CYNGOR CEFN GWLAD CYMRU
COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES

CORE MANAGEMENT PLAN
(INCLUDING CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES)

for

Aberbargoed Grasslands
Special Area of Conservation

Date: 14th March 2008

Approved by: **David Mitchell**

A Welsh version of all or part of this document can be made available on request.

Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru
Countryside Council for Wales

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PREFACE

This document provides the main elements of CCW's management plan for the site named. It sets out what needs to be achieved on the site, the results of monitoring and advice on the action required. This document is made available through CCW's web site and may be revised in response to changing circumstances or new information. This is a technical document that supplements summary information on the web site.

One of the key functions of this document is to provide CCW's statement of the Conservation Objectives for the relevant Natura 2000 site. This is required to implement the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994, as amended (Section 4). As a matter of Welsh Assembly Government Policy, the provisions of those regulations are also to be applied to Ramsar sites in Wales.

1. VISION FOR THE SITE

This is a descriptive overview of what needs to be achieved for conservation on the site. It brings together and summarises the Conservation Objectives (part 4) into a single, integrated statement about the site.

Walking through this site on a hot sunny day you are enveloped by butterflies, most notably orange and black coloured (these are the colours of the marsh fritillary). The population is viable long term with enough marshy grassland and, more importantly, the butterfly's foodplant devil's bit scabious present to support them.

Marshy grassland is seen over half of the site, preferably increasing to cover a wider area. Established woodland /scrub and bracken on this site does not occupy more than 20% of the site. The remainder of the site is a mixture of neutral grassland, wet heath and mire.

During the summer a walk over the site will show you the wide range of plants and insects that thrive here. There is a mixture of different grasses and flowers that add splashes of colour. The tallest common plants, standing at about knee-height, are grasses and sedges including purple moor-grass and carnation sedge. Growing amongst these plants you will also find Meadow-thistle, devil's-bit scabious and tormentil.

Where the ground is particularly wet you see blunt-flowered rush, sharp flowered rush with common marsh bedstraw, greater bird's-foot trefoil and water mint.

Where neutral grassland replaces marshy grassland the types of plants and animals that live there change. Here the tallest plant is black knapweed with common bird's-foot trefoil, red clover, oxeye daisy, devil's-bit scabious and autumn hawkbit growing amongst it.

Species that show agricultural modification, such as perennial rye grass and white clover are uncommon. Scrub species such as willow and birch are also uncommon.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Area and Designations Covered by this Plan

Grid reference: ST 163992

Unitary authority: Caerphilly

Area (hectares): 42.5 ha

Designations covered: Aberbargoed Grasslands is underpinned by the Aberbargoed Grasslands SSSI. Not all of the SSSI is within the SAC, however.

For a summary map showing the coverage of this document see accompanying Management Unit Map.

2.2 Outline Description

Aberbargoed Grasslands covers an area of 42.5ha and lies on a southwest facing hillside in the Rhymney Valley, 1km east of Bargoed. The site occupies an urban fringe position, between 200m and 290m above sea level.

The fields in the south and west of Aberbargoed Grasslands have impeded drainage and contain a mixture of marshy grassland communities. Areas of particular interest are characterised by abundant purple moor grass *Molinia caerulea* and meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum* with devil's bit scabious *Succisa pratensis* and carnation sedge *Carex panicea*. Other species such as saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria* and lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica* occur frequently in heavily flushed areas. Associated stands of *Molinia caerulea – Potentilla erecta* mire contain abundant purple moor grass with tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, mat grass *Nardus stricta*, common sedge *Carex nigra* and spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata*. Small stands of rush pasture are scattered across the site, with soft rush *Juncus effuses*, greater bird's foot trefoil *Lotus uliginosus* and marsh bedstraw *Galium palustre.*

2.3 Outline of Past and Current Management

Until recently the site had not been managed or grazed for a number of years, and both scrub and bracken have encroached on large areas of the site. The site has in previous years been regularly burnt by arsonists, used for off roading and tipping. In 2005 Caerphilly County Borough Council took over the management of the site and a site manager and stock handler are now in post. With this presence on the site and other measures, arson, fly-tipping and off-roading have become much less frequent.

Scrub and bracken have been cleared to open up the fields and create flight lines for marsh fritillary Butterflies. The site is now fenced and is stock proof, and a mixture of Welsh black and belted Galloway cattle have been grazing the site this year with a Limousin bull. A combination of the staff and cattle presence have halted most of the anti-social behaviour; effects have also been made to educate the local community about the importance of the site.

2.4 Management Units

The plan area has been divided into management units to enable practical communication about features, objectives, and management. This will also allow us to differentiate between the different designations where necessary. In this plan the management units have been based on mainly tenure, but also with reference to status and land management requirements.

A map showing the management units referred to in this plan is attached.

The following table confirms the relationships between the management units and the designations covered:

Unit number	**SAC**	**SSSI**	**CCW owned**	**Other**
Aberbargoed Grasslands				
1	✔	✔	-	-
2		✔	-	-

3. THE SPECIAL FEATURES

3.1 Confirmation of Special Features

Designated feature	***Relationships, nomenclature etc***	***Conservation Objective in part 4***
SAC features		
1.*Marsh fritillary butterfly *Euphydryas* (*Eurodryas, Hypodryas*) *aurinia (EU Species Code: 1065)		1
2.*Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*) (EU Habitat Code: 6410)	Referred to as Eu Molinion in the management plan.	2
SSSI features		
3.Non-SAC features-Marshy grassland.		
4. Dry neutral Grassland.		

3.2 Special Features and Management Units

This section sets out the relationship between the special features and each management unit. This is intended to provide a clear statement about what each unit should be managed for, taking into account the varied needs of the different special features. All special features are allocated to one of seven classes in each management unit. These classes are:

Key Features
KH - a 'Key Habitat' in the management unit, i.e. the habitat that is the main driver of management and focus of monitoring effort, perhaps because of the dependence of a key species (see KS below). There will usually only be one Key Habitat in a unit but there can be more, especially with large units.

KS – a 'Key Species' in the management unit, often driving both the selection and management of a Key Habitat.
Geo – an earth science feature that is the main driver of management and focus of monitoring effort in a unit.

Other Features
Sym - habitats, species and earth science features that are of importance in a unit but are not the main drivers of management or focus of monitoring. These features will benefit from management for the key feature(s) identified in the unit. These may be classed as 'Sym' features because:

a) they are present in the unit but may be of less conservation importance than the key feature; and/or
b) they are present in the unit but in small areas/numbers, with the bulk of the feature in other units of the site; and/or
c) their requirements are broader than and compatible with the management needs of the key feature(s), e.g. a mobile species that uses large parts of the site and surrounding areas.

Nm - an infrequently used category where features are at risk of decline within a unit as a result of meeting the management needs of the key feature(s), i.e. under Negative Management. These cases will usually be compensated for by management elsewhere in the plan, and can be used where minor occurrences of a feature would otherwise lead to apparent conflict with another key feature in a unit.
Mn - Management units that are essential for the management of features elsewhere on a site e.g. livestock over-wintering area included within designation boundaries, buffer zones around water bodies, etc.
x – Features not known to be present in the management unit.

The table(s) below sets out the relationship between the special features and management units identified in this plan:

Aberbargoed Grasslands	**Management unit**	
	1	2
SAC	✔	
SSSI	✔	✔
NNR/CCW owned	-	-
SAC features		
1. Marsh fritillary butterfly	**KS**	**KS**
2. Eu Molinion meadows	**KH**	**KH**
SSSI features		
3. Marshy grassland	**Sym**	**Sym**
4. Dry neutral grassland	**Sym**	**Sym**

4. CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

Background to Conservation Objectives:

a. Outline of the legal context and purpose of conservation objectives.

Conservation objectives are required by the 1992 'Habitats' Directive (92/43/EEC). The aim of the Habitats Directives is the maintenance, or where appropriate the restoration of the 'favourable conservation status' of habitats and species features for which SACs and SPAs are designated (see Box 1).

In the broadest terms, 'favourable conservation status' means a feature is in satisfactory condition and all the things needed to keep it that way are in place for the foreseeable future. CCW considers that the concept of favourable conservation status provides a practical and legally robust basis for conservation objectives for Natura 2000 and Ramsar sites.

Box 1
Favourable conservation status as defined in Articles 1(e) and 1(i) of the Habitats Directive

"The conservation status of a natural habitat is the sum of the influences acting on it and its typical species that may affect its long-term natural distribution, structure and functions as well as the long term survival of its typical species. The conservation status of a natural habitat will be taken as favourable when:

- Its natural range and areas it covers within that range are stable or increasing, and
- The specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and
- The conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

The conservation status of a species is the sum of the influences acting on the species that may affect the long-term distribution and abundance of its populations. The conservation status will be taken as 'favourable' when:

- population dynamics data on the species indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, and
- the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and
- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis."

Achieving these objectives requires appropriate management and the control of factors that may cause deterioration of habitats or significant disturbance to species.

As well as the overall function of communication, Conservation objectives have a number of specific roles:

- Conservation planning and management.

  The conservation objectives guide management of sites, to maintain or restore the habitats and species in favourable condition.

- Assessing plans and projects.

  Article 6(3) of the 'Habitats' Directive requires appropriate assessment of proposed plans and projects against a site's conservation objectives. Subject to certain exceptions, plans or projects may not proceed unless it is established that they will not adversely affect the integrity of sites. This role for testing plans and projects also applies to the review of existing decisions and consents.

- Monitoring and reporting.

  The conservation objectives provide the basis for assessing the condition of a feature and the status of factors that affect it. CCW uses 'performance indicators' within the conservation objectives, as the basis for monitoring and reporting. Performance indicators are selected to provide useful information about the condition of a feature and the factors that affect it.

The conservation objectives in this document reflect CCW's current information and understanding of the site and its features and their importance in an international context. The conservation objectives are subject to review by CCW in light of new knowledge.

b. Format of the conservation objectives

There is one conservation objective for each feature listed in part 3. Each conservation objective is a composite statement representing a site-specific description of what is considered to be the favourable conservation status of the feature. These statements apply to a whole feature as it occurs within the whole plan area, although section 3.2 sets out their relevance to individual management units.

Each conservation objective consists of the following two elements:

1. Vision for the feature
2. Performance indicators

As a result of the general practice developed and agreed within the UK Conservation Agencies, conservation objectives include performance indicators, the selection of which should be informed by JNCC guidance on Common Standards Monitoring[1].

There is a critical need for clarity over the role of performance indicators within the conservation objectives. **A conservation objective, because it includes the vision for the feature, has meaning and substance independently of the performance indicators, and is more than the sum of the performance indicators**. The performance indicators are simply what make the conservation objectives measurable, and are thus part of, not a substitute for, the conservation objectives. Any feature attribute identified in the performance indicators should be represented in the vision for the feature, but not all elements of the vision for the feature will necessarily have corresponding performance indicators.

As well as describing the aspirations for the condition of the feature, the Vision section of each conservation objective contains a statement that the factors necessary to maintain those desired conditions are under control. Subject to technical, practical and resource constraints, factors which have an important influence on the condition of the feature are identified in the performance indicators.

[1] Web link: http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-2199

4.1 Conservation Objective for Feature 1: Marsh fritillary Butterfly *Euphydryas* (*Eurodryas, Hypodryas*) *aurinia (EU Species Code: 1065)*

The vision for this feature is for it to be in a favourable conservation status, where all of the following conditions are satisfied:

- The site will support a sustainable metapopulation of the marsh fritillary in the Aberbargoed area. This will require at least 50ha of suitable habitat, although not all of this will be within the SAC
- The population will be viable in the long term, acknowledging the extreme population fluctuations of the species.
- Habitats on the site will be in optimal condition to support the metapopulation.
- At least 25ha of the total site area will be marshy grassland suitable for supporting marsh fritillary, with *Succisa pratensis* present and only a low cover of scrub.
- At least 6.25ha will be good marsh fritillary breeding habitat, dominated by purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, with *S. pratensis* present throughout and a vegetation height of 10-20cm over the winter period.
- All factors affecting the achievement of the foregoing conditions are under control.

Performance indicators for feature condition		
Attribute	***Attribute rationale and other comments***	***Specified limits***
A1. Density of larval webs Marsh fritillary butterfly *Euphydryas* **(***Eurodryas, Hypodryas) aurinia*	We have limited web count surveillance information therefore we are unable to set site-specific targets therefore the targets set are based on those outlined in the generic guidance (Fowles, 2004)	*Upper limit*: Not required *Lower limit*: In one year in six the number of larval webs is estimated to be: 200 per hectare of good condition habitat.
A2. **Extent of Marsh fritillary butterfly** *(Eurodryas, Hypodryas) aurinia* **Habitat**	There is limited habitat available in the landscape surrounding Aberbargoed Grasslands, therefore it is vital that management of the SAC needs to ensure that as much habitat as possible within the SAC is available to Marsh Fritillaries, to ensure their long term survival. Approximately 50ha of habitat is required to maintain the population in the long term, with at least 10ha in good condition. Not all is expected to be within the SAC. The specified limits reflect the minimum contribution of the Aberbargoed Grasslands SAC towards the favourable conservation status of the species in the Caerphilly area. Good condition habitat is defined as: Grassland, with *Molinia* abundant	*Upper limit*: Not required *Lower limit*: 25ha of available habitat including 6.25ha of good condition habitat.

	where, for at least 80% of sampling points, the vegetation height is within the range of 10 to 20 cm and *Succisa pratensis* is present within a 1 m radius. Scrub (>0.5 metres tall) covers no more than 10% of area. Suitable condition habitat is defined as: Stands of grassland where *Succisa pratensis* is present at lower frequencies but still widely distributed (>5% of sampling points) throughout the habitat patch and in which scrub (>0.5 metre tall) covers no more than 25% of area. Alternatively, *Succisa* may be present at high density in close-cropped swards. [**note: Available habitat is the total of Good Condition and Suitable habitat**] An assessment of Rhos Pasture habitat in Caerphilly CBC, in respect of its suitability and condition for the priority butterfly species, marsh fritillary *Euphydryas aurinia* was carried out in February 2005 by Richard Smith. This highlights areas around Aberbargoed Grassland that could support metapopulations of marsh fritillary.	
A3. **Condition of Marsh fritillary butterfly** *(Eurodryas, Hypodryas) aurinia* **Habitat**	Refer to feature 2.	*Upper limit:* Not required *Lower limit:* See feature 2.
Performance indicators for factors affecting the feature		
Factor	***Factor rationale and other comments***	***Operational Limits***
F1. Livestock grazing	The *eu-Molinion* marshy grassland needs to be maintained through traditional farming practices. Without an appropriate grazing regime, the grassland will continue to become rank and eventually turn to scrub and woodland. Light grazing by cattle and ponies between April and November each year is essential in maintaining the marshy grassland communities.	*Upper limit*: to be agreed *Lower limit*: See feature 2
F2. Anti-social behaviours	In previous years anti-social behaviour such as off-roading and burning have occurred at Aberbargoed grasslands.	See feature 2 *Upper limit:* None

	This issues need to be addressed to prevent the *eu-Molinion habitat* from being damaged.	*Lower Limit*: None tolerated

4.2 Conservation Objective for Feature 2:*Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*) (EU Habitat Code: 6410)

Vision for feature 1

The vision for this feature is for it to be in a favourable conservation status, where all of the following conditions are satisfied:

- *eu-Molinion* marshy grassland will occupy at least 70% of the total site area.
- The remainder of the site will be other semi-natural habitat or areas of permanent pasture.
- The following plants will be common in the *eu-Molinion* marshy grassland: purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*; meadow thistle *Cirsium dissectum*; devil's bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*; carnation sedge *Carex panicea;* saw wort *Serratula tinctoria;* and lousewort *Pedicularis sylvestris*.
- Cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* and common heather *Calluna vulgaris* will also be common in some areas.
- Rushes and species indicative of agricultural modification, such as perennial rye grass *Lolium perenne* and white clover *Trifolium repens* will be largely absent from the *eu-Molinion* marshy grassland.
- Scrub species such as willow *Salix* and birch *Betula* will also be largely absent from the *eu-Molinion* marshy grassland.
- All factors affecting the achievement of these conditions are under control.

Performance indicators for Feature 1

The performance indicators are part of the conservation objective, not a substitute for it. Assessment of plans and projects must be based on the entire conservation objective, not just the performance indicators.

Performance indicators for feature condition		
Attribute	***Attribute rationale and other comments***	***Specified limits***
A1. Extent of *Eu Molinion* grassland	Lower limit is based on current extent. The draft mapping guidance developed by Adrian Fowles was used to map the habitat at Aberbargoed and is in itself a condition mapping exercise that has provided information on the quality of the habitat.	*Upper limit*: As limited by other habitats. *Lower limit*: Current extent (As shown in SAC monitoring report by Karen Wilkinson 2002)
A2. Condition of *Eu Molinion* grassland	Habitat quality required within each of the four areas reflects that detailed in the generic guidance. In addition however sampling in good condition habitat at Aberbargoed indicated that *Succisa* is present at a density of 5% or more. This has therefore been incorporated into the sites based performance indicators.	*Upper limit*: Not required *Lower limit*: Within fields H,L,M and W (on phase II map) 50% of the vegetation meets the following criteria: Within a 50cm radius: *Molinia* is present AND The cover of *Succisa* is 5% or greater AND The vegetation height is between 10-20cm when measured using a

		Boorman's disc. AND Scrub (including seedlings of any tree species and bramble) is absent.
Performance indicators for factors affecting the feature		
Factor	***Factor rationale and other comments***	***Operational Limits***
F1. Livestock grazing	The *eu-Molinion* marshy grassland needs to be maintained through traditional farming practices. Without an appropriate grazing regime, the grassland will continue to become rank and eventually turn to scrub and woodland. Light grazing by cattle and ponies between April and November each year is essential in maintaining the marshy grassland communities.	*Upper limit*: to be agreed *Lower limit*: as grazing is has only been happening for two years it will need constant review to make sure we get it right. The *eu Molinion* grasslands have been grazed hard for the first couple of year to get through the litter build up. Now light grazing by cattle is required.
F2. Burning/off-road vehicles	In previous years anti-social behaviour such as off-roading and burning have occurred at Aberbargoed grasslands. This issues need to be addressed to prevent the *eu-Molinion habitat* from being damaged.	*Upper limit:* None *Lower Limit*: No burning No off-road vehicles

4.3 Conservation Objective for Feature 3 & 4:

Performance indicators for feature condition		
Attribute	***Attribute rationale and other comments***	***Specified limits***
A1. Non SAC features-Marshy Grassland, Dry Neutral Grassland	See features 1 & 2	*Upper limit*: See features 1 &2 *Lower limit*:
Performance indicators for factors affecting the feature		
Factor	***Factor rationale and other comments***	***Operational Limits***
F1. Livestock grazing	See features 1 &2	*Upper limit*: See features 1 &2 *Lower limit*:
F2. Anti-social behaviours	See features 1 &2	*Upper limit:* See features 1 &2 *Lower Limit*:

Feature 3 and 4 to be completed

5. ASSESSMENT OF CONSERVATION STATUS AND MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

This part of the document provides:

- A summary of the assessment of the conservation status of each feature.
- A summary of the management issues that need to be addressed to maintain or restore each feature.

5.1 Conservation Status and Management Requirements of Feature 1: Marsh fritillary butterfly *Euphydryas* **(***Eurodryas, Hypodryas) aurinia*

Conservation Status of Feature 1

The Marsh Fritillary feature at Aberbargoed Grasslands SAC is considered to be in **unfavourable** condition and conservation status (October 2003).

Web counts have in recent years been very low, but the species naturally undergoes significant fluctuations in population numbers due to a variety of factors, including cold and wet weather conditions and parasitic attack.

Management Requirements of Feature 1

See management requirements for feature 2.

5.2 Conservation Status and Management Requirements of Feature 2: *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*) (EU Habitat Code: 6410)

Conservation Status of Feature 2

The SAC report dated October 2003 states that the site is considered to be **Unfavourable** condition and conservation status. This is because the habitat is not in suitable condition for the marsh fritillary. In areas of the site the vegetation is too tall, is dominated by Molinia and does not have sufficient *Succisa*. There is only 2.3ha of good condition habitat and 9.7ha of suitable habitat within the site.

Management Requirements of Feature 2

Management Requirements

It is essential that restoration management is undertaken at Aberbargoed Grasslands to improve the quality and quantity of habitat available to marsh fritillaries. This primarily needs to include the establishment of suitable grazing regime, scrub clearance and control of illegal burning.

Recent Management Actions

In 2005 Caerphilly were successful in gaining funding via the Heritage Lottery Fund, this along with money from CCW has lead to a full- time officer being appointed to Aberbargoed Grasslands. There is also a part-time stock handler. Work has progressed well on the site in the past few years; the site is now stock-proof and a mixture of Welsh Black and Belted Galloways graze the land with a Limousin bull. Scrub clearance and bracken control has begun and flight lines have been cut to improve the connectivity for the butterflies. A programme has been set up to educate the local community to understand why this area is important. A newsletter has been created detailing activities on the grassland and difficulties the site is facing. This and the presence of staff and stock onsite seem to have halted the illegal burning and off-roading.

5.3 Conservation Status and Management Requirements of Feature 3 & 4: Non SAC features- Marshy Grassland, Dry Neutral Grassland

Conservation Status of Feature 3
Unfavourable (as Eu-moliionion is unfavourable)

Management Requirements of Feature 3 & 4
The management requirements of the non-SAC marshy grassland and dry neutral grassland are entirely consistent with those of the areas of *Eu Molinion* marshy grassland (Feature 1) and these two features will be managed collectively

6. ACTION PLAN: SUMMARY

This section takes the management requirements outlined in Section 5 a stage further, assessing the specific management actions required on each management unit. This information is a summary of that held in CCW's Actions Database for sites, and the database will be used by CCW and partner organisations to plan future work to meet the Wales Environment Strategy targets for sites.

Unit Number	CCW Database Number	Unit Name	Summary of Conservation Management Issues	Action needed?
1	000252	Butterfly fields	Lack of management has lead to the gradual decline of this grassland. Bracken and scrub have taken over the site, which has caused a decrease in the quality of the grassland through the reduction of the species diversity. The site has recently been leased to CCBC, they have carried out a number of steps to get the site back into management. New fencing is in place to allow grazing of the site, scrub and bracken are being cleared to open up flight lines and grazing started in the site this year (2007).	Yes
2	000253	Allotment Fields (non SAC unit)	The site has recently been leased to CCBC. They have put in place recovery management and are fencing and putting in place grazing and are undertaking scrub clearance. This will take time to cover the whole SSSI.	yes

7. GLOSSARY

This glossary defines the some of the terms used in this **Core Management Plan**. Some of the definitions are based on definitions contained in other documents, including legislation and other publications of CCW and the UK nature conservation agencies. None of these definitions is legally definitive.

Action A recognisable and individually described act, undertaking or **project** of any kind, specified in section 6 of a **Core Management Plan** or **Management Plan**, as being required for the **conservation management** of a site.

Attribute A quantifiable and monitorable characteristic of a **feature** that, in combination with other such attributes, describes its **condition**.

Common Standards Monitoring A set of principles developed jointly by the UK conservation agencies to help ensure a consistent approach to **monitoring** and reporting on the **features** of sites designated for nature conservation, supported by guidance on identification of **attributes** and monitoring methodologies.

Condition A description of the state of a feature in terms of qualities or **attributes** that are relevant in a nature conservation context. For example the condition of a habitat usually includes its extent and species composition and might also include aspects of its ecological functioning, spatial distribution and so on. The condition of a species

population usually includes its total size and might also include its age structure, productivity, relationship to other populations and spatial distribution. Aspects of the habitat(s) on which a species population depends may also be considered as attributes of its condition.

Condition assessment The process of characterising the **condition** of a **feature** with particular reference to whether the aspirations for its condition, as expressed in its **conservation objective**, are being met.

Condition categories The **condition** of **feature** can be categorised, following **condition assessment** as one of the following[2]:

Favourable: maintained;
Favourable: recovered;
Favourable: un-classified
Unfavourable: recovering;
Unfavourable: no change;
Unfavourable: declining;
Unfavourable: un-classified
Partially destroyed;
Destroyed.

Conservation management Acts or undertaking of all kinds, including but not necessarily limited to **actions,** taken with the aim of achieving the **conservation objectives** of a site. Conservation management includes the taking of statutory and non-statutory measures, it can include the acts of any party and it may take place outside site boundaries as well as within sites. Conservation management may also be embedded within other frameworks for land/sea management carried out for purposes other than achieving the conservation objectives.

Conservation objective The expression of the desired **conservation status** of a **feature,** expressed as a **vision for the feature** and a series of **performance indicators**. The conservation objective for a feature is thus a composite statement, and each feature has one conservation objective.

Conservation status A description of the state of a **feature** that comprises both its **condition** and the state of the **factors** affecting or likely to affect it. Conservation status is thus a characterisation of both the current state of a feature and its future prospects.

Conservation status assessment The process of characterising the **conservation status** of a **feature** with particular reference to whether the aspirations for it, as expressed in its **conservation objective**, are being met. The results of conservation status assessment can be summarised either as 'favourable' (i.e. conservation objectives are met) or unfavourable (i.e. conservation objectives are not met). However the value of conservation status assessment in terms of supporting decisions about **conservation management**, lies mainly in the details of the assessment of feature **condition**, **factors** and trend

[2] See JNCC guidance on Common Standards Monitoring http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-2272

information derived from comparisons between current and previous conservation status assessments and condition assessments.

Core Management Plan A CCW document containing the conservation objectives for a site and a summary of other information contained in a full site **Management Plan**.

Factor Anything that has influenced, is influencing or may influence the **condition** of a **feature**. Factors can be natural processes, human activities or effects arising from natural process or human activities, They can be positive or negative in terms of their influence on features, and they can arise within a site or from outside the site. Physical, socio-economic or legal constraints on **conservation management** can also be considered as factors.

Favourable condition See **condition** and **condition assessment**

Favourable conservation status See **conservation status** and **conservation status assessment.**[3]

Feature **The species population, habitat type or other entity for which a site is designated. The ecological or geological interest which justifies the designation of a site and which is the focus of conservation management.**

Integrity See **site integrity**

Key Feature The habitat or species population within a **management unit** that is the primary focus of **conservation management** and **monitoring** in that unit.

Management Plan The full expression of a designated site's legal status, **vision**, **features**, **conservation objectives**, **performance indicators** and management requirements. A complete management plan may not reside in a single document, but may be contained in a number of documents (including in particular **the Core Management Plan**) and sets of electronically stored information.

Management Unit An area within a site, defined according to one or more of a range of criteria, such as topography, location of **features**, tenure, patterns of land/sea use. The key characteristic of management units is to reflect the spatial scale at which **conservation management** and **monitoring** can be most effectively organised. They are used as the primary basis for differentiating priorities for conservation management and monitoring in different parts of a site, and for facilitating communication with those responsible for management of different parts of a site.

Monitoring An intermittent (regular or irregular) series of observations in time, carried out to show the extent of compliance with a formulated standard or degree of deviation from an expected norm. In **Common Standards Monitoring**, the formulated standard is the quantified expression of favourable **condition** based on **attributes**.

Operational limits The levels or values within which a **factor** is considered to be acceptable in terms of its influence on a **feature**. A factor may have both upper and lower

[3] A full definition of favourable conservation status is given in Section 4.

operational limits, or only an upper limit or lower limit. For some factors an upper limit may be zero.

Performance indicators The **attributes** and their associated **specified limits**, together with **factors** and their associated **operational limits,** which provide the standard against which information from **monitoring** and other sources is used to determine the degree to which the **conservation objectives** for a **feature** are being met. Performance indicators are part of, not the same as, conservation objectives. See also **vision for the feature**.

Plan or project **Project:** Any form of construction work, installation, development or other intervention in the environment, the carrying out or continuance of which is subject to a decision by any public body or statutory undertaker.
Plan: a document prepared or adopted by a public body or statutory undertaker, intended to influence decisions on the carrying out of **projects.** Decisions on plans and projects which affect Natura 2000 and Ramsar sites are subject to specific legal and policy procedures.

Site integrity The coherence of a site's ecological structure and function, across its whole area, that enables it to sustain the habitat, complex of habitats and/or the levels of populations of the species for which it is designated.

Site Management Statement (SMS) The document containing CCW's views about the management of a site issued as part of the legal notification of an SSSI under section 28(4) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as substituted.

Special Feature See **feature**.

Specified limit The levels or values for an **attribute** which define the degree to which the attribute can fluctuate without creating cause for concern about the **condition** of the **feature**. The range within the limits corresponds to favourable, the range outside the limits corresponds to unfavourable. Attributes may have lower specified limits, upper specified limits, or both.

Unit See **management unit.**

Vision for the feature The expression, within a **conservation objective**, of the aspirations for the **feature** concerned. See also **performance indicators.**

Vision Statement The statement conveying an impression of the whole site in the state that is intended to be the product of its **conservation management.** A 'pen portrait' outlining the **conditions** that should prevail when all the **conservation objectives** are met. A description of the site as it would be when all the **features** are in **favourable condition**.

8. REFERENCES AND ANNEXES

Aberbargoed SAC Monitoring Report-Oct 2003- Karen Wilkinson, available on request.

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