

**REPORT OF THE CONSERVATION POLICY OFFICER**

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**SUBJECT: CONNECTIVITY AND THE LAND MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME**

**Purpose of Report**

1. Landscape connectivity refers to the degree to which the landscape permits the movement of species. This report provides an update on the legislative requirements regarding connectivity and how the NPA's land management programme takes account of connectivity in the selection and management of sites.

**Connectivity: legislation and guidance**

2. The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 contains at Section 6(2)(b) a duty on public authorities to take account of the connections between and within ecosystems. Welsh Government's *Natural Resources Policy Statement (2015)* - which sets out the key challenges for the sustainable management of natural resources - highlights the need to improve the quality and connectivity of habitats. Connectivity is an underlying theme in *The State of Natural Resources Report 2016* and a particular topic in chapter 4 of that report.
3. "A Resilient Wales" is one of the seven well-being goals set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The description of the goal (at Section 4 of the Act) refers to ecological resilience. NRW's document, *Introducing Sustainable Management of Natural Resources*, identifies connectivity as a core component of resilient ecosystems. Landscape connectivity therefore plays a role in achievement of Future Generations goals.

**Connectivity mapping**

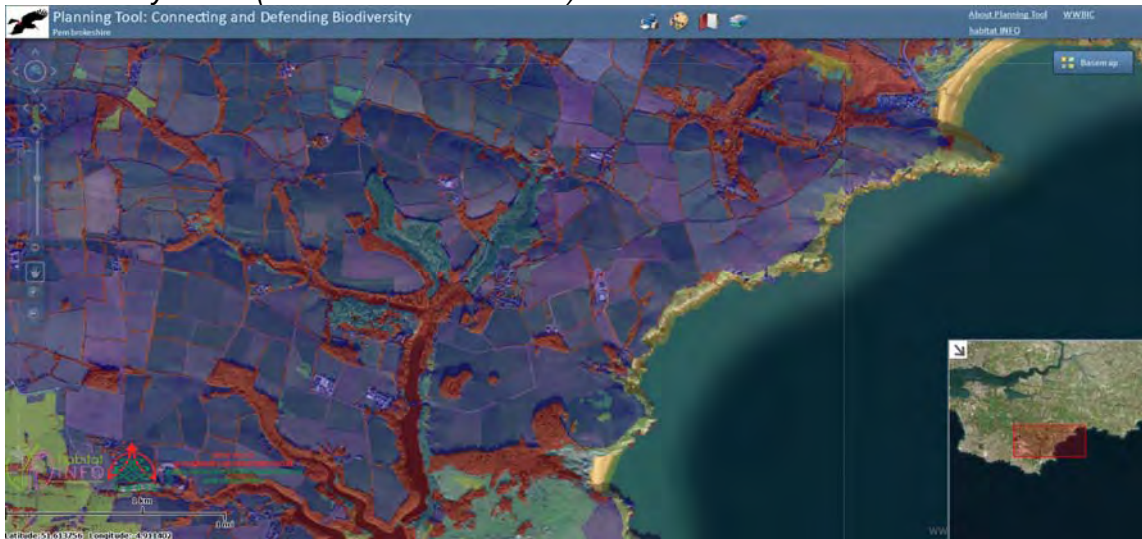
4. Connectivity means different things to different species, depending on, for example, their ability to range and their life-cycle requirements. Accordingly, there are different geographies of connectivity, and habitat areas do not have to be physically joined to be "connected" as far as some species are concerned.
5. Connectivity mapping for a range of species/species groups was commissioned by the Pembrokeshire Biodiversity Partnership as part of a National Trust-led, Welsh Government-funded project (the Castlemartin Peninsular project) in 2015. The mapping was later extended to the whole of Pembrokeshire with funding from Natural Resources Wales and is available as an online resource<sup>1</sup>. The maps can be used to assess the wider potential benefit of conservation land management at a site and to suggest areas in which to seek opportunities.
6. Sample connectivity maps are included below for information. In these, warmer hues indicate areas where there is suitable habitat for and known records of a

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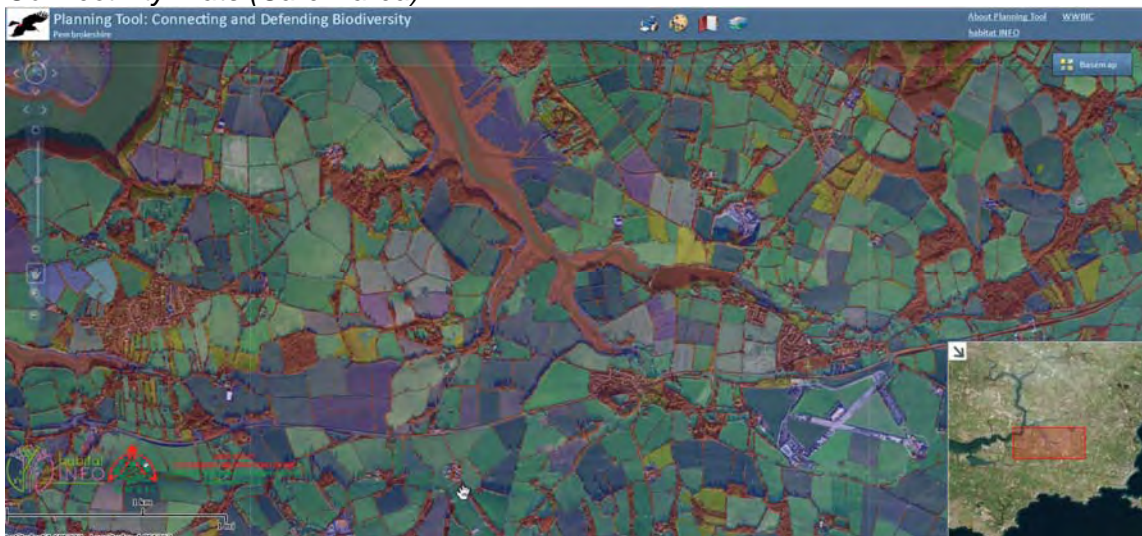
<sup>1</sup> [http://gis.wwbic.org.uk/flexviewers/LUPT\\_pembs/](http://gis.wwbic.org.uk/flexviewers/LUPT_pembs/) (login required)

given species, while cooler hues indicate areas where there are no records and sub-optimum habitat i.e. where appropriate action could be directed. They reflect how different species use the landscape in different ways.

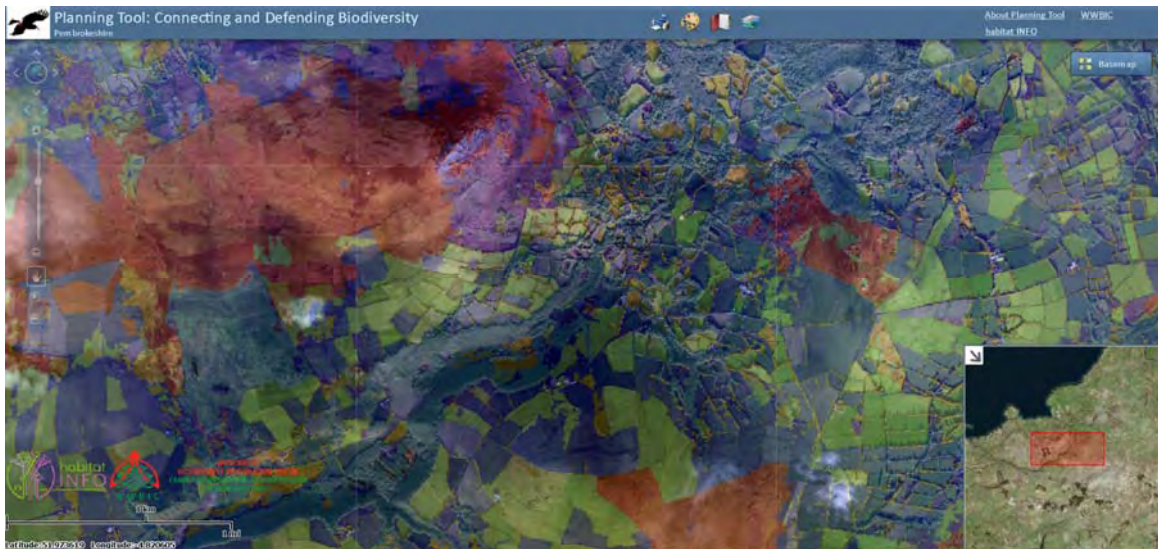
*Connectivity: Otter (Bosherston Lakes area)*



*Connectivity: Bats (Carew area)*



*Connectivity: Pollinators (Gwaun valley)*



*Connectivity: Chough (Strumble Head area)*



### **Financial, Risk and Compliance Considerations**

7. The NPA's land management programme seeks to consolidate, extend, link and create sites of conservation value, taking into account international, national and local conservation priorities. Connectivity is integral to delivery of the National Park's conservation purpose and a checklist (Annex 1) is used when considering new conservation sites; the checklist includes consideration of connectivity potential.
  
8. The NPA's conservation approach is supportive of the "resilience" goal in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and helps to fulfil the NPA's duties under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The NPA collects evidence to ensure the continued performance of the land management programme.
  
9. It is hoped that the statutory basis for taking account of connectivity will lead to greater adoption of the principles by relevant authorities, more scope for collaboration, with improved conservation outcomes as a result.

### **Human Rights/Equality Issues**

10. No issues have been identified.

### **Biodiversity Implications/Sustainability Appraisal**

11. Positive implications for biodiversity conservation.

### **Welsh Language Statement**

12. No issues have been identified.

### **Recommendation**

**That Members note the report.**

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#### *Background documents*

- The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2016/3/contents>
- Welsh Government, 2015, *Natural Resources Policy Statement*  
<http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/150914-natural-resources-policy-statement-en.pdf>
- Natural Resources Wales, *The State of Natural Resources Report 2016*  
<https://naturalresources.wales/our-evidence-and-reports/the-state-of-natural-resources-report-assessment-of-the-sustainable-management-of-natural-resources/?lang=en>
- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015  
(<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2015/2/contents/enacted>)
- Natural Resources Wales, *Introducing Sustainable Management of Natural Resources*  
<https://naturalresources.wales/media/678317/introducing-smnr-booklet-english.pdf>

## Annex 1 - Site selection checklist for conservation management agreement and assistance sites

Site details	
Site name/grid reference	
Landowner name	
Contact name (if different)	
Map of potential agreement site (link to workspace)	
Site area	
PCNPA officer name	
Date of visit	

Nature conservation interest, risks and potential	
Site in or affecting a nature conservation designation? (e.g. could buffer or provide added resilience to designated or significant areas)	
Habitats Directive Annex 1 habitats historical presence/presence/potential	
Habitats Directive Annex 2 species historical presence/presence/potential	
UK/Wales/LBAP habitats/species presence/potential	
Habitats/species locally scarce or at risk	
Connectivity/in-combination potential (e.g. stepping stone/contiguous area/corridor)	
Risks to nature conservation interest without our intervention (e.g. alternative uses, invasive species, hydrological regime)	
Expected outcomes (Year 1, Year 2 etc - relate to target habitats, species and management results)	

Context	
In other agri-environment/woodland scheme?	
Suitable for/landowner willing to enter national agri-environment scheme?	
Watercourses/waterbodies	
Other designations (SAMs, historic landscape, parks and gardens, GCR/RIGS, TPO)	
Boundary features, veteran trees	
Other considerations/constraints (e.g. buried archaeology, buildings/ruins)	
Brief description of previous management if known	
Brief overall description of current state, uses,	

risks and nature conservation potential	
Is there formal public access to the site?	

<b>Management options</b>	
Description of potential assistance (Year 1, Year 2 etc.)	
Options for delivery (e.g. other partners, referral)	
Estimated costs (time, materials, monitoring)	
Consents required	
Exit strategy/continuity of management	
Other comments	

<b>Recommendations</b>	
Officer recommendation	
Priority or reserve	
Consultations required	
Consultations undertaken	
Date	

<b>Added value</b>	
Historic environment significance	
Cultural significance	
Access/recreation potential (e.g. existing PROW, statutory duty met, opportunities for improved access)	
Opportunities for raising awareness	
Landscape	
Complementary business benefits (e.g. sustainable tourism, local produce)	