

C3. Status of European habitats and species

C3a. Status of UK habitats of European importance

Type: State Indicator

Summary

No new data since the previous publication.

In 2007, 5% of UK habitats listed on Annex I of the Habitats Directive were in favourable conservation status, decreasing to 3% in 2013.

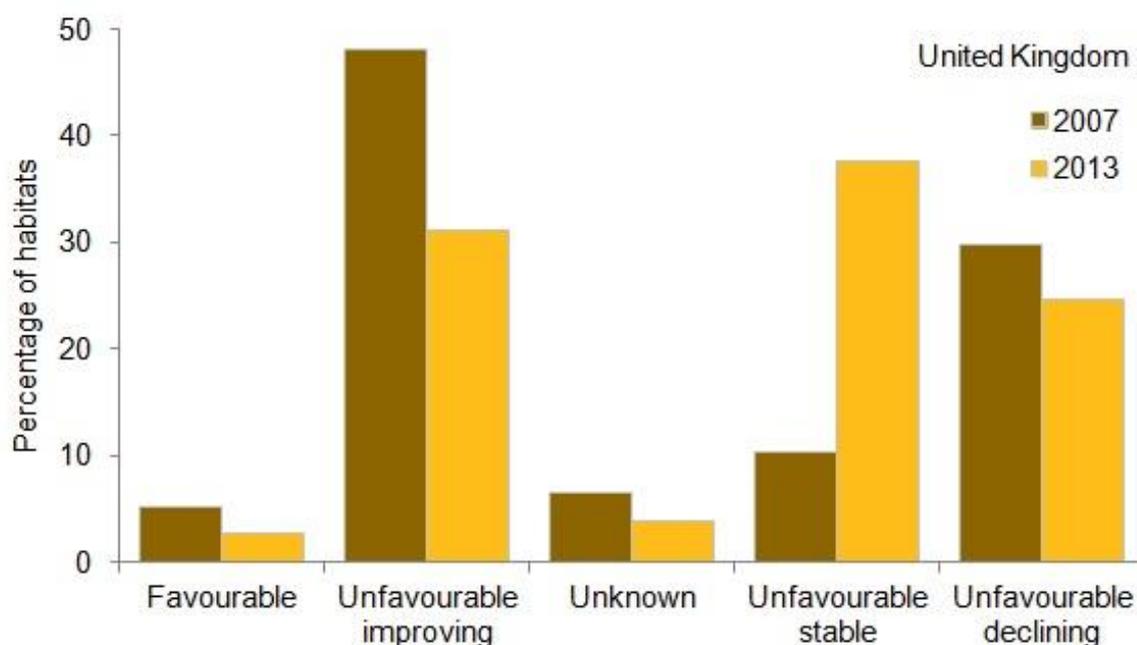
The conservation status of 48% of habitats was unfavourable-improving in 2007, decreasing to 31% in 2013.

The conservation status of 30% of the habitats was unfavourable-declining in 2007, decreasing to 25% in 2013.

Indicator Description

Member States of the European Union are required to report every 6 years on the conservation status of habitats and species listed on the annexes of the Habitats Directive. Each assessment needs to conclude whether the habitat is in one of the following states: Favourable, Unfavourable-Inadequate, Unfavourable-Bad or Unknown. The indicator is based on an evaluation of whether the results are better or worse in 2013 than in 2007.

Figure C3ai. Percentage of UK habitats of European importance in improving or declining conservation status in 2007 and 2013.



Notes:

1. The chart is based on 77 habitats listed on Annex I of the Habitats Directive.
2. The aim of the Habitats Directive is to achieve favourable conservation status for the species and habitats listed in its Annexes. An assessment of status and trends for each species and habitat is undertaken every 6 years. Trends in unfavourable conservation status allow identification of whether progress is being made, as it will take many years for some habitats and species to reach favourable conservation status.

Source: UK Habitats Directive (Article 17) reports 2007 and 2013.

Assessment of change in status of UK habitats of European importance			
	Long term*	Short term	Latest year
Percentage of UK habitats of European importance in favourable or improving conservation status		 2007–2013	Decreased (2013)

*A long-term assessment is not made as the time series does not go back more than 10 years.

Indicator description

Member States of the European Union are required to report every 6 years on the conservation status of habitats and species listed on the annexes of the Habitats Directive. Details of exactly what information is to be delivered is laid out in the [report format and guidance](#) notes. Each assessment needs to conclude whether the habitat is in one of the following states:

- Favourable
- Unfavourable-Inadequate
- Unfavourable-Bad
- Unknown

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

The indicator is based on an evaluation of whether the results are better or worse in 2013 than in 2007. At its simplest (Figure C3ai), this can be the proportion of habitats which are favourable or show an improving trend (i.e. favourable, or unfavourable-inadequate but improving, or unfavourable-bad but improving). This applies to 53% of habitats assessed in 2007, and 34% in 2013.

Figure C3ai combines the unfavourable inadequate and unfavourable-bad assessments which show a similar direction of trend. In both 2007 and 2013 improving and declining trends were assigned where the evidence allowed a conclusion that improvements or declines in the conservation status of habitats were occurring. Thus:

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

In 2007, no trend was assigned to those habitats which were neither improving nor declining. This included both habitats for which the trend was unknown, and those for which there was no evidence of change. In 2013, careful consideration of evidence allowed the use of the term 'stable'. For ease of comparison in the figures, unfavourable-inadequate, and unfavourable-bad assessments with no trend conclusion in 2007 were summed to form the category 'unfavourable stable'; the same term was used for 2013 data, but with more confidence that the trend was neither improving nor declining.

The assessment of change for both measures is evaluated against a 3% [rule of thumb](#). In 2007, the percentage of UK habitats of European importance in favourable or improving conservation status was 53%, in 2013 it was 34%; the measure is assessed as declining.

Relevance

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

Background

The first assessment of conservation status of species and habitats listed on the annexes of the Directive was produced in 2007. A second assessment was produced in 2013. Each individual habitat assessment requires information on 4 parameters, which are brought together using an evaluation matrix to form an overall assessment.

For habitats the parameters are:

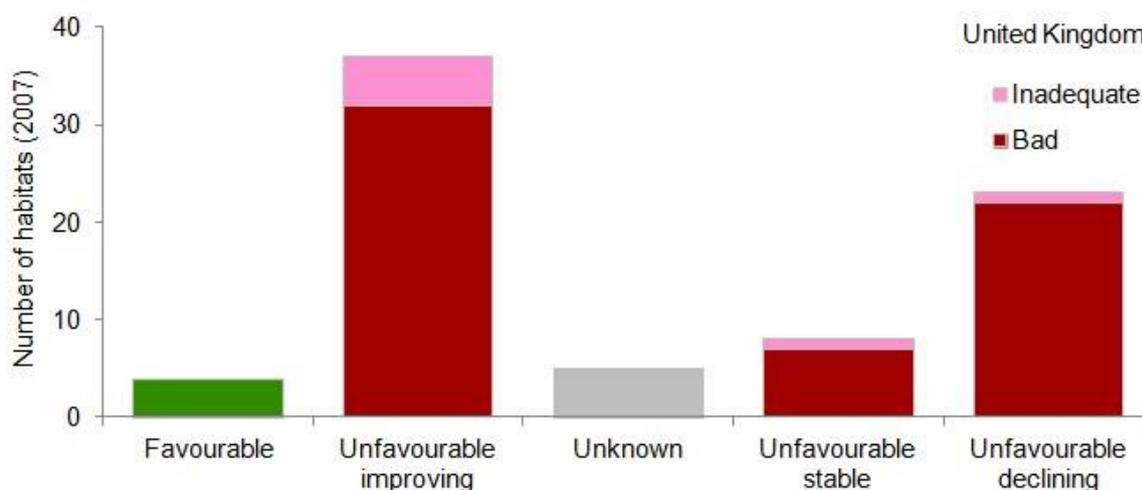
- range;
- area;
- structure and functions; and
- future prospects.

The trend in the overall assessment is based upon an [integration of the trend information](#) for the individual parameters.

The UK reported on 77 habitats in the [Atlantic biogeographic region](#) in both 2007 and 2013. Grouping the habitats by broad habitat types leads to the following breakdown:

Marine	8
Coastal	19
Heaths and scrub	8
Woodlands	10
Grasslands	9
Freshwater	8
Bogs, Mires and Fens	9
Rocky habitats	6

Figure C3aii. Status of UK habitats of European importance, 2007.



Notes:

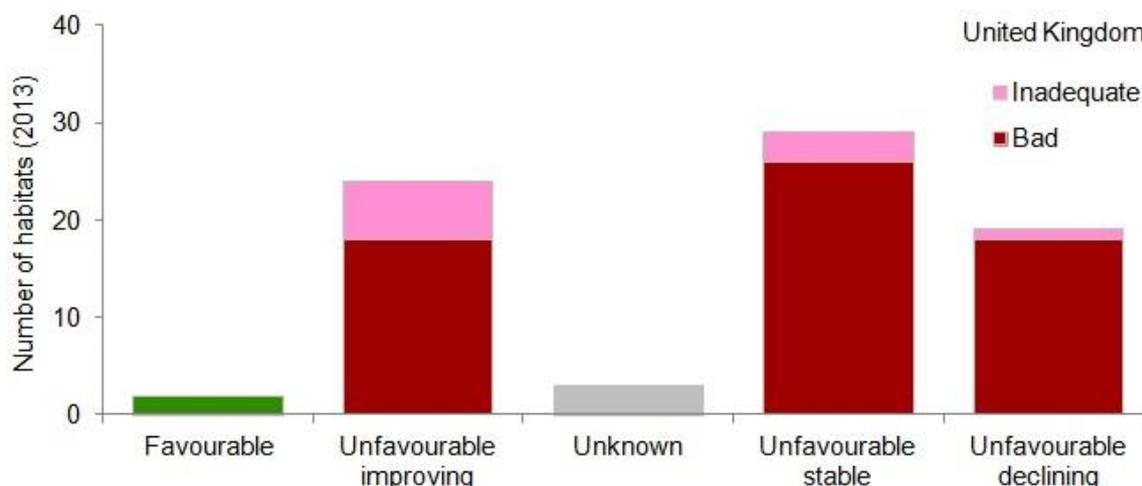
1. Graph based on 77 habitats listed on Annex I of the Habitats Directive.

C3a. Status of UK habitats of European importance

- The aim of the Habitats Directive is to achieve favourable conservation status for the species and habitats listed in its Annexes. An assessment of status and trends for each species and habitat is undertaken every 6 years. Trends in unfavourable conservation status allow identification of whether progress is being made, as it will take many years for some habitats and species to reach favourable conservation status.
- Red shows the number of habitats within a trend which were unfavourable-bad; pink shows the number of habitats within a trend which were unfavourable-inadequate.

Source: UK Habitats Directive (Article 17) reports 2007 and 2013.

Figure C3aiii. Status of UK habitats of European importance, 2013.



Notes:

- Graph based on 77 habitats listed on Annex I of the Habitats Directive.
- The aim of the Habitats Directive is to achieve favourable conservation status for the species and habitats listed in its Annexes. An assessment of status and trends for each species and habitat is undertaken every 6 years. Trends in unfavourable conservation status allow identification of whether progress is being made, as it will take many years for some habitats and species to reach favourable conservation status.
- Red shows the number of habitats within a trend which were unfavourable-bad; pink shows the number of habitats within a trend which were unfavourable-inadequate.

Source: UK Habitats Directive (Article 17) reports 2007 and 2013.

Figures C3aii and C3aiii provide a breakdown of Figure C3ai by showing the number of habitats in the unfavourable categories which arise from the unfavourable-inadequate or unfavourable-bad assessment categories. The picture for habitats is somewhat worse than for species (see [indicator C3b](#)), in that more habitats are in unfavourable conservation status, and more habitats which are unfavourable are in unfavourable-bad status.

A change matrix to show improving and declining conservation status has been developed (Table 3ai) to apportion how each transition from a category in 2007 to a category in 2013 contributes to a 'better' or 'worse' result between the 2 reporting periods. Figure C3aiiv is linked to Figure C3ai, but is not a duplication, as Figure C3ai is based on state, and Figure C3aiiv is based on change; the 6 measures are therefore complementary.

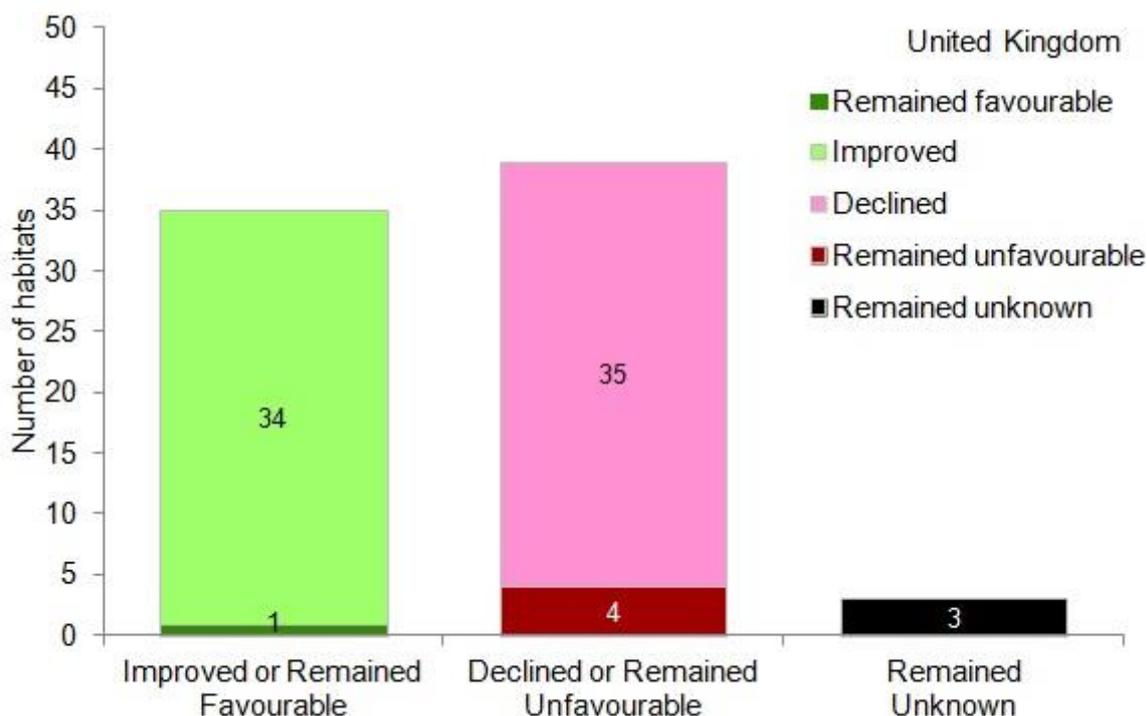
C3a. Status of UK habitats of European importance

Table C3ai. Change matrix for conservation status assessments in 2007 and 2013.

Habitats	2013								
	Favourable	Inadequate improving	Inadequate stable	Inadequate declining	Bad improving	Bad stable	Bad declining	Unknown	Total
2007									
Favourable	1	1			2				4
Inadequate improving	1	3					1		5
Inadequate			1						1
Inadequate declining					1				1
Bad improving		1	1		10	11	9		32
Bad					2	3	2		7
Bad declining		1	1		3	11	6		22
Unknown				1		1		3	5
Total	2	6	3	1	18	26	18	3	77

Note: Cells marked red contribute to Declined or Remained Unfavourable; cells marked green contribute to Improved or Remained Favourable.

Figure C3aiv. Change in conservation status of UK habitats of European importance between 2007 and 2013.



Notes:

1. Graph based on 77 habitats listed on Annex I of the Habitats Directive.
2. The aim of the Habitats Directive is to achieve favourable conservation status for the species and habitats listed in its Annexes. An assessment of status and trends for each species and habitat is undertaken every 6 years. Trends in unfavourable conservation status allow identification of whether progress is being made, as it will take many years for some habitats and species to reach favourable conservation status.

Source: UK Habitats Directive (Article 17) reports 2007 and 2013.

Using the change matrix shown in Table C3ai, a comparison between the conservation status assessments undertaken for the 2007 and 2013 Habitats Directive reports shows that the net change (calculated as the difference between the red and green columns in Figure C3aiv) is minus 5%.

These results are graphed in Figure C3aiv:

- 35 habitats improved or remained favourable (green cells in Table C3ai, and green column in Figure C3aiv):
 - One habitat remained favourable (natural dystrophic lakes and ponds);
 - One habitat became favourable (box woods on rock slopes);
 - 33 habitats showed an improvement in conservation status:
 - moving from unfavourable-bad to unfavourable-inadequate conservation status (e.g. machair), or
 - an improvement within one of the unfavourable categories (for example from unfavourable declining to unfavourable improving e.g. calcareous fens), or
 - the status has remained at improving since the last assessment (e.g. lowland hay meadows, and limestone pavements).
- 39 habitats declined or remained unfavourable (red cells in Table C3ai, and red column in Figure C3aiv):
 - Four habitats remained unfavourable (e.g. coastal lagoons);
 - 35 habitats got worse (e.g. blanket bogs), or are still declining (e.g. estuaries).
- Three habitats remained in an unknown status (e.g. submarine structures made by leaking gases) between the 2 assessments (white cells in Table C3ai, and in the black column in Figure C3aiv). They are not included in the calculation of net change.

JNCC and the Country Nature Conservation Bodies put a huge amount of effort into checking the assessments, and therefore have a high level of confidence that they are correct, and that changes, including within category changes, have been consistently and accurately discriminated. These changes are ecologically important, as stabilising a decline in a habitat, for example, is an important conservation achievement. The information sources on which the assessments are based are quite varied – their quality is documented in the database which underpins the assessments. The changes are largely based on evidence, though expert opinion was used in a few cases where evidence was not available.

A guiding principle in presenting this indicator has been that if conservation action is making a difference, positive change would be expected between reporting periods. On that basis, both declines in conservation status and stability in status (i.e. habitats remaining in a stable unfavourable conservation status) would be seen as a negative outcome.

Goals and targets

Aichi Targets for which this is a primary indicator

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



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

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



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

Aichi Targets for which this is a relevant indicator

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



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

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



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

Web links for further information

Reference	Title	Website
UK Habitats Directive Report 2001	First report by the United Kingdom	http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-3051
UK Habitats Directive Report 2007	Summary of Conservation Status Assessments	http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-4067
UK Habitats Directive Report 2013	Summary of Conservation Status Assessments	http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-6565
European guidance on making conservation status assessments	Reference Portal for Article 17 of the Habitats Directive	http://bd.eionet.europa.eu/article17/reference_portal
European level assessments	Online report on Article 17 of the Habitats Directive:	http://bd.eionet.europa.eu/article17

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Reference	Title	Website
	conservation status of habitats & species of Community interest (2001–2006)	
European level assessments	EEA Technical report No 2/2015: Results from reporting under the nature directives 2007-2012	http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/state-of-nature-in-the-eu

Full details of this indicator, including a datasheet and technical documentation are available at: <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-4239>

Last updated: October 2013

Latest data: 2013