

Site 28 - Swilly

Site description

Swilly is a medium-sized saltmarsh site located within the Lough Swilly Estuary, Co. Donegal. It is divided in four sub-sites.

The site is part of the Lough Swilly SAC (SAC 002287) and Lough Swilly SPA (SPA 004075).

Based on the currently available mapping, seven coastal Annex I habitats occur within this SAC, one of which (**1330 Atlantic salt meadows**) is listed as Qualifying Interests ([Table 1](#)).

Table 1. Annex I habitats present at Lough Swilly 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 habitats that were not the target of this survey are excluded.

Habitat Code	Area (ha)	Qualifying Interest?
1210 Drift line vegetation	0.457	No
1310 <i>Salicornia</i> flats	2.953	No
1330 Atlantic salt meadows	46.754	Yes
1410 Mediterranean saltmarsh	0.769	No
2110 Embryonic shifting dunes	1.506	No
2120 Marram dunes (white dunes)	1.160	No
*2130 Fixed dunes (grey dunes)	12.342	No

Habitat losses were recorded mainly due to transformation of **1330 Atlantic salt meadows** in artificial surfaces or amenity grasslands and natural succession to reedbeds ([Table 2](#)).

Table 2. Habitat loss recorded during the desk and field surveys in hectares.

Habitat	Within SAC?	Loss (ha)	Impact code	New habitat
1330	Yes	0.154	PM07	Reed and large sedge swamps (FS1)
1410	Yes	0.138	PM07	Reed and large sedge swamps (FS1)
1330	Yes	0.213	PF15	Buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3)
1330	No	0.534	PF03	Amenity grassland (GA2)

Conservation assessments were carried out within four sub-sites occupying a total area of 69.26 ha ([Table 3](#)). All the habitats were in Unfavourable condition, mainly due to overgrazing and spreading of *Spartina anglica*.

Table 3. Summary of Conservation Status for all habitats assessed at Swilly.

Subsite	Habitat	Area	Structure and Functions	Future Prospects	Overall assessment
28.01 Rathmelton	1310	Favourable (stable)	NA (NA)	Unfavourable - Inadequate	NA (NA)
28.01 Rathmelton	1330	Unfavourable - Inadequate (decreasing)	Unfavourable - Inadequate (increasing)	Unfavourable - Bad	Unfavourable - Bad (stable)
28.01 Rathmelton	1410	Favourable (stable)	Unfavourable - Inadequate (decreasing)	Unfavourable - Inadequate	Unfavourable - Inadequate (deteriorating)
28.02 Green Hill	1310	Favourable (stable)	Unfavourable - Inadequate (decreasing)	Unfavourable - Inadequate	Unfavourable - Inadequate (stable)

28.02 Green Hill	1330	Favourable (stable)	Unfavourable - Bad (decreasing)	Unfavourable - Bad	Unfavourable - Bad (deteriorating)
28.03 Lower Lough Swilly	1310	Favourable (stable)	Unfavourable - Inadequate (decreasing)	Unfavourable - Inadequate	Unfavourable - Inadequate (stable)
28.03 Lower Lough Swilly	1330	Unfavourable - Inadequate (decreasing)	Unfavourable - Bad (stable)	Unfavourable - Bad	Unfavourable - Bad (stable)
28.04 Fahan	1330	Favourable (stable)	Unfavourable - Inadequate (stable)	Unfavourable - Inadequate	Unfavourable - Inadequate (stable)
28.04 Fahan	1410	Favourable (stable)	NA (NA)	Favourable	NA (NA)

Sub-site 1. Rathmelton

Rathmelton covers 24 ha in the upper part of the River Lennon Estuary. The largest stretch of the sub-site is on the mainland, with smaller stretches occurring between and including the edge of three islands: two to the west and a larger island, Augnish, to the east.

Summary Information

Survey Date: 02 May 2022

Water Framework Directive Waterbody: Swilly Estuary

Previous survey identifiers: SMP0028

Current survey details:

Table 4: Current survey details for Annex I habitats at Rathmelton

Habitat Code	Area	Monitoring stops
1310 <i>Salicornia</i> flats	1.108	0
1330 Atlantic salt meadows	9.657	10
1410 Mediterranean saltmarsh	0.688	3

1310 *Salicornia* flats

Area

The habitat has decreased from 1.12 ha during SMP11 to 1.11 ha. This change was the result of a different and more detailed mapping technique. This is consistent with an Area assessment of Favourable and the trend is stable compared to SMP.

Structure and Functions

Structure and Functions were not assessed due to the inaccessibility of the areas.

Future Prospects

Spreading of *Spartina anglica* was recorded as a high-intensity negative impact for this habitat, affecting 50% of the habitat area. Future Prospects were therefore assessed as Unfavourable - Inadequate, and the trend was assessed as stable, because the previous assessment was also Unfavourable - Inadequate.

Conservation assessment

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

- Area: Favourable (stable)
- Structure and Functions: not assessed (NA)
- Future Prospects: Unfavourable - Inadequate (stable)

Since Structure and Functions were not assessed as Favourable, the overall conservation assessment for **1310 *Salicornia* flats** at 28.01 Rathmelton was also not assessed and the trend is not applicable.

Overall Conservation Status: not assessed (NA)

Condition of the habitat by area

The habitat condition was not assessed.

1330 Atlantic salt meadows

Area

The habitat has slightly increased over the most recent reporting cycle, mainly due to natural processes, but there was a loss of area since SMPII, less than 1% per year. Area was therefore assessed as Unfavourable - Inadequate and the trend is decreasing because it was assessed as Favourable during SMP.

Structure and Functions

Two saltmarsh community types were recorded during the surveys: SM3a *Plantago maritima*–*Armeria maritima* saltmarsh; SM4a *Festuca rubra*–*Agrostis stolonifera* saltmarsh.

One criterion failed in the Structure and Functions assessment: only ten positive indicator species were recorded across all plots, while the threshold is twelve. As this assessment criterion failed, the Structure and Functions were Unfavourable - Inadequate. Since during the SMP Structure and Functions were assessed as Unfavourable - Bad, the trend is therefore increasing.

Future Prospects

Agricultural vehicle tracks, creating ruts, were noted in small areas in the west of the site and also in the south of Augnish Island on **1330 Atlantic salt meadows**. Overgrazing and trampling by cattle and sheep had a high-intensity negative impact over 10% of the habitat's area. Finally, spreading of *Spartina anglica* was recorded as an high-intensity negative impact for this habitat, affecting 30% of the habitat area. Future Prospects were therefore assessed as Unfavourable - Bad, and the trend was assessed as stable.

Conservation assessment

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

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

Since at least one of the three parameters was assessed as Unfavourable - Bad, the overall conservation assessment for **1330 Atlantic salt meadows** at 28.01 Rathmelton was Unfavourable - Bad. Since the SMP assessment was also Unfavourable - Bad, the trend is therefore stable.

Overall Conservation Status: Unfavourable - Bad (stable)

Condition of the habitat by area

High and medium-intensity negative impacts were affecting about 25% of **1330 Atlantic salt meadows**, leading to the failure of one Structure and Functions criterion, so this area was considered to be in poor condition. The remaining 75% of the habitat was considered to be in good condition.

1410 Mediterranean saltmarsh

Area

The habitat has increased from 0.63 ha to 0.69 ha, due to natural processes. This is consistent with an Area assessment of Favourable and the trend is stable.

Structure and Functions

One criterion failed in the Structure and Functions assessment: only two positive indicator species (*Juncus maritimus* and *Cochlearia* sp.) were recorded in the habitat, while the threshold is at least six. As this assessment criterion failed, the Structure and Functions were Unfavourable - Inadequate. Since during SMP Structure and Functions were assessed as Favourable, the trend is decreasing.

Future Prospects

Overgrazing and trampling by cattle and sheep had a high-intensity negative impact over 10% of the habitat's area. Future Prospects were therefore assessed as Unfavourable - Inadequate, and the trend was assessed as decreasing, because the previous assessment was Favourable.

Conservation assessment

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

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

Since at least one of the three parameters was assessed as Unfavourable - Inadequate, the overall conservation assessment for **1410 Mediterranean saltmarsh** at 28.01 Rathmelton was Unfavourable - Inadequate. Since the SMP assessment was Favourable, the trend is deteriorating.

Overall Conservation Status: Unfavourable - Inadequate (deteriorating)

Condition of the habitat by area

High-intensity negative impacts were affecting about 25% of **1410 Mediterranean saltmarsh**, leading to the failure of one Structure and Functions criterion, so this area was considered to be in poor condition. The remaining 75% of the habitat was considered to be in good condition.

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Appendix 1. Area

Total habitat area recorded during reporting cycles to date.

Habitat	2007	2013	2019	2025
1310	1.235	NS	1.118	1.108
1330	9.989	NS	9.603	9.657
1410	0.501	NS	0.626	0.688

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)
1310	1.235	0	NS	0	0
1330	9.989	0	NS	<1% per year	2019 loss
1410	0.501	0	NS	0	0

Appendix 2. Structure and Functions

Positive indicator species and notable species

Habitat	Species name	Cover (%) (if recorded)
1330	<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	
1330	<i>Armeria maritima</i>	
1330	<i>Aster tripolium</i>	
1330	<i>Cochlearia species</i>	
1330	<i>Elytrigia repens</i>	
1330	<i>Festuca rubra</i>	
1330	<i>Glaux maritima</i>	
1330	<i>Juncus gerardii</i>	
1330	<i>Plantago maritima</i>	
1330	<i>Triglochin maritimum</i>	
1410	<i>Cochlearia species</i>	
1410	<i>Juncus maritimus</i>	

Structure and Functions Assessment Criteria

Habitat	Indicator	Pass/Fail
1330	Positive indicator species	Fail
1330	Vegetation height – Standard deviation	Pass
1330	Vegetation height – Average height	Pass
1330	Negative indicator species	Pass
1330	Disturbed ground	Pass
1330	Signs of negative activities, e.g. infilling, reclamation, turf-cutting, pollution	Pass
1330	Human disturbance to hydrology	Pass
1330	Natural transitions to semi-natural terrestrial habitats on landward margin	Pass
1330	Presence of <i>Spartina</i> spp. within vicinity of habitat	Pass
1330	Presence of site-specific target species	Pass
1330	Number of zones (SM2, SM3, SM4, SM6BCD, SM7/driftline) covering 1% or more of 1330 area	Pass
1410	Positive indicator species	Fail
1410	Negative indicator species	Pass
1410	Disturbed ground	Pass
1410	Signs of negative activities, e.g. infilling, reclamation, turf-cutting, pollution	Pass
1410	Human disturbance to hydrology	Pass
1410	Natural transitions to semi-natural terrestrial habitats on landward margin	Pass
1410	Presence of site-specific target species (indicators of local distinctiveness)	Pass
1410	Presence of <i>Spartina</i> spp. within vicinity of habitat	Pass

Appendix 3. Impacts and Activities

Impacts recorded

Habitat code	Impact code	Impact description	Relative importance	Influence	Source	Timing	Trend	Area
1310	PI02	Spartina anglica	High	Negative	Inside	Ongoing	Decreasing	50.0
1330	PA07	Overgrazing and trampling	High	Negative	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	10.0
1330	PA25	Agricultural vehicle tracks	High	Negative	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	1.0
1330	PF15	Road on embankment	Low	Neutral	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	Unknown
1330	PI02	Spartina anglica	High	Negative	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	30.0
1410	PA07	Overgrazing and trampling	High	Negative	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	10.0

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)
1330	CA05	Measure required to regulate grazing	9.6571	Absent	Medium-term results	Restore the structure & functions, including the status of typical species	Inside
1330	CI03	Measure required to control Spartina anglica	2.8971	Absent	Medium-term results	Restore the structure & functions, including the status of typical species	Inside
1410	CA05	Measure required to regulate grazing	0.6879	Absent	Medium-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
1330	25	75
1410	25	75

Sub-site 2. Green Hill

Green Hill covers 27 ha, occurring as a narrow strip along the shore and as a number of islands separated by wide channels. The site is located in the western bank of the lower part of the Lough Swilly Estuary, Co. Donegal.

Summary Information

Survey Date: 03 May – 02 July 2022

Water Framework Directive Waterbody: Swilly Estuary

Previous survey identifiers: SMP0029

Current survey details:

Table 5: Current survey details for Annex I habitats at Green Hill

Habitat Code	Area	Monitoring stops
1310 <i>Salicornia</i> flats	1.480	2
1330 Atlantic salt meadows	9.395	3

1310 *Salicornia* flats

Area

The habitat has increased from 0.59 ha during SMP11 to 1.48 ha. This change was the result of a different and more detailed mapping technique. This is consistent with an Area assessment of Favourable and the trend is stable.

Structure and Functions

One criterion failed in the Structure and Functions assessment: *Spartina* spp. cover was more than the percentage baseline in 100% of stops. As this assessment criterion failed, the Structure and Functions were assessed as Unfavourable - Inadequate. Since during SMP11 Structure and Functions were assessed as Favourable, the trend is therefore decreasing.

Future Prospects

Spreading of *Spartina anglica* was recorded as a high-intensity negative impact for this habitat, affecting 50% of the habitat area. Future Prospects were therefore assessed as Unfavourable - Inadequate, and the trend was assessed as stable.

Conservation assessment

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

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

Since at least one of the three parameters was assessed as Unfavourable - Inadequate, the overall conservation assessment for **1310 *Salicornia* flats** at 28.02 Green Hill was Unfavourable - Inadequate. Since the previous assessment was also Unfavourable - Inadequate, the trend is therefore stable.

Overall Conservation Status: Unfavourable - Inadequate (stable)

Condition of the habitat by area

Spartina was affecting about 25% of **1310 *Salicornia* flats**, leading to the failure of one Structure and Functions criterion, so this area was considered to be in poor condition. The remaining 75% of the habitat was considered to be in good condition.

1330 Atlantic salt meadows

Area

The habitat has decreased over the most recent reporting cycle. This change was the result of a different and better mapping technique. This is consistent with an Area assessment of Favourable and the trend is stable.

Structure and Functions

Three saltmarsh community types were recorded during the surveys: SM2a *Puccinellia maritima*–*Glaux maritima* saltmarsh; SM3a *Plantago maritima*–*Armeria maritima* saltmarsh; SM4a *Festuca rubra*–*Agrostis stolonifera* saltmarsh.

Six criteria failed in the Structure and Functions assessment: only ten positive indicator species were recorded across all plots, while the threshold is twelve; the standard deviation of median plant height was 4.06, while the threshold is greater than 5; in 33.33% of stops, vegetation height was greater than 15 cm, while the threshold is only 20-30% of stops with an average height greater than 15 cm; *Spartina* spp. cover increased in stop n. 1 and 2 and in the entire site; finally, signs of negative activities were recorded across the habitat (land reclamation). As these six assessment criteria failed, the Structure and Functions were Unfavourable - Bad. Since during the SMP Structure and Functions were assessed as Unfavourable - Inadequate, the trend is therefore decreasing.

Future Prospects

Sheep grazing was the main impact currently acting on the site. The middle of the site was heavily grazed, resulting in a tight sward and much poaching. A fence excluded sheep from the southern part of the site, which was ungrazed, as was the northern area. The southern part of the site were backed by a significant old embankment, behind which the land was drained via sluice gates and was used as a golf course. Another old, much smaller, embankment occurred in the north of the site, the land behind which supported sloping agricultural fields and fragments of woodland. Finally, spreading of *Spartina anglica* was recorded as a high-intensity negative impact for this habitat, affecting 30% of the habitat's area. Future Prospects were therefore assessed as Unfavourable - Bad, and the trend was assessed as decreasing.

Conservation assessment

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

- Area: Favourable (stable)
- Structure and Functions: Unfavourable - Bad (decreasing)
- Future Prospects: Unfavourable - Bad (decreasing)

Since two of the three parameters were assessed as Unfavourable - Bad, the overall conservation assessment for **1330 Atlantic salt meadows** at 28.02 Green Hill was Unfavourable - Bad. Since the SMP assessment was Unfavourable - Inadequate, the trend is deteriorating.

Overall Conservation Status: Unfavourable - Bad (deteriorating)

Condition of the habitat by area

High-intensity negative impacts were affecting about 80% of **1330 Atlantic salt meadows**, leading to the failure of six Structure and Functions criteria, so this area was considered to be in poor condition. The remaining 20% of the habitat was considered to be in good condition.

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Appendix 1. Area

Total habitat area recorded during reporting cycles to date.

Habitat	2007	2013	2019	2025
1310	0.000	NS	0.590	1.480
1330	1.811	NS	13.190	9.395

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)
1310	0.590	NR	NS	0	0
1330	13.190	0	NS	0	0

Appendix 2. Structure and Functions

Negative indicator species and non-native invasive species

Habitat	Species name	Cover (%)
1310	<i>Spartina species</i>	15.0
1330	<i>Spartina species</i>	16.3

Positive indicator species and notable species

Habitat	Species name	Cover (%) (if recorded)
1310	<i>Salicornia species</i>	
1330	<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	
1330	<i>Armeria maritima</i>	
1330	<i>Aster tripolium</i>	
1330	<i>Cochlearia species</i>	
1330	<i>Festuca rubra</i>	
1330	<i>Glaux maritima</i>	
1330	<i>Juncus gerardii</i>	
1330	<i>Plantago maritima</i>	
1330	<i>Puccinellia maritima</i>	
1330	<i>Triglochin maritimum</i>	

Structure and Functions Assessment Criteria

Habitat	Indicator	Pass/Fail
1310	Positive indicator species	Pass
1310	Negative indicator species	Pass
1310	Signs of negative activities, e.g. infilling, reclamation, turf-cutting, pollution	Pass
1310	Occurrence of human disturbance to hydrology	Pass
1310	Presence of site-specific target species	Pass
1310	Presence of <i>Spartina</i> spp. within vicinity of habitat	Fail
1330	Positive indicator species	Fail
1330	Vegetation height – Standard deviation	Fail
1330	Vegetation height – Average height	Fail
1330	Negative indicator species	Fail
1330	Disturbed ground	Pass
1330	Signs of negative activities, e.g. infilling, reclamation, turf-cutting, pollution	Fail
1330	Human disturbance to hydrology	Pass
1330	Natural transitions to semi-natural terrestrial habitats on landward margin	Pass
1330	Presence of <i>Spartina</i> spp. within vicinity of habitat	Fail
1330	Presence of site-specific target species	Pass
1330	Number of zones (SM2, SM3, SM4, SM6BCD, SM7/driftline) covering 1% or more of 1330 area	Pass

Appendix 3. Impacts and Activities

Impacts recorded

Habitat code	Impact code	Impact description	Relative importance	Influence	Source	Timing	Trend	Area
1310	PI02	Spartina anglica	High	Negative	Inside	Ongoing	Decreasing	50.0
1330	PA07	Overgrazing (sheep)	High	Negative	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	50.0
1330	PA22	Land reclamation	High	Negative	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	20.0
1330	PA25	Agricultural vehicle tracks	High	Negative	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	1.0
1330	PF15	Dam	Medium	Neutral	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	5.0
1330	PI02	Spartina anglica	High	Negative	Inside	Ongoing	Decreasing	30.0
1330	PM07	Natural succession to HCH FS1	Low	Neutral	Inside	Ongoing	Decreasing	1.0

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)
1310	CI03	Measure required to control Spartina anglica	0.7398	Absent	Medium-term results	Restore the structure & functions, including the status of typical species	Inside
1330	CA05	Measure required to regulate grazing	9.3951	Absent	Medium-term results	Restore the structure & functions, including the status of typical species	Inside
1330	CA15	Measure required to regulate drainage for land reclamation	1.8790	Absent	Medium-term results	Restore the structure & functions, including the status of typical species	Inside
1330	CI03	Measure required to control Spartina anglica	2.8185	Absent	Medium-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
1310	25	75
1330	80	20

Sub-site 3. Lower Lough Swilly

Lower Lough Swilly covers 12 ha. It is a narrow estuarine site backed by a historic embankment.

Summary Information

Survey Date: 02 May 2022

Water Framework Directive Waterbody: Swilly Estuary

Previous survey identifiers: SMP0030

Current survey details:

Table 6: Current survey details for Annex I habitats at Lower Lough Swilly

Habitat Code	Area	Monitoring stops
1310 <i>Salicornia</i> flats	0.365	4
1330 Atlantic salt meadows	7.158	4
1410 Mediterranean saltmarsh	0.0001	0

1310 *Salicornia* flats

Area

The habitat has increased from 0.32 ha during SMP11 to 0.37 ha. This change was the result of a different and more detailed mapping technique. This is consistent with an Area assessment of Favourable and the trend is stable.

Structure and Functions

One criterion failed in the Structure and Functions assessment: *Spartina* spp. was present and increasing in the vicinity of the habitat. As this assessment criterion failed, the Structure and Functions were assessed as Unfavourable - Inadequate. Since during the SMP Structure and Functions were assessed as Favourable, the trend is decreasing.

Future Prospects

Spreading of *Spartina anglica* was recorded as a high-intensity negative impact for this habitat, affecting 50% of the habitat's area. Future Prospects were therefore assessed as Unfavourable - Inadequate, and the trend was assessed as stable.

Conservation assessment

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

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

Since two of the three parameters were assessed as Unfavourable - Inadequate, the overall conservation assessment for **1310 *Salicornia* flats** at 28.03 Lower Lough Swilly was Unfavourable - Inadequate. Since also the previous assessment was Unfavourable - Inadequate, the trend is therefore stable.

Overall Conservation Status: Unfavourable - Inadequate (stable)

Condition of the habitat by area

Spartina was affecting about 25% of **1310 *Salicornia* flats**, leading to the failure of one Structure and Functions criterion, so this area was considered to be in poor condition. The remaining 75% of the habitat was considered to be in good condition.

1330 Atlantic salt meadows

Area

The habitat has decreased over the most recent reporting cycle, from 8.46 ha to 7.16 ha. This change was the result of a different and more detailed mapping technique. Furthermore, there was a loss due to transformation of 0.21 hectares of the habitat in artificial surfaces since SMPII. The loss was less than 1% per year, so this is consistent with an Area assessment of Unfavourable - Inadequate and the trend is decreasing.

Structure and Functions

Five saltmarsh community types were recorded during the surveys: SM2a *Puccinellia maritima*–*Glaux maritima* saltmarsh; SM3a *Plantago maritima*–*Armeria maritima* saltmarsh; SM4a *Festuca rubra*–*Agrostis stolonifera* saltmarsh; SM6b *Agrostis stolonifera*–*Triglochin maritimum* saltmarsh; SM7a *Elytrigia repens* coarse grassland.

Three criteria failed in the Structure and Functions assessment: the standard deviation of median plant height is 3.74, while the threshold is greater than 5. *Spartina* spp. cover in 100% of stops was more than the percentage baseline and it was present and increasing in the vicinity of the habitat. As these three assessment criteria failed, the Structure and Functions were Unfavourable - Bad. Since also during SMP Structure and Functions was assessed as Unfavourable - Bad, the trend is therefore stable.

Future Prospects

Cattle grazing, and the resulting poaching and trampling were having a high impact on the west of the site (about 50% of the habitat area). Spreading of *Spartina anglica* was recorded as a high-intensity negative impact for this habitat, affecting 30% of the habitat area.

Future Prospects were therefore assessed as Unfavourable - Bad, and the trend was assessed as stable.

Conservation assessment

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

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

Since at least one of the three parameters was assessed as Unfavourable - Bad, the overall conservation assessment for **1330 Atlantic salt meadows** at 28.03 Lower Lough Swilly was Unfavourable - Bad. Since the SMP assessment was also Unfavourable - Bad, the trend is stable.

Overall Conservation Status: Unfavourable - Bad (stable)

Condition of the habitat by area

High-intensity negative impacts were affecting about 80% of **1330 Atlantic salt meadows**, leading to the failure of three Structure and Functions criteria, so this area was considered to be in poor condition. The remaining 20% of the habitat was considered to be in good condition.

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Appendix 1. Area

Total habitat area recorded during reporting cycles to date.

Habitat	2007	2013	2019	2025
1310	0.010	NS	0.320	0.365
1330	8.460	NS	8.460	7.158
1410	0.010	NS	0.010	0.0001

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)
1310	0.011	NA	NS	0	0
1330	5.535	0	NS	<1% per year	2019 loss
1410	0.005	NA	NS	0	NA

Appendix 2. Structure and Functions

Negative indicator species and non-native invasive species

Habitat	Species name	Cover (%)
1310	<i>Spartina species</i>	10.0
1330	<i>Spartina species</i>	10.5

Positive indicator species and notable species

Habitat	Species name	Cover (%) (if recorded)
1310	<i>Salicornia species</i>	
1330	<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	
1330	<i>Armeria maritima</i>	
1330	<i>Aster tripolium</i>	
1330	<i>Cochlearia species</i>	
1330	<i>Festuca rubra</i>	
1330	<i>Glaux maritima</i>	
1330	<i>Juncus gerardii</i>	
1330	<i>Plantago maritima</i>	
1330	<i>Puccinellia maritima</i>	
1330	<i>Salicornia species</i>	
1330	<i>Spergularia marina</i>	
1330	<i>Triglochin maritimum</i>	

Structure and Functions Assessment Criteria

Habitat	Indicator	Pass/Fail
1310	Positive indicator species	Pass
1310	Negative indicator species	Pass
1310	Signs of negative activities, e.g. infilling, reclamation, turf-cutting, pollution	Pass
1310	Occurrence of human disturbance to hydrology	Pass
1310	Presence of site-specific target species	Pass
1310	Presence of <i>Spartina</i> spp. within vicinity of habitat	Fail
1330	Positive indicator species	Pass
1330	Vegetation height – Standard deviation	Fail
1330	Vegetation height – Average height	Pass
1330	Negative indicator species	Fail
1330	Disturbed ground	Pass
1330	Signs of negative activities, e.g. infilling, reclamation, turf-cutting, pollution	Pass
1330	Human disturbance to hydrology	Pass
1330	Natural transitions to semi-natural terrestrial habitats on landward margin	Pass
1330	Presence of <i>Spartina</i> spp. within vicinity of habitat	Fail
1330	Presence of site-specific target species	Pass
1330	Number of zones (SM2, SM3, SM4, SM6BCD, SM7/driftline) covering 1% or more of 1330 area	Pass

Appendix 3. Impacts and Activities

Impacts recorded

Habitat code	Impact code	Impact description	Relative importance	Influence	Source	Timing	Trend	Area
1310	PI02	Spartina anglica	High	Negative	Inside	Ongoing	Decreasing	50.0
1330	PA07	Overgrazing and trampling	High	Negative	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	50.0
1330	PA22	Pan (Drainages)	High	Negative	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	2.0
1330	PF15	Rock armour	Medium	Neutral	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	Unknown
1330	PI02	Spartina anglica	High	Negative	Inside	Ongoing	Decreasing	30.0
1410	PX04							

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)
1310	CI03	Measure required to control Spartina anglica	0.1826	Absent	Medium-term results	Restore the structure & functions, including the status of typical species	Inside
1330	CA05	Measure required to regulate grazing	7.1578	Absent	Medium-term results	Restore the structure & functions, including the status of typical species	Inside
1330	CA15	Measure required to regulate drainage for land reclamation	0.1432	Absent	Medium-term results	Restore the structure & functions, including the status of typical species	Inside
1330	CI03	Measure required to control Spartina anglica	2.1474	Absent	Medium-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
1310	25	75
1330	80	20

Sub-site 4. Fahan

Fahan is a small saltmarsh site covering 8 ha. It is estuarine, located on the east of the Lough Swilly Estuary, to the south of Buncrana, Co. Donegal. The site is backed to the east by a steep bank, which has a cliff formation in place, above which is located a regional road.

Summary Information

Survey Date: 02 May 2022

Water Framework Directive Waterbody: Swilly Estuary

Previous survey identifiers: CMP174, SMP0031

Current survey details:

Table 7: Current survey details for Annex I habitats at Fahan

Habitat Code	Area	Monitoring stops
1330 Atlantic salt meadows	7.637	5
1410 Mediterranean saltmarsh	0.081	0

1330 Atlantic salt meadows

Area

The habitat has slightly decreased over the most recent reporting cycle. This change was the result of a different and more detailed mapping technique. This is consistent with an Area assessment of Favourable and the trend is stable.

Structure and Functions

Only one saltmarsh community type was recorded during the surveys: SM4d *Festuca rubra*– *Plantago maritima* saltmarsh.

Two criteria failed in the Structure and Functions assessment: only ten positive indicator species were recorded across all plots, while the threshold is twelve, and the standard deviation of median plant height was 2.12, while it should be greater than 5. As two criteria failed, the Structure and Functions were Unfavourable - Inadequate. Since also during the SMP Structure and Functions was assessed as Unfavourable - Inadequate, the trend is therefore stable.

Future Prospects

Offroad driving and walking tracks had a medium-intensity negative impact over 2% of the habitat's area. Future Prospects were therefore assessed as Unfavourable - Inadequate, and the trend was assessed as stable.

Conservation assessment

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

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

Since two out of three parameters were assessed as Unfavourable - Inadequate, the overall conservation assessment for **1330 Atlantic salt meadows** at 28.04 Fahan was Unfavourable - Inadequate. Since the SMP assessment was also Unfavourable - Inadequate, the trend is stable.

Overall Conservation Status: Unfavourable - Inadequate (stable)

Condition of the habitat by area

High and medium-intensity negative impacts were affecting about 25% of **1330 Atlantic salt meadows**, leading to the failure of three Structure and Functions criteria, so this area was considered to be in poor condition. The remaining 60% of the habitat was considered to be in good condition.

1410 Mediterranean saltmarsh

Area

The habitat has increased from 0.04 ha to 0.08 ha, due to natural processes. This is consistent with an Area assessment of Favourable and the trend is stable.

Structure and Functions

Structure and Functions were not assessed because the habitat area was below the minimum threshold, so the trend was not applicable.

Future Prospects

No pressures were recorded for this habitat. Future Prospects were therefore assessed as Favourable, and the trend was assessed as stable, because the previous assessment was also Favourable.

Conservation assessment

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

- Area: Favourable (stable)
- Structure and Functions: not assessed (NA)
- Future Prospects: Favourable (stable)

Since Structure and Functions were not assessed, the overall conservation assessment was also not assessed and the trend is not applicable.

Overall Conservation Status: not assessed (NA)

Condition of the habitat by area

Condition of the habitat was not assessed.

Site 28 Subsite 4 - Fahan Appendices

Appendix 1. Area

Total habitat area recorded during reporting cycles to date.

Habitat	2007	2013	2019	2025
1330	7.510	NS	7.789	7.637
1410	0,000	NS	0.040	0.081

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)
1330	7.510	0	NS	0	0
1410	0.040	NR	NS	0	0

Appendix 2. Structure and Functions

Negative indicator species and non-native invasive species

Habitat	Species name	Cover (%)
1330	<i>Spartina species</i>	7.0

Positive indicator species and notable species

Habitat	Species name	Cover (%) (if recorded)
1330	<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	
1330	<i>Armeria maritima</i>	
1330	<i>Aster tripolium</i>	
1330	<i>Carex extensa</i>	
1330	<i>Cochlearia species</i>	
1330	<i>Festuca rubra</i>	
1330	<i>Glaux maritima</i>	
1330	<i>Juncus gerardii</i>	
1330	<i>Plantago maritima</i>	
1330	<i>Triglochin maritimum</i>	

Structure and Functions Assessment Criteria

Habitat	Indicator	Pass/Fail
1330	Positive indicator species	Fail
1330	Vegetation height – Standard deviation	Fail
1330	Vegetation height – Average height	Fail
1330	Negative indicator species	Pass
1330	Disturbed ground	Pass
1330	Signs of negative activities, e.g. infilling, reclamation, turf-cutting, pollution	Pass
1330	Human disturbance to hydrology	Pass
1330	Natural transitions to semi-natural terrestrial habitats on landward margin	Pass
1330	Presence of <i>Spartina</i> spp. within vicinity of habitat	Pass
1330	Presence of site-specific target species	Pass
1330	Number of zones (SM2, SM3, SM4, SM6BCD, SM7/driftline) covering 1% or more of 1330 area	Pass

Appendix 3. Impacts and Activities

Impacts recorded

Habitat code	Impact code	Impact description	Relative importance	Influence	Source	Timing	Trend	Area
1330	PF05	Offroad driving, walking and dog-walking	Medium	Negative	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	2.0
1330	PM07	Sand blowouts	Medium	Neutral	Inside	Ongoing	Stable	0.5
1410	PX04							

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)
1330	CF03	Measure required to regulate recreational activities	0.1527	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
1330	25	75