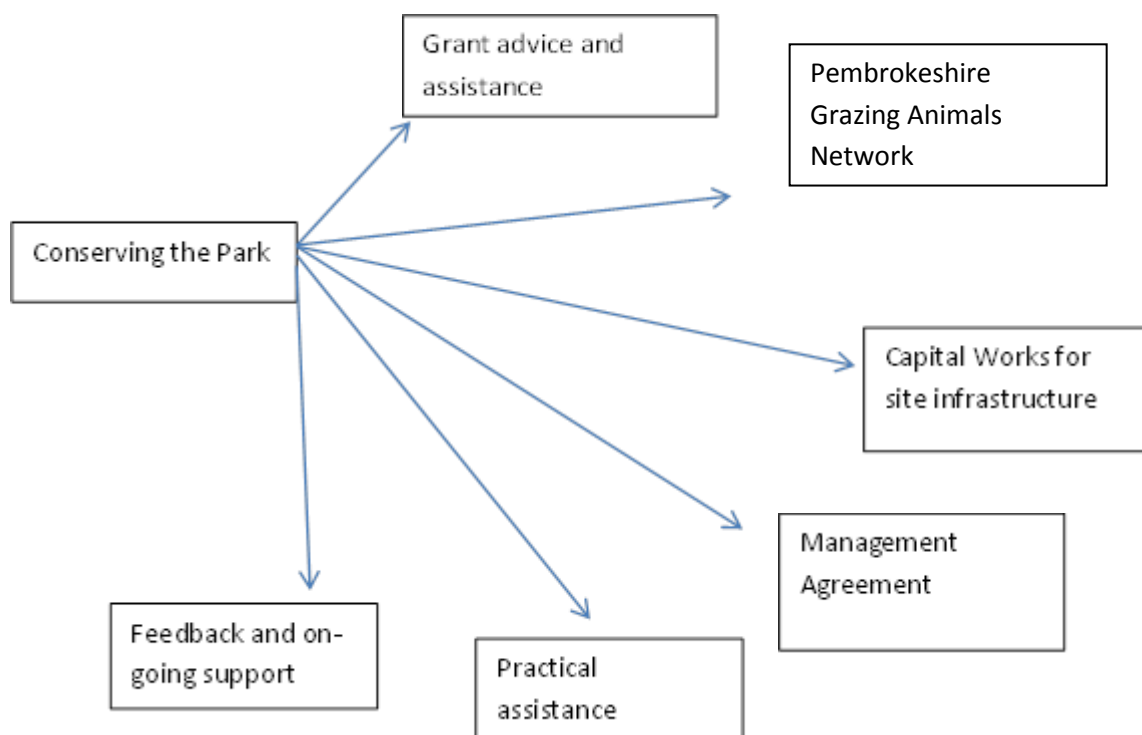
Barriers to management removed by selecting items from the toolkit (below).



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

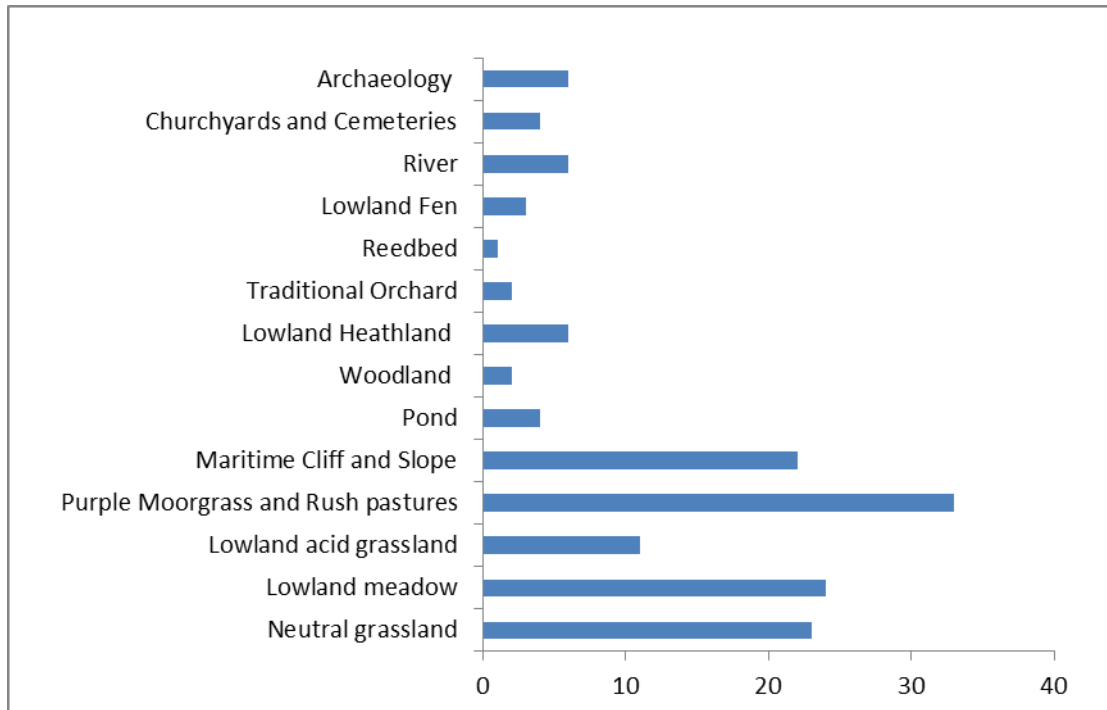
The Toolkit approach

28. 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.



Priority habitats supported

29. The graph below shows the number of active sites by priority habitat type within the scheme in 2014-15. Note that some sites support more than one priority habitat type.



Grasslands under threat

30. The spread of habitat types demonstrates the niche quality of the scheme and our ability to respond to current threats. The majority of our agreements support 'unimproved' species-rich dry or marshy grassland of varying types. Lowland grassland has undergone a huge decline in the UK as whole, with estimates of over 97% losses since the 1940's. Although we do not have accurate data for local losses, as a county supporting intensive pastoral agriculture it is likely we have suffered similar losses.
31. Unlike some of our other priority habitats such as lowland heathland, the majority of our wildlife rich grassland resource exists **outside** of designated sites and receives little or no protection from agricultural improvement or degradation through neglect and abandonment of traditional management practices. Our grassland resource is seriously under threat with limited support on offer to manage grasslands appropriately and key species such as skylarks and pollinators are suffering as a result. Hence the scheme has evolved to fill this gap.



Traditional meadow management at Chapel Fields

Conserving our Coast

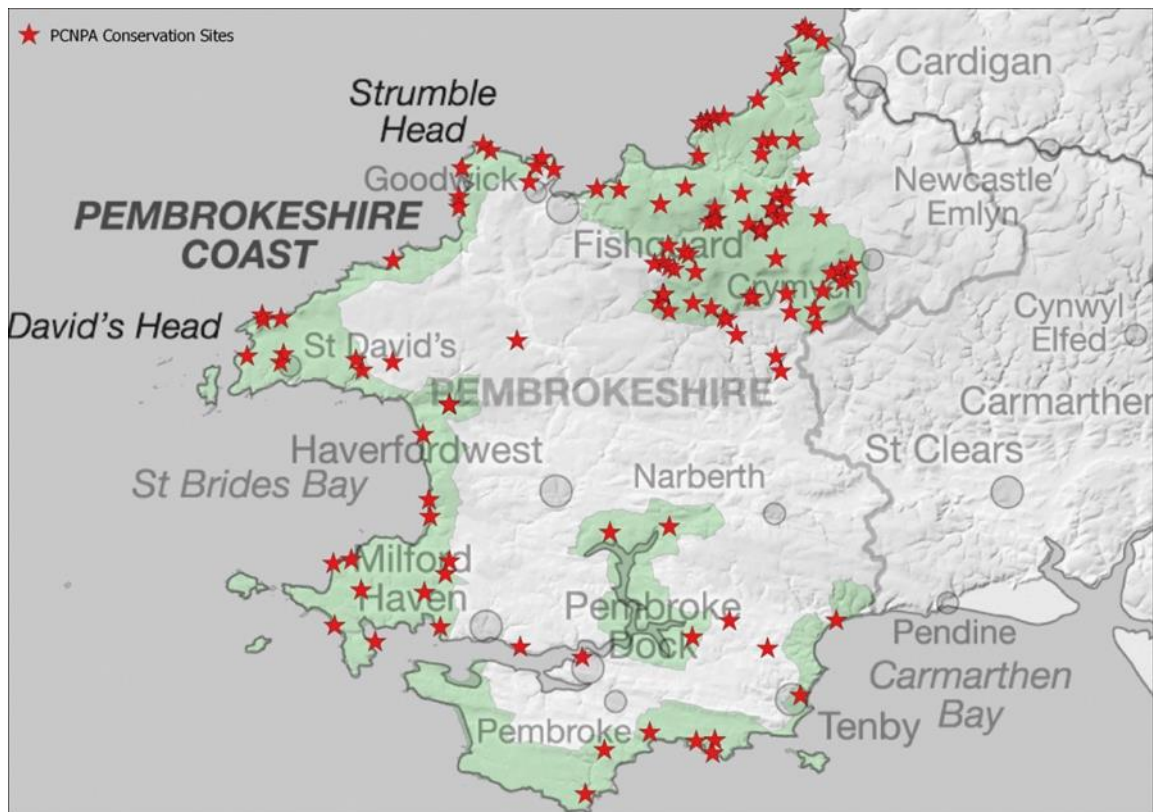
32. As you might expect for a coastal National Park we have a high number of agreements for Maritime cliff and slope. Some of these agreements are areas of land we are still supporting from the Conserving the Coastal Slopes project. While most capital items were addressed through the original project, some sites required on-going support to fully maximise their potential, for example continued help with burning management and the provision of animals through the grazing network. As well as being good for wildlife, the management of coastal slopes provides a rich and varied wildlife experience along the National Trail.



Spring comes to Strumble.

Conserving the Park Case Studies

33. Below we present a series of Case Studies to give a greater understanding of how the scheme works and also how the scheme is delivering when looked at in terms of newer political priorities such as ecosystem services and landscape scale management.



Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2015.

This map shows the distribution of our conservation sites around the National Park.

Case Study: Hill Farm, Manorbier

Reversing the decline

34. Ten hectares of coastal slope were brought back into management after many years of neglect. As part of the original Conserving the Coastal Slopes Scheme, the landowner received capital funding for fencing, practical assistance with vegetation management and an annual management agreement payment to assist with the costs of extra shepherding associated with introducing grazing to the coastal slope.

Transition to agri-environment

35. Hill Farm is now in the national agri-environment scheme which picks up the capital works and area payments for grazing management. In addition, the landowners are now carrying out haymeadow management in fields adjacent to the coastal strip as part of their agri-environment agreement.



Anthills exposed by grazing on the coastal slopes at Hill Farm. These provide 'training' prey items for young chough when they first fledge.

Adding value

36. Although coastal management options exist within the agri-environment scheme there were two specific barriers to taking up these options at Hill Farm.
37. Lack of manpower to carry out the on-going vegetation management required and a lack of suitable heavy stock to manage the vegetation (Hill Farm has only sheep). The Conserving the Park Scheme was able to step in and provide practical help with both of these aspects, un-locking the coastal slope management options within Glastir, adding value to the scheme whilst avoiding duplication.
38. Hill Farm lies on a popular short coastal circular walk easily accessible from Manorbier. The spring coastal flowers here are outstanding, with sea campion, cushions of sea thrift, spring squill and wild thyme to name but a few. Choughs and Skylarks are a regular sight.

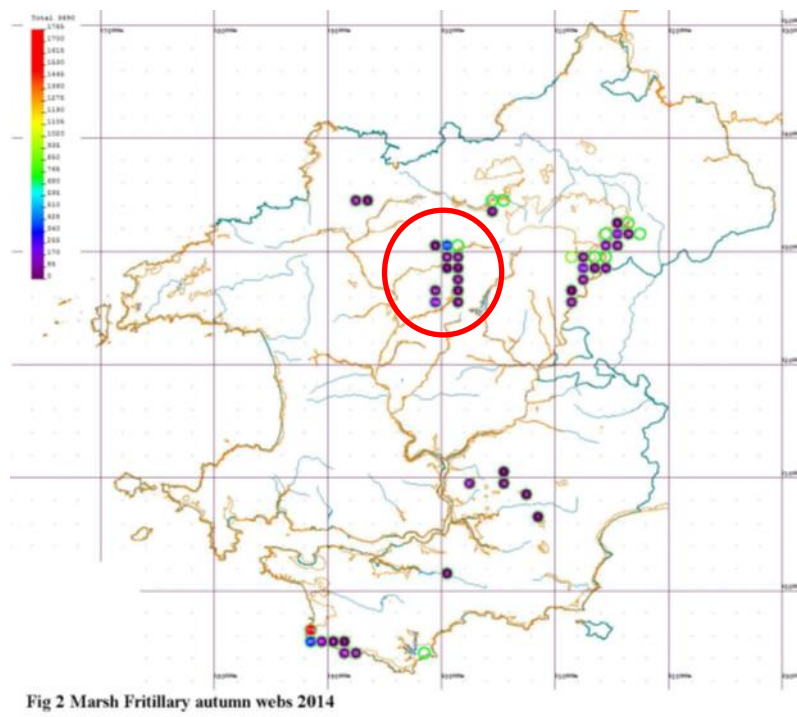


Practical assistance is provided in the skilled art.

Assistance in 2014/2015: Pembrokeshire Grazing Animals Network, Practical Assistance

Case Study: Landscape Scale Management for Marsh Fritillary Butterfly & Species-rich grassland

39. At first glance our conservation sites may appear scattered. When viewed in context it becomes clear that they contribute to a bigger picture. The map below is an excerpt from the 2014 report on Marsh Fritillary in Pembrokeshire by Stephen Coker a volunteer recorder. Monitoring is carried out and compiled annually by volunteers and provides the most up to date information we have on the status of this rare butterfly in the county.



A butterfly in decline

40. Marsh Fritillary has declined significantly since UK monitoring records began and South and South West Wales remains a stronghold. This is still a butterfly very much under threat of extinction from our county.

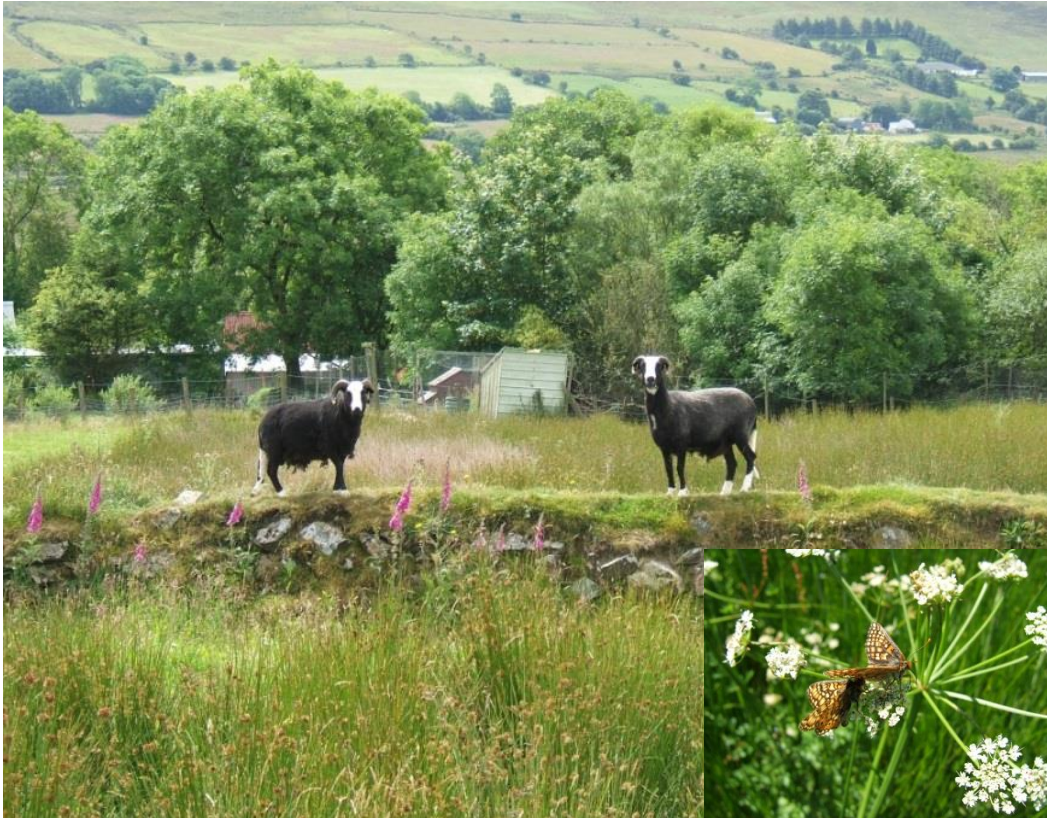


Connected networks

41. Although we have European sites designated for this species, they are insufficient to safeguard its future. The Marsh Fritillary is struggling to survive due to neglect and loss of ancillary sites in the wider countryside.
42. This is because the butterfly has a complex population dynamics, known as a 'meta-population' structure. A single population will use a cluster of sites, with patterns of colonisation, extinction and re-colonisation. This aids genetic exchange and allows them to evade parasite build-up.

Adding value

43. The red circle on the diagram below paragraph 39 shows the Mynachlogddu 'population' where a number of our conservation sites support conservation work for Marsh Fritillary around designated sites. Management work within the Special Areas of Conservation is funded through Natural Resources Wales management agreements, and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority works with Natural Resources Wales to secure management on critical sites outside of the designated area through providing advice and access to assistance with management. Thus we are adding value to the work of Natural Resources Wales and filling gaps in the support outside of designated area. Importantly, we are putting the data gathered by volunteers to best use, by using it to inform our conservation strategy.

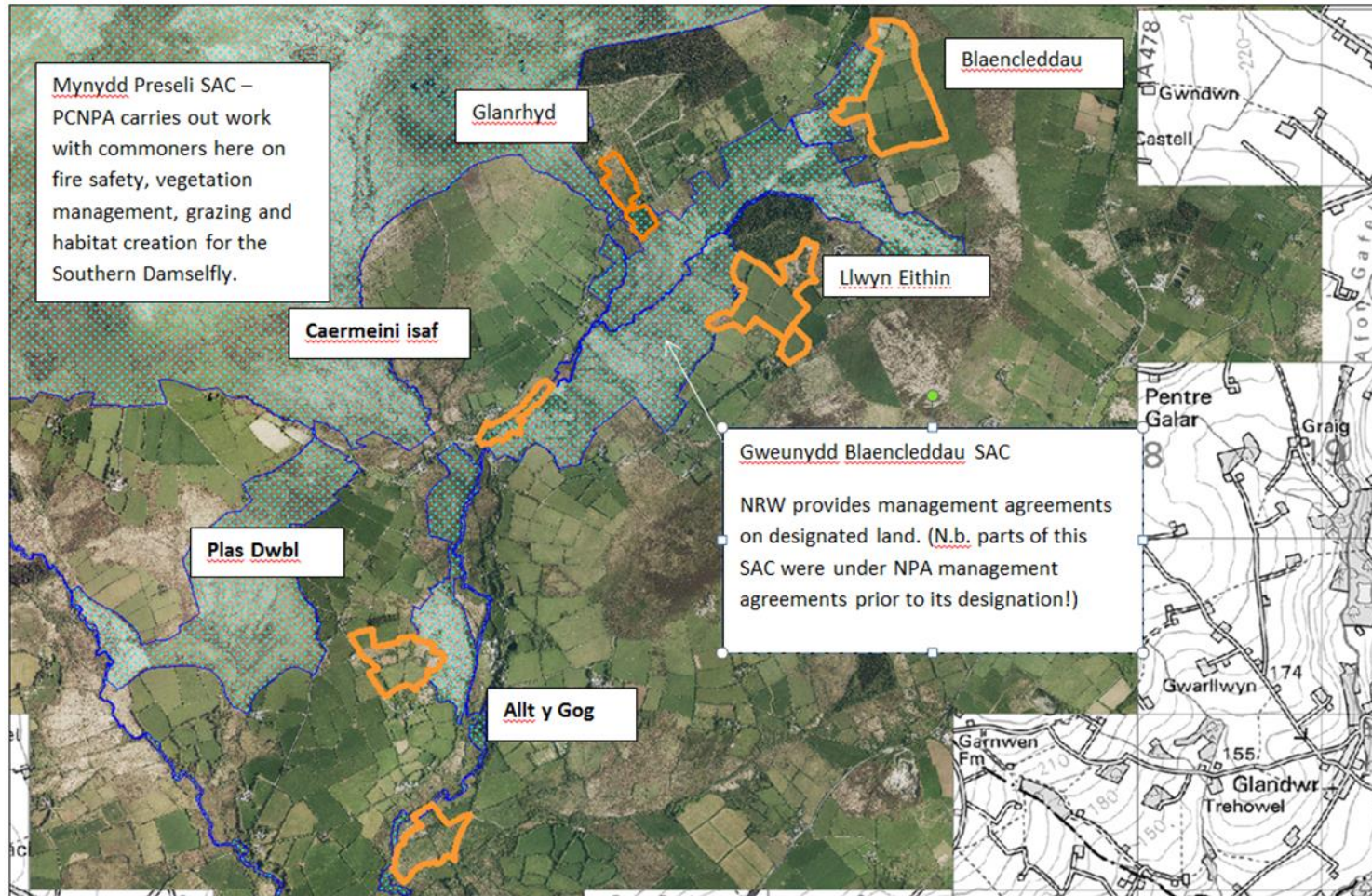


Balwen sheep graze the Marsh Fritillary Meadow at Glanrhyd.



Mr Kirby of Blaencleddau Farm in his haymeadows. The first orchid appeared in the new haymeadows in 2014.

Network of sites near Mynachlogddu



Name	Description	Support Received from our 'Toolkit'					
		Advice & Grant Assistance	Grazing animals	Practical Assistance	Management Agreement	Capital Grant	On-going support and feedback
Allt y Gog	57 marsh fritillary webs were recorded here in 2014 making this a significant local site. The owner receives a management agreement payment for grazing and scrub control from PCNPA. Additional stock was needed to help get the site into good condition and these were sourced through the grazing animals network.		Y		Y		Y
Plas Dwbl	100 acre college with a working farm and craft workshops offering training for young people with learning disabilities. PCNPA has provided management advice and assistance with fencing in the past to help owners manage the grasslands for marsh fritillary. The site is now in Glastir and PCNPA ecologists continue to help monitor the marsh fritillaries and butterfly orchids to give the owners feedback on management.	Y					Y
Caermeini Isaf	This site is within the SAC and under a management agreement with NRW. Help was requested by NRW to cut tracks through the vegetation to help the grazing regime create ideal conditions for marsh fritillary.			Y			
Glanrhyd	This parcel of land lies between Mynydd Preseli SAC at one end and Gweunydd Blaencleddau SAC at the other, forming an important link/ecological corridor between the two. The owners use their hardy breed Balwen sheep to maintain their habitats in ideal condition. The owners supplement the grazing with some rush management. Adult marsh fritillaries were recorded here in 2014, and the owners will be helping with the survey for larval webs in autumn 2015.	Y			Y	Y	Y
Blaencleddau	This is an exciting and significant (22ha) meadow project with overgrazed fields being allowed to grow on and flower. The first orchid appeared in 2014 as well as a single plant of whorled caraway. A local business collects flower seed from the best meadows for use in meadow creation projects.	Y			Y		Y
Llwyn Eithin	The SSSI/SAC land at Llwyn Eithin is signed up to a NRW agreement; all of the remainder is covered by a PCNPA agreement. The whole farm is thus signed up to high level management for nature conservation whilst still being a viable working cattle farm (with pedigree beef animals). As such it is a fine example/model. The grasslands are outstanding.	Y			Y		Y

Case Study: Working with Business – Stena Ferries

44. The land above Goodwick Harbour, owned by Stena Ferries, is of high landscape and wildlife value and, at over 20 hectares, represents a sizeable area of coastal belt. It includes a range of habitats such as coastal grassland, marshy grassland, streamside, hedgebanks, scrub and patches of young woodland – each supporting its own range of plant and animal species. Businesses such as Stena are not entitled to support through agri-environment.
45. Part of its value lies in the fact that it forms part of, and contributes to, the ‘ecological corridor’ that is the coastal strip which runs the length of the Pembrokeshire coastline and beyond.
46. Species of particular interest include the yellowhammer which is often seen calling from the top of trees and shrubs here. This bird has seen a large decline in numbers UK-wide over recent years, as has the grasshopper warbler which has also been heard at this site. Unusual plants include the pale dog violet and black bog rush. The rare chough has also been seen feeding here.



© Getmapping (2013).

47. To keep these habitats and species in good condition, grazing is absolutely vital. Without it, the land becomes overgrown with bracken and gorse, smothering out the rich variety of plants and all the animal life which depends on them. Large swathes of gorse also present a risk of fire, which is now managed. Residents from Harbour Village noticed the change and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority were able to share these positive comments with Stena: ***‘The horses were put on after swathes of land had been cut to reduce bracken and gorse.***

The following spring was wonderful – bluebells covered the ground where bracken had been before, together with other spring flowers such as red campion and violets. In one particular area, below a little stream, there was a superb display of wild garlic'. J Roberts, Harbour Village.³

The Pembrokeshire 'Dating Agency' for Grazing Animals

48. The Pembrokeshire Grazing Animals Network started in 2002 in response to the need for stock suitable for conservation grazing. Many of our habitats require grazing to maintain their open state and create suitable conditions for key species such as Chough, Skylarks and Marsh Fritillaries. Undergrazing is a key reason for unfavourable condition of habitats across the designated sites network and in the wider countryside.
49. On more intensive farms, land becomes abandoned as modern commercial breeds do not always thrive on the rougher land and in some cases landowners may have no stock at all, so to fill this gap, the network was created with key partners, The National Trust, Natural Resources Wales (then Countryside Council for Wales), The Wildlife Trust and Pembrokeshire County Council, who meet annually to coordinate grazing across the county.
50. The scheme is pretty simple, we match up land that needs grazing with appropriate stock by working with local graziers to ensure habitats get the grazing they need. In 2014/15, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority staff assisted with providing conservation grazing on 41 sites (280 ha of land).
51. This is one of only two Local Grazing Schemes in Wales and the longest running. Many other areas aspire to replicate this model.

³ Assistance in 2014/15: Practical Assistance, Pembrokeshire Grazing Animals Network



No grazing – no flowers! Ponies grazing amongst spring squill on Cemaes Head.

Pembrokeshire Wildfire Group

52. National Park Authority staff continue to play an active role in the activities of the Pembrokeshire Wildfire Group including its chairmanship. The Group is administered by PLANED under the auspices of its Pembrokeshire Sustainable Agriculture Network.
53. Fires have potentially devastating impacts on our countryside, harming our economy, ecology, environment, heritage and rural communities. Yet the damage can be minimised. Through education we can help to reduce outbreaks of wildfires and through practical land management we can minimise the potential damage.
54. The Group's overall aims are to:
 - Contribute to the sustainable management of the Pembrokeshire countryside
 - Promote fire prevention to land managers, local communities and visitors
 - Reduce the scale and impact of wildfires when they do occur
 - Improve links with the local community and the Fire and Rescue Service
 - Build a strong network that encourages collaboration and allows rural communities to take an active role in protecting their environment and economy from the effects of wildfires
 - Become the voice for wildfire issues in Pembrokeshire

55. The Group is able to offer farmers and landowners:
- Information on the legal requirements of controlled burning
 - Advice in planning a controlled burn
 - Assistance with the preparation of burn plans
 - Practical assistance with site preparation
 - Where possible, practical assistance on the day of the burn
56. Burning heather and grass is a traditional and ancient land management practice. It is an important part of maintaining palatable and accessible vegetation for grazing animals, sustains a diversity of plants which benefits nature and controls the volume of vegetation in order to avoid large scale, uncontrolled and dangerous wildfires in the countryside.
57. However, burns need to be planned carefully and done in accordance with the Heather and Grass Burning Code.
58. Activities have included:
- site preparation including fire break cutting
 - awareness events at Crymych, Newport and St. Davids
 - provision of staff and equipment for controlled burn management
59. National Park Authority staff have had an involvement on the following sites over the 2014/15 burning season which ended on the 31st March 2015.

Banc Du/ Waun Mawn
Bedd yr Afanc
Craig Rhos y Felin
Rhos Miriannog
Foel Drygarn
Talfynydd/Cors Tewgyl
Pantmaenog Boundary
Carn Ingli
Gelli Deg
Parc Mawr/Mynydd Dinas
Mynydd Melyn/Trellwyn
Castlebythe Common
Morvil Farm
Strumble Head
Hill Farm Manorbier



Controlled burning at Talfynydd, Mynachlogddu.

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority Owned Sites – Highlights from the year

Pentre Ifan Woodland

- 60. This ancient woodland was under planted with conifers by the Forestry Commission and since acquisition, the National Park Authority is undertaking a restoration project, gradually removing the conifers to release the broadleaved trees and allow woodland ground flora to flourish.
- 61. Around 80 cubic metres of conifer were removed this winter funded by the Better Woodlands for Wales scheme as part of our gradual restoration project at this site. Felled areas were restocked with native species such as birch, hazel and oak with help from volunteers.
- 62. There was a fantastic show of spring flowers this year, including Moschatel (aka Town Hall Clock), Wood sorrel and Opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage.

Allt Kilkiffeth

- 63. Further thinning work took place in this Special Area of Conservation oak woodland, mainly to lighten up the area for the benefit of lichens which are a Site of Special Scientific Interest feature at this site. During the dormouse surveys, our Skills in Action trainee Mark Roch also took some photos of the fabulous rare String of Sausages lichen, a Kilkiffeth speciality which is still thriving on site thanks to our management. Continued removal of non-native tree species took place this winter funded by the Better woodland for Wales scheme.



Minwear Picnic Site

64. A slightly earlier monitoring visit took place this year and added even more species to the 40 or so already recorded here, including Bugle, Wood Anemone and Cuckoo-flower. At only 0.18 ha it is one of our smallest sites but it is incredibly species-rich. Unusually it has elements of woodland spring flowers, wet grassland species, as well as neutral meadow species. Silver-washed Fritillary and Green veined white butterflies are also recorded here.
65. The site's proximity to the car park means this is a fabulous easy access wildflower experience for those who are less mobile.



Strumble Head & St. Davids Airfield Heaths

66. For heathland management the balance of heather, gorse and open grassland is really important in deciding whether a site is in good condition. If sites are not cut/burned and grazed, gorse and purple



Species rich meadow habitat at St Davids Airfield, such a rare sight in the wider countryside.

Freshwater East Local Nature Reserve

68. The area managed through grazing, bracken bruising and scrub management has really come into its own this year and is considered to be in optimal ecological condition. In particular it is a real butterfly hotspot and a survey by volunteer recorder David Redhead of Butterfly Conservation revealed two UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority butterflies here, the Dingy Skipper and the Silver-Studded Blue. The Marbled White Butterfly, scarce in this area was also seen here for the first time this year.



69. Another first for Freshwater East was a record of the Grey Bush Cricket for which the Pembrokeshire population is important in a UK context. As you can see from the photo it is fairly cryptic, luckily we have volunteer experts who kindly spend time on our sites and help us to note these things.



70. The bracken control has helped to make space for a rich variety of flowers, Burnet rose and birds-foot trefoil. This kind of habitat is essential for pollinators and helps support a variety of butterflies and insects.



71. This site is much treasured by locals and well used by visitors to the National Park providing a unique wildlife experience in a tourist hotspot.

Projects

Stitch in Time Project

72. The Stitch in Time Project got underway in the Gwaun Valley this year. This 18 month project, funded by the Sustainable Development Fund is aimed at piloting a catchment based approach to managing non-native invasive species.

73. Three species in particular were highlighted as targets for control by the Pembrokeshire Biodiversity Partnership, Japanese knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and Rhododendron. The early part of the project has focussed on awareness raising, and collating and collecting records to get an idea of the scale of the problem. As the season for control approaches the project will begin to target areas for practical control through working with Natural Resources Wales on designated areas within the North Pembrokeshire Woodlands Special Area of Conservation and also with individual landowners to help them tackle the problem, supported by Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority volunteers.
74. Project Officer Matt Tebbutt started with the Park as a Skills In Action Trainee before landing the project officer job. He is in for a busy summer putting all that training to good use.

Southern Damselfly Project

75. Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority is one of a group of organisations, including the British Dragonfly Society, Natural Resources Wales and the Pembrokeshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership, who have come together to help secure the future of the endangered Southern Damselfly.
76. This Damselfly is a real Preseli speciality and the Pembrokeshire Hills support one of the strongest remaining populations of this species in the United Kingdom and it has already disappeared, or is on the edge of extinction in seven other European countries.

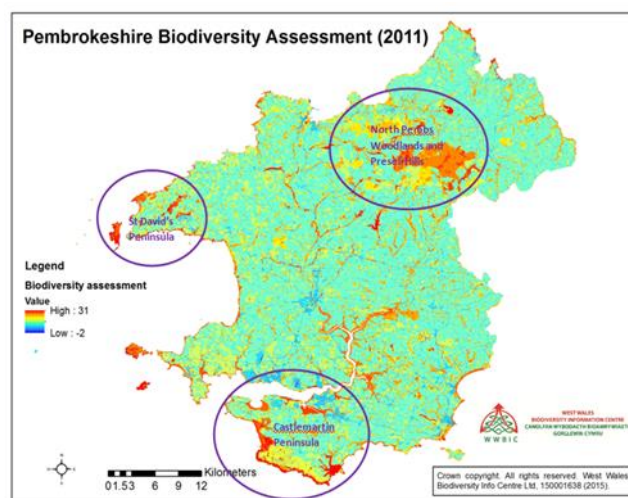


77. The decline in traditional grazing management with cattle and ponies on the Preseli commons is a big problem for this species which likes open, sunny, slow moving flushes with emergent vegetation. Monitoring over several years confirmed suspicions that the population was in trouble. It had disappeared from two of its main sites and was shown to be clinging on in the remaining habitat, which was gradually becoming less and less suitable.

78. Urgent action was needed to save this species from extinction in the National Park. As a last resort, the partnership turned to mechanical intervention to create more suitable habitat at several of the known sites. Over 1000m of linear spring and stream habitat was created at 2 sites and a shallow pool and flush created at a third site. Work involved transforming deeply cut streams into wide, open watercourses by drawing back encroaching peat and vegetation.

Castlemartin Nature Fund Project

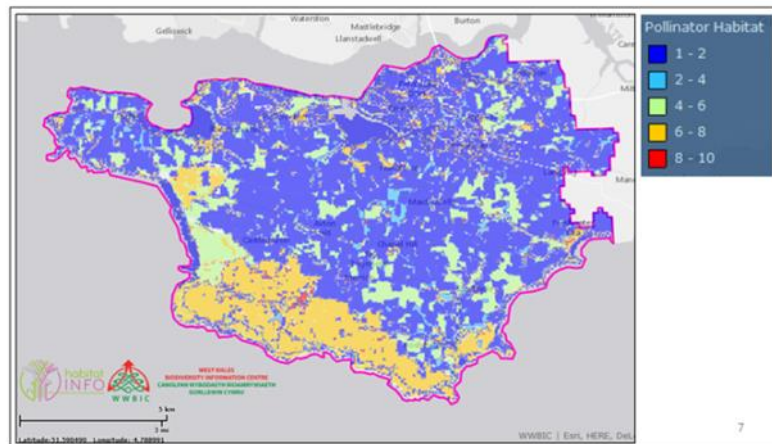
79. The partnership, led by the National Trust includes, Pembrokeshire County Council, Natural Resources Wales, Pembroke Community Interest Company, Bumblebee Conservation Trust, the West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre and the Pembrokeshire County National Park Authority.
80. Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority assisted the partnership by writing the project bid and were successful in obtaining £144,000 from the Welsh Government Nature Fund for a landscape scale project to connect and defend high value nature conservation sites with the aim of bringing together communities, land managers, industry and public sectors to build resilience in the local environment and economy.



The 2011 Biodiversity Assessment identified the Castlemartin Peninsula as one of three critical concentrations of semi-natural habitats.

81. Key outputs
- Catchment sensitive farming trial, on stream silt management, and de-siltation feasibility study at Bosherton Lakes
 - Wetland management at Castlemartin Corse, Freshwater East
 - Volunteer and community engagement delivered by Pembroke Community Interest Company. 5 trainees carried out training accredited through Agored Cymru
 - Habitat creation at Valero
 - Conservation Opportunities Planning Tool for the Castlemartin Peninsula

82. Outputs from the project will be shared at an open learning event on the 29th June at the National Trust Stackpole Centre and a project report will be available shortly.
83. Partners are currently thinking about the next steps for this project now the funding has come to an end.



Map showing connectivity or pollinators such as bees on the Castlemartin Peninsula.

Other Monitoring

Chough

84. The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park supports an internationally important chough population that has been the subject of annual surveillance since the early 1980s. The main focus of the annual surveillance work carried out over the years has been on the numbers and distribution of breeding pairs and on productivity, in line with the Chough Conservation Strategy for Pembrokeshire.



85. In 2014 the total number of non-breeding choughs in the National Park was estimated to be between 58 and 71 birds, the highest number recorded for many years. This is a really positive development in terms of the short to medium term future of the breeding population within the National Park.

86. The data for 2014 indicate that there was a slight increase in the number of occupied territories (one new territory was established on a Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority Conserving the Park site!) and in the numbers of pairs attempting to breed compared with 2013, however productivity in terms of young fledged appeared roughly similar to 2013.
87. In addition to the annual surveillance of choughs in the National Park, a national chough census was carried out in the UK in 2014. In Wales, the national census was co-ordinated by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the data collected during the annual surveillance of chough populations in the National Park were used as the basis of the census "returns" for Pembrokeshire.

Dormouse

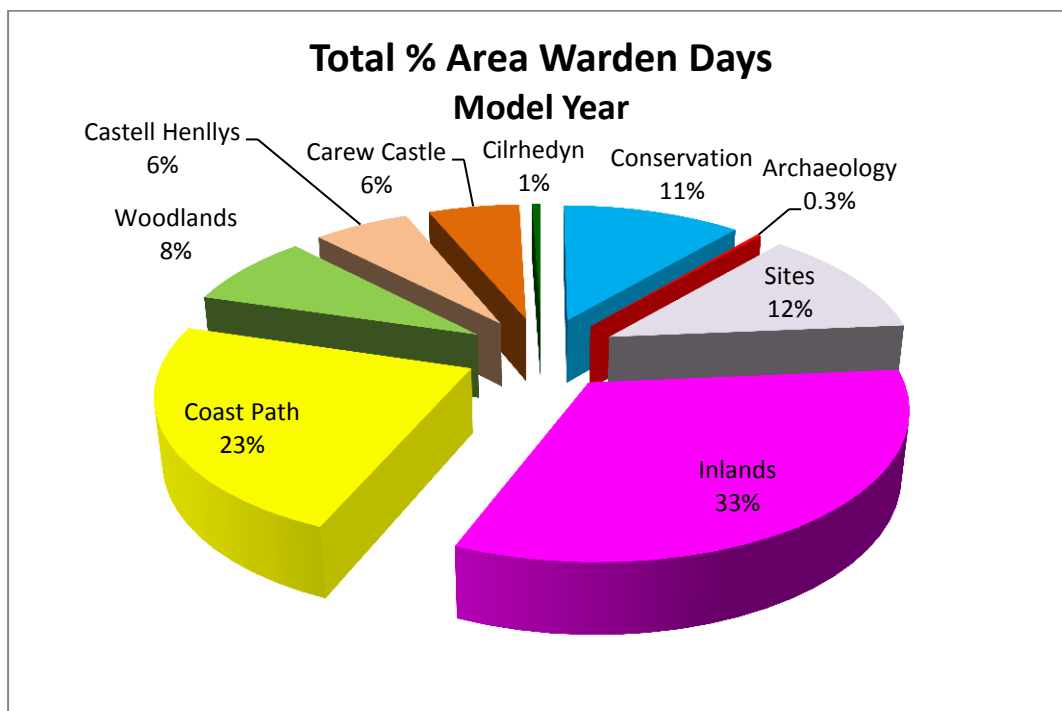
88. Pentre Ifan Woodland forms part of a national network of Dormouse monitoring sites and therefore contributes to monitoring this species at a national level. Box checks are carried out twice yearly to record dormouse occupancy with help from the Vincent Wildlife Trust.
89. In 2014 live Dormice were recorded in some of the boxes confirming their continued presence at the site. In a number of boxes the blue tits got there first, and other species such as woodmouse and pygmy shrews were present, making for a fun box-checking experience for Skills in Action trainees and volunteers.



90. Matt, Mark and Toby, our Skills in Action Trainees, carried out dormouse surveys across other areas of the Gwaun Valley woodlands, to help increase our knowledge of their distribution.

2014-2015 Warden Time Commitments

The planned division of warden team time between the different areas of work in an average year is shown in the chart below. These are based on a combination of the allocation of warden time pre-reorganisation and the experience of the last three years.



The actual figures for warden time for 2014-5 are shown below

