NPWS

Ballyteige Burrow SAC
(site code: 000696)

Conservation objectives supporting document - coastal habitats

Version 1 - supplement 1

July 2026

IMPORTANT: This supplement, published in 2026, includes details relating to the EU habitat **2190 Humid dune slacks** which was added as a Qualifying Interest (QI) and **1320 Spartina swards (Spartinion maritimae)** which was removed as a QI for the site after the Site-Specific Conservation Objectives (Version 1) were published. This document should be read in conjunction with the Version 2 Site-Specific Conservation Objectives (NPWS, 2026), and with the Conservation objectives supporting document - Coastal habitats Version 1 (NPWS, 2014). Any references to these habitats in previously published Site-specific Conservation Objectives (SSCO), or SSCO supporting documents, including the mapping, are to be considered **superseded** by these updates.

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Citation: NPWS (2026) Ballyteige Burrow SAC (site code 000696) Conservation objectives supporting document - coastal habitats V1 - supplement 1. Conservation Objectives Supporting Document Series. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Dublin, Ireland.

1. Introduction

2190 Humid dune slacks were added as a Qualifying Interest to Ballyteige Burrow SAC (site code: 000696) after the Site-Specific Conservation Objectives (Version 1) were published. This document sets out the SSCO for the newly listed Qualifying Interest for the site and acts as a supplement to the original SSCO Supporting Document.

2. Coastal habitats

2.1 2190 Humid dune slacks

2.1.1 Site description of habitat

The morphology of the dune slacks is typical: flat-bottomed, bowl-shaped structures surrounded by dune ridges. However, the vegetation and substrate of several of the larger slacks are unusual. The slack floor is composed of sandy shingle and the vegetation is dominated by species typical of dry dune conditions (Delaney *et al*., 2013).

2.1.2 Overall objective

The overall objective for *'Humid dune slacks'* in Ballyteige Burrow SAC (site code: 000696) is to '*restore the Favourable conservation condition*'.

This objective is based on an assessment of the recorded condition of the habitat under a range of attributes and targets. The assessment is divided into three main headings: (a) Area (b) Range and (c) Structure and Functions. This conservation objective applies to the total extent of this habitat within the SAC, including but not limited to the mapped areas of this habitat.

2.1.3 Area

Habitat area

Coastal habitats are generally dynamic and increase and decrease in area due to natural processes. These natural changes are not taken into account in conservation status assessments. Changes associated with human activities including destruction and restoration do contribute to the assessment of conservation status.

The area for 2190 Humid dune slacks was recorded as 17.37ha.

No loss of habitat due to human activities has been observed on the site.

Target: Area stable or increasing, subject to natural processes, including erosion and succession.

2.1.4 Range

Habitat distribution

The 2190 Humid dune slack habitat at Ballyteige Burrow SAC occurs in a series of low-lying depressions distributed throughout the dune system, particularly in the more stable rear dune areas behind the foredunes.

Target: No decline in the distribution of this habitat, unless it is the result of natural processes.

2.1.5 Structure and Functions

Structure and Functions for Humid dune slacks are assessed on the basis of:

Physical structure: functionality and sediment supply

Target: Natural circulation of sediment and organic matter, absence of any physical obstructions or evidence of sediment extraction from the beach and its environs. Physical obstructions that have

been in place and are unchanged since prior to 1994 are excluded from this target, unless they have a current adverse impact on sediment circulation.

Disturbance

Target: No more than 20% of the habitat should be subject to disturbance *e.g.* trampling, vehicle damage, removal of substrate.

Physical structure: hydrological and flooding regime

Target: Hydrological regime supports typical seasonal fluctuations.

Bare ground

Target: Bare ground should be present but should not exceed 5% of dune slack habitat, with the exception of pioneer slacks which can have up to 20% bare ground.

Vegetation composition: typical species (positive indicators)

Target: At least four of the positive species occur with a frequency of more than 40% of stops and another two species occur with a frequency of more than 20% of stops and every stop contains at least three positive species.

Vegetation composition: bryophytes

Target: Present in more than 20% of stops.

Vegetation composition: native negative indicator species

Target: No negative indicator species occurs at a frequency of more than 60% of stops and the total combined cover of all negative indicator species across the habitat is 5% or less and highest % cover of any negative indicator species within any stop is 25% or less.

Vegetation composition: non-native species

Target: No non-native species occurs at a frequency of more than 20% of stops and no evidence that % cover has increased.

Vegetation composition: trees/scrub

Target: Present at no more than 40% of stops and combined cover of 5% or less.

Vegetation composition: forb:grass ratio

Target: Forb (herbaceous flowering plant) cover over 30% and grass cover below 70%.

Vegetation composition: cover of *Salix repens*

Target: Less than 40% cover of *Salix repens.*

Indicators of local distinctiveness: site-specific target features (including rare and notable species)

Target: No evidence of decline since designation.

Structure and Functions were found to be in good condition. The eastern end of the site had some negative impacts due to artificial ponds, drainage, under grazing and campfires. The lack of grazing was causing the area to become rank. There are some indications of drying out at the edges of wet, eastern dune slacks. While the condition of the dune slacks was good, the Future prospects were not. The overall assessment of the habitat at the site was Unfavourable (Delaney *et al*., 2013).

3. QI Removals

1320 *Spartina* swards (Spartinion maritimae): This Annex I habitat is now considered not to occur in Ireland as *Spartina* species, which are core to the definition of this habitat, are not native to this country. The habitat has therefore been removed from the list of Qualifying Interests for this site. Consequently, conservation objectives for the habitat *Spartina* swards have not been set for this site.

4. References

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Appendix 1 – Distribution map of Humid dune slacks in Ballyteige Burrow SAC (000696)

