

Guidance for Completing the Consultation Response Pro-forma (May 2016)



Introduction

This guidance note has been designed to support local planning authorities in undertaking the Local Plans Consultation Response Pro-forma. The note should be used as a tool to ensure that relevant nature considerations are included in the Local Plan at any stage of policy planning or review.

Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) are prescribed in the regulations as bodies which local authorities 'should have regard to' given their role in the management of natural environmental assets, supporting biodiversity and, in particular, identifying Nature Improvement Areas. The Kent Nature Partnership (KNP) is a relatively new partnership and has evolved from recommendations in the Natural Environment White Paper (2011).

The NPPF (Paragraph 165) encourages local planning authorities to work with LNPs, recognising the valuable input they can make to assessments of ecological networks and Sustainable Environmental Assessments (SEA) of the local plan. Working with LNPs, where appropriate, should also include an assessment of existing and potential components of ecological networks.

It is also important to point out that the Localism Act (2011) Duty to Co-operate states that *"Local Planning bodies that are subject to the duty must cooperate with LNPs and have regard to their activities when preparing their Local Plans"*.

*"This requirement reflects the important role that both Local Enterprise Partnerships and Local Nature Partnerships need to play in **assisting** local planning authorities' strategic planning"*¹. Furthermore, Section 40 of the NERC Act requires all public bodies to have regard to biodiversity conservation when carrying out their functions.

The KNP recognises that some planning authorities may not have the knowledge or capacity to address all the issues covered here and so further support and information is highlighted as appropriate.

In a nutshell, the guide provides:

- an overview of the issues policy should address for each outcome
- what a green, amber and red assessment will look like for each target
- advice on how an amber or red assessment can be improved
- sources of further advice and direct link to relevant paragraphs in the NPPF (see appendix I)

¹ May 2016 revision to the Duty to Cooperate: <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/revisions/9/006/>

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Overview of *Kent Biodiversity 2020 and beyond – a strategy for the natural environment 2015-2025*

Action for the natural environment in Kent and Medway will be delivered by many organisations and individuals across all sectors. The Kent Nature Partnership identifies the priorities for the natural environment in Kent and Medway, co-ordinates, facilitates and supports work that contributes to the objectives of the Strategy for the Natural Environment, and ensures that this work is monitored to capture the contribution that is being made in Kent and Medway to Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services

A Vision for Kent and Medway:

By 2050 our land and seas will be rich in wildlife, our biodiversity will be conserved, restored, managed sustainably and be more resilient and able to adapt to change and will be enjoyed and valued by all, underpinning our long-term economic, social and personal wellbeing

2020 Mission:

Our mission is to halt overall biodiversity loss in Kent and Medway, and to contribute to the conservation of national and global biodiversity, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people.

Across the county, this will be achieved through delivering the following four outcomes:

Outcome 1: Habitats and ecosystems on land (including freshwater environments)

By 2020 measures will be in place so that biodiversity is maintained and enhanced, further degradation has been halted and where possible restoration is underway, helping deliver more resilient and coherent ecological networks, healthy and well-functioning ecosystems, which deliver multiple benefits for wildlife and people. This includes:

- Better wildlife habitats in the county, with 70% of Local Wildlife Sites in favourable condition and at least 90% of Local Wildlife Sites in favourable or recovering condition, at least 50% of SSSIs in favourable condition, while maintaining at least 95% in favourable or recovering condition.
- More, bigger and less fragmented areas for wildlife, with no net loss of priority habitat and an increase in the overall extent of priority habitats of 10,260 ha.
- By 2020, at least 17% of land and inland water, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, conserved through effective, integrated and joined up approaches to safeguard biodiversity and ecosystem services, including through management of our existing systems of protected areas.
- Restoring at least 15% of degraded ecosystems as a contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

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Outcome 2: Marine habitats, ecosystems and fisheries

By 2020 we will have put in place measures so that biodiversity is maintained, further degradation has been halted and where possible restoration is underway, helping deliver good environmental status and our vision of clean, healthy, safe productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas. This will be underpinned by the following:

- By the end of 2016 in excess of 25% of waters around Kent and Medway will be contained in a well-managed Marine Protected Area network that helps deliver ecological coherence by conserving representative marine habitats that are nationally and internationally important. This target should not include the area already covered by the Outer Thames SPA.
- By 2020 we will be managing fish stocks sustainably and harvesting fish in a non-environmentally damaging way.
- By 2022 the marine plans for Kent and Medway's marine area will include policies that ensure the sustainable development of our seas, integrating economic growth with social need and ecosystem management.

Outcome 3: Species

By 2020, we will see an overall improvement in the status of our wildlife and will have prevented further human-induced extinctions of known threatened species including:

- Fewer species on Kent's red list: 10% of species on Kent's red list removed as they are no longer under threat of extinction.
- More, bigger and less fragmented areas for key species of conservation concern in Kent; with no net loss of habitat that supports priority species and an increase in the overall extent of such habitats.
- By 2020, landscape scale initiatives that address the conservation of key species, through effective, integrated and joined up approaches including through management of our existing systems of protected areas.

Outcome 4: People

By 2020, significantly more people will be engaged in biodiversity issues, aware of its value and taking positive action including:

- Steps have been taken to put the value of nature at the heart of decision making in Kent and Medway, reflecting the economic value of the natural environment in the decisions that each of us – businesses, government and individuals
- Increase public access to quality community green spaces
- Projecting and enhancing urban natural environment to improve people's health and wellbeing

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Assessment Guidance

Outcome 1: Habitats and ecosystems on land

1A – Statutory and non-statutory nature sites in favourable, recovering or positive conservation management

Policies in the Local Plan identify ways to minimise impacts on biological important sites and promote their protection, restoration or appropriate management

The Plan identifies biologically important sites but does not facilitate their protection, restoration or appropriate management

The plan does not take into account biological important sites

The plan should identify and map the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites such as Local Wildlife Sites and make allowances for their protection and appropriate management as key components of ecological networks.

The location of important sites for biodiversity can be obtained from the Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre² and status of their condition can be found in MAGIC³ (for designated sites) or the Local Wildlife Sites Officer at Kent Wildlife Trust⁴

1B – Increased extent of priority habitats

Policies identify mechanisms to increase priority habitats

Plans leads to no net loss of priority habitats and doesn't identify mechanisms to increase them

Priority habitat likely to be lost

Paragraph 109 of the NPPF states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. In Kent we have identified the most threatened habitats requiring conservation action as listed under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006- see appendix II. The 2012 Kent Habitat Survey (2012 KHS) provides a measure of the extent and change (during the last ten years) of each priority habitat. This data is apportioned to each district and it's available from the ARCH website⁵ or in more detail through the Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre.

Any net loss of priority habitat should be measured in area (hectares) for each habitat type by assessing the balance between losses and gains over the plan's period.

The Kent Nature Partnership (KNP) has set targets for conserving, restoring and expanding priority habitats across the county and these are spatially reflected through the Biodiversity

² <http://www.kmbrc.org.uk/aboutus/index/index.php>

³ <http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

⁴ <http://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/what-we-do/local-wildlife-sites>

⁵ www.archnature.eu

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Opportunity Areas⁶. Policies in Local Plans should identify how they will contribute to reach those targets.

1C- Green corridor plans or Green Infrastructure strategies contributing to green spaces and habitat connectivity

The Plan makes provisions for linking up green spaces and priority habitats
The Plans neither link or break up green spaces and priority habitats
Policies within the plan contribute towards habitat fragmentation and isolation of green spaces

Green corridors and green infrastructure are areas of land allocated for the extension and linkage of priority habitats. These can take the form of linear corridors or 'stepping-stone' patches of habitat between existing areas of related priority habitat, thereby reducing fragmentation. Fragmentation and isolation of habitats greatly reduces the ability of wildlife to disperse through the landscape in order to sustain healthy populations and spatially adapt to environmental impacts such as climate change. A linked network of habitats also provides a significant amenity asset.

The 2012 KHS provides the most recent, county-wide survey of habitats, and the locations and extent of each habitat type can be viewed by selecting the 'Priority Habitats' layer⁷. More detailed analysis of the habitat survey can be provided by the Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre.

Planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of ecological networks and GI will demonstrate meeting the requirements in paragraph 114 of the NPPF.

1D- Effective, integrated and joined up approaches to safeguard biodiversity and ecosystem services

Ecosystem services clearly considered within plan and maintenance and management defined
Consideration of ecosystem services within plan but no associated action
No consideration or recognition of ecosystem services within plan

The natural environment provides people with goods and services that are fundamental to human wellbeing. Paragraph 109 of the NPPF requires Planning Authorities to recognise the wider benefits of ecosystem services in their areas. Services are grouped into four categories; supporting, provisioning, regulating and cultural services. More detail of these can be found at the UNEP website.⁸

⁶ <http://kentbap.org.uk/kent-boas/>

⁷ http://maps.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/LocalViewPublic/Sites/khs2012_navigator/

⁸ <http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/EcosystemAssessmentConcepts/EcosystemServices/tabid/103/Default.aspx>

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The Local Plan should contain policies that identify ecosystem services as part of a strategy to for enhanced ecological connectivity. Provisions should be made for mechanism such as habitat conservation in key areas or carrying out appropriate environmental impact assessments as a way to allow natural process to continue providing a service.

1E – Restoration of degraded ecosystems as contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation

Policies in the Plan facilitate the identification and restoration of degraded ecosystems and contribute towards ecological networks

Plan neither restores nor further degrades ecosystems for climate change mitigation/adaption

Plan further degrades ecosystem services for climate change mitigation/adaption

As a response to the targets set to Biodiversity 2020 strategy on climate change mitigation and adaptation, in Kent we have a target to restore at least 15% of degraded ecosystems. Local Plans should identify ways to contribute to this target. The habitat changed analysis carried out as part of the 2012 KHS, highlights the habitats that have been in decline during the past 10 years, this is available through the ARCH website.⁹

Including policies in the plan that identify mechanisms to increase habitat connectivity through ecological networks¹⁰ and buffering key sites (such as projected sites or priority habitat sites), will make a positive contribution to species adaptation to climate change.

The Local Plan may adopt what the Convention on Biological Diversity terms an 'Ecosystem Approach'¹¹. This approach offers a framework for considering the role of nature in providing life-support and life-fulfilment to people. It can be used in the planning process as a tool to assess the condition of those functions of a working landscape that are valued by people as services (or 'benefits') and to identify where changes in management can improve the quality or flow of these services. These services include provision of clean air and water; maintenance of liveable climates; production of food, fuel and fibre; pollination of crops; control of pests; provision of genetic resources and provision of cultural, spiritual and intellectual experiences.

⁹ <http://archnature.eu/assets/files/final-pdfs/KHS-Section-6-Change-Analysis.pdf>

¹⁰ NPPF Guidance- [Biodiversity, Ecosystems & Green Infrastructure](#)

¹¹ <http://www.cbd.int/ecosystem/>

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Outcome 2 – Marine habitats, ecosystems and fisheries

Please note that this outcome is only relevant to Local Planning Authorities in coastal areas.

2A – Active contribution towards well-managed Marine Protected Areas

Policies directly taken from Marine Protected Area management plans
The Plan takes account of Marine Protected Area management plans
No policies or content relating to Marine Protected Area management plans

Marine Protected Area (MPA) is a catch all term which applies to Natura 2000 sites such as SAC's and SPA's (European designations) , along with the new Marine Conservation Zone's (MCZ's) established under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. Such designations can be found right around the Kent coastline and estuaries.

There are three Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ's) around the Kent coast with three candidate zones going out to public consultation in 2015 and one more in 2016. LPAs should engage with Natural England to identify any MCZ conservation and management measures that could be incorporated into their Local Plans.

The North East Kent MPA management group has been established to involve 'relevant authorities' that have some form of marine regulatory function in such sites in all of Thanet and parts of Canterbury and Dover districts (historically this just related to the Natura2000 sites). All three districts are part of this group which is chaired by Natural England.

Where such groups exist, local authorities should engage and ensure their local plan development reflects the work of these groups and includes MPA management recommendations where appropriate. Where they don't exist but MPA designations are present, local authorities should actively engage with any consultations or meetings relating to the management of these sites and where possible incorporate policies for these sites into their local plan development.

2B- Active contribution towards sustainable management of fish stocks

Policies contribute towards sustainable use and management of fish stocks
Plan takes account of use and management of fish stock but does not identify pro-active actions
No policies on sustainable management of fishstock included

The Plan should identify ways to conserve fish stocks (and their habitat) and to ensure that commercial fish populations are not over exploited. Fish management policies should also take account of non-commercial marine species (and their habitat). The plan should seek proactive engagement with the Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority

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to secure the right balance between social, environmental and economic benefits that can be brought about through sustainable fisheries.¹²

2C – Active contribution to Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)

Policies directly taken from Marine Plans and seascape assessments
Policies take account of Marine Plans and seascape assessments
No policies or content relating to Marine Plans and seascape assessments

For coastal districts, the marine dimension and marine biodiversity should be an important consideration in local plan content and policies. Terrestrial planning should take an ICZM approach in order that relevant influences from below low water mark are represented in local plans and policies.

Seascape Character Assessment's (SCA's) capture natural and cultural characteristics for marine and coastal areas and provide guidelines for future development that simultaneously considers marine and terrestrial issues. A SCA for the coast line from Margate to Dungeness is available here: www.doverstraitseascape.co.uk

The Marine Management Organisation will also be undertaking a seascape assessment for the majority of the Kent coastline as they develop the South Marine Plan.

Where available, these documents provide a rare opportunity to help LPA's take an ICZM approach in local plan development. Engagement with the Marine Plan making process provides local authorities with an additional opportunity to understand the marine environment and to include elements of this, including Marine Plan policies into their own local plan development. The South Marine Plan only covers the Kent coast from Dungeness to Samphire Hoe and will be completed in 2016. The plan making process for the rest of the Kent coast (under the South East Plan) has yet to be started.

¹² <http://www.kentandessex-ifca.gov.uk/>

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Outcome 3 – Species

3A – Avoid, reduce and minimise the impact on protected species

The Plan contains provision which allows positive action for threatened species and enhancement of their associated habitats

Policies are included but they neither instigate action nor encourage further impacts on threatened species

No provision made furthering impact on threatened species and degrading or destroying associated habitats

Most of the rarest and most threatened species are listed under Section 41¹³ of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act. Annex IV of the European Habitat Directive identifies the species of European Community interest and in need of strict protection. These are distinguished from other species protected primarily by domestic UK legislation.

The Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre can provide guidance of the protected species present in your district.

Paragraph 118 of the NPPF directs LPAs to conserve and enhance biodiversity. The Plan should contain policies that avoid the reduction the natural range of threaten species and make provisions for sufficient large habitats to be maintained allowing long term viability of species populations.

3B– Monitoring, evaluation & reporting of biodiversity outcomes

Overall net effect of development systematically monitored, evaluated and recorded in particular for species through planning conditions

Initial assessment made but no commitment in the Plan to on-going monitoring

Plan does not make provisions for recording, evaluated or monitoring the effect of development

Paragraph 117 of the NPPF notes the use of suitable indicators for monitoring biodiversity¹⁴. Performance against the county's priority habitat targets can be used as indicator as well as adequate recording of impact (or gains) on biodiversity at development sites.

Base data on species distribution and habitat extent can be obtained through the Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre. The Records Centre serves as a one-stop shop that holds and facilitates access to biodiversity information that which may be held across many public and voluntary organisations. They can also assist in the completion of Annual Monitoring Reports and evaluate the Borough's contribution towards national strategies such as Biodiversity 2020.

¹³ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4958719460769792?category=6074729802760192>

¹⁴ See- [Planning for a healthy environment: good practice for GI and Biodiversity TCPA](#). pp 13

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There is also a multitude of specialist organisations operating countywide that can help in collecting individual species information. When commissioning services Planning Authorities should ensure that they are employing a skill and competent ecologist. The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management have a free of charge professional directory¹⁵ of qualified practitioners. Also the British Standard for Biodiversity (BS 42020¹⁶) should be consulted to ensure that ecological work is conducted in the appropriate manner.

3C- Contribute towards large-scale initiatives that establish coherent ecological networks that are resilient to current and future pressures.

Plan identifies key components of ecological networks and contributes to increasing species movement through the landscape

Plan recognises ecological networks but does not take action at large-scale

There are no provisions for contributing towards ecological networks nor facilitating species movement through the landscape

Planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of habitat networks is encouraged in paragraphs 114, 117 and 109 of the NPPF. Creating new habitat, enhancing existing habitat or providing new features can all contribute towards biodiversity enhancement, and helping to rebuild habitat networks in the wider area improving ecological resilience and adaptation to climate change. The Kent Biodiversity Opportunity Areas identify where this can take place as they are spatial reflection of the priority habitat targets.

Ecological networks are likely to cross district borders therefore collaboration with neighbouring district is essential as well as required by the Duty to Co-operate.

¹⁵ <http://www.cieem.net/members-directory>

¹⁶ <http://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/standards/>

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Outcome 4 – People

The sustainability assessment of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) for Kent and Medway provides further information on the importance of the natural environment to health and wellbeing. This is due to be uploaded on to Kent Public Health Website.¹⁷

4A – Increased public access to natural green spaces

Plan identifies measures and mechanisms to increase public access to green spaces

Plan neither increases nor reduces the amount of green space and/or public access to the natural environment

Plan reduces the amount of green space and/or public access to the natural environment

Natural green spaces are places where human control and activities are not intensive so that a feeling of naturalness is allowed to predominate. They also have to have the ability to perform more than one function at the same time. In terms of green space this can mean providing opportunities for recreation whilst delivering biodiversity and contributing to climate change adaptation and mitigation¹⁸.

Policies within the plan should identify mechanisms that will facilitate people's access to natural sites, improving sites' naturalness and providing a suitable atmosphere to all visitors. Broad assessment of existing provision and determining the strategic requirements for provision of green space for major new developments is crucial. This can be done through the use of mechanisms such as the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt).¹⁹

4B – Protecting and enhancing natural environment to improve public health & wellbeing

Policies within the plan recognise the natural environment as key component to enhance people's health and wellbeing

Plan recognises the importance of the natural environment for health & wellbeing but does not take any action

No policies included to address improvement of people's health & wellbeing through use or enhancement of the natural environment

Local Plans should integrate and make links to other strategies such as Kent's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Health & Wellbeing Strategy. The health benefits of nature and green spaces are highlighted on The Public Health White Paper²⁰ and the quality of the

¹⁷ <http://www.kent.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/health>

¹⁸ [Nature Nearby: Accessible Natural Greenspace](#). Natural England, March 2010

¹⁹ http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/east_of_england/ourwork/gi/accessiblenaturalgreenspacestandardangst.aspx

²⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/healthy-lives-healthy-people-our-strategy-for-public-health-in-england>

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environment around us affects any community. For example, improving the environment in which people live can make healthy lifestyles easier and policies in the plan should identify mechanisms to improve the immediate environment to tackle air quality (through perhaps street tree planting), noise and land pollution.

The KNP has a task group working on Health & Nature and a report on the value of nature to the health sector is available from the Health & Nature section on our website.²¹

²¹ <http://kentnature.org.uk/~kentnatu/assets/files/Resources/Securing-the-Value-of-Nature-in-Kent.pdf>

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Appendix I

Links to relevant paragraphs in the NPPF, NPPG and sources of additional information

Outcome	NPPF Reference	NPPG Ref & Further Information
1A – Statutory and non-statutory nature sites in favourable, recovering or positive conservation management	17, 109,113,115, 117,157,166	Hierarchy of sites
1B – Increased extent of priority habitats	8, 109,115,117, 157,181	Net gains in biodiversity
1C- Green corridor plans or Green Infrastructure strategies contributing to green spaces and habitat connectivity	76,77,99, 103, 109,114,117, 157,165,181	Biodiversity, ecosystems and green infrastructure
1D- Effective, integrated and joined up approaches to safeguard biodiversity and ecosystem services	109	Ecosystem Services guidance for policy & decision makers
1E – Restoration of degraded ecosystems as contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation	93,94,99, 100	Climate Chang Planning Practice Guidance
2A – Active contribution towards well-managed Marine Protected Areas	105, 179	Marine Protected Areas
2B- Active contribution towards sustainable management of fish stocks	7, 105	Protecting & sustainably using the marine environment
3A – Avoid, reduce and minimise the impact on protected species	109,115,117	Protected Species
3B– Monitoring, evaluation & reporting of biodiversity outcomes	117,157,165, 166,181,192 158	Ecological information
3C- Contribute towards large-scale initiatives that establish coherent ecological networks that are resilient to current and future pressures	76,77,99, 103, 109,114,117, 157,165,181	Biodiversity, ecosystems and green infrastructure
4B – Protecting and enhancing natural environment to improve public health & wellbeing	69, 73, 120, 143, 171	Checklist for assessing the Health Impact of planning proposals

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Appendix II

UK Priority habitats occurring in Kent

TERRESTRIAL HABITATS

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland
Wet Woodland
Lowland Beech and Yew Woodland
Wood Pasture and Parkland
Traditional Orchard
Hedgerows
Arable Field Margins
Open mosaic habitats on previously developed land
Lowland dry acid grassland
Lowland meadow
Lowland Fen
Lowland calcareous grassland
Lowland heathland
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh
Reedbeds
Purple moor grass and rush pasture
Rivers, including chalk rivers
Ponds
Maritime cliffs and slopes
Coastal sand dunes
Coastal vegetated shingle

LITTORAL HABITATS

Coastal saltmarsh
Intertidal mudflats
Seagrass beds
Intertidal Underboulder communities
Sabellaria alveolata reefs
Sheltered muddy gravels
Peat and Clay Exposures with Piddocks

SUBLITTORAL HABITATS

Saline lagoons
Sabellaria spinulosa reefs
Sub tidal chalk
Fragile Sponge and Anthozoan Communities on Subtidal Rocky Habitats
Subtidal sands and gravels
Blue Mussel Beds on Sediment

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Appendix III

Current European and UK Legislations

European Legislation
Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds (EC Birds Directive)
Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (Habitats Directive)
EU Water Framework Directive
EU Marine Strategy
Catches of cetaceans
Environmental Liability
UK Legislation
The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act)
The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010
The Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c.) Regulations 2007
Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009

Appendix IV

Conventions

Bern	The Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats
CBD	The Convention on Biological Diversity
Bonn	The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
OSPAR	The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic
RAMSAR	The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat
World Heritage	The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (UNESCO)

Further information on the above available from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee website: <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1359>