

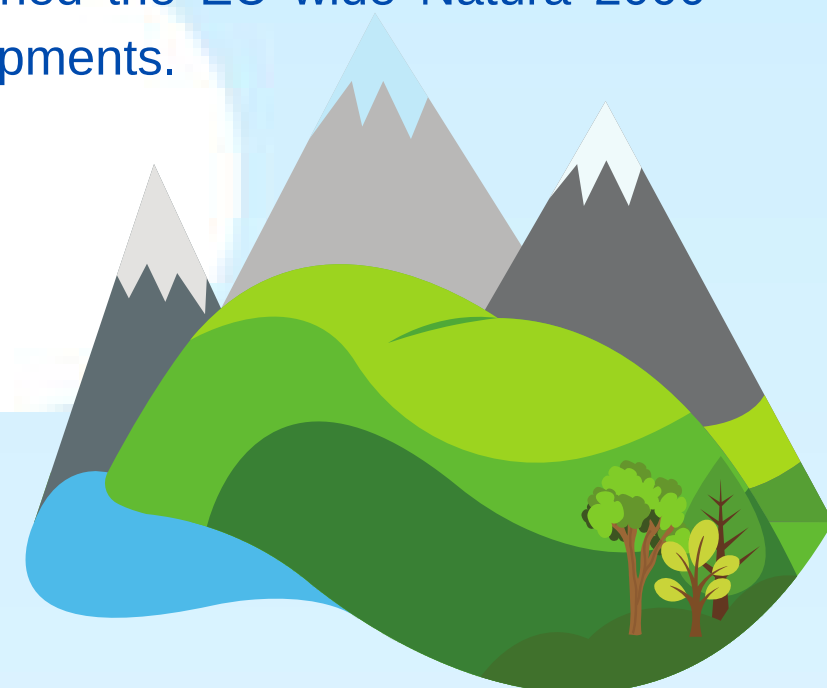
5 Key things you need to know about

NI SAC Conservation Management Plans (CMPs)

A Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is an area of land or water that has been chosen to protect special habitats or species that are listed in the Habitats Directive. The Habitats Directive is an EU law designed to protect and maintain a wide range of rare, threatened or native animal and plant species. It was adopted in 1992 and established the EU wide Natura 2000 ecological network of protected areas to safeguard them against potentially damaging developments.

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There will be 57 plans drafted for NI's SACs, covering a range of habitats like bogs, woodlands, grasslands, rivers, lakes, coastland and mountains; and rare or protected animals like otters, salmon and the Marsh Fritillary Butterfly

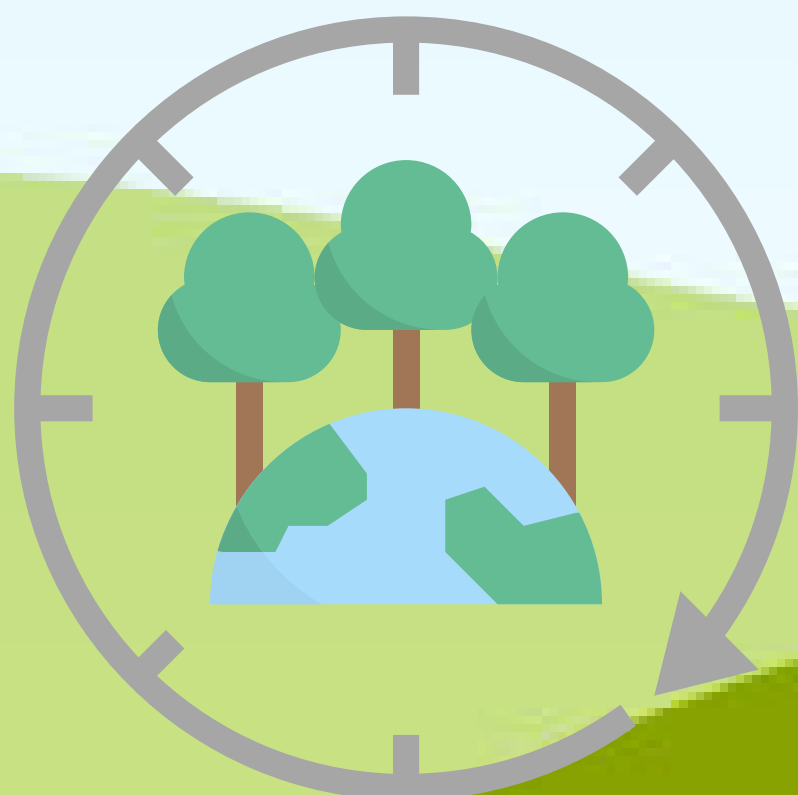


CMPs will help meet national and international obligations to protect, promote and manage designated sites and therefore, will contribute to halting and reversing the loss of biodiversity

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All SACs will be visited to check that plants, animals and habitats that made them important are still present and how they're doing. Most of our SACs are in unfavourable condition which means that what makes the sites special aren't doing well. These CMPs will help figure out what is wrong in each SAC and propose ways of fixing the problems



The desire is to develop management plans that meet conservation requirements whilst taking account of local needs, resulting in more workable and sustainable plans

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By working with land managers, farmers and key stakeholders, we can develop practical management measures to help nature on these sites and identify available funding sources



Conservation Management Plans for Northern Ireland's Special Areas of Conservation

Northern Ireland is home to iconic and important nature and wildlife, of both national and international importance, which are a key part of the Northern Ireland landscape, providing a wide range of goods and services to society and helping to deal with climate change.

Some of our key areas for nature conservation have been designated as Special Areas of Conservation, or SAC for short. These are designated to protect special habitats or species of international importance, as listed in the Habitats Directive, to ensure 'the conservation of a wide range of rare, threatened or endemic animal and plant species.

Some 200 rare and characteristic habitat types are also targeted for conservation in their own right.' All of the SAC sites chosen under the Habitats Directive are collectively known as the Natura 2000 Network which is a network of protected areas across the EU, which forms part of a wider international Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest.

The sites are chosen according to scientific criteria to ensure favourable conservation status of each habitat type and species. 'Favourable conservation status' means managing the site to ensure the special habitats and species are healthy.

Northern Ireland has 58 areas that have been designated as SACs covering terrestrial, freshwater and marine habitats. Some of these are cross-border sites.

The habitats and species that occur in our SACs are called 'features' and they are of international importance. These SACs are vitally important as their purpose is to protect Northern Ireland's biodiversity.

Important features of Northern Ireland's SACs include freshwater pearl mussel, grey seal, bogs, otters, salmon, sand dunes, rivers and lakes, estuaries, heaths, mountains and woodland.

For a list of our SACs and their important features, please visit <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/protected-areas/type/sac>

Unfortunately many of our SACs are not in good health. The reasons for this include climate change, inappropriate land management, water and air pollution, invasive non-native species and development. To help bring our SACs back into good condition, we need to establish key measures to address these pressures. With that in mind, we are preparing individual Conservation Management Plans for 57 of our SACs. These plans help figure out what is wrong in each SAC and propose ways of fixing the problems. Fixing the problem could be as simple as getting the site grazed more or blocking drains on a bog to make it wetter. Writing a Conservation Management Plan involves going out onto the site and looking at all the features and assessing what 'condition' they are in or how healthy they are and assessing any issues. Issues include things that are impacting the site and its features right now, known as pressures and things that may impact the site and its features in future, known as threats.

Stakeholder engagement is key to the success of the Conservation Management Plans. We expect the Management Plans to provide a mechanism for discussing and agreeing appropriate land use and management with land managers, farmers and other key stakeholders within the sites to develop practical measures and identify available funding sources.

It is intended that these Conservation Management Plans will meet the conservation requirements of the sites with community participation resulting in workable, sustainable plans.

For more information please email ConservationPlans@daera-ni.gov.uk