UK Biodiversity Indicators 2019

This document supports
C3a. Status of UK habitats of European importance

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For further information on C3a. Status of UK habitats of European importance visit
jncc.gov.uk/ukbli-C3a

For further information on the UK Biodiversity Indicators visit jncc.gov.uk/ukbi
C3a. Status of UK habitats of European importance

C3. Status of European habitats and species – revised

C3a. Status of UK habitats of European importance – revised

Type: State Indicator

Summary

This indicator has been updated with new data from the 2019 UK Habitats Directive Article 17 report to the European Union.

In 2007, 5% of UK habitats listed in Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive were in favourable conservation status, this figure decreased to 3% in 2013 before increasing again to 8% in 2019 (Figure C3ai).

The conservation status of 48% of the habitats was unfavourable-improving in 2007, it decreased to 31% in 2013 and 20% in 2019.

The conservation status of 30% of the habitats was unfavourable-declining in 2007, this decreased to 25% in 2013 and 23% in 2019.

The proportion of the habitats assessed as unfavourable-stable increased from 10% in 2007, to 38% in 2013, and 48% in 2019.

Figure C3ai. Conservation status of UK habitats of European importance, 2007, 2013 and 2019.

United Kingdom

Notes:

1. The chart is based on 77 habitats listed in Annex I of the Habitats Directive.
2. Trends in ‘unfavourable’ conservation status allow identification of whether progress is being made, as it will take many years for some habitats and species to reach ‘favourable’ conservation status.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment of change in status of UK habitats of European importance</th>
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Note: The long and short-term assessments are based on a 3% rule of thumb. See Assessing Indicators. No latest-year change is provided because Article 17 reports are only submitted once every 6 years and therefore, any latest-year change would simply mirror the short-term assessment.

Indicator description

Member States of the European Union are required to report every 6 years on the conservation status of habitats and species listed on the annexes of the Habitats Directive. Details of exactly what information is to be delivered is laid out in the report format and guidance notes. Each assessment needs to conclude whether the habitat is in one of the following states: favourable; unfavourable-inadequate; unfavourable-bad; or unknown.

However, it is likely to take time before habitats move from unfavourable conservation status to favourable conservation status, so for the unfavourable assessments, an assessment of trend is made to determine if the habitat is improving, declining, or stable. The information sources on which the assessments are based vary between habitats – their quality is documented in the database which underpins the assessments. The changes are largely based on evidence, though expert opinion was used in a few cases where evidence was not available.

The indicator is based on an evaluation of whether the results obtained in 2019 are better or worse than those obtained in 2013 (short term) and 2007 (long term). At its simplest (Figure C3ai), this can be the proportion of habitats which are favourable or show an improving trend (i.e. favourable, or unfavourable-inadequate but improving, or unfavourable-bad but improving). This applies to 27%¹ of all habitats assessed in 2019, 34%¹ of those assessed in 2013 and 53%¹ of those assessed in 2007; the measure is therefore assessed as declining in both the long and short term.

Figure C3ai combines the unfavourable inadequate and unfavourable-bad assessments which show a similar direction of trend. In all reporting years, improving and declining trends were assigned where the evidence allowed a conclusion that improvements or declines in the conservation status of habitats were occurring. Thus:

- Unfavourable-inadequate improving, and unfavourable-bad improving were summed to form the category ‘unfavourable improving’; and
- Unfavourable-inadequate declining, and unfavourable-bad declining were summed to form the category ‘unfavourable declining’.

In 2007, no trend was assigned to those habitats which were neither improving nor declining. This included both habitats for which the trend was unknown, and those for which there was no evidence of change. In subsequent years, careful consideration of evidence allowed the use of the term ‘stable’. For ease of comparison in the figures, unfavourable-

¹ Note that the combined figure for favourable and unfavourable-improving may be different from sum of the figures provided individually for these categories due to rounding to a whole number.
inadequate, and unfavourable-bad assessments with no trend conclusion in 2007 were
summed to form the category ‘unfavourable stable’; the same term was used for data in
subsequent years, but with more confidence that the trend was neither improving nor
decreasing.

Relevance
Article 17 of the EU Habitats Directive requires Member States to report every 6 years on
progress made with maintaining and/or restoring favourable conservation status for habitat
types and species of community interest. These are habitats and species for which the UK
has European-level conservation responsibilities.

Background
The first assessment of conservation status of species and habitats listed on the annexes of
the Directive was produced in 2007; a second assessment was produced in 2013; and a
third assessment was made in 2019. Each individual habitat assessment requires
information on 4 parameters, which are brought together using an evaluation matrix to form
an overall assessment. These parameters are: range; area; structure and functions; and
future prospects. The trend in the overall assessment is based upon an integration of the
trend information for the individual parameters.

The UK reported on 77 habitats in the Atlantic biogeographic region in 2007, 2013 and 2019.
Grouping the habitats by broad habitat types leads to the following breakdown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Habitat Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marine</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coastal</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heaths and scrub</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodlands</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grasslands</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshwater</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bogs, Mires and Fens</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocky habitats</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure C3aii provides a breakdown of Figure C3ai by showing the number of habitats in the
unfavourable categories in the 2019 report which arise from the unfavourable-inadequate or
unfavourable-bad assessment categories. The picture for habitats is somewhat worse than
for species (see indicator C3b), in that proportionally more habitats are in unfavourable
conservation status, and proportionally more habitats which are unfavourable are in
unfavourable-bad status.
Figure C3aii. Conservation status of UK habitats of European importance, 2019.

Notes:
1. Graph based on 77 habitats listed in Annex I of the Habitats Directive.
2. Trends in unfavourable conservation status allow identification of whether progress is being made, as it will take many years for some habitats and species to reach favourable conservation status.
3. Red shows the number of habitats within a trend which were unfavourable-bad; pink shows the number of habitats within a trend which were unfavourable-inadequate.


The Joint Nature Conservation Committee and the Country Nature Conservation Bodies have carefully collated and considered a wide range of data, using a robust quality assurance protocol, to come to the conclusion for each habitat and species, and to ensure changes, including within category changes, have been consistently and accurately discriminated. These changes are ecologically important, as stabilising a decline in a habitat, for example, is an important conservation achievement. The information sources on which the assessments are based are quite varied – their quality is documented in the database which underpins the assessments. The changes are largely based on evidence, though expert opinion was used in cases where evidence was not available.

Goals and targets

Aichi Targets for which this is a primary indicator

Strategic Goal B. Reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use

Target 5: By 2020, the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, is at least halved and where feasible brought close to zero, and degradation and fragmentation is significantly reduced.

Strategic Goal C. To improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity
**Target 11:** By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.

**Aichi Targets for which this is a relevant indicator**

**Strategic Goal B:** Reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use

**Target 8:** By 2020, pollution, including from excess nutrients, has been brought to levels that are not detrimental to ecosystem function and biodiversity.

**Strategic Goal C:** To improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity

**Target 12:** By 2020 the extinction of known threatened species has been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline, has been improved and sustained.

**Web links for further information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK Habitats Directive Report 2001</td>
<td>First report by the United Kingdom</td>
<td><a href="http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-3051">http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-3051</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>assessments</td>
<td>nature directives 2007-2012</td>
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**Full details of this indicator, including a datasheet are available at:** [jncc.gov.uk/ukbi-C3a](http://jncc.gov.uk/ukbi-C3a)

**Last updated:** December 2019

**Latest data:** 2019