Ardal Gwarchodaeth Arbennig Traeth Lafan / Lavan Sands Special Protection Area

Advice provided by Natural Resources Wales in fulfilment of Regulation 37(3) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

June 2025

Contents

Contents 2

List of Figures 3

List of Tables 3

Crynodeb Gweithredol 4

Executive Summary 5

1. Introduction 6

1.1. SPA map 8

1.2. The purpose of conservation advice 8

1.3. Conservation objective structure 9

2. Roles and responsibilities 11

2.1. NRW's role 11

2.2. The role of competent and relevant authorities 11

2.3. The purpose of conservation objectives 13

2.4. The purpose of advice on operations 13

2.5. When to use this advice 14

2.6. Feature condition 14

3. Conservation objectives for Traeth Lafan SPA 15

3.1. Feature 1: Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*. 16

3.2. Feature 2: Curlew *Numenius arquata*. 20

3.3. Feature 3: Redshank *Tringa totanus*. 24

3.4. Feature 4: Red-breasted merganser *Mergus serrator*. 28

3.5. Feature 5: Great crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus*. 32

4. Advice on operations 36

4.1. Operations which may cause deterioration or disturbance to the features of the site 36

5. References 41

List of Figures

Figure 1. Map of the Traeth Lafan SPA..... 8

List of Tables

Table 1. Summary of site features and link to Conservation Objectives..... 5

Table 2. Advice on operations for Traeth Lafan SPA. 37

Crynodeb Gweithredol

Mae'r ddogfen hon yn cynnwys cyngor Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru ar gyfer ardal gwarchodaeth arbennig (AGA) Traeth Lafan a gyhoeddwyd o dan Reoliad 37(3) o Reoliadau Cadwraeth 2017. Sef amcanion cadwraeth a chyngor ar weithrediadau.

Mae Adran 1 yn cyflwyno'r safle, pwrpas y cyngor a strwythur yr amcanion cadwraeth. Mae Adran 2 yn cynnwys esboniad o'r rolau a'r cyfrifoldebau, ac mae Adran 3 yn amlinellu amcanion cadwraeth pob nodwedd a gwybodaeth ategol. Mae cyngor ar weithrediadau mewn perthynas â'r safle hwn i'w gael yn Adran 4.

Isod mae rhestr o nodweddion dynodedig yr AGA hon a dolen uniongyrchol i'r amcanion cadwraeth, ond mae'n bwysig darllen pob adran yn llawn.

Tabl 1. Crynodeb o nodweddion yr AGA a'r ddolen i'r amcanion cadwraeth.

Enw'r AGA	Nodweddion Dynodedig	Cysylltiad â'r Amcanion Cadwraeth
Traeth Lafan	• Pioden fôr *Haematopus ostralegus* • Gylfinir *Numenius arquata* • Pibydd coesgoch *Tringa totanus* • Hwyaden Frongoc *Mergus serrator* • Clwych Fawr Gopog *Podiceps cristatus*	Amcanion Cadwraeth

Executive Summary

This document contains NRW's advice for Lavan Sands special protection area (SPA) issued under Regulation 37(3) of the Conservation Regulations 2017.

Section 1 introduces the SPA, the purpose of the advice and the structure of the conservation objectives. Section 2 includes an explanation of the roles and responsibilities before Section 3 outlines each feature's conservation objectives and supporting information. Advice on operations in relation to this SPA is found in Section 4.

Table 1 lists the designated features of this SPA and provides a direct link to the conservation objectives, but it is important that all sections are read in full.

Table 1. Summary of SPA features and link to conservation objectives.

SPA Name	Designated Features	Link to Conservation Objectives
Lavan Sands	• Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* • Curlew *Numenius arquata* • Redshank *Tringa totanus* • Red-breasted merganser *Mergus serrator* • Great crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus*	Conservation objectives

1. Introduction

Ardal gwarchodaeth arbennig Traeth Lafan / Lavan Sands special protection area (SPA) is in Conwy Bay, lying between Bangor and Llanfairfechan in north west Wales (Figure 1). This large area of intertidal sand and mudflats lies at the eastern edge of the Menai Strait. The site is of importance for wintering waterbirds, especially oystercatcher and curlew. In conditions of severe winter weather, Traeth Lafan acts as a refuge area for oystercatchers displaced from the Dee Estuary. The site is also an important moulting roost for great-crested grebe in late summer / early autumn.

The SPA was classified in 1996 under Article 4.2 of the Wild Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) for regularly supporting 1% or more of the biogeographical population of the following regularly occurring migratory species in winter,

- 5500 oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus*.
- 1500 curlews *Numenius arquata*.
- 1200 redshanks *Tringa totanus*.
- 120 red-breasted mergansers *Mergus Serrator*.
- 500 great-crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus* during their autumn moult.

This information can be found on the standard data form on the Joint Nature Conservation Committee website.

All the SPA reference populations are 5-year peak means from winter counts. The 5-year peak mean is the peak number of birds in a winter season averaged across 5 years. The bullet points below detail how this mean is reached.

- Each winter (Oct -March), counts are made every month by British Trust of Ornithology (BTO) volunteers in count sectors in estuaries for the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBs) data base on behalf of the all the Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies (SNCBs).
- The figures from each count sector are added together to give a total figure for an estuary in a winter month.
- The highest figure during the winter months is the peak count for that winter.
- These peak counts are then averaged across 5 winters to give a 5-year peak mean.
- Estuarine SPAs were designated under the Birds Directive using a 5-year peak mean from these counts.

There will be inaccuracies in these whole estuarine counts due to different counters, varying weather conditions, missed counts, spring tides etc. This means these counts are estimates. However, as the same methods and techniques are used each time, the inaccuracies should be consistent, allowing estimates to be compared across 5-year periods. This enables SNCBs, such as NRW, to use 5-year peak means in

condition assessments and when considering how a proposed development may affect the designated bird species of a site.

The SPA contains a range of intertidal habitats from sheltered mudflats traversed by freshwater streams, to saltmarsh and exposed sand banks. These habitats support large numbers of invertebrates which provide rich feeding grounds for the birds, making this one of the most important sites in Wales for waders and wildfowl.

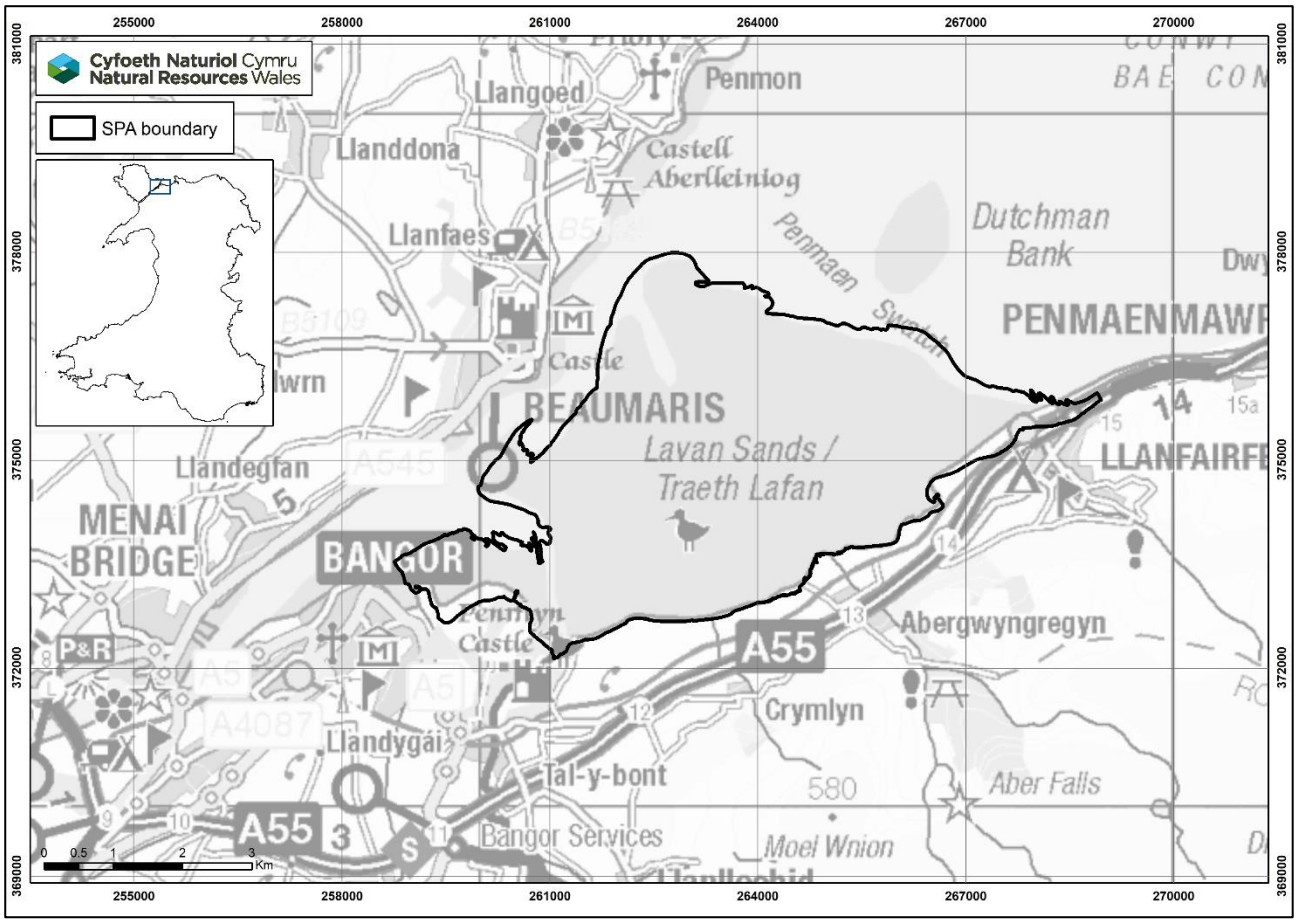
The flats have been used as an area for shellfish fishing since prehistoric times. Currently the area nearest to Bangor is designated as a cockle fishery using traditional hand methods under the Cockles and Mussels (Specified Area) (Wales) Order 2011 (S.I. 2011/1988). The fishery is only opened when there is an adequate resource to sustain harvesting without detrimental adverse impact on the oystercatchers, of which cockles are the main food source.

This SPA is also notified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and is overlapped by the Menai Strait and Conway Bay Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The conservation objectives for these protected sites can be found on the NRW website. The boundaries and geographical extents of these sites can be seen on the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) MPA mapper.

1.1. SPA map

Figure 1 shows the boundaries of the Traeth Lafan SPA.

Figure 1. Map of the Traeth Lafan SPA.



1.2. The purpose of conservation advice

Conservation advice provides a framework for assessing developments and activities with the potential to affect the features for which a European marine site (EMS) is designated. An EMS is a SAC or SPA which consists of marine areas. Conservation advice presents site specific information, in addition to highlighting activities that are potentially capable of having an impact on the site and its designated species (known as a feature).

This SPA is an EMS subject to protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, as amended (referred to in this document as the 'Habitats Regulations'). Under the Habitats Regulations, relevant and competent authorities with functions in relation to an EMS must exercise those functions to comply with the requirements of the 1992 European Commission (EC) Habitats and Species Directive and the 2009 EC Wild Birds Directive. The key requirements of these Directives

include the conservation of the features (habitat types or species) for which SACs or SPAs are designated. This requires taking appropriate steps to avoid deterioration or disturbance of SAC or SPA features and carrying out appropriate assessment of any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on a SAC or SPA.

This document contains the conservation advice for the Traeth Lafan SPA. It is prepared by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and given under our duty in Regulation 37(3) of the Habitats Regulations (see Section 2.1).

This advice is based on the best available evidence and information at the time of writing. In some cases, evidence can be limited. It will be kept under review by NRW and updated as and when appropriate.

1.3. Conservation objective structure

The conservation objectives for the designated features in this site are underpinned by conservation objective attributes. These attributes describe the ecological characteristics (e.g. population), and the ecological requirements that allow the conservation objectives for each feature to be met.

Conservation objective attributes have a target which is either quantified or qualified depending on the available evidence. The target identifies, as far as possible, the desired state to be achieved for the attribute. In many cases, the attribute targets show if the current objective is to either 'maintain' or 'restore' the attribute and are based on the latest condition assessment for the feature. Some aspects of feature condition may be assessed as unknown. In these cases, a maintain target will be set as necessary. For attributes that have been assigned 'unknown' in the condition assessment, further information on feature condition and/or activities impacting the feature will be required to inform further advice. Each attribute target will need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis using the most current information available.

The conservation objective attributes that underpin the conservation objectives are used to measure if the objective is being met. This in turn can be used to see if site integrity is being maintained. Failure to meet any attribute means that the conservation objective is not being met and thus site integrity is not being maintained. Below is an example of a conservation objective and associated conservation objective attributes and targets.

Example Objective 1: The wintering population of the feature is stable or increasing relative to the SPA target population.

Example Objective attribute	**Example Site specific target**
Wintering population	Maintain/restore the wintering population of feature at or above X individuals (mean peak population year-year).

The conservation objectives for Traeth Lafan SPA are set out in Section 3. As noted in Section 1.2, NRW may refine these in the future as further information becomes available and increases our understanding of the feature.

The feature's conservation objective section provides:

1. A clear statement of each conservation objective for the feature.

2. A table summarising the attributes, and the targets for those attributes.

3. Supporting information that underpins the selection of the attributes and targets.

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1. NRW's role

Under Regulation 5 of the Habitats Regulations, NRW is a Nature Conservation Body and, in relation to Wales, is the Appropriate Nature Conservation Body (ANCB).

In its role as the ANCB, NRW has a duty under Regulation 37(3) of the Habitats Regulations to advise relevant authorities in respect of a EMS as to:

(a) the conservation objectives for that site

(b) any operations which may cause deterioration of natural habitats or the habitats of species, or disturbance of species, for which that site has been designated (see Section 1.1).

Advice on operations which may cause deterioration, together with the conservation objectives, is designed to assist relevant authorities and other decision-makers in complying with their statutory duties under the Habitats Regulations. The advice on operations which may cause deterioration given in this document is without prejudice to other advice given. This includes the conservation objectives themselves, and other advice which may be given by NRW from time to time in relation to any specific operations.

"Operations" is taken to cover all types of human activity, irrespective of whether they are under any form of regulation or management. Thus, the advice contains reference to operations which may not be the responsibility of any of the relevant authorities.

NRW will provide additional advice for the site to relevant authorities and competent authorities to allow them to fulfil their duties under the Habitats Regulations. For example, by providing advice to a competent authority assessing the implications of plans or projects on the features of the EMS. Each plan or project will be judged on its own merits, and this will determine the nature of any additional advice required.

2.2. The role of competent and relevant authorities

The expressions used in this advice of "relevant authority" and "competent authority" are as defined in Regulation 3 of the Habitats Regulations. Relevant authorities are specified in Regulation 6 of the Habitats Regulations. Competent Authorities are specified in Regulation 7 of the Habitats Regulations.

Under Part 6 of the Habitats Regulations, all competent authorities must undertake a formal assessment of the implications that any new plans or projects may have on the designated features of a protected site. The implications must be assessed in the context of other plans and projects affecting the same site. Activities outside the site may also affect the features of the site, therefore, plans and projects located outside of a designated site may still need to be assessed.

In respect of the assessment provisions in Part 6 (assessment of plans or projects) of the Habitats Regulations, NRW is also the ANCB in relation to Wales.

The assessment provisions comprise several distinct stages which are collectively described as a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), for which guidance is available. Before deciding to undertake, or give any consent, permission or other authorisation for, a plan or project which is likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), and is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of that site, the competent authority must make an appropriate assessment of the implications of the plan or project for that site in view of that site's conservation objectives.

In light of the conclusions of the HRA and subject to derogation under Regulation 64, the competent authority may agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the EMS. In considering whether a plan or project will adversely affect the integrity of the site, the competent authority must have regard to the manner in which it is proposed to be carried out or to any conditions or restrictions subject to which it proposes that the consent, permission or other authorisation should be given.

Carrying out the HRA process is the responsibility of the decision maker as the competent authority. However, it is the responsibility of the applicant to provide the competent authority with the information that they require for this purpose.

The competent authority has a duty to consult the ANCB for the purposes of the assessment. Under Regulation 63(3) of the Habitats Regulations the competent authority must have regard to any representations made by the ANCB when reaching its decision.

Under Regulation 38(1) of the Habitats Regulations it states that, "*the relevant authorities, or any of them, may establish for a European marine site a management scheme under which their functions (including any power to make byelaws) are to be exercised so as to secure compliance with the requirements of the Directives in relation to that site".*

In other words, a group of relevant authorities, or any individual relevant authority, may create a management plan for an EMS. Management plans should be used to help relevant authorities carry out their duties to secure compliance with the Habitats Regulations. Only one management scheme may be made for each EMS. A management scheme may be amended. An authority which has established a management scheme must as soon as practicable thereafter send a copy of it to the ANCB. Any management plans created on this site should be guided by the advice in this package.

Within their areas of jurisdiction relevant authorities must have regard to both direct and indirect effects of an activity on the designated features of the site. This may include consideration of issues outside the boundary of the site. Nothing within a Regulation 37(3) package will require relevant authorities to undertake any actions to maintain or improve the condition of designated features if it is shown that the changes result wholly from natural causes.

NRW will continue to review any new evidence or information about this site and will provide further advice as appropriate. This does not stop relevant authorities from taking any appropriate conservation measures to prevent deterioration to the designated features. Such actions should be undertaken when required.

2.3. The purpose of conservation objectives

The purpose of the conservation objectives for an EMS is to help meet the obligations of the Habitats Regulations in relation to that site. They do this by supporting:

- **Communication**. The conservation objectives help convey to stakeholders what is needed to maintain or restore a feature in/to favourable condition.
- **Site planning and management**. The conservation objectives guide the development of management measures for sites. Achievement of conservation objectives may require management action to be taken inside or outside the site boundary.
- **Assessment of plans and projects**. The Habitats Regulations require the assessment of plans and projects in view of 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 a site. Conservation objectives can help develop suitable compensatory measures.
- **Monitoring and reporting**. Conservation objectives provide the basis for defining the evidence that will be used for assessing the condition of a feature.

This document includes both a statement of the conservation objectives and explanatory text on their intent and interpretation specific to the site (supporting information).

2.4. The purpose of advice on operations

NRW must provide advice to relevant authorities about operations that may cause,

- deterioration of designated natural habitats
- deterioration of the habitats of designated species
- the disturbance of designated species

This is statutory advice required by Regulation 37(3)(b) of the Habitats Regulations when considering operations which may cause impacts to designated features. These are operations which could take place within or outside the boundary of the Traeth Lafan SPA.

NRW can provide specific advice on existing activities and management, advising on the extent to which activities are consistent with the conservation objectives. This advice, together with the list of activities in Section 4 and the latest condition assessments should direct required management measures within a site.

2.5. When to use this advice

This advice should be used together with case-specific advice issued by NRW when developing, proposing or assessing an activity, plan or project that may affect the features of the site. Any proposal or operation that has the potential to affect a site must not prevent the achievement of the feature's conservation objectives. Any such prevention would amount to an adverse effect on the integrity of the site.

The advice given here is without prejudice to any advice which may be provided by NRW in relation to the consideration of individual plans or projects in the carrying out of the assessment provisions as defined in Part 6 of the Habitat Regulations.

2.6. Feature condition

NRW has a dedicated condition assessment process to assess feature condition. Each feature designated in Welsh EMS have their own set of performance indicators. These indicators have targets which are assessed with the most up to date evidence available. When all required indicator targets are met a feature is in favourable condition.

The condition assessment of a feature helps to determine if its conservation objectives are being achieved. Results determine if maintain or restore conservation objectives are needed. Appropriate management must be in place to enable conservation objectives to continue being met and for feature condition to be maintained or restored as required. The conservation objectives cannot be achieved if a feature is in unfavourable condition.

Feature condition is recorded in condition assessment documents. These are available on the NRW website. NRW will update this advice package when new condition assessment information is available.

2.6.1. Favourable conservation status and National Site Network

If features are in favourable condition, it is likely they are making an appropriate contribution to Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) of the feature at the UK level. A feature cannot make an appropriate contribution to FCS without meeting its conservation objectives. More information on FCS can be found in the joint statement from the UK Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies.

Regulation 16A of the Habitats Regulations creates the National Site Network on land and at sea, including both the inshore and offshore marine areas in the UK, and sets out the powers and duties of the appropriate authority (Welsh Government).

Information on how features in a site are meeting their conservation objectives will feed into the assessment of the National Site Network management objectives. The management objectives for the National Site Network are to maintain or restore designated SAC and SPA features to favourable conservation status across their natural range. More information on the UK National Site Network and its management objectives can be found on the gov.uk website.

3. Conservation objectives for Traeth Lafan SPA

The conservation objectives for each designated feature are outlined in the sections below. Each objective is accompanied by objective attributes and targets (see Section 1.3) and supporting information specific to each objective.

The following terms are used in the conservation objectives.

Anthropogenic: In this document anthropogenic specifically relates to environmental changes caused or influenced by people, either directly or indirectly. NRW consider human influences to include climate change.

Maintain: Where existing evidence from the most recent condition assessment suggests the feature to be in favourable condition, the conservation objective is for the feature to remain in favourable condition.

Natural change: This is defined as species or habitat changes which are not a result of human influences.

Natural variability: This is defined as species or habitat variability, which are not a result of human influences.

Restore: Where existing evidence from the most recent condition assessment suggests the feature, or part of the feature, to be in unfavourable condition the conservation objective is to return the feature to favourable condition. As the feature is being returned to favourable condition, further decline in the aspects of condition that are causing it to be unfavourable should be prevented. The ability to achieve favourable condition should not be inhibited.

Significant anthropogenic disturbance: For anthropogenic disturbance on a species feature to be significant an action (alone or in combination with other effects) must impact on the species in such a way as to be likely to cause negative effects on the population associated with the site. For example, through changes to behaviour, distribution or abundance.

3.1. Feature 1: Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*.

NRW published the latest condition assessment for oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* in Traeth Lafan SPA in 2025. They were assessed as **unfavourable** (medium confidence) at that time. NRW will review these conservation objectives when new condition assessment information is available.

Below are the attributes and targets for each conservation objective alongside supporting information.

Objective 1: The population of wintering oystercatcher is stable or increasing relative to the SPA target population.

Objective attribute	**Site specific target**
1a. Wintering population	Maintain the wintering population of oystercatcher at a minimum 5-year peak mean of 5,500 individuals across the SPA.

Supporting Information

1a. Wintering population

In winter, oystercatcher gather in large flocks, with resident UK birds joined by birds migrating to the UK for the winter.

At designation Traeth Lafan supported a wintering oystercatcher population of 5,500 individuals. The latest condition assessment showed the 5-year peak mean of the oystercatcher population to be meeting the required target. The wintering population attribute is being met, allowing a maintain target to be set for objective 1a. For more information see the latest condition assessment (Hatton-Ellis et al., 2025).

Objective 2: The wintering oystercatcher that use the SPA continue to have access to, and can utilise, habitats necessary to maintain the population in favourable condition.

Objective attribute	Site specific target
2a. Wintering population distribution	The distribution of the wintering oystercatcher population that use the SPA should not be significantly impacted by anthropogenic activity.
2b. Wintering population disturbance (by human activity)	The wintering oystercatcher population that use the SPA should not be subject to significant anthropogenic disturbance.

Supporting Information

2a. Wintering population distribution

This objective attribute seeks to ensure that oystercatcher can continue to use and access all areas within the Traeth Lafan SPA needed for feeding, moulting, roosting, loafing, shelter and any other activities necessary to support their survival.

Traeth Lafan is an important winter refuge for oystercatcher. Most of the birds wintering here are from northern breeding grounds, such as the Faroes and occasionally Norway. Juveniles take three years to mature and often stay in wintering grounds all year round until reaching maturity (Sitters, 2002). The area is also an important resting stop for birds migrating further south.

Oystercatchers gather in large flocks to feed on the mudflat and sandflat throughout the Traeth Lafan SPA. They roost above high water in groups. Most oystercatchers roosting at Traeth Lafan at high water also forage on the mudflats and sandflats (Howe, 1998). Oystercatchers mainly use the shore of the Gwynedd and Anglesey coast for roosting. However, they will also roost in the adjacent fields.

The roosting sites on the shore and adjacent fields are outside the boundary of the SPA. The ability of oystercatcher to move freely between feeding and roosting sites is critical to their fitness and survival. Therefore, movement of the birds inside and outside of the SPA must not be impacted or restricted.

There are no known anthropogenic activities that have impeded the use of the whole SPA by oystercatcher or restricted their movements. For more information see the latest condition assessment (Hatton-Ellis et al., 2025).

2b. Wintering population disturbance (by human activity)

Changes in the distribution of the oystercatchers are most likely to be brought about through disturbance. Disturbance occurs when an activity is sufficient to disrupt normal behaviours, for example, changes to feeding or roosting behaviour, increased energy expenditure due to time spent moving to avoid stressors, desertion of supporting habitats (both within and outside the protected area where appropriate). If

the activity occurs at a level that substantially impacts behaviour for long enough it can lead to changes in distribution, displacement through reduction of habitat available and consequently could affect the long-term viability of the population.

Disturbance associated with human activity may take a variety of forms including, light, sound, vibration, trampling, presence of people, animals and structures. Oystercatchers are moderately sensitive to disturbance. They do tolerate some disturbance stimuli and will habituate rapidly to ongoing activity. They seem to tolerate activity better in more disturbed locations compared to undisturbed. Oystercatcher are thought to be tolerant of sound but there is little evidence to back this up. A standard approach to mitigating disturbance should be taken (Cutts et al., 2013).

One of the main high tide roosting areas is outside of the SPA and SSSI designations but is covered by a local nature reserve. This offers some protection from human disturbance in the form of bird hides and public access routes, helping retain suitable high tide roosts. However, there is open access to the shore. Localised disturbance from people and their dogs is likely to be the main risk to oystercatchers in Traeth Lafan. It is difficult to control for this disturbance, though education and signage can help to some extent. It should be noted that important roosting areas exist both inside and outside of the SPA.

The latest condition assessment found there has been a significant decline in oystercatcher at one of the important roosting areas. This decline coincides with the establishment of access to that part of the coast. The disturbance attribute target is not being met as oystercatcher in the SPA are subject to significant anthropogenic disturbance. For more information see the latest condition assessment (Hatton-Ellis et al., 2025).

Objective 3: The quality of habitat and abundance of food supply is sufficient to maintain the population of wintering oystercatcher that use the SPA in favourable condition.

Objective attribute	**Site specific target**
3a. Supporting habitat	Maintain sufficient extent, distribution, function and quality of supporting habitat to support a wintering oystercatcher population of 5,500 individuals. Maintain existing unrestricted bird sightlines in every direction around both roosting sites and feeding areas.
3b.Food availability	Maintain the abundance and distribution of oystercatcher food supply at levels sufficient to support a wintering population of 5,500 individuals.

Supporting Information

3a. Supporting habitat

The extent, distribution and availability of suitable habitat (either within or outside the site boundary) which supports the feature for all necessary stages of the non-breeding/wintering period (moulting, roosting, loafing, feeding) should be maintained.

Some of the high tide roosts are in fields close to the shore outside the SPA and local nature reserve. Good sightlines (i.e. open spaces where the birds can see any potential predators) are a defining characteristic of roosting sites. Any significant obstruction to sightlines could impact on use of the roosts. If line of sight becomes obstructed birds may abandon their roosts, which could consequently have a negative impact on the population.

There has been no loss in extent or distribution of supporting habitat in the SPA and no issues with sightlines. There is also no evidence to suggest that the functioning or quality of the supporting habitat is not sufficient to support the population. Therefore the supporting habitat attribute is being met, allowing maintain targets to be set for objective 3a. For more information see the latest condition assessment (Hatton-Ellis et. al., 2025).

3b.Food availability

The availability of an abundant food supply is critically important for successful fitness, survival and the overall sustainability of the population. As a result, inappropriate management and direct or indirect impacts which may affect the distribution, abundance and availability of food may adversely affect the population and alter the distribution of birds.

Oystercatchers predominantly feed on shellfish, although feeding on worms is common amongst juveniles. Once adult, however, few birds take worms and concentrate on blue mussels, *Mytilus edulis*, and cockles *Cerastoderma edule*. In periods of food shortage, they may take other sources of food, particularly *Macoma* and other clams (Zwarts et al. 1996). Birds may also spend the high tide period ‘topping up’ on invertebrates in surrounding agricultural or grassland if such habitat is available (Goss-Custard et al. 1994).

There is a long-standing commercial cockle fishery operating in the SPA. Harvests in the past have caused concern that stocks would not provide enough food for the Oystercatchers. However, the fishery is now manged through a permitted fishery under the Cockle Fishing Management and Permitting (Specified Area) (Wales) Order 2024. When the fishery is open there are catch limits set to ensure sufficient cockles remain to support the wintering population of oystercatcher.

There is no reason to believe the distribution and abundance of oystercatcher food is not sufficient to support the target population. The food availability attribute is being met, allowing a maintain target to be set for objective 3b. For more information see the latest condition assessment (Hatton-Ellis et. al., 2025).

3.2. Feature 2: Curlew *Numenius arquata*.

NRW published the latest condition assessment for curlew *Numenius arquata* in Traeth Lafan SPA in 2025. They were assessed as Favourable (medium confidence) at that time. NRW will review these conservation objectives when new condition assessment information is available.

Below are the attributes and targets for each conservation objective alongside supporting information.

Objective 1: The population of wintering curlew is stable or increasing relative to the SPA target population.

Objective attribute	**Site specific target**
1a. Wintering population	Maintain the wintering population of curlew at a minimum 5 year peak mean of 1,500 individuals across the SPA.

Supporting Information

1a. Wintering population

In winter, curlews migrate from their breeding grounds in upland areas of rough pasture, heather moorland and wetland to gather in groups on tidal mudflats, saltmarshes and nearby farmland (RSPB bird facts).

At designation Traeth Lafan supported a wintering curlew *Numenius arquata*, population of 1,500 individuals. The latest condition assessment showed the 5-year peak mean of the curlew population to be meeting the required target. The wintering population attribute is being met, allowing a maintain target to be set for objective 1a. For more information see the latest condition assessment (Hatton-Ellis et al., 2025).

Objective 2: The wintering curlew that use the SPA continue to have access to, and can utilise, habitats necessary to maintain the population in favourable condition.

Objective attribute	Site specific target
2a. Wintering population distribution	The distribution of the wintering curlew population that use the SPA should not be significantly impacted by anthropogenic activity.
2b. Wintering population disturbance (by human activity)	The wintering curlew population that use the SPA should not be subject to significant anthropogenic disturbance.

Supporting Information

2a. Wintering population distribution

This objective attribute seeks to ensure that curlew can continue to use and access all areas within the Traeth Lafan SPA needed for feeding, moulting, roosting, loafing, shelter and any other activities necessary to support their survival.

The ability of curlew to move freely between feeding and roosting sites is critical to their fitness and survival. As roosting can be outside of the SPA boundary movement of the birds inside and outside of the SPA must also not be impacted or restricted. Most roosting curlew forage on the flats of Traeth Lafan where they tend to concentrate in the coastal sections and are actively feeding at low water (Howe, 1998).

Curlew roosts are more common on the Gwynedd coast than the Anglesey coast. Curlew also roost in the adjacent fields outside of the SPA in greater numbers than oystercatcher. The fields in which they roost varied when compared over time (Butler, 2005).

Important roosting areas have been identified as Baron Hill, Park, the pond at Parciau, Penrhyn Park, the Spinnies fields and Llanfairfechan spit (Butler, 2005). However, this is not an exhaustive list of their roosts.

There are no known anthropogenic activities that have impeded the use of the whole SPA by curlew or restricted their movements. Therefore the population distribution attribute is being met. For more information see the latest condition assessment (Hatton-Ellis et al., 2025).

2b. Wintering population disturbance (by human activity)

Changes in the distribution of the qualifying features are most likely to be brought about through disturbance.

Disturbance occurs when an activity is of sufficient level or duration to disrupt normal behaviours. For example, changes to feeding or roosting behaviour, increased

energy expenditure due to time spent moving to avoid stressors, desertion of supporting habitats (both within or outside the protected area where appropriate). If the activity occurs at a level that substantially impacts behaviour for long enough it can lead to changes in distribution, displacement through reduction of habitat available and consequently could affect the long-term viability of the population.

Disturbance associated with human activity may take a variety of forms including, but not limited to, light, sound, vibration, trampling, presence of people, animals and structures.

The high tide area in Traeth Lafan is outside of the SPA and SSSI designations but is designated a local nature reserve. This offers some protection from human disturbance in the form of bird hides and public access routes, allowing for suitable high tide roosts. However, there is open access to the shore and localised disturbance from people and their dogs is difficult (or impossible) to control.

Curlew are moderately sensitivity to disturbance. Evidence indicates curlew is an extremely wary species that does not habituate to works rapidly. They are highly sensitive to people and aircraft (Cutts et al., 2013).

The latest condition assessment found there has been a significant decline in curlew at one of the important roosting areas. This decline coincides with the establishment of the of access to that part of the coast. Prior to which there was little access to the coast. The disturbance attribute target is not being met as curlew in the SPA are subject to significant anthropogenic disturbance. For more information see the latest condition assessment (Hatton-Ellis et al., 2025).

Objective 3: The quality of habitat and abundance of food supply is sufficient to maintain the population of wintering curlew that use the SPA in favourable condition.

Objective Attribute	**Site specific target**
3a. Supporting habitat	Maintain sufficient extent, distribution, function and quality of supporting habitat to support a wintering curlew population of 1,500 individuals Maintain existing unrestricted bird sightlines in every direction around both roosting sites and feeding areas.
3b. Food availability	Maintain the abundance and distribution of curlew food supply at levels sufficient to support a wintering curlew population of 1,500 individuals.

Supporting Information

3a. Supporting habitat

The extent, distribution and availability of suitable habitat (either within or outside the site boundary) which supports the feature for all necessary stages of the non-breeding/wintering period (moulting, roosting, loafing, feeding) should be maintained.

Curlews favour large areas of open terrain, largely free of obstructions, in and around roosting and feeding areas. There is a need to maintain an unobstructed line of sight within feeding or roosting habitat to detect approaching predators, or to ensure visibility of displaying behaviour. Often these areas can be far from the SPA boundary.

Some of the high tide roosts are in fields close to the shore outside the SPA and local nature reserve. Any significant increase in grass height through cessation of grazing, in hedge height or changes by means of tree planting or installation of tall structures could impact on the curlew roosts. Any permanent loss of habitat in these fields would reduce the area available for roosting which could have a detrimental impact on the number of curlews using Traeth Lafan. Impacts on high tide roosts should be considered when assessing any plans or projects close to the shore.

There has been no loss in extent or distribution of supporting habitat in the SPA and no issues with sightlines. There is also no evidence to suggest that the functioning or quality of the supporting habitat is not sufficient to support the population. Therefore the supporting habitat attribute is being met, allowing maintain targets to be set for objective 3a. For more information see the latest condition assessment (Hatton-Ellis et. al., 2025).

3b. Food availability

The availability of an abundant food supply is critically important for successful fitness, survival and the overall sustainability of the population. As a result, inappropriate management and direct or indirect impacts which may affect the distribution, abundance and availability of food may adversely affect the population and alter the distribution of birds.

Curlew feed on a wide variety of invertebrate species including worms, shrimps, crabs, shellfish and insects. There is a long-standing commercial cockle fishery operating in the SPA. There is potential for this activity to damage the habitat of curlew prey species. However, the fishery is manged through a permitted fishery under the Cockle Fishing Management and Permitting (Specified Area) (Wales) Order 2024. The number of fishers is deemed to not be having a detrimental impact on the curlew prey habitat.

There is no reason to believe the distribution and abundance of curlew food is not sufficient to support the target population. The food availability attribute is being met, allowing a maintain target to be set for objective 3b. For more information see the latest condition assessment (Hatton-Ellis et. al., 2025).

3.3. Feature 3: Redshank *Tringa totanus*.

NRW published the latest condition assessment for redshank *Tringa totanus* in Traeth Lafan SPA in 2025. They were assessed as **favourable** (medium confidence) at that time. NRW will review these conservation objectives when new condition assessment information is available.

Below are the attributes and targets for each conservation objective alongside supporting information.

Objective 1: The population of wintering redshank is stable or increasing relative to the SPA target population.

Objective attribute	**Site specific target**
1a. Wintering population	Maintain the wintering population of redshank at a minimum 5-year peak mean of 1,200 individuals across the SPA.

Supporting Information

1a. Wintering population

During the winter redshank are largely coastal, occupying rocky, muddy and sandy beaches and estuaries as well as coastal wetlands (The Wildlife Trusts).

At designation Traeth Lafan supported a wintering redshank *Tringa totanus*, population of 1,200 individuals. The latest condition assessment showed the 5-year peak mean of the redshank population to be meeting the required target. The wintering population attribute is being met, allowing a maintain target to be set for objective 1a. For more information see the latest condition assessment (Hatton-Ellis et al., 2025).

Objective 2: The wintering redshank that use the SPA continue to have access to, and can utilise, habitats necessary to maintain the population in favourable condition.

Objective attribute	Site specific target
2a. Wintering population distribution	The distribution of the wintering redshank population that use the SPA should not be significantly impacted by anthropogenic activity.
2b. Wintering population disturbance (by human activity)	The wintering redshank population that use the SPA should not be subject to significant anthropogenic disturbance

Supporting Information

2a. Wintering population distribution

This objective attribute seeks to ensure that redshank can continue to use and access all areas within the Traeth Lafan SPA needed for feeding, moulting, roosting, loafing, shelter and any other activities necessary to support their survival.

Redshank feed on the mudflat and sandflat throughout the Traeth Lafan SPA. They roost above high water.

There is evidence that redshank are site-faithful and do not move between similar sites situated closely (Donald and Clark, 1991; Toomer and Clark, 1992) and thus require secure roost sites near to their feeding grounds (Toomer and Clark, 1993).

There are no known anthropogenic activities that have impeded the use of the whole SPA by redshank or restricted their movements. Therefore the population distribution attribute is being met. For more information see the latest condition assessment (Hatton-Ellis et al., 2025).

2b. Wintering population disturbance (by human activity)

Human activity is classed as disturbance when the activity is sufficient to disrupt normal behaviours and / or the distribution of the bird species.

Disturbance occurs when an activity is of sufficient level or duration to disrupt normal behaviours. For example, changes to feeding or roosting behaviour, increased energy expenditure due to time spent moving to avoid stressors, desertion of supporting habitats (both within and outside the protected area where appropriate). If the activity occurs at a level that substantially impacts behaviour for long enough it can lead to changes in distribution, displacement through reduction of habitat available and consequently could affect the long-term viability of the population.

Disturbance associated with human activity may take a variety of forms including, but not limited to, light, sound, vibration, trampling, presence of people, animals and structures.

The high tide area in Traeth Lafan is outside of the SPA and SSSI designations but is designated a local nature reserve. This offers some protection from human disturbance in the form of bird hides and public access routes, allowing for suitable high tide roosts. However, there is open access to the shore and localised disturbance from people and their dogs is difficult (or impossible) to control.

Redshank appear to be a quite tolerant to visual disturbance and habituate to works rapidly. However, they are highly sensitive to noise disturbance, especially so when in conjunction with visual stimuli (i.e. low flying aircraft) (Cutts et al., 2013).

Objective 3: The quality of habitat and abundance of food supply is sufficient to maintain the population of wintering redshank that use the SPA in favourable condition.

Objective Attribute	**Site specific target**
3a. Supporting habitat	Maintain sufficient extent, distribution, function and quality of supporting habitat to support a redshank population of 1,200 individuals Maintain existing unrestricted bird sightlines in every direction around both roosting sites and feeding areas.
3b. Food availability	Maintain the abundance and distribution of redshank food supply at levels sufficient to support a wintering population of 1,200 individuals.

Supporting Information

3a. Supporting habitat

The extent, distribution and availability of suitable habitat (either within or outside the site boundary) which supports the feature for all necessary stages of the non-breeding/wintering period (roosting, loafing, feeding) should be maintained.

Redshank favour large areas of open terrain, largely free of obstructions, in and around its roosting and feeding areas. There is a need to maintain an unobstructed line of sight within feeding or roosting habitat to detect approaching predators, or to ensure visibility of displaying behaviour.

Some of the high tide roosts are in fields close to the shore outside the SPA and local nature reserve. Any significant increase in grass height through cessation of grazing, in hedge height or changes by means of tree planting or installation of tall structures could impact on the redshank roosts. Any permanent loss of habitat in these fields would reduce the area available for roosting which could have a detrimental impact on the number of redshank using Traeth Lafan SPA. Impacts on high tide roosts should be considered when assessing any plans or projects close to the shore.

There has been no loss in extent or distribution of supporting habitat in the SPA and no issues with sightlines. There is also no evidence to suggest that the functioning or

quality of the supporting habitat is not sufficient to support the population. Therefore the supporting habitat attribute is being met, allowing maintain targets to be set for objective 3a. For more information see the latest condition assessment (Hatton-Ellis et. al., 2025).

3b. Food availability

The availability of an abundant food supply is critically important for successful fitness, survival and the overall sustainability of the population. As a result, inappropriate management and direct or indirect impacts which may affect the distribution, abundance and availability of food may adversely affect the population and alter the distribution of birds.

Redshank feed mainly on small bivalve molluscs and crustaceans.

There is no reason to believe the distribution and abundance of redshank food is not sufficient to support the target population. The food availability attribute is being met, allowing a maintain target to be set for objective 3b. For more information see the latest condition assessment (Hatton-Ellis et. al., 2025).

3.4. Feature 4: Red-breasted merganser *Mergus serrator*.

NRW published the latest condition assessment for red-breasted merganser *Mergus serrator* in Traeth Lafan SPA in 2025. They were assessed as **unfavourable** (medium confidence) at that time. NRW will review these conservation objectives when new condition assessment information is available.

Below are the attributes and targets for each conservation objective alongside supporting information.

Objective 1: The population of wintering red-breasted merganser is stable or increasing relative to the SPA target population.

Objective attribute	**Site specific target**
1a. Wintering population	Restore the wintering population of red-breasted merganser at a minimum 5 year peak mean of 120 individuals across the SPA.

Supporting Information

1a. Wintering population

During the winter the red-breasted merganser gather in large groups and are found almost entirely at sea, hunting small fish close to shore. At the time of writing they are amber listed on the UK Birds of Conservation Concern (BTO Bird Facts)

At designation Traeth Lafan supported a wintering red-breasted merganser *Mergus serrator*, population of 120 individuals. The latest condition assessment showed the 5-year peak mean of the red-breasted merganser population to be below the required target. Therefore the wintering population attribute is not being met and a restore target has been set for objective 1a. For more information see the latest condition assessment (Hatton-Ellis et al., 2025).

Objective 2: The wintering red-breasted merganser that use the SPA continue to have access to, and can utilise, habitats necessary to restore the population to favourable condition.

Objective attribute	Site specific target
2a. Wintering population distribution	The distribution of the wintering red-breasted merganser population that use the SPA should not be significantly impacted by anthropogenic activity.
2b. Wintering population disturbance (by human activity)	The wintering red-breasted merganser population that use the SPA should not be subject to significant anthropogenic disturbance.

Supporting Information

2a. Wintering population distribution

This objective attribute seeks to ensure that red-breasted merganser can continue to use and access all areas within the Traeth Lafan SPA needed for feeding, moulting, roosting, loafing, shelter and any other activities necessary to support their survival.

Red-breasted mergansers use shallow estuarine waters in the winter, normally less than 2 km from land, more usually within 850 m from shore (Craik et al. 2011; Kirby et al. 1993). The birds prefer clear, shallow water, between 0-10 m though usually less than 4 m deep (BirdLife International, 2019). Red-breasted merganser roost on the water and can roost further offshore in waters up to 12 m deep (Craik et al. 2011).

There are no known anthropogenic activities that have impeded the use of the whole SPA by red-breasted merganser or restricted their movements. Therefore the population distribution attribute is being met. For more information see the latest condition assessment (Hatton-Ellis et al., 2025).

2b. Wintering population disturbance (by human activity)

Changes in the distribution of the qualifying features are most likely to be brought about through disturbance.

Disturbance occurs when an activity is of sufficient level or duration to disrupt normal behaviours. For example, changes to feeding or roosting behaviour, increased energy expenditure due to time spent moving to avoid stressors, desertion of supporting habitats (both within and outside the protected area where appropriate). If the activity occurs at a level that substantially impacts behaviour for long enough it can lead to changes in distribution, displacement through reduction of habitat available and consequently could affect the long-term viability of the population.

Disturbance associated with human activity may take a variety of forms including, but not limited to, light, sound, vibration, trampling, presence of people, animals and structures.

Wintering red-breasted merganser have been shown to be sensitive to marine vessel traffic (Gittings and O'Donoghue 2016; Jarrett et al., 2021).

There are no known anthropogenic activities that would have caused significant disturbance to red-breasted merganser in this SPA. Therefore the population disturbance attribute is being met. For more information see the latest condition assessment (Hatton-Ellis et al., 2025).

Objective 3: The quality of habitat and abundance of food supply is sufficient to restore the population of wintering red-breasted merganser that use the SPA to favourable condition.

Objective Attribute	**Site specific target**
3a. Supporting habitat	Maintain sufficient extent, distribution, function and quality of supporting habitat to support a red-breasted merganser population of 120 individuals
3b. Food availability	Maintain the abundance and distribution of red-breasted merganser food supply at levels sufficient to support a wintering population of 120 individuals.

Supporting Information

3a. Supporting habitat

Red-breasted merganser require suitable habitat within the SPA to support their survival in the non-breeding/wintering period. This includes sufficient habitat for foraging, loafing, roosting and moulting. The area of suitable habitat in the site should be maintained.

During the winter the red-breasted Merganser is found almost exclusively on the sea. They forage in shallow, sheltered marine water, swimming with their eyes just below the water to hunt for small fish close to shore. (Birdlife international, 2019). This is likely due to having increased foraging efficiency due to hunting by sight. For this reason, maintaining good water quality in terms of low nutrients and turbidity is important.

There has been no loss in extent or distribution of supporting habitat in the SPA. There is also no evidence to suggest that the functioning or quality of the supporting habitat is not sufficient to support the population. Therefore the supporting habitat attribute is being met, allowing a maintain target to be set for objective 3a. For more information see the latest condition assessment (Hatton-Ellis et. al., 2025).

3b. Food availability

The availability of an abundant food supply is critically important for successful fitness, survival and the overall sustainability of the population. As a result, inappropriate management and direct or indirect impacts which may affect the

distribution, abundance and availability of food may adversely affect the population and alter the distribution of birds.

Red-breasted merganser dive in shallow water to feed primarily on small (generally less than 8–10 cm but up to 15 cm long) fish. Though information on non-breeding diet is scant, it can be assumed fish species taken will be influenced by what is locally most readily available. In Traeth Lafan this is likely to include mainly Clupeidae fish (e.g. herring and sprat), as well as crustaceans and invertebrates.

There is no reason to believe the distribution and abundance of red-breasted merganser food is not sufficient to support the target population. The food availability attribute is being met, allowing a maintain target to be set for objective 3b. For more information see the latest condition assessment (Hatton-Ellis et. al., 2025).

3.5. Feature 5: Great crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus*.

NRW published the latest condition assessment for great-crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus* in Traeth Lafan SPA in 2025. They were assessed as **unfavourable** (medium confidence) at that time. NRW will review these conservation objectives when new condition assessment information is available.

Below are the attributes and targets for each conservation objective alongside supporting information.

Objective 1: The population of wintering great-crested grebe is stable or increasing relative to the SPA target population.

Objective attribute	**Site specific target**
1a. Wintering population	Restore the wintering population of great-crested grebe at a minimum five year peak mean of 260 individuals across the SPA.

Supporting Information

1a. Wintering population

During winter months great-crested grebe are widespread around the UK and can be found in estuaries and shallow sea coasts where they can gather in large flocks (BTO Bird Facts).

At designation Traeth Lafan supported a wintering great-crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, population of 260 individuals (1985/86). The latest condition assessment showed the 5-year peak mean of the great-crested grebe population to be below the required target. Therefore the wintering population attribute is not being met and a restore target has been set for objective 1a. For more information see the latest condition assessment (Hatton-Ellis et al., 2025).

Objective 2: The wintering great-crested grebe that use the SPA continue to have access to, and can utilise, habitats necessary to restore the population to favourable condition.

Objective attribute	Site specific target
2a. Wintering population distribution	The distribution of the wintering great-crested grebe population that use the SPA should not be significantly impacted by anthropogenic activity.
2b. Wintering population disturbance (by human activity)	The wintering great-crested grebe population that use the SPA should not be subject to significant anthropogenic disturbance.

Supporting Information

2a. Wintering population distribution

This objective attribute seeks to ensure that great-crested grebe can continue to use and access all areas within the Traeth Lafan SPA needed for feeding, moulting, roosting, loafing, shelter and any other activities necessary to support their survival.

Large numbers of great-crested grebes enter shallow and sheltered coastal waters of Wales in autumn to moult and then overwinter.

There are no known anthropogenic activities that have impeded the use of the whole SPA by great-crested grebe or restricted their movements. Therefore the population distribution attribute is being met. For more information see the latest condition assessment (Hatton-Ellis et al., 2025).

2b. Wintering population disturbance (by human activity)

Changes in the distribution of the great-crested grebe are most likely to be brought about through disturbance.

Disturbance occurs when an activity is of sufficient level or duration to disrupt normal behaviours. For example, changes to feeding or roosting behaviour, increased energy expenditure due to time spent moving to avoid stressors, desertion of supporting habitats (both within or outside the protected area where appropriate). If the activity occurs at a level that substantially impacts behaviour for long enough it can lead to changes in distribution, displacement through reduction of habitat available and consequently could affect the long-term viability of the population.

Disturbance associated with human activity may take a variety of forms including, but not limited to, light, sound, vibration, trampling, presence of people, animals, and structures. Great crested grebes seem quite tolerant to vessel traffic when feeding but are more sensitive when roosting in flocks (Gittings, 2017).

There are no known anthropogenic activities that would have caused significant disturbance to great-crested grebe in this SPA. Therefore the population disturbance attribute is being met. For more information see the latest condition assessment (Hatton-Ellis et al., 2025).

Objective 3: The quality of habitat and abundance of food supply is sufficient to restore the population of wintering great-crested grebe that use the SPA to favourable condition.

Objective attribute	**Site specific target**
3a. Supporting habitat	Maintain sufficient extent, distribution, function and quality of supporting habitat to support a great-crested grebe population of 260 individuals.
3b. Food availability	Maintain the abundance and distribution of great-crested grebe food supply at levels sufficient to support a wintering population of 260 individuals.

Supporting Information

3a. Supporting habitat

Great crested grebes require suitable habitat within the SPA to support their survival in the non-breeding/wintering period. This includes sufficient habitat for foraging, loafing, roosting and moulting. The area of suitable habitat in the site should be maintained.

During the winter grebes gather offshore on shallow marine or brackish waters over sandy substrate. Often there is a need for them to maintain an unobstructed line of sight within feeding or roosting habitat to detect approaching predators, or to ensure visibility of displaying behaviour.

There has been no loss in extent or distribution of supporting habitat in the SPA. There is also no evidence to suggest that the functioning or quality of the supporting habitat is not sufficient to support the population. Therefore the supporting habitat attribute is being met, allowing a maintain target to be set for objective 3a. For more information see the latest condition assessment (Hatton-Ellis et. al., 2025).

3b. Food availability

The availability of an abundant food supply is critically important for successful fitness, survival and the overall sustainability of the population. As a result, inappropriate management and direct or indirect impacts which may affect the distribution, abundance and availability of food may adversely affect the population and alter the distribution of birds. Great created grebe are mainly piscivorous, diving in shallow water to catch small fish. They will also eat small crustaceans.

There is no reason to believe the distribution and abundance of great-crested grebe food is not sufficient to support the target population. The food availability attribute is being met, allowing a maintain target to be set for objective 3b. For more information see the latest condition assessment (Hatton-Ellis et. al., 2025).

4. Advice on operations

NRW must provide advice to relevant authorities about operations that may cause,

- deterioration of designated natural habitats
- deterioration of the habitats of designated species
- the disturbance of designated species

This is statutory advice required by regulation 37(3b) of the Habitats Regulations.

This advice is to help relevant authorities direct and prioritise their management of activities that are of greatest threat to the features of the site. The advice given here is without prejudice to any advice provided in relation to the consideration of plans or projects within the meaning of Part 6 of the Habitat Regulations.

Activities operating at distance from the site may cause pressures that travel into the site. These external pressures may affect features within the site.

4.1. Operations which may cause deterioration or disturbance to the features of the site

Table 2 lists activities that have the potential to deteriorate or disturb the designated features of Traeth Lafan SPA if they are known to occur within the SPA.

This list of operations is not exhaustive. If an operation or activity is not listed in Table 2 it may still have the potential to cause deterioration of the features of the site. Activities occurring outside of the site may still have the potential to impact the features within the site. The occurrence information was correct at time of publication, but activities may have ceased or started since. Advice on individual operations should be sought on a case-by-case basis.

Additional information can be found on the Natural England's designated sites website and Marine Scotland's Feature Activity Sensitivity Tool (FEAST). It is important to note that NRW has not agreed sensitivity thresholds with either Natural England or Nature Scot and the information should be used as a general guide. Specific advice on operations should be sought from NRW on a case-by-case basis.

Table 2. Advice on operations for Traeth Lafan SPA.

Operation/Activity	Occurrence in SPA
Dredging: construction and maintenance, including disposal	Not currently occurring in the SPA.
Shipping: vessel traffic and maintenance (including antifouling)	Not currently occurring in the SPA.
Shipping: anchoring (commercial)	Not currently occurring in the SPA.
Shipping: conventional and accidental discharges (including ballast water discharge, refuse, sewage, operational, petrochemical, cargo losses and salvage).	Possibly occurs in the waters adjacent to SPA, likely low level in site as not on main shipping routes. Ballast water convention now in force.
Land claim (gain of land from the sea or coastal wetlands e.g. for agricultural purposes, industrial use and harbour expansions).	Not currently occurring in the SPA.
Coast protection: both hard and soft defences (including sea walls, breakwaters, railways and foreshore deposit of rock, rubble, groynes, beach replenishment etc.)	Ongoing flood defence works. See relevant shoreline management plan.
Coast protection: barrages (including storm surge, tidal and amenity)	Not currently present in the SPA.
Artificial reef	Not currently present in the SPA.
Power station	Not currently present in the SPA.
Pipelines	Gas pipeline beneath Traeth Lafan
Power / communication cables.	Not currently present in the SPA.
Effluent disposal: disposal of sewage, chemical, thermal and sludge dumping (not including combined sewage overflows)	NRW and DCWW datasets available on locations and inputs. No thermal or sludge disposal.
Miscellaneous wastes and debris.	Litter present in the sea from various sources

Operation/Activity	Occurrence in SPA
Run-off: urban, industrial and agricultural run-off.	Urban and industrial run-off is widespread and common around coastal populations and industry. Agricultural run-off is widespread, particularly around coast of Anglesey, where agricultural use is higher than on the mainland. Concentrated around estuaries.
Fishing: all trawling (including beam, otter, toothed and any trawled gear).	Occurs on sandflat at high tide. Could impact quality of habitat. Light otter trawling from vessels under 12m occurs in the SPA. Trawling can occur in SPA for University research.
Fishing: all dredging (including toothed, bladed, mechanical, hydraulic and any other gear not listed).	Regulated mussel dredging occurs in the Fishery Order located within the over lapping Menai Strait and Conwy Bay SAC, dredging for mussel seed can occur intermittently at a few localised areas in the site. Dredging for oyster is not known to occur.
Fishing: all netting (including gill, tangle, trammel, seine, fyke and any other fishing with netted gear).	Seine netting at low water on edge of SPA for sand eels. Occasional setting of tangle and gill netting for skate and bass.
Fishing: all potting (including lobster, crab, prawn, whelk and any other fishing with potted gear).	Not currently occurring in the SPA.
Fishing: all line fishing (including long-line and handline).	Long lining for bass has previously occurred.
Fishing: all methods of hand gathering (including cockles, mussels, mussel seed, razor clam, bivalves, winkles, algae and plants four human consumption and chemical extraction and biomass (excluding access issues).	Significant regulated commercial cockle fishery on Traeth Lafan. Fishery is managed to ensure sufficient food remain for waders. Hand collection of other species occurs within the site but location and effort information is unknown.
Fishing: bait collection commercial and recreational (including digging, pump, boulder turning etc).	Digging for bait occurs within the site Pump methods used target black lug *Arenicola defodiens*.
Aquaculture: all forms of aquaculture (including algae, sea cages, impoundments, ranching, shellfish ropes and trestles and enclosed recirculation).	Not currently occurring in the SPA.
Water abstraction.	Not currently occurring in the SPA.

Operation/Activity	Occurrence in SPA
Aggregate extraction (including mineral and biogenic sands and gravels).	Not currently occurring in the SPA.
Oil and gas exploration: All oil and gas exploration activity (including seismic survey, drilling and discharges both operational and accidental).	Not currently present in the SPA.
Renewable energy generation: all forms of renewable energy (including tidal barrage and impoundments, tidal and wave energy, offshore wind both fixed and floating).	Not currently present in the SPA.
Oil spill response: all activities of responding to oil spills at sea and on shore (including chemical, physical and access).	Reactive only. No recent activity.
Recreation: fishing (e.g. angling and spearfishing).	Occurs within the SPA but location extent and intensity information are unknown.
Recreation: boating (e.g. power craft, sailing, canoeing, surfing, kite surfing, paddle boarding, etc).	Occurs within and adjacent to the SPA but location extent and intensity information are unknown.
Recreation: coastal activities (e.g., dog walking, coasteering etc).	Occurs within the SPA but location extent and intensity information are unknown.
Recreation: coastal access.	Occasional on areas within SPA have vehicles on the foreshore in relation to launching of boats.
Recreation: light aircraft and drones.	Small airfield at Caernarfon, light aircraft fly over SPA. Possible recreational drone use.
Recreation: wildfowling.	Not currently occurring in the SPA.
Recreation: marine wildlife watching / eco-tourism.	Bird watching occurs within the site but location and effort information are unknown
Military activity: all forms of military activity (including ordnance ranges, marine exercises, aircraft etc).	No ranges within or near to SPA. Occasional military exercises in Irish sea. RAF Valley airbase on Anglesey. Occasional aircraft transit over SPA.
Marine archaeology and salvage.	No data available. Potential to occur in the SPA.

Operation/Activity	Occurrence in SPA
Science and outreach: education.	Occurs within the SPA but location extent and intensity information are unknown.
Science and outreach: animal welfare operations and sanctuaries.	Occurs within the SPA but location extent and intensity information are unknown.
Science and outreach: science research.	Occurs within the SPA but location extent and intensity information are unknown.

5. References

BirdLife International. 2019. Multiple species factsheets. Downloaded from Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*) - BirdLife species factsheet. Accessed on 22/08/2023.

Butler, A. 2005. A study of the high tide wader roosts adjacent to Traeth Lafan. CCW Staff Science Report No. 050901.

Craik, S.R., Savard, J.-P.L., Richardson, M.J. and Titman, R.D. 2011. Foraging ecology of flightless male Red-breasted Mergansers in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Canada. Waterbirds 34: 280–288

Cutts, N., Hemingway, K. and Spencer, J. 2013. Waterbird disturbance mitigation toolkit informing estuarine planning and construction projects [Version 3.2]. Institute of Estuarine and Coastal Studies (IECS) University of Hull.

Donald, P.F. and Clark, N. A. 1991. The effect of Cardiff Bay barrage on waterfowl populations. 2 distribution and movement studies August 1990-1991. RTO research report 83. British Trust for Ornithology to Cardiff Bay Development Corporation.

Gittings, T. 2017. Nocturnal communal roosting behaviour in Great Crested Grebes *Podiceps cristatus*. *Irish Birds*, 10, 483–492.

Gittings, T. and O'Donoghue, P. 2016. Disturbance response of Red-breasted Mergansers *Mergus serrator* to boat traffic in Wexford Harbour. *Irish Birds*, 10: 329–334.

Goss-Custard, J.D., Durell, S.E.A.le V. dit, 1994. Feeding ecology, winter mortality and the population dynamics of the oystercatchers on the Exe Estuary. In: Evans, P.R., Goss-Custard, J.D., Hale, W.G. (Eds.), *coastal waders and wildfowl in winter*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 190–208.

Hatton-Ellis, M., Murphy, M., Cuthbertson, S., Jackson-Bué, M. and Wynter, E. 2025. Condition assessments for the designated features of Ardal Gwarchodaeth Arbennig Traeth Lafan / Lavan Sands Special Protection Area. NRW Evidence Report No: 918, 54pp, NRW, Cardiff.

Howe, M. A. 1998. The importance of Traeth Lafan to wintering waterfowl and the use of the mudflats and sandflats for feeding at low water. Science Report 98. Countryside Council for Wales. Bangor.

Jarrett, D., Calladine, J., Cook, A.S., Upton, A., Williams, J., Williams, S., Wilson, J.M., Wilson, M.W., Woodward, I. and Humphreys, E.M., 2021. Behavioural responses of non-breeding waterbirds to marine traffic in the near-shore environment. *Bird Study*, 68(4), pp.443-454.

Kirby, J.S., Evans, R.J. and Fox, A.D. 1993. Wintering seaducks in Britain and Ireland: populations, threats, conservation and research priorities. Aquatic Conservation: Marine and Freshwater Ecosystems 3: 105–137.

Sitters, H. 2002. Eurasian Oystercatcher. In Wernham, C.V, Tome, M.P., Marchant, J.H., Clark, J., Siriwardena, G.M. and Baillie, S.E. (eds) *The Migration Atlas. Movements of the birds of Britain and Ireland*. T. and A.D. Poyser, London.

Toomer, D.K. and Clark, N.A. 1992. The Effect of the Cardiff Bay Barrage on Waterfowl Populations. 3. Distribution and Movement studies. BTO Research Report No. 104 to Cardiff Bay Development Corporation. British Trust for Ornithology.

Toomer, D.K. and Clark, N. A. 1993. The roosting behaviour of waders and wildfowl in Cardiff Bay: Winter 1992/93. BTO research report No. 116. to Cardiff Bay Development Corporation. British Trust for Ornithology.

Zwarts, L., Wanink, J.H., Ens, B.J. 1996. Predicting seasonal and annual fluctuations in the local exploitation of different prey by oystercatchers Haematopus ostralegus: a ten-year study in the Wadden Sea. *Ardea*, 84A: 401–440.