

# National Parks and Wildlife Service

## Conservation Objectives Series

### Slyne Head Islands SAC 000328



**An Roinn**  
***Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta***  
**Department of**  
***Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht***



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## Introduction

The overall aim of the Habitats Directive is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest. These habitats and species are listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives and Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas are designated to afford protection to the most vulnerable of them. These two designations are collectively known as the Natura 2000 network.

European and national legislation places a collective obligation on Ireland and its citizens to maintain habitats and species in the Natura 2000 network at favourable conservation condition. The Government and its agencies are responsible for the implementation and enforcement of regulations that will ensure the ecological integrity of these sites.

A site-specific conservation objective aims to define favourable conservation condition for a particular habitat or species at that site.

The maintenance of habitats and species within Natura 2000 sites at favourable conservation condition will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at a national level.

Favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

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

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

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

### Notes/Guidelines:

1. The targets given in these conservation objectives are based on best available information at the time of writing. As more information becomes available, targets for attributes may change. These will be updated periodically, as necessary.
2. An appropriate assessment based on these conservation objectives will remain valid even if the targets are subsequently updated, providing they were the most recent objectives available when the assessment was carried out. It is essential that the date and version are included when objectives are cited.
3. Assessments cannot consider an attribute in isolation from the others listed for that habitat or species, or for other habitats and species listed for that site. A plan or project with an apparently small impact on one attribute may have a significant impact on another.
4. Please note that the maps included in this document do not necessarily show the entire extent of the habitats and species for which the site is listed. This should be borne in mind when appropriate assessments are being carried out.
5. When using these objectives, it is essential that the relevant backing/supporting documents are consulted, particularly where instructed in the targets or notes for a particular attribute.

## Qualifying Interests

*\* indicates a priority habitat under the Habitats Directive*

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000328	Slyne Head Islands SAC
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1170	Reefs
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1364	Grey Seal <i>Halichoerus grypus</i>
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**Please note that this SAC partially overlaps with Slyne Head to Ardmore Point SPA (004159) and adjoins Slyne Head Peninsula SAC (002074). See map 2. The conservation objectives for this site should be used in conjunction with those for the overlapping and adjoining sites as appropriate.**

## Supporting documents, relevant reports & publications (listed by date)

Supporting documents, NPWS reports and publications are available for download from: [www.npws.ie/Publications](http://www.npws.ie/Publications)

<b>Title:</b>	Reef Investigations in Slyne Head Islands cSAC (Site Code: IE000328) Co. Galway
<b>Year:</b>	2011
<b>Author:</b>	Aquafact
<b>Series:</b>	Unpublished Report to NPWS & MI
<b>Title:</b>	An assessment of the breeding population of grey seals in the Republic of Ireland, 2005
<b>Year:</b>	2008
<b>Author:</b>	Ó Cadhla, O.; Strong, D.; O'Keeffe, C.; Coleman, M.; Cronin, M.; Duck, C.; Murray, T.; Dower, P.; Nairn, R.; Murphy, P.; Smiddy, P.; Saich, C.; Lyons, D.O.; Hiby, L.
<b>Series:</b>	Irish Wildlife Manuals No. 34
<b>Title:</b>	Grey seal moult population survey in the Republic of Ireland, 2007
<b>Year:</b>	2007
<b>Author:</b>	Ó Cadhla, O.; Strong, D.
<b>Series:</b>	Unpublished Report to NPWS & CMRC
<b>Title:</b>	Exploratory surveys for grey seals on islands off northwest Galway and southwest Mayo, 2004-05
<b>Year:</b>	2006
<b>Author:</b>	Ó Cadhla, O.; Strong, D.; O'Donnell, G.
<b>Series:</b>	Unpublished Report to NPWS
<b>Title:</b>	Grey seal population status in the Slyne Head SAC/SPA and Hen Island Co. Galway, as determined from breeding ground surveys in 2004
<b>Year:</b>	2005
<b>Author:</b>	Ó Cadhla, O.; Strong, D.; O'Donnell, G.
<b>Series:</b>	Unpublished Report to NPWS
<b>Title:</b>	Harbour seal population assessment in the Republic of Ireland: August 2003
<b>Year:</b>	2004
<b>Author:</b>	Cronin, M.; Duck, C.; Ó Cadhla, O.; Nairn, R.; Strong, D.; O'Keeffe, C.
<b>Series:</b>	Irish Wildlife Manuals No. 11
<b>Title:</b>	Summary of National Parks & Wildlife Service surveys for common (harbour) seals ( <i>Phoca vitulina</i> ) and grey seals ( <i>Halichoerus grypus</i> ), 1978 to 2003
<b>Year:</b>	2004
<b>Author:</b>	Lyons, D.O.
<b>Series:</b>	Irish Wildlife Manuals No. 13
<b>Title:</b>	The grey seal ( <i>Halichoerus grypus</i> ) in Ireland
<b>Year:</b>	1983
<b>Author:</b>	Summers, C.F.
<b>Series:</b>	Unpublished Report to the Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Wildlife

## Spatial data sources

<b>Year:</b>	Interpolated 2012
<b>Title:</b>	Subtidal reef survey 2010
<b>GIS operations:</b>	Polygon feature classes from marine community types base data sub-divided based on interpolation of marine survey data. Expert opinion used as necessary to resolve any issues arising
<b>Used for:</b>	Marine community types, 1170 (maps 3 and 4)
<b>Year:</b>	2005
<b>Title:</b>	OSi Discovery series vector data
<b>GIS operations:</b>	High water mark (HWM) and low water mark (LWM) polyline feature classes converted into polygon feature classes and combined; EU Annex I Saltmarsh and Coastal data erased out if present
<b>Used for:</b>	Marine community types base data (map 4)
<b>Year:</b>	2005
<b>Title:</b>	OSi Discovery series vector data
<b>GIS operations:</b>	High Water Mark (HWM) polyline feature class converted into polygon feature class; clipped to SAC boundary. Expert opinion used as necessary to resolve any issues arising
<b>Used for:</b>	1364 (map 5)
<b>Year:</b>	2012
<b>Title:</b>	NPWS rare and threatened species database
<b>GIS operations:</b>	Dataset created from spatial references in database records. Expert opinion used as necessary to resolve any issues arising
<b>Used for:</b>	1364 (map 5)

**1170 Reefs**

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Reefs in Slyne Head Islands SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

Attribute	Measure	Target	Notes
Distribution	Occurrence	The distribution of reefs is stable or increasing, subject to natural processes. See map 3	Distribution was established from 2010 subtidal reef survey (Aquafact, 2011) and 2012 field observations
Habitat area	Hectares	The permanent area is stable, subject to natural processes. See map 3	Habitat area was estimated as 1418ha from 2010 subtidal reef survey (Aquafact, 2011) and 2012 field observations
Community structure	Biological composition	Conserve the following community types in a natural condition: Exposed intertidal reef community complex; <i>Laminaria</i> -dominated community; and Exposed subtidal reef with echinoderms and encrusting algae community. See map 4	Based on 2010 subtidal reef survey (Aquafact, 2011) and 2012 field observations

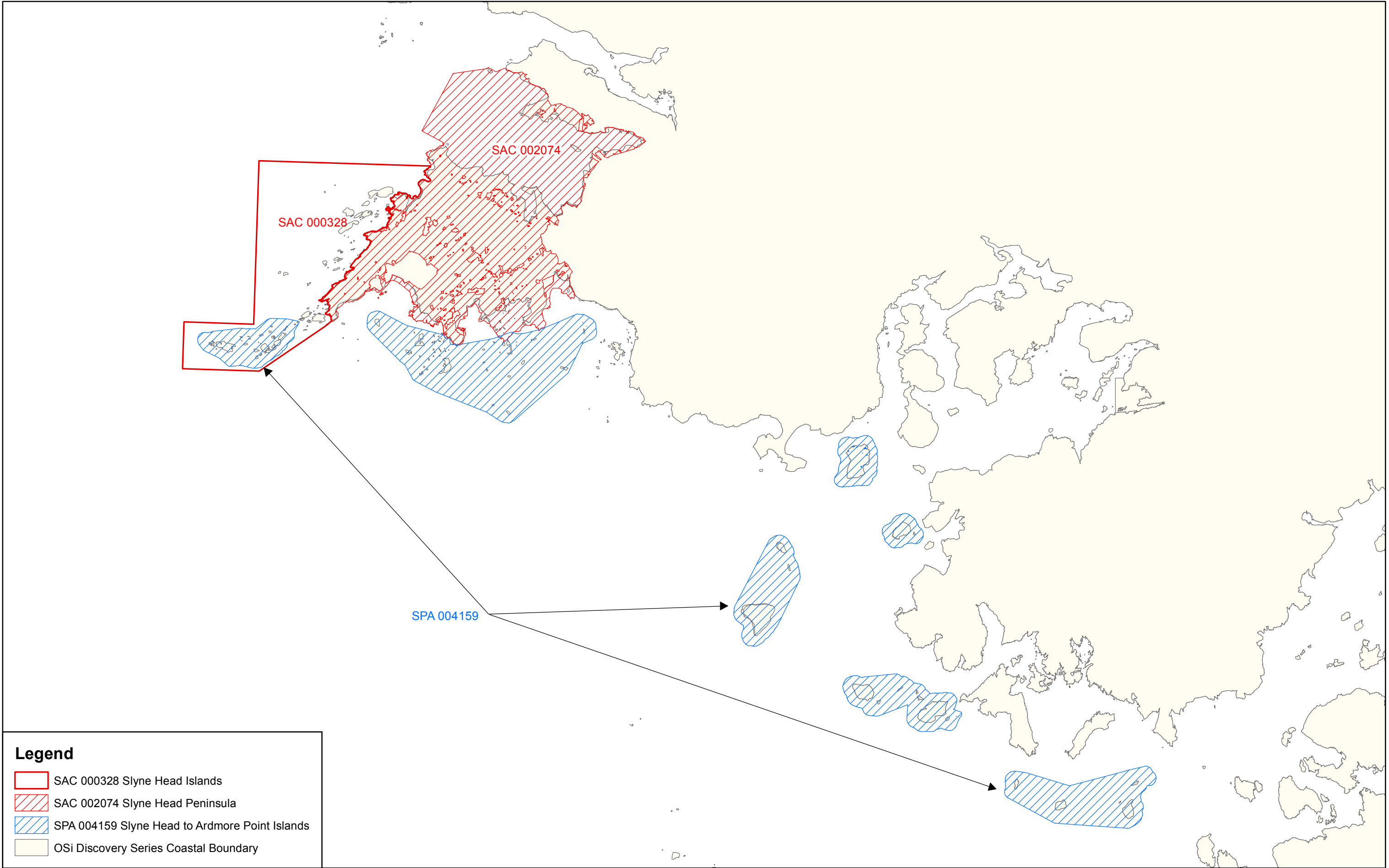
**1364 Grey Seal *Halichoerus grypus***

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Grey Seal in Slyne Head Islands SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

Attribute	Measure	Target	Notes
Access to suitable habitat	Number of artificial barriers	Species range within the site should not be restricted by artificial barriers to site use. See map 5	See marine supporting document for further details
Breeding behaviour	Breeding sites	Conserve the breeding sites in a natural condition. See map 5	Attribute and target based on background knowledge of Irish breeding populations, review of data from Summers (1983), Lyons (2004), Ó Cadhla et al. (2005), a comprehensive breeding survey in 2005 (Ó Cadhla et al., 2008) and unpublished National Parks and Wildlife Service records. See marine supporting document for further details
Moulting behaviour	Moult haul-out sites	Conserve the moult haul-out sites in a natural condition. See map 5	Attribute and target based on background knowledge of Irish populations, review of data from Ó Cadhla et al. (2006), a national moult survey (Ó Cadhla and Strong, 2007) and unpublished National Parks and Wildlife Service records. See marine supporting document for further details
Resting behaviour	Resting haul-out sites	Conserve the resting haul-out sites in a natural condition. See map 5	Attribute and target based on review of data from Lyons (2004), Cronin et al. (2004), Ó Cadhla et al. (2005) and unpublished National Parks and Wildlife Service records. See marine supporting document for further details
Disturbance	Level of impact	Human activities should occur at levels that do not adversely affect the grey seal population at the site	See marine supporting document for further details







**Legend**

- SAC 000328 Slyne Head Islands
- SAC 002074 Slyne Head Peninsula
- SPA 004159 Slyne Head to Ardmore Point Islands
- OSi Discovery Series Coastal Boundary

