

Site 18 - Port Ui Chuireain to Bunaniver

Site description

Port ui Chuireain to Bunaniver is a medium-sized shingle site located on the coastline of the Bloody Foreland Mountain, Co. Donegal. The site is part of the Gweedore Bay and Islands SAC (site code 001141) (NPWS, 2015).

Based on the currently available mapping one coastal Annex I habitat occur within Gweedore Bay and Islands SAC, and it is listed as of Qualifying Interest (Table 1).

Table 1. Annex I habitats present at Gweedore Bay and Islands SAC, the area they occupy (based on the most recent mapped available) and status as a Qualifying Interest of the SAC. An asterisk denotes a priority Annex I habitat and habitat that were not the target of this survey are excluded.

Habitat Code	Area (ha)	Qualifying Interest?
1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks	2.173	Yes

The Donegal Way (Slí Dhún na nGall) walking route runs adjacent to the site. The site is predominantly used for sheep grazing.

Habitat losses were recorded due to invasion of problematic native and alien species (mainly *Gunnera tinctoria*, *Iris* spp, *Urtica dioica*) (Table 2).

Table 2. Habitat loss recorded during the desk and field surveys in hectares and % of total habitat area in the site.

Habitat	Within SAC?	Loss (ha)	Impact code	New habitat
1220	No	0.020	PI03	Reed and large sedge swamps (FS1) and Improved agricultural grasslands (GA1)

Conservation assessments were carried out within one sub-site occupying a total area of 2.17 ha (Table 3). The only habitat present (**1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks**) was in Unfavourable condition.

Table 3. Summary of Conservation Status for all habitats assessed at Port ui Chuireain to Bunaniver.

Subsite	Habitat	Area	Structure and functions	Future Prospects	Overall assessment
18.01 Port Ui Chuireain to Bunaniver	1220	Unfavourable - Inadequate (Decreasing)	Unfavourable - Inadequate (Stable)	Unfavourable - Inadequate	Unfavourable - Inadequate (Improving)

Sub-site 1. Port Ui Chuireain to Bunaniver shingles

Summary Information

Survey Date: 10 July 2022

Water Framework Directive Waterbody: not applicable

Previous survey identifiers: VSM004

Current survey details:

Table 4: Current survey details for Annex I habitats at Port Ui Chuireain to Bunaniver shingles

Habitat	Area	Monitoring stops
1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks	2.173	9

1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks

Area

The habitat has decreased over the most recent reporting cycle due to anthropogenic influences (drainage in the north part of the site led to invasion of problematic native and alien species). This is consistent with an Area assessment of Unfavourable - Inadequate and the trend is decreasing.

Structure and Functions

The pioneer community, dominated by *Silene uniflora*, ranged from 3 m wide in the south of the site to more expansive bands of up to 30 m wide in the north. A lichen-rich community has developed on one area of stable shingle in the north of the site. The grassland community was present on both sides of the track in the south of the site, with additional areas also present in the north.

One criterion failed in the Structure and Functions assessment: the coastal protection features (i.e. boulder barriers) and the track that runs adjacent to the habitat are artificially stabilizing the ridge and **1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks** habitat. As this assessment criterion failed, the Structure and Functions were therefore assessed as Unfavourable - Inadequate. Since during the VSM, Structure and Functions were also assessed as Unfavourable - Inadequate, the trend is therefore stable.

Future Prospects

Grazing by sheep and cattle had a low-intensity neutral impact on a small portion (10%) of the habitat. The track and walking also had a low-intensity neutral impact affecting 50% of the habitat. High-intensity negative impacts included the presence of invasive non-native species affecting 0.1% of the habitat area and drainage resulting in spread of problematic native and non native species. Litter had a medium-intensity negative impact affecting 1% of the habitat. Future Prospects were therefore assessed as Unfavourable - Inadequate, and the trend was assessed as increasing, because they were assessed as Unfavourable - Bad during the VSM.

Conservation assessment

The conservation status assessments of the three parameters are as follows:

- Area: Unfavourable - Inadequate (decreasing)
- Structure and Functions: Unfavourable - Inadequate (stable)
- Future Prospects: Unfavourable - Inadequate (increasing)

Because all of the three parameters were assessed as Unfavourable - Inadequate, the overall conservation assessment for **1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks** at 18.1 Port Ui Chuireain to Bunaniver shingles is Unfavourable - Inadequate. Since the overall conservation was previously assessed as Unfavourable - Bad, the trend is therefore improving.

Overall Conservation Status: Unfavourable - Inadequate (Improving)

Condition of the habitat by area

Given that 25% of **1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks** was affected by several impacts that led to a failure in the Structure and Functions assessment, this area was considered to be in poor condition. The remaining 75% of the habitat was considered to be in good condition.

Site 18 Subsite 1 Appendices

Appendix 1 Area

Total habitat area recorded during reporting cycles to date.

Habitat	2007	2013	2019	2025
1220	NS	NS	2.300	2.173

Favourable Reference Area and cumulative changes in area due to human activities (restoration and loss) recorded during reporting cycles to date. Natural fluctuations are not taken into account.

Habitat	Favourable Reference area (ha)	2007 change (ha)	2013 change (ha)	2019 change (ha)	2025 change (ha)
1220	2.300	NS	NS	<1% per year	0.02 and 2019 loss

Appendix 2. Structure and functions

Negative indicator species and non-native invasive species

Habitat	Species name	Cover (%)
1220	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	1.0
1220	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	2.0
1220	<i>Gunnera tinctoria</i>	1.0

Positive indicator species and notable species

Habitat	Species name	Cover (%) (if recorded)
1220	<i>Beta maritima</i>	5.0
1220	<i>Potentilla anserina</i>	5.0
1220	<i>Silene uniflora</i>	11.3

Structure and Functions Assessment Criteria

Habitat	Indicator	Pass/Fail
1220	Shingle habitat	Pass
1220	Native species	Pass
1220	Notable/rare species	Pass
1220	Negative indicator species	Pass
1220	Non-native species	Pass
1220	Interference with the sediment dynamics	Fail
1220	Damage due to disturbance	Pass

Appendix 3. Impacts and Activities

Impacts recorded

Habitat code	Impact code	Impact description	Relative importance	Influence	Source	Timing	Trend	Area
1220	PA07	Overgrazing (cattle)	Low	Neutral	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	10.0
1220	PA22	Drainage	High	Negative	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	1.0
1220	PF04	Litter	Low	Negative	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	0.5
1220	PF05	Walking	Low	Neutral	Inside	Ongoing	Decreasing	50.0
1220	PF06	Litter	Low	Negative	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	0.5
1220	PF15	Coastal protection and unpaved road	High	Negative	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	Unknown
1220	PI01	Gunnera tinctoria	High	Negative	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	0.1

Conservation Measures required

Habitat code	Measure code	Measure description	Area (ha)	Status (in place/partial/Absent/unidentified)	Response timeframe	Purpose	Location (inside and or Outside SAC)
1220	CF02	Measure required to remove litter	0.0217	Absent	Short-term results	Restore the structure & functions, including the status of typical species	Inside
1220	CI02	Measure required to eradicate Gunnera tinctoria	0.0022	Absent	Short-term results	Restore the structure & functions, including the status of typical species	Inside

Appendix 4. Condition of the habitat by area

Summary of habitat condition

Habitat code	% remaining habitat in poor condition	% remaining habitat in good condition
1220	25	75