



**Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru  
Countryside Council for Wales**

**MANAGEMENT PLANNING FOR SSSIs,  
NATURA 2000 SITES AND RAMSAR SITES**

May 2003

## PREFACE

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This planning guide is one of the key projects (Project 2 - Conservation Management Planning Guidance) identified in the CCW Programme for Rationalising and Implementing Statutory Site Management (PRISM). This guide outlines the CCW approach to management planning for SSSIs and terrestrial SACs and SPAs. The contents follow accepted CCW procedures for preparing management plans. The main changes are concerned with the presentation of the conservation objectives. The guide, for the first time, incorporates guidance applicable to management planning of both biological and geological sites.

It is our intention that this guide should have a shelf life of at least 5 years, however, as we gain experience in using the guide it may be necessary on occasions to make minor improvements. Comments on the guide will be welcome at any time.

For some sites there may not be sufficient information to complete all sections of the management plan. Where this is the case staff should note such deficiencies and identify a corresponding need for further research or development.

This document identifies the minimum level of information required to construct a working management plan. Additional information may be required on certain sites, for example, access information on NNRs.

The guide will provide the basis for defining and achieving 'Management Security' (PRISM Project 4). An approved management plan will define the management prescriptions consistent with obtaining Favourable Conservation Status for each feature. Once a secure mechanism for implementing the management is in place CCW will have achieved management security.

Appendix 1 contains a summary of the management plan approvals and review process.

### **JNCC COMMON STANDARDS MONITORING**

CCW staff will be aware of the JNCC Generic Guidance on condition monitoring. This planning guide has been written to take into account JNCC guidance; this is reflected throughout and is particularly relevant to section 4.2.2 of this guide. Please see appendix 4, for a list of JNCC generic guidance on common standards monitoring.

Mike Alexander  
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May 2003

## SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENTS AND LEGAL CONTEXT

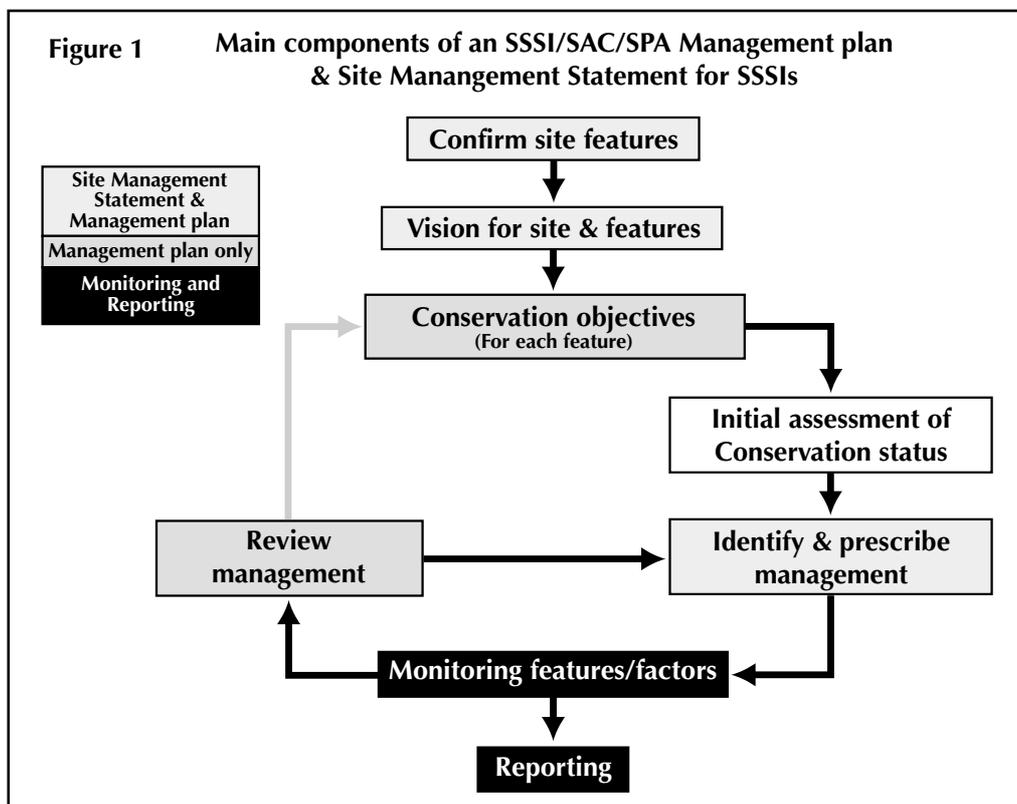
CCW is obliged to produce Site Management Statements (SMS) for all SSSI's, including those that underpin international designations. Section 28(4) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as substituted) requires CCW, when notifying an SSSI, to include:

*“a statement of the Council's views about the management of the land (including any views the Council may have about the conservation and enhancement of that flora or fauna or those features)”.*

Thus the SMS forms part of the legal documentation of the site. This is in contrast to the management plan, which is not legal documentation, in that there are no statutory obligations to produce management plans, either for SSSIs or international designations. However, it is important to remember that, in addition to the SMS, the contents of a CCW management plan can and will be used in statutory decision-making processes, and even Public Inquiries or legal proceedings. CCW-approved management plans for statutory designated sites will be expected to guide decisions by, for example, section 28G authorities under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (as substituted) and by competent authorities under the 1994 Habitats Regulations in relation to Natura 2000 sites.

To avoid unnecessary duplication of effort and to ensure consistency, the SMS is, in effect, an abbreviated version of the management plan. Two key sections, the vision statement and the management rationale are presented in both documents. Ideally the management plan should be completed before embarking on the SMS, however, there are many good reasons why this is not always possible. When the SMS is prepared in advance of the management plan, we need to bear in mind the relationship between the two documents. A copy of the CCW guide to preparing SMS is attached to this document (Appendix 2).

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between the SMS and the management plan.



## ADAPTABLE MANAGEMENT

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Conservation managers must adopt a flexible approach to management planning. This so-called adaptable approach allows site management to respond to the legitimate interests of others, adapt to the ever-changing political and socio-economic climate, accommodate uncertain and variable resources, and most importantly respond to the unpredictability of the natural world.

**The adaptable process as incorporated in this planning process is:**

1. A decision is made on what should be achieved (i.e. conservation objectives are prepared for the features).
2. An assessment of the current conservation status of the feature is made.
3. Appropriate management is implemented to achieve the objectives, taking account of (2).
4. The features are monitored in order to determine whether the objectives are being met.
5. Where objectives are not being met, management of the site is reviewed and if necessary modified.
6. Reporting of the results of monitoring, for example reporting to government that there has been a failure to meet the objectives, can provide a means of addressing factors that cannot be controlled within the site management process.
7. The cycle is repeated at appropriate intervals (which may be influenced by agency-agreed, or statutory reporting timetables)
8. Occasionally, it may be necessary to modify the objectives.

**This adaptable approach enables conservation managers to:**

- Learn through experience
- Take account of, and respond to, the varying factors that affect the features
- Continually develop or refine management processes
- Demonstrate whether or not management is appropriate

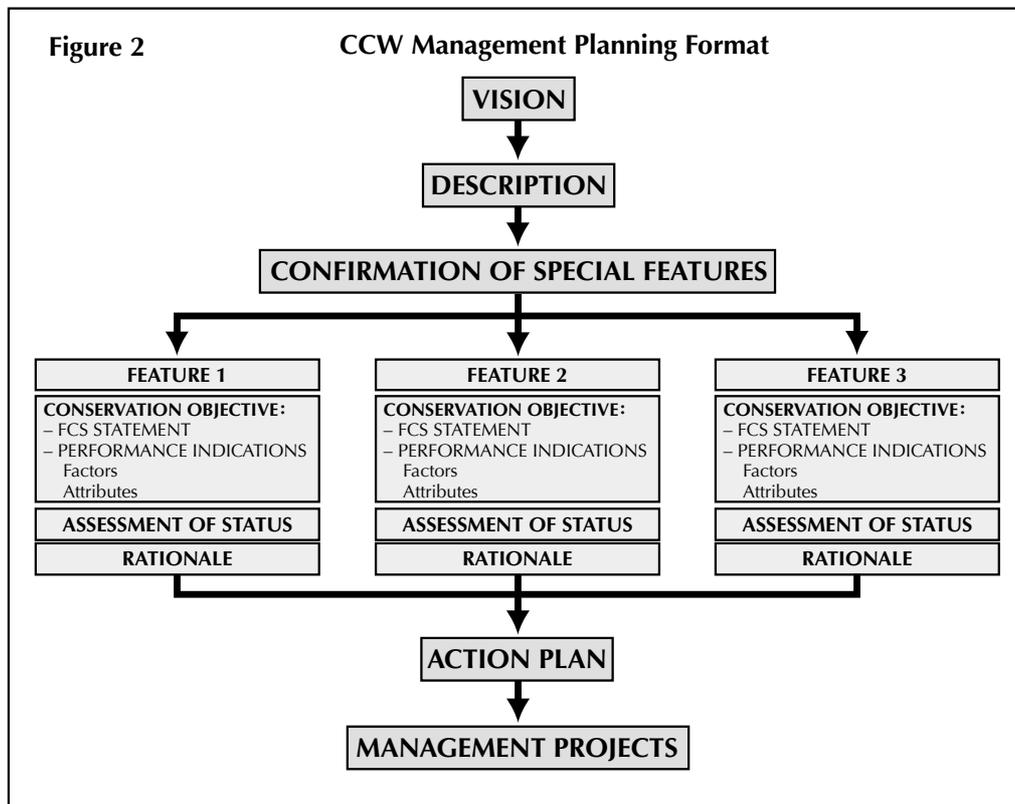
## MANAGEMENT PLAN CONTENTS

All CCW management plans should contain 6 sections presented in the order given below. However, it is recognised that at a given time some sections may be more complete than others. The development of the management plan as a whole should not be unduly held up by inability to complete one or more sections. Any deficiencies in information identified in the planning process, or decisions still to be made, should be noted as requiring further work, and the remainder of the plan completed to the best extent possible.

A related point is that although the information should be presented in the following sequence, the order in which the various sections are written may vary depending on circumstances, not least the way in which the author of the plan prefers to approach the task. What is important is the coherence and practicality of the resultant management plan, not the order in which the thinking is done.

Figure 2 illustrates the content and structure of a CCW management plan, and Appendix 3 contains a summary and checklist of the management planning process.

1. **VISION STATEMENT**
2. **SITE DESCRIPTION**
3. **CONFIRMATION OF SPECIAL FEATURES**
4. **CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES**
  - 4.1 FAVOURABLE CONSERVATION STATUS: VISION FOR THE FEATURE
  - 4.2 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
    - 4.2.1 Identification of factors, operational limits and monitoring
    - 4.2.2 Identification of attributes, specified limits and monitoring
5. **ASSESSMENT OF CONSERVATION STATUS AND RATIONALE**
6. **ACTION PLAN AND MANAGEMENT PROJECTS**



## 1 VISION STATEMENT FOR THE SITE

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This statement is intended to convey an impression or vision of the site in the condition that is intended to be the end product of management. In other words, a pen portrait outlining the conditions that should prevail when all the objectives have been met. This could also include features that are currently absent from the site but which we would expect to be present if the site was being managed appropriately. Relationships between features, in particular where the vision for one feature conflicts with another, should be clearly stated. For example, when referring to a desire to increase the extent of one habitat such as heath it should be clear that this will be achieved by replacement of acid grassland which will thereby reduce in area. We should then briefly explain why this is acceptable perhaps in certain areas of the site or at the expense of certain acid grassland communities but not others. This statement must be consistent with the objectives prepared for each feature (section 4), and therefore it may be preferable to complete it after the feature-specific elements of the management plan.

This statement will also be presented in the Site Management Statement.

## 2 SITE DESCRIPTION AND OTHER RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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The following provide a list of the essential contents for this section of any CCW management plan:

- SSSI map and citation
- Any other relevant maps, for example, vegetation maps, feature location maps, management maps.
- For Natura 2000 sites: "Reasons for recommendation" and Natura 2000 data form
- For Ramsar sites: Ramsar information sheet
- PDO list
- SSSI features database printout
- Features of interest sheet (or other earlier versions of, e.g. SSSI criteria sheet)
- Owner/occupier and other stakeholder interests (See section below)
- Existing management agreements
- Outline of past and current management (a short, concise note describing any significant past, and any current, management work)
- References (key items only - this is not intended to be comprehensive but it should provide readers with an indication of any significant reference material used during the production of the plan)
- Any further information added at the discretion of Area team staff (e.g. the Senior Conservation Officer)

### **Owners, Occupiers and other Stakeholder interests**

Owners, occupiers and other stakeholder interests must be given appropriate attention in all CCW management plans.

The purpose here is to set out the owners and occupiers and other stakeholder interests in the site. The word 'stakeholder' has been used because this is currently the term that international conservation appears to favour. There is no universally accepted definition of a stakeholder, but the

following definition, taken from the Ramsar Convention, is adopted for the purposes of CCW site management planning:

*'A stakeholder is taken to mean any individual, group or community living within the influence of the protected area, and any individual, group or community likely to influence the management of the site. This will obviously include all those dependent on the site for their livelihood.'*

It is essential that the owners' and occupiers' interests are established and taken into account, but the extent to which we should be influenced by wider stakeholder interest is less clear. The management of sites must be as inclusive as possible, but we must not forget that the prime function of a statutory conservation site is to safeguard the nature conservation interest, namely its wildlife or earth science features. We generally have little room to accommodate stakeholder interests when setting conservation objectives, but we should be able to reflect the legitimate interests of stakeholders when deciding on how the features will be managed to achieve those objectives.

Later in the management plan we return to this subject and recognise that the owners and occupiers interests or aspirations will be treated as factors. It is important to remember that factors can be positive and negative and that often the owner or occupier's aspirations can help achieve the conservation objectives.

This section should only contain factual information concerning stakeholders. Any references to stakeholder aspirations should be based on documentary evidence of those aspirations, not unsupported speculation by the site manager. Interpretation of people's motivations, or elaboration of information that is actually held, should be carefully avoided. Note also that reference to stakeholders in ways that might enable individuals to be identified is subject to the normal provisions of data protection and privacy/human rights legislation.

### 3 CONFIRMATION OF FEATURES

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The main purpose of this section is to identify and confirm the list of qualifying features, and to resolve the relationships between the differing levels of designation that features may have, i.e. SSSI, SAC, SPA, Ramsar site. Sites are selected for protection because they contain one or more features which qualify under the legislation applicable to the designation concerned. Biological features can be species populations or habitats. For geological or physiographical features the Geological Conservation Review category (GCR selection block) is the feature.

CCW staff must prepare conservation objectives (see section 4) for all the qualifying features on a site. This does not mean that we are always obliged to write an objective for each individual feature, as occasionally there are good reasons for aggregating features under a single conservation objective. For example, a woodland site may contain several communities or sub-communities, each of which meets the selection requirement; these communities form a large-scale mosaic and the management requirement is common to all. Therefore, we decide to aggregate these and write a single objective to cover the entire woodland.

Conversely, it may sometimes be necessary to split a feature into different components (or 'sub-features'), for example, a sand dune systems may be dealt with this way. Equally with geological features, it may be sensible to divide the feature, as defined by the GCR selection block, into a number of sub-features.

Whenever it is expedient to aggregate or split features a clear justification should be included in this section.

It is important to remember that aggregating features does have implications for our ability to report on the condition and conservation status of individual features. This needs to be borne in mind, particularly where there is a need to report on a feature of international importance. However, it will often be the case that the same reasons that lead us to decide to aggregate features will mean that their conservation status (i.e. whether each is favourable or unfavourable) are interdependent.

The process of identifying and confirming features will often identify additional features of importance that are not listed in the citation for the site. This cannot be resolved within the context of preparing the management plan, but should be flagged up, since CCW will need to decide how to proceed in relation to such features (for example, re-notification of the site may be indicated).

Any important additional features, for example BAP habitat types or species which are not qualifying features should be listed in this section. Separate conservation objectives should not be written for these features but they should be taken into consideration when preparing conservation objectives for the qualifying features. For example, we may wish to treat a non-qualifying BAP species as an aspect of the quality or structure of a qualifying habitat type. Important but non-qualifying features may also be taken into account when identifying factors and attributes for the performance indicators (see section 4.2).

There are various legal issues concerning the degree to which the relevant legislation (e.g. SSSI or Natura 2000) can be invoked for the protection of non-qualifying interests identified during the confirmation of special features stage. It is outside the scope of this guidance to address these, and in the meantime any queries should be referred to Site Safeguard Team in Bangor. Similarly if additional *qualifying* features are identified at this stage, CCW will need to decide how to proceed (for example re-notification may be indicated). Again, such issues should be referred to Site Safeguard Team in the first instance.

## 4 CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

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**From this point onward to the end of section 5, we must treat each feature or aggregated group of features (as identified and defined in section 3) individually. This means that we will need separate sub-sections for each feature or group of features.**

**For each feature (or aggregated group of features) in turn ('x') this section should be presented as follows:**

- 4.x (Name of feature)**
- 4.x.1 Favourable Conservation Status – Vision for the feature**
- 4.x.2 Performance Indicators**
  - 4.x.2.1 Identification of factors and operational limits**
  - 4.x.2.2 Identification of attributes, specified limits**

Each of these is described below.

### 4.1 Favourable Conservation Status: 'Vision' for the feature

This section lies at the very heart of the management plan and is in many ways the most important section of all. Its purpose is to provide a clear, site-specific description of what we require for the feature. It should include a discussion and justification as to how and why these judgements were made.

We need to prepare a statement for the feature, applicable to the individual site concerned, based on the generic definition of favourable conservation status. In broad terms, Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) is the desired status of a feature habitat or species, over its entire range, within a defined protected area, or at any scale in between. Although the concept of FCS originates in international and European treaties and Directives, CCW consider it to be a sound concept and have chosen to adopt it as the basis for expressing conservation objectives for all statutory nature conservation sites in Wales.

It is important at this point to clearly distinguish FCS from 'favourable condition'. The latter term is defined as

'The condition for a feature, expressed in terms of the abundance, distribution, and/or quality of that feature within a site' (based on JNCC, 1998 *A statement on common standards monitoring*)

The key difference between FCS and favourable condition is that whereas 'condition' defines the state of a feature at a given point in time, 'conservation status' incorporates both the state of a feature at a point in time and the factors affecting it, and hence the feature's future prospects. FCS is thus a more forward-looking basis for expressing conservation objectives than favourable condition. The generic definition of FCS as used in this guidance is given in Box 1.

## **BOX 1**

### **GENERIC DEFINITION OF FAVOURABLE CONSERVATION STATUS**

#### **Habitat features**

For a habitat feature to be considered to be at FCS, ALL of the following must be true:

- The area of the habitat must be stable in the long term, or increasing ,
- its quality (including in terms of ecological structure and function) must be being maintained
- any typical species must also be at FCS, as defined below,
- the factors that affect the habitat, including its typical species, must be under control.

#### **Species features**

For a species feature to be considered to be at FCS, ALL of the following must be true:

- The size of the population must be being maintained or increased
- the population must be sustainable in the long term
- the range of the population must not be contracting
- sufficient habitat must exist to support the population in the long term
- the factors which affect the species or its habitat must be under control.

#### **Geological or physiographical features**

Earth science conservation may be defined essentially as the preservation of sites for the purpose of scientific use (observation, sampling, coring). This has always been the distinguishing characteristic of geoconservation. For a geological or geomorphological feature to be at FCS, BOTH of the following must be true:

- The feature is in a state (e.g. degree of exposure, integrity of landforms, or processes) which enables a full understanding of its primary interest - the GCR interest.
- Any factors which might prevent or inhibit the foregoing are under control

The definition of FCS for habitats and species in Box 1 is based on and is entirely consistent with the statutory definition of FCS for habitats and species given in Article 1 of the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC of the 21st May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora [Official Journal of the European Communities OJ] no. L206, 22.7.92, p.7,

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/legis.htm>. The definition of FCS for Geological features has been produced by CCW Geologists.

A site-specific expression of FCS should be written for the feature, based on the generic definition in Box 1.

But how do we decide what we want? This is perhaps the most important question of all. This is first and foremost a site specific question, tailored to the particular conservation interest of the feature on the site concerned. However JNCC are currently co-ordinating the development of feature-specific generic guidance on the definition of favourable condition. Although the purpose of this generic guidance is to help establish a common framework across the UK for monitoring and reporting on feature condition, since favourable condition is a major component of favourable conservation status, the guidance can assist in the development of FCS statements. Therefore, once this guidance is available CCW will use it as appropriate, retaining the flexibility to modify its application to sites in Wales, while also retaining the ability to monitor and report to a common standard. Until this generic guidance is available (at time of writing some sets are already completed and available) staff should rely on the following guidance and seek the advice of the specialists). Appendix 4 contains a list of the generic guidance for common standards monitoring. In due course it is anticipated that the full guidance, once approved, will be accessible via the Intranet.

For habitats, we should begin by examining the current condition of the feature on the site. If any part or parts of the feature appear to be in the condition that we require then we have an excellent starting point. The next step, in these circumstances, is to decide how much of the habitat, in this condition, we want and where we want it. In many situations we will not find features in the conditions that we require, in these cases deciding what we require may be more difficult.

For both habitat and species features, we should begin by considering size and distribution. FCS requires that the extent of a habitat should be stable or increasing. This will naturally lead to the conclusion that we should provide some indication of the size or extent of the feature.

Sometimes this is not as straightforward as it may appear. We may have to deal with situations where one feature is in direct conflict with another. This might happen when two habitats, for example, woodland and heath can occupy the same space; an increase of one will lead to a loss of the other. To overcome this we could set a minimum area for both habitats and express this as a percentage of the whole, for example, state that at least 70% of the site must be covered by woodland and that at least 20% must be covered by heath. The real difficulty will arise if the conservation value of one of the features changes, for example, if a qualifying population of silver studded blue butterflies is discovered. Since the butterflies are entirely dependent on the heath, the value of heath on the site will have increased. We may decide that there is insufficient heath to support a viable population of butterflies and so we would need to clear woodland to provide habitat for the butterflies. We now recognise that we must be prepared to lose some of the woodland. Re-notification of the site to recognise the butterfly population as a feature in its own right might also be desirable.

It is important that, whenever possible, we give some indication of the extent of a feature. The best approach for habitats is to follow the earlier example and give an indication of the minimal requirement. For example, "At least 70% of the site should be covered by oak woodland."

Once we have dealt with size/extent we need to move on to consider other values. For a habitat we have to find some means of expressing the quality that we require (once again, the generic guidance from JNCC, when available, can assist here). The temptation may be to provide exhaustive lists of species that we consider important. But exhaustive species lists are more likely to confuse than assist the expression of the quality that we require for a habitat. For example for a woodland site we could

say that we want locally native species of trees. We could enhance this statement by naming a few of the most important desirable species. We could, of course, also state what we don't want based on the more pertinent threats to the site, for example, invasive alien species.

Where the objective is for habitats or populations to be in a more natural state, management will generally attempt to maintain, or enable, natural processes. For example when managing an upland acidic oak woodland we believe that, in order to optimise conditions for the widest range of species, plant and animal, we should aim, in the long term, to achieve a woodland stand which is naturally regenerating, (where sufficiently large) and includes trees of all age classes and sufficient standing and fallen dead wood. We can easily describe these conditions in simple language.

In contrast, on many sites, conservation management is geared to holding successional processes at a phase of high conservation interest, for example, managed grassland, where allowing or encouraging natural processes to continue would result in loss of diversity or loss of highly valued components.

The definition of Favourable Conservation Status points to the future; habitats and populations must be sustainable. Therefore it is important not to overlook the factors that are likely to affect the feature and include in the site-specific expression of FCS what "state" we require the most important factors to be in.

As an example, a site-specific version of FCS for an upland acid oak wood could be as follows:

(Each relevant clause of the generic FCS definition is shown in italics, see box 1)

*(the extent is stable or increasing)*

Between 80% and 90%, of the site will be covered by broad-leaved woodland. The trees will be locally native species, with an overall dominance of oak in the canopy.

*(its quality is being maintained)*

In the long term, the woodland will include trees across a broad range of age classes, and in particular veteran trees are present. The canopy will not be completely closed, and at any given time approximately 20% of the woodland area will comprise of a dynamic shifting pattern of gaps. These gaps will arise through natural tree die-off.

*(the conservation status of typical species is favourable)*

Dead wood, standing and fallen, is being retained to provide habitat for invertebrates, fungi and other woodland species. (Note that in this example the 'typical species' element of FCS is provided for through a surrogate, in the form of a factor, namely presence of dead wood. The logic of this is that the presence of dead wood should provide for a wide range of dependant species, in particular invertebrates, lower plants and fungi. The presence of locally native tree species and veteran trees should ensure that other dependant species are also present.)

*(factors are under control)*

There are no factors currently occurring, or likely to occur, which would prevent the achievement of any of the foregoing.

The expression of the condition that we wish to achieve for a feature is complicated in many situations because some features, in particular habitats, are naturally dynamic, and to a certain extent it is the dynamic process that we wish to maintain, rather than any precisely defined actual state. The outcome of this dynamism in terms of the resultant state, may not be of particular concern. In other words, we may accept that on-going natural processes can deliver a wide variety of acceptable

conditions for a feature, and we may not be overly concerned about the precise conditions that result. However, we should not write objectives that simply seek the occurrence of “natural processes” without defining to some degree the range of conditions – even if it is a very wide range of conditions – that we regard as acceptable for the feature.

For example: on a coastal sand dune system, we might not be concerned about the composition and structure of the vegetation providing that the following conditions were met:

- First, that we had the confidence that it consisted of a dynamic, shifting mosaic of sand dune communities (and we state what these could be), and where the actual composition and structure is largely governed by natural processes;
- Second, that however the feature evolves, a sufficient area of habitat exists to support the full complement of typical species that depend upon it. This should include any such species that are features of the site in their own right. Indeed the interdependence of features, particularly the dependence of species on habitats, may often constrain the scope for accepting natural change.
- Third, that typical species populations and their distribution are also governed, as far as possible, by natural processes (again, provided this is compatible with the obligation to maintain species populations that are themselves features of the site)

In relation to geological and physiographic features, it should be noted that FCS is not always consistent with good physical appearance. The ‘look’ of a site is not always important. Some features are better left buried for their better conservation long-term. In a specific example, a feature may be at FCS if a given area of a particular rock type, or a particular fault plane, or a sedimentary feature were to remain exposed. The stability or decline of a feature and sub-feature can be assessed against specified limits (see section 4.2.2), for example square metres of a specific outcrop or a particular small landform. It is a reasonably straightforward procedure to define precisely the area of core or primary interest to be maintained, and this can be simply done often by photographic means.

Finally in this section, it is important to note some generally applicable points concerning the development of site-specific expressions of FCS:

- It is important to include supporting text clearly setting out why decisions were made, if necessary in an Appendix to the management plan.
- In the long term we need to keep objectives, including those relating to extent or population size, under review. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, over time our perception of what is valuable in conservation terms may change. Secondly, our understanding of features, the way they behave and in particular the relationship between feature condition and factors will develop over time.
- We should avoid any temptation to confuse the site-specific definition of FCS by including management prescriptions. Management is likely to change with time. We will in any case be including operational limits for factors affecting the features in the performance indicators (see section 4.2), which will often include operational limits for management actions, which we are likely to review and revise at more frequent intervals than the conservation objectives.

## 4.2 Performance Indicators

Performance indicators provide the evidence that we use to determine whether or not we are meeting our conservation objectives. Hence a conservation objective is more than the sum of the performance indicators.

Performance Indicators encompass both 'operational limits' (which apply to factors) and 'specified limits' (which apply to features). Both must be within the defined limits in order for it to be concluded that FCS is being attained.

### ***4.2.1 Identification of factors, operational limits and monitoring***

#### **Introduction**

The conservation management of habitats, species and geological interests is mainly about controlling factors, and in particular the consequence of human intervention, past, present and future. Our ability to achieve conservation objectives will always be constrained by our ability to control factors. Factors may include anything that has, is or may influence, the feature. It is important that both negative and positive factors are considered, since both have implications for management. There is a slight complication: although individually factors may have a limited impact on a feature, in combination they can become a serious issue. This requires that factors are considered both individually and collectively.

Factors are agents of change. If we can identify current and future factors we will in some cases be able to predict the direction of change and in particular be able to identify the attributes of a feature that are most likely to demonstrate the change (see section 4.2.2). This relationship between factors and attributes is the reason why factors are considered at this stage in the plan.

It must be stressed that, while a range of factors should be considered, albeit briefly, ultimately we should concern ourselves with setting operational limits for those factors which, if breached, are so significant to the condition of the habitat or species that we would have to conclude that the conservation status is not favourable on the grounds that the feature is either being, or is likely to be, significantly adversely affected.

Factors are considered in two main sections of the plan. At this stage we concentrate on the impact that the factor may have on a feature and identify the critical factors which will require monitoring or recording. Later in section 5 (the Management Rationale), the management implications of these factors is considered.

#### **Types of factors**

The following list is provided to aid the identification of factors. Some of the categories will be important on all sites, for example, Owner/Occupiers and other stakeholder interests, and some will be rarely encountered. Similarly it may be appropriate to identify and record factors under different headings to those given here.

- Owner/occupiers and other stakeholder interests
- Existing management agreements and consents
- Factors arising from legislation, tradition
- Physical considerations and constraints
- Internal natural factors (on-site)
- Internal anthropogenic factors (on-site)
- External factors (off-site)

We can never be certain that we have identified all the factors nor should we assume that we fully understand the implications of each factor. However, management planning is a process and we can only react to that which we know and understand at any given time.

For geological and geomorphological features, access is a primary imperative for successful conservation: research and education must be taken forward. Accessibility is therefore a factor. Projects are for the control of factors (e.g. misuse of the resource and physical decay), or enhancement of sub-features (e.g. excavation, scrub control etc) which would bring a geological feature into Favourable Conservation Status.

### **Operational limits**

Our ability to maintain a feature at FCS comes in part from our ability to control the factors. Given that factors can be positive or negative, control is taken to mean; to remove or minimise adverse impacts or to apply or increase desired effects. If we express the levels within which a factor may be considered to be at an acceptable level we have provided a performance indicator. These levels are operational limits.

We need to define operational limits for any factors considered to have a significant impact on the features. For example, it is often necessary to set a level of tolerance for the water table in a blanket bog, or the level of grazing on a grassland. Other examples could be a limit on hunting, a limit on livestock grazing levels, or a limit on human use/access.

Operational limits can be the total exclusion of a factor, the acceptance of its 'presence' below an upper limit, a requirement for it to be between upper and lower limits, or a lower limit only. Operational limits are an early warning system and should trigger action before it is too late. They are used to express the range of values within which a factor can be considered beneficial or does not threaten a feature. There may be situations where we have identified a factor which we know affects the feature but we do not sufficiently understand the factor-feature relationship to set operational limits. The best we can do here is set very wide limits, or none at all, and monitor the feature attributes (see section 4.2.2) while keeping the factor under surveillance.

Operational limits require an upper or lower limit, or both. In general, upper limits are applied to undesirable factors - they define our maximum tolerance - and lower limits are applied to positive factors. In reality, there are few occasions where the impact of a factor is sufficiently well understood that we are able to set both upper and lower limits with any confidence. In most cases, the best that we can achieve is to set a lower limit for positive factors and an upper limit for negative factors. Operational limits should only be set at the current level of influence of a factor if that is considered compatible with the achievement of FCS for the feature.

For some factors it may not be possible to set operational limits. These will fall in to two categories:

- Factors which we could measure but currently have no idea at what level to set a limit (these will usually require surveillance). If we have absolutely no idea where to set operational limits for a factor, we need to ask ourselves what led us to consider it an important factor in the first place.
- Factors for which we could set operational limits in order to guide management action, but which we are currently unable to measure. In these case we identify the need to develop a suitable methodology.

When the value of the factor is found to fall outside the operational limits, we have at least evidence to suggest that management is inappropriate and, most importantly, that the condition of the feature may deteriorate, and can no longer be considered to be at FCS.

### **Monitoring factors**

Monitoring factors requires exactly the same care and consideration required for attributes (see section 4.2.2).

Monitoring is only possible when the factor is quantifiable. Recording or surveillance, or indeed research, will be required when the relationship between a feature and a factor is unclear. For example, one of the factors that will affect grassland is grazing. In some cases it may not be possible to identify the appropriate grazing levels (operational limits) required to achieve the desired sward condition. Where this is the case the site manager should implement what they consider to be the most appropriate grazing regime whilst also setting up a programme of surveillance to look at the sward condition and the stocking levels. In time, it may be possible to establish what the most appropriate stocking levels are.

Determining that factors are within operational limits must not be taken as conclusive evidence that a feature is at FCS. The attributes must also be within specified limits.

#### ***4.2.2 Identification of attributes, specified limits and monitoring***

This stage in the management planning process identifies the attributes that can be used as performance indicators, providing evidence about the condition of a feature. Attributes are monitorable characteristics of a feature that provide a useful (in conservation management terms) indication of its condition. As with factors, attribute selection is a site- and feature-specific process, but should follow the JNCC generic guidance on attribute selection as it is established. That guidance has been developed using knowledge of the sensitivity of features to various factors, and can therefore be expected to be helpful in the process of identifying attributes having regard to factors.

Attributes describe the condition of a feature, rather than the factors affecting it and its future prospects. Therefore although monitoring attributes provides the information necessary to assess feature condition, it provides only part of the evidence that we require to determine whether or not a feature is at FCS, which incorporates factors (see previous section).

It is essential that the reasons for selecting each attribute that will be used as a performance indicator are clearly explained. Why has an attribute been selected, what information is it intended to convey and what, if any, is the relationship between the attribute and the factors?

Because it is not feasible to measure the totality of a feature, there is a need to focus on a limited range of attributes. Where we are aware of negative factors and understand their impact upon a feature it may be possible to predict the nature of the changes that are most likely to take place, and to select attributes and set targets for them on that basis. For example the application of artificial fertilizer to a traditional hay meadow would lead to an increase of some undesirable species and corresponding loss of desirable species. Both groups of species would provide useful performance indicators.

Given the above it is potentially very useful to be able to differentiate between attributes which are indicators of the impact of a factor and those which directly represent what we require of a feature. This is further reason for justifying the selection of each attribute.

Attributes must be quantifiable and monitorable. It is important at this stage to discuss how this can be achieved, but the details of the monitoring methodology can be left until later.

It may not be possible to identify sufficient attributes. Where there is a shortfall of information, any agreed generic guidance from JNCC could be relied upon, and the shortfall noted and surveys or research planned. In the meantime, the plan should carry a warning that the current list of attributes does not provide enough evidence to determine, with sufficient confidence, the current condition of the feature. This is not quite the disaster that it may appear and does not negate the value of an incomplete approach. Where it may be highly desirable to deal in certainties, this is not a luxury

that conservation managers can afford. Management decisions are made – indeed can only be made - on the basis of best available information.

Some general examples of attributes that may be used as performance indicators are given in Box 2. JNCC generic guidance will provide more detailed, feature-specific examples.

## **BOX 2: EXAMPLES OF ATTRIBUTES**

### FOR SPECIES

#### **Quantity:**

- The size of a population, for example:
- The total number of individuals present.
- The total number of breeding adults.
- The population at a specified point in an annual cycle.
- The extent or distribution of a population

#### **Quality:**

- Survival rates
- Productivity
- Age structure
- Sex ratio

### FOR HABITATS

#### **Quantity:**

- Size of the area occupied by the habitat or by one or more constituent communities
- Distribution of the habitat or of one or more constituent communities

#### **Quality:**

- Physical structure (a wide range of attributes are possible here, and are very feature-specific)
- Presence, abundance, relative proportions, distribution of individual species or groups of species indicative of condition
- Presence, abundance, relative proportions, distribution of individual species or groups of species indicative of change

### FOR GEOLOGICAL / GEOMORPHOLOGICAL FEATURES

#### **Quantity and Quality:**

- Size of area occupied by a rock type or landform (or group of these)
- Distribution of rocks, minerals, fossils or landforms: mappable traces of any geological feature
- Amount of resource (e.g. volume of mineral in a mine tip)
- Size of clean examinable rock surfaces
- Integrity, for instance of a static landform (e.g. measure of turf cover and lack of erosion, and absence of trees)

### **Specified limits for performance indicators & monitoring projects**

For the purpose of this planning guide, the term 'specified limits' will be used and the following definition, based on CCW's 1997 guidance, will be applied.

‘Specified limits define the degree to which the value of an attribute is allowed to fluctuate without creating any cause for concern. As with factors, two values may be required: an upper limit and a lower limit, but it is not always possible or necessary to define both upper and lower limits.’

Specified limits were developed in recognition of the inherent dynamics and cyclical change in populations and communities, and an acknowledgement that such variation is often acceptable in conservation terms. In reality, there are very few features for which the inherent fluctuations are fully understood. For a population, the lower limit might be the threshold beyond which a population will cease to be viable. However, even if the viability threshold is known, it is at best incautious and at worse foolhardy to set a lower limit close to the point of possible extinction. The upper limit could be the point at which a population might begin to threaten another important feature, or where a population becomes so large that it risks compromising the habitat that supports it. In many cases upper limits may be unnecessary. In many ways, specified limits can be regarded as limits of confidence. When the value of all attributes fall within the specified limits, we can be confident that the feature is in a favourable condition, and provided all factors are within their operational limits, we can conclude that the feature is at FCS;

It is important to remember that the identification of specified limits will always require a degree of judgement. Firstly, it is rare to have robust empirical datasets which show the inherent variability of features from which specified limits can be directly derived. The best that can be done in many cases is to set limits using expert judgement (expert in terms of the feature generally and in terms of knowledge of the site), hopefully backed up by some form of peer review and corporate ownership gained through the management planning approvals process (see preamble to this guidance document). The JNCC generic guidance will facilitate this process. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, conservation objectives are fundamentally about what we want on sites, not necessarily what we have got, so the specified limits are primarily value judgements rather than scientifically derived figures.

### **Monitoring attributes**

Whenever attributes are identified they must be monitored. That is their entire purpose. The monitoring of attributes provides evidence that is used in the assessment of the conservation status of the features. However, determining that attributes are within their specified limits (indicating Favourable Condition) must not be taken as conclusive evidence that a feature is at FCS. The factors must also be within operational limits - see section 4.2.1.

## **5 ASSESSMENT OF CONSERVATION STATUS AND RATIONALE**

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As with section 4, we are still considering each feature (or aggregated group of features) ‘x’ separately:

- 5.x.1 Assessment of conservation status
- 5.x.2 Rationale

### **5.1 Assessment of conservation status**

The purpose of performance indicators as described in section 4.2 is to enable monitoring to be carried out which in turn enables judgements to be made about whether or not the conservation objectives are being met.

Monitoring is a huge subject, and it is beyond the scope of this document to do much other than underline the essential relationship between monitoring and planning - no monitoring, no planning, and no planning, no monitoring. A bold statement, but easily justified. If we do not monitor we will never be in a position to know whether the feature is at the conservation status that we require, and will have no means of knowing that management is appropriate. It is the management planning process that we use to describe the status that we require for the feature, and unless we know what we want, we cannot monitor.

Having defined our objectives and performance indicators and having carried out the necessary monitoring, we should be in a position to make judgements about the conservation status of the feature and more particularly how, if at all, we need to review the management of the site. The conservation status of a feature will have significant implications for management. When we know that a feature has been maintained, for some time, at FCS the probable implication is that management is appropriate. Conversely, when a feature is unfavourable and declining management must be considered inappropriate. This relationship between the conservation status of a feature and the quality of management is an essential starting point when deciding on what management is most appropriate for a feature.

This section of the management plan should describe the current status of a feature and outline the evidence which led to that conclusion. Table 1 gives the various “categories of response”, each of which should be selected according to the assessment of the status of the feature, which in turn is derived from the results of monitoring of the performance indicators (factors and attributes). The response category then provides the starting point for the management rationale section of the plan. Important: This initial assessment must not be confused with the 6 year monitoring cycle.

**Table 1**

| <b>Assessment of conservation status<sup>1</sup></b> |   |  | <b>Management response category</b>   |
|--|---|--|---|
|  | <b>Current</b>  | <b>Comparison with previous assessment</b>   |   |
| 1  | Both attributes and factors are within limits, and...               | ...(a) attributes were within limits at last visit   | no change to management is required   |
|  |   | ...(b) attributes were outside limits at last visit  | change in management may be required since management that has been in place to restore condition may not be appropriate for maintaining it   |
|  |   | ...(c) there is no previous assessment   | no change to management is required   |
| 2  | attributes are within limits but factors are outside limits, and... | ...(a) factors were outside limits at last visit   | factors may in fact be OK and limits may need to be reviewed  |
|  |   | ...(b) both attributes and factors were within limits at last visit                        | we can expect condition to deteriorate and therefore management to bring factors back within limits is required   |
|  |   | ...(c) there is no previous assessment   | we can expect condition to deteriorate and therefore management to bring factors back within limits is required   |
| 3  | attributes are within limits but factors are outside limits, and... | ...(a) attributes were outside limits at last visit as well, but...                        | ...we can still expect condition to recover under these factors, so maintain current management<br>...condition ought to be showing signs of recovery by now and therefore management should be changed |
|  |   | ...(b) attributes were within limits at last visit   | condition has deteriorated and changes to management are required (i.e. limits for factors are inappropriate, or new factors have arisen)   |
|  |   | ...(c) there is no previous assessment   | We expect condition to recover under current management   |
| 4  | Both attributes and factors are outside limits, and...              | ...(a) Recovery is possible if factors can be brought under control                        | Changes to management are required  |
|  |   | ...(b) Recovery of part of the feature is possible if factors can be brought under control |   |
|  |   | ...(c) there is no prospect of recovery  | Abandon feature   |
| 5  | Attributes within limits, factors not assessed                      | No basis on which to change management   |   |
| 6  | Attributes outside limits, factors not assessed                     | No information on which to change management <sup>3</sup>                                  |   |
| 7  | Attributes not assessed, but factors within limits                  | No basis on which to change management <sup>3</sup>  |   |
| 8  | Attributes not assessed, factor outside limits                      | Management required to bring factors back within limits <sup>3</sup>                       |   |
| 9  | Attributes and factors not assessed                                 | No basis on which to change management <sup>3</sup>  |   |

1. Note that categorising conservation status (and condition) as “favourable” or “unfavourable”, though necessary for reporting purposes, is less important in the site management context that understanding the direction of change of the feature, and making judgements about the causes of that change. Each of the options 1-9 will have a corresponding reporting category for both condition and conservation status. Development of guidance on this is required (see Appendix 5).

2. These categories provide the starting point for the “Management rationale” section of the management plan (section 5.2).

3. Measures to enable assessment must be put in place as soon as possible.

## 5.2 Management rationale

The management rationale section of the plan is concerned with identifying and describing, in outline, the management considered necessary to maintain the site features in (or restore them to) FCS. The procedure follows directly on from the previous section, beginning by considering the status of the feature, both its condition and the factors affecting it, and the implications for management. Obviously we will have some confidence in current management when the feature is considered to be in a favourable conservation status and little confidence when it is not.

Management is invariably about controlling factors. By control, we mean the removal, maintenance, adjustment or application of factors, either directly or indirectly. For example, grazing is an obvious factor for grassland habitats. We can remove grazing, reduce grazing, maintain current levels, increase grazing or introduce grazing.

It is essential to consider the relationship between the factors and the condition of the feature. For example, for features in unfavourable condition (i.e. attributes are outside specified limits) we should ask what factors are responsible for this unsatisfactory situation, and how might they be controlled. Similarly if the feature is in a favourable condition (i.e. attributes are within specified limits) but the factors are not under control (i.e. outside their operational limits), we need to consider what the likely effect on the feature will be, and how that factor can be brought under control.

In some cases, it may not be possible to conclude with any certainty what the management should be. The only approach is to seek best advice and run a trial or an experiment. If the outcome is acceptable, continue; if not, modify the approach or try something different. As outlined in the preamble to this guidance, management is adaptable; we learn through experience, or the experience of others, what the most effective and efficient management may be at any given time.

For example, consider once again the grassland that we wish to maintain. Either too little or too much grazing will have a negative impact. Therefore, we need, as far as possible, to define the levels of grazing, both the least that is required and the most that can be tolerated. The best way of determining the appropriate grazing level, when this is unknown, is to recognise that the most important reference point is the condition that we want for the vegetation, i.e. the objective. We should begin by obtaining the best advice and guidance available from experts or the relevant literature (the JNCC generic guidance will play a significant role here). Then we should vary grazing practices until the required condition is met and maintained.

We must also not forget that the effect of factors can change with time. Climate change is a very good example: management activities considered currently appropriate today might be completely inappropriate in the future.

There are many factors beyond the control of site managers. These may include direct impacts from distant sources such as atmospheric pollution, or interruption of water or sediment supply. Factors which cannot be tackled due to inadequacies in the legislation, or because of competing legislation must also be identified. Some factors may be beyond our ability to control at the present time, but as an initial management response to an unfavourable conservation status assessment, we may be able to modify the way we control other factors to offset the negative effects. For example, if a feature relies on open sand dune habitats for survival and there is negligible sand accretion on the site, then it may be necessary to create open sand as part of a holding operation until natural dynamism can be restored to the system. In all such cases it is important to communicate with those who could influence this factor. Within CCW the most appropriate response may often be to inform relevant CCW staff, (for example, HQ policy staff) of the problem, so that they can attempt to influence regional or even national policy or legislation. Good examples of impact from specific sites will usually help CCW to make its case.

## 6 ACTION PLAN AND MANAGEMENT PROJECTS

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By this stage in the plan we have, for each feature, set objectives, carried out monitoring, assessed conservation status and prepared a management rationale. We now need to bring this information back together into a single plan of action and list of specific projects. So from this point onwards, we are dealing with all the features together.

### 6.1 Action plan

This section of the plan brings together all the activities required to ensure that the conservation features are safeguarded. Where necessary the individual outline prescriptions are expanded or elaborated to meet the requirements of site managers.

The management of sites, other than those managed directly by CCW, will be obtained, in the main, through Agreed Management Policies, (AMP).

It is essential that the contents of the amp is consistent with the management plan. The amp contains the following sections, those shown in bold are taken from the management plan.

1. **NATURE CONSERVATION INTEREST**
2. **MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES**
3. **MANAGEMENT REGIME**
4. KEEPING RECORDS
5. OPERATIONS LIKELY TO DAMAGE
6. WRITE OFF OF EXPENDITURE

Section 3 Management Regime, will contain the conclusions or outline prescriptions taken from the Management Rationale. The prescriptions will be expanded in the AMP to provide sufficient guidance, at an appropriate level of detail, for individuals responsible for managing the site. The AMP will also deal with resource implications. (PRISM Project 6)

Occasionally grant aid may be an appropriate means of funding conservation management on these sites. In these cases the action plan should contain a list of projects with descriptions. Guidance on producing project descriptions is given below.

### 6.2 Management projects

In most cases the management of SSSI features will be addressed through the various implementation processes outlined in the preceding section. For sites managed directly by CCW the CMS software is used to manage the entire Action Plan. Full guidance on using CMS is available from the Conservation Management Team in Operations Directorate. There will be a need to describe some of the projects which require input from CCW staff. The section is concerned with the preparation of these projects, for example, liaison and recording projects. Quite often an individual action or project will be carried out to meet the management requirements of several features. For this reason this section brings together all the projects that will be required on the site. However, the relationship between each project and the related objectives must be maintained.

### Planning individual projects.

It is important, when planning individual projects, that the following areas are given attention:

**“Target” feature** For which feature’s benefit is the work principally required (noting that it may be aimed at more than one feature)?

**When** When will the work be carried out and for how long?

**Where** Where on or off the site will activities take place?

#### Effects on other

**Features** What are the implications of the work for other features?

**Who** Who will do the work and how much of their time will be required?

**Priority** What priority is given to the project?

**Expenditure** How much will the work cost?

**What** What does the work entail? The following headings should be used for each management project plan:

**Purpose:** Explain why the particular project is being carried out.

**General background:** Provide any relevant information concerning the background to the project, for example development work leading to adoption of the current methodology.

**Methodology:** Provide sufficient guidance to enable anyone required to carry out the work to do so without needing to refer to any other instruction. Provide clear succinct instructions. A series of points is usually more useful than large blocks of text.

**Programme:** Set out the work programme. In particular, when work is phased over a period, describe each stage leading to the completion of the project.

## APPENDICES

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### **APPENDIX 1. MANAGEMENT PLAN APPROVALS AND REVIEW PROCESS, INCLUDING FREQUENCY OF REVIEWS (PRISM PROJECT 2 SECTION 3)**

The approval process, PRISM project section 3, is being prepared and will be available in draft for consultation in July 2003.

## APPENDIX 2. GUIDANCE ON THE PRODUCTION OF A SITE MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

As a consequence of Section 28(4) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 amended by the CRoW Act 2000, CCW is required to provide a "statement of management" as part of the notification package for each of our SSSIs. All new sites will need a management statement when they go to Council for approval and statements must be provided for all existing SSSIs no later than January 2006. This guide is intended to help you prepare management statements. The approach outlined below has had very limited testing and must be regarded as provisional. Refer to the attached examples as you read the guide; they will help to illustrate the process.

### 5 THE LEGISLATION AND CODE OF GUIDANCE

The wording in the legislation is:

"A notification ..... shall contain a statement of the Council's view about the management of the land (including any views the Council may have about the conservation and enhancement of that flora and fauna or those features."

Wording in the National Assembly's draft Code of Guidance, which has not yet gone out for public consultation, is as follows:

"The National Assembly for Wales expects this to be a simple statement of the way in which the land needs to be managed in order to maintain its special interest. It should provide an initial outline on which to base future discussions and decisions on conservation management of the SSSI."

### 6 GENERAL GUIDANCE

#### 6.1 The recipients or audience

The statements will be sent out with the notification package to all owners and occupiers and all other statutory recipients.

#### 6.2 Language and style

All notification documentation is bilingual and the management statements will be no exception. The translation of the Management Statements will be organised by Areas at the same time as the rest of the notification documents.

It is essential, given the audience, that we use plain language and avoid jargon, scientific terms and acronyms, unless these are in wide and common use. Avoid, whenever possible, scientific names and whenever possible give the English or Welsh common name for species. Obviously, there will be many occasions when species do not have a common name. For these cases you could write, for example, the rare lichen (followed by its name).

The management statement will be as concise as possible. Bear in mind that this document will accompany the notification package, so there is no reason to replicate anything contained in the other documents. Don't forget that the management plan and management agreement will deal with the detail; this management statement is an outline, and does not require detail.

We recommend that individual paragraphs are not numbered.

#### 6.3 Statements refer to the site as a whole

Management statements will always refer to the site as a whole; no attempt should be made to produce statements tailored to one or individual holdings.

## 7 STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS

The document comprises 4 main sections:

### 7.1 Introduction

This is a generic statement, provided by Site Safeguard, which must be included in all documents. If a local need arises, additional information may be added, but on no account delete any part of the generic statement.

The generic statement is as follows:

"This management statement contains CCW's opinion of the way in which the SSSI should be managed in order to maintain its special interest. It also provides a basis for future discussions and decisions on the conservation management of the SSSI. It is important that any work described in this statement are fully discussed with and formally consented by CCW, before any of these management activities are started.

The document sets out a vision for the features of interest; it describes the key issues affecting the features of interest and outlines any management considered necessary to safeguard those features.

It is very important to recognise that management may need to change with time. Problems that we are aware of today may be resolved or completely removed and new unforeseen problems may arise. New improved management techniques may also become available. Consequently the management outlined in this document is considered appropriate for the short term but may need to change in the long term."

### 7.2 Features of special scientific interest

This section provides a list of the features of special scientific interest. We are required to write a management objective which includes, or covers, each SSSI qualifying feature. This does not mean that we write an objective for each individual feature. Often we combine several qualifying features to provide a focus for our objectives. For example, a woodland site may contain several communities or sub-communities, each of which meets the selection requirement; these communities form a large scale mosaic and the management requirement is common to all. As a consequence, we decide to write a single objective to cover the entire woodland. The level of definition that we use for the objectives in the management plan will also define the features listed in this section. As a general rule, you should group features whenever possible, but only when this will not compromise our ability to apply differing management or monitoring.

As with everything in this document, remember to use plain language. Don't use NVC community codes or names, or scientific names for species. Talk about a Western Birch - Oak wood and not a W17 Quercus petraea - Betula pubescens - Dicranum majus woodland.

This is a generic statement, provided by Site Safeguard, which must be included in all documents. If a local need arises, additional information may be added, but on no account delete any part of the generic statement.

The generic statement is as follows:

"As well as the features listed above, (Site Name) has other habitats that contribute to the special wildlife interest. These include (insert list of mixture habitats from Features Database, together with any linear or point structures such as hedgerows, streams, ponds, small rock outcrops or individual trees). This diversity of habitats is important for a wide range of species. Except where specified below, management of this site should aim to look after these habitats as well as the listed features of interest."

Tempting though it may be, reference should not be made to Biodiversity Action Plan species and habitats, as we are not required to cover them by the legislation.

### **7.3 Long term vision for the features**

The starting point for anyone wishing to understand why we carry out management is an appreciation of what we are trying to achieve. We understand that our obligation to all qualifying features is to maintain them in at favourable conservation status. We prepare quantified and measurable objectives to define our requirements. These are concise scientific statements, and are not in any way intended, or suited, to inform the majority of owners and occupiers. We need something different that will describe, in plain language, our long-term vision for the feature. These statements should be based on the definitions of Favourable Conservation Status.

#### **A simplified definition of Favourable Conservation Status**

##### **Habitats**

The habitat must be stable or increasing in area; it must be sustainable, the typical species are also at favourable conservation status and the factors that affect the habitat or its typical species must be under control.

##### **Species**

The population must be viable in the long term, the range must not be contracting, sufficient habitat must exist to support the population in the long term and the factors which affect the species, or its habitat, must be under control.

For both habitat and species features, begin by considering size and distribution. The preceding definition requires that the size of a habitat should be stable or increasing. This will naturally lead to the conclusion that we should provide some indication of the size or extent of the feature. Unfortunately, this is not as straightforward as it may appear.

We often have to deal with situations where one feature is in direct conflict with another. This will happen when two communities, for example, woodland and heath can occupy the same space; an increase of one will lead to a loss of the other. We could, of course, provide lower limits for both. In order to express this in plain language we could, for example, state that at least 70% of the site must be covered by woodland and that at least 20% must be covered by heath.

The real difficulty will arise if the value of one of the features changes. For example, if a population of silver studded blue butterflies is discovered. Since the butterflies are entirely dependent on the heath, the value of heath on the site will suddenly increase. There is insufficient heath to support a viable population of butterflies and so you need to clear woodland to provide habitat for the butterflies. You now recognise that you must be prepared to lose some of the woodland.

We could avoid these issues by not quantifying the extent of the feature. For example, you could say that we wish to maintain a viable area of heath sufficient to ensure the survival of typical and important associated species, but such statements can become rather meaningless.

We have to recognise, and share with others, the fact that conservation management is an imprecise art. There are so many variables, real and potential, that can impact on our ability to safeguard features. In addition, conservation values will change over time. Today's solutions are not necessarily tomorrow's. This means that any statement we make is time limited.

To conclude, it is important that, whenever possible, we give some indication of the extent of a feature. The best approach for habitats is to follow the earlier example and give an indication of the minimal requirement. For example, "At least 70% of the site will be covered by a sustainable oak wood."

Once we have dealt with size we move on to consider other values. For a habitat we have to find some means of expressing the quality that we require. The temptation may be to provide long lists of the species that we consider important. But species lists are more likely to confuse than inform the majority of owners and occupiers. For example, an alternative for a woodland site could be to say that we want locally native species of trees. We can enhance this statement by naming a few of the most important desirable species. We can, of course, also state what we don't want.

The definition of Favourable Conservation Status points to the future; habitats and populations must be sustainable. For the more natural habitats, management will generally attempt to maintain, or enable, natural processes. Woodland, in particular high forest, provides a good example. We know that, in order to optimise conditions for the widest range of species, plant and animal, we should aim, in the long term, to achieve a woodland which is naturally regenerating, includes trees of all age classes and sufficient standing and fallen dead wood. We can easily describe these conditions using plain language.

The less natural a habitat, the easier it will be to describe what we want. This is because the conditions that we require will be obtained through prescribed management. We could, for a grassland feature, simply state that we want a herb rich sward and give the names of a few important species.

Avoid any temptation to confuse the vision statement by including prescription. Remember that management is most likely to change with time.

#### 7.4 Key management issues

Nature conservation management is concerned with maintaining, or obtaining, Favourable Conservation Status for the features. The status of a feature will change as a consequence of the impact, singly or severally, of various factors. Nature conservation management is obtained through the control, removal or application of factors. For example, we can control grazing pressure, remove grazing or introduce grazing.

The path towards identifying appropriate management should always begin with an assessment of the factors. We need to identify the most important factors, past, present and potential, and consider how they may affect the feature. We then have to identify any management activities necessary to control the factors.

Thus, for each feature in turn, identify the key factors, describe their impact on the feature and outline the consequential management requirement. Only include the factors which necessitate management.

For example:

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| <b>Feature:</b>    | Woodland   |
| <b>Factor:</b>     | Uncontrolled sheep grazing   |
| <b>Impact:</b>     | The woodland has been overgrazed for many years. This has prevented the natural regeneration of the woodland, since seedlings are given no opportunity to grow into viable trees.                                    |
| <b>Management:</b> | It is necessary to control the number of animals grazing in the wood, and this should include total exclusion for limited periods. A fence should be erected and maintained in order to obtain the required control. |

Discussion of management requirements should not include monitoring work.  
Staff should not refer to named herbicides/ pesticides in the statement, but should use the appropriate generic term instead.  
Follow the layout used in the attached examples. Above all, use plain language and be as concise as possible.

**APPENDIX 3.  
SUMMARY OF THE PLANNING PROCESS AND MANAGEMENT PLAN CHECKLIST**

| Management Plan Section   | What to include   | What to leave out  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>1. Vision Statement</b>  |   |  |
|   | <b>A vision of the site, as we would like it to be</b><br>Identical to the equivalent statement in the Site Management Statement. This is a compilation of the statements prepared for each feature in 4.1.   |  |
| <b>2. Site Description and Other Relevant Background Information</b>      |   |  |
|   | <b>Basic site information</b><br>Include a factual account of what we know about owner/occupier/stakeholder objectives  | Don't re-write existing documents – attach copies or include references.   |
| <b>3. Confirmation of Special Features</b>                                |   |  |
|   | A list of special features for which the site will be managed<br>This can be just a list on a simple site, but any unresolved issues about features (e.g. uncertainty about definitions, difficulties in recognition) will make subsequent sections of the plan impossible to complete satisfactorily.<br>cSAC, SPA, Ramsar, etc - the plan must address all designations, so the relationships between the features recognised in each layer must be resolved.<br>If features are aggregated or split, provide an explanation.   |  |
| <b>4. Conservation Objectives (complete for each feature)</b>             |   |  |
| <b>4.1 Favourable Conservation Status: 'Vision' for the feature</b>       | <b><i>What do we want? A broad objective.</i></b><br>A plain text statement of what we require for the feature, now and in the future, based on the generic definition of FCS in 4.1.<br>Where there is potential for significantly different choices at this stage (eg. natural vs coppiced woodland), outline the options considered and justify the choice made.   | Any reference to monitoring or management prescriptions.   |
| <b>4.2 Performance Indicators</b>   | <b><i>What evidence will we need to collect to be confident of the feature's conservation status?</i></b><br>This is divided into the two sections below:   |  |
| <b>4.2.1 Identification of Factors, Operational Limits and Monitoring</b> | <b><i>What might affect our ability to get what we want, and why, and how,...?</i></b><br>Identify the factors which affect or may affect the feature (positive and negative).<br>For each factor, discuss the significance and nature of the impact or potential impact, emphasising how the feature may change as a result. Other features may be factors.<br><b><i>...and what do we need to measure directly to be confident of the feature's future condition?</i></b><br>For each factor, decide whether its' significance warrants direct measurement. Where tolerances are known, set Operational Limits with a monitoring project. Where tolerances are not yet known, a surveillance project should be specified. | Any reference to possible management response – this belongs in 5.2 and 6. Where continuation of management (eg. grazing) is an Operational Limit, the detailed prescription should be in 5.2 and 6. |

| Management Plan Section  | What to include  | What to leave out  |
|--|--|--|
| <b>4.2.2 Identification of Attributes, Specified Limits and Monitoring</b>             | <p><b>What do we need to measure to be confident of the feature's condition, and why?</b><br/> <b>How will we make our measurements?</b><br/>           Select a set of attributes as specified in CSM guidance which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• represent the condition of the feature itself (from 4.1) – size/extent/quality/etc</li> <li>• reflect the potential impact of factors on the feature (from 4.2.1) – e.g. indicator species</li> </ul> <p>Set Specified Limits for each attribute representing what we require of feature condition.<br/>           Include justification of each attribute and set of Specified Limits</p> | Most of the detail about measurement methods is often best covered in individual Monitoring Project descriptions, particularly where sampling is required. |
| <b>5. Assessment of Conservation Status, and Rationale (complete for each feature)</b> |  |  |
| <b>5.1 Assessment of Conservation Status</b>   | <p><b>What is the feature's conservation status now?</b><br/>           Judge and record conservation status (condition of the feature, and any information on trends), with date and basis of assessment.<br/>           Firm conclusions can often be reached without detailed/measured fieldwork, but must always be based on good field experience and observation.<br/>           For unfavourable features, record which Specified and/or Operational Limits were breached<br/>           In all cases, include any relevant discussion about your confidence in the verdict.</p>  | Again, avoid reference to management prescriptions.  |
| <b>5.2 Management Rationale</b>  | <p><b>Given the feature's conservation status, and the factors which affect it, what should we do?</b><br/>           A discussion which draws together the implications of the current status (5.1) and the factors (4.2.1), sets out response options, and concludes with the management action required now, bearing in mind the interests of the owner/occupier/other stakeholders (2).<br/>           This is one of the most important, but most frequently neglected, parts of the plan.</p>  |  |
| <b>6. Action Plan and Management Projects</b>  |  |  |
|  | <p><i>Our conclusions – the management we must do.</i><br/>           Details of the management action – when, where, who, priority, expenditure, purpose, method.<br/>           Work Programme.</p>  | Any rationale or justification for the work – this should be covered in 5.   |

#### **APPENDIX 4. LIST OF JNCC GENERIC GUIDANCE ON COMMON STANDARDS MONITORING.**

The JNCC generic guidance on common standards monitoring will comprise the following chapters:

|                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| lowland heath     | marine (simple)  |
| woodland          | marine (complex) |
| earth science     | marine mammals   |
| birds             | herpetofauna     |
| lowland wetland   | freshwater       |
| mammals           | vascular plants  |
| upland            | lower plants     |
| lowland grassland | invertebrates    |
| coastal           |                  |

The guidance manual is to be launched in the Autumn 2003 and the text placed on the JNCC website. It is intended to provide the attribute tables in a user friendly way enabling conservation objectives to be produced for individual sites.

A list of completed guidance is not currently available. This appendix will be updated as information becomes available.

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#### **APPENDIX 5. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS. (PRISM PROJECT 5)**

Guidance will be provided by EAG