

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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## Advice on Operations | (FAQs)

### **1. *The Advice on Operations states that the habitat in question is 'Not sensitive' to a pressure (e.g. abrasion) caused by my activity (e.g. demersal trawling) but surely there must be an impact?***

A rank of 'not sensitive' does not mean that no impact is possible from a particular 'pressure vs. feature' combination, only that a limited impact was judged to be likely at the specified level of the benchmark. Should the benchmark be exceeded then the feature is likely to be 'Sensitive' and should be taken into consideration in any impact assessments.

Sensitivity assessments are NOT absolute values but are relative to the magnitude, extent, duration and frequency of the pressure affecting the species or community and habitat in question; thus the assessment scores are very dependent on the pressure benchmark levels used.

### **2. *My activity isn't available for selection on the list of activities?***

If you hover the cursor over the name of an activity, a pop-up will appear providing further detail including all sub-activities that are included as part of a particular activity which should cover all possible activities. We use a list of 100 activities in the Advice on Operations.

### **3. *Why do sensitivity assessments for the same features and pressures appear different in different sites?***

Sensitivity assessments are conducted on the individual biotopes that comprise each feature. They are generic and NOT site specific. They are based on the likely effects of a pressure on a 'hypothetical' population in the middle of its 'environmental range'.

Previously all possible biotopes within a feature were included in determining its sensitivity but this did not take into account geographical considerations i.e. whether or not the physical and chemical conditions exist in an area for a particular biotope to occur and to the biogeographic distributions of characteristic or key species defining particular biotopes.

The Regional Seas Areas (RSA) where appropriate, were subdivided into "Sub-regions" in order to take account of distinctive habitat ecology found within them and then an exercise to assign EUNIS biotopes to these sub-regions was undertaken to enable us to present our Advice on Operations at a higher resolution. Sites within a

given biogeographic sub-region will only include sensitivity assessments of those biotopes known to be present within that region and as such the feature sensitivity they comprise can be different from sites in other sub-regions.

#### **4. Why are some assessments shown as ‘Not relevant’ in the Advice on Operations**

There are 39 pressures, 100 activities, and currently over 200 species and habitats that have been included in these sensitivity assessments which translates to: around 3900 Activity-Pressure relationships, around 19000 Activity-Feature interactions, around 7500 Pressure-Feature sensitivity combinations and a total of somewhere in the region of 750,000 Activity/Pressure/Feature interactions that Natural England have assessed. Around 500,000 of these combinations are not relevant either through no interaction of concern between the pressure and feature or that the activity and feature cannot interact.

Natural England’s sector specialists, using expert judgment in conjunction with feature specialists, determined whether or not an activity could interact with a feature. Erroneous activity-feature interactions were either physically impossible (e.g. horse riding and offshore birds) or legally not permitted (wildfowling on non-quarry features). This allowed a filter to be applied to the data which made such interactions ‘Not relevant’ and therefore hidden on the Advice on Operations matrix. This resulted in thousands of Feature-Activity-Pressure combinations being excluded.

### **MAGIC Maps | (FAQs)**

Please refer to table below for FAQs on mapping.

**Table 1.** MAGIC – FAQs

MAGIC Maps FAQs	FAQ response
<i>General</i>	
<b>How do I view data on MAGIC?</b>	<p>The content on the MAGIC website (<a href="http://www.magic.gov.uk/">http://www.magic.gov.uk/</a>) should to be viewed in conjunction with the Conservation Advice packages. The data behind the interactive maps have been collated from many sources and <b>are our best available sources of information</b> for the presence and extent of habitats and species in our MPAs.</p> <p>Once on MAGIC (<a href="http://www.magic.gov.uk/">http://www.magic.gov.uk/</a>) users need to click on ‘Get Started’ then navigate to the data via the data layers in the Table of Contents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designated site boundaries – are located via Designations / Marine Designations / Statutory /</li> <li>• Marine Protected Area (MPA) Features – are located via Marine / Marine Protected Area Features</li> <li>• Priority Habitats Inventory (PHI) habitats – are located via Habitats and Species / Habitats</li> </ul> <p>There is a video tutorial to walk you around the MAGIC website and the interactive map tools at <a href="http://www.magic.gov.uk/Help_text.htm">http://www.magic.gov.uk/Help_text.htm</a>.</p>
<b>How often is MAGIC updated with Marine Protected Areas (MPA) feature data?</b>	<p>We will continue to update our database as new evidence comes in and update MAGIC on a bi-annual cycle. If stakeholders and partners would like to provide us with new data to update the interactive map they can follow the best-practice guidelines for data providers at <a href="http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/Collecting%20and%20submitting%20data%20to%20support%20designation%20of%20MCZs_1_0.pdf">http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/Collecting%20and%20submitting%20data%20to%20support%20designation%20of%20MCZs_1_0.pdf</a>, through their area team lead, who will then pass it to the Marine Evidence Project staff to action the updates.</p> <p>MPA feature data updates will take place on a 6 monthly cycle. You can view the archive to view when the last update occurred: <a href="http://magic.defra.gov.uk/News_Dataset_Archive.htm">http://magic.defra.gov.uk/News_Dataset_Archive.htm</a></p>
<b>MAGIC appears to be down or not loading correctly?</b>	<p>Users can be directed to <a href="mailto:data.services@naturalengland.org.uk">data.services@naturalengland.org.uk</a> for technical support.</p>
<b>How can I provide feedback that MAGIC is difficult to use?</b>	<p>We would like to seek feedback on the delivery of the feature mapping on MAGIC. Please can you email any feedback to <a href="mailto:data.services@naturalengland.org.uk">data.services@naturalengland.org.uk</a> with the subject heading “Marine Protected Area Feature data feedback”.</p>

<b>Technical</b>	
<b>What should I do if I think the data is wrong?</b>	The data has been through an extensive process of quality assurance (QA) with local site leads in area teams, to ensure that it is based on the most up to date data meeting our evidence standards. As part of the Marine Evidence cycle we will continue to call for new data, update the GI, seek area team feedback and then publish to MAGIC and send the GI to the IFCA's and the MMO. You will be able to feedback information through this cycle. External stakeholders should contact their NE local site contact.
<b>Would it be possible to have Admiralty Charts as a backdrop for the MPA features?</b>	Unfortunately, it is not possible externally due to the increased financial costs of the licensing arrangement this would require.
<b>Why is a feature/subfeature not displaying in MAGIC?</b>	In certain instances alternative feature/sub-feature/supporting habitat names are used on MAGIC when compared to the Conservation Advice package. This should be detailed in the Supplementary Advice; together with which supporting habitats will not be available on MAGIC (i.e. because they cannot be mapped at the current time – Water Column etc).
<b>Why are SPA supporting habitats not displaying outside of the site boundary?</b>	As per our current Mapping Principles, features and supporting habitats that are entirely outside site boundaries (i.e. not overlapping or contiguous) will not be mapped. External stakeholders should contact their local NE site contact.
<b>How are we approaching the mapping of species (immobile/mobile/highly mobile spp.)?</b>	Our mapping principles explain the different mapping scenarios in relation to species and where we will and will not map them on MAGIC. External stakeholders should contact their local NE site contact.
<b>Where can I find the metadata for the MPA feature data?</b>	Metadata is viewable by selecting the blue information 'i' to the right of the layer name in the Table of Contents (the left-hand expandable list of layers).
<b>Where can I find the metadata for how the designated site boundaries are defined?</b>	Metadata is viewable by selecting the blue information 'i' to the right of the layer name in the Table of Contents (the left-hand expandable list of layers). Information on designated site boundaries may not be specified here however, in which case the paper designation map or original designation documents should be consulted.
<b>Why is biotope information not displayed on the MPA feature maps?</b>	Where information is received in biotope form (JNCC 04/05) it is converted into EUNIS codes (07/11). The original habitat field however will maintain original habitat types (such as biotopes) and this field is viewable by querying MAGIC marine habitats with the identify tool (see below). Furthermore the JNCC correlation table is available <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>Would it be possible to highlight that SPA</b>	It is not possible to 'highlight' this change on MAGIC – only business critical amendments to MAGIC infrastructure are

<p><b>supporting habitats are located in different themes within MAGIC (Marine theme and Priority Habitats Inventory (PHI) theme?)</b></p>	<p>currently allowed. The bookmarks that link to MAGIC from the conservation advice package are however bespoke for the features of that site, and will include the activation of both the MPA and PHI themes <u>where</u> features under both themes are present. This in itself is a form of highlighting that both themes will need to be considered. Conversely where only data from the MPA theme is used the PHI theme will not be activated.</p>
<p><b>Is it possible to link from MAGIC to the Designated Sites System (DSS)?</b></p>	<p>The seamless linking from MAGIC to DSS; or from DSS to MAGIC for specific sites is possible as demonstrated by the SSSI dataset. This functionality is not yet in place for marine sites however and requires further development. Where marine sites are on DSS, a link to MAGIC will be present – however it is not yet possible to link to DSS from MAGIC.</p>
<p><b>How can I tell when marine data has been updated on MAGIC?</b></p>	<p>The following page displays the datasets updated by the most recent update: <a href="http://magic.defra.gov.uk/News_Dataset.htm">http://magic.defra.gov.uk/News_Dataset.htm</a> . The following page displays the archive for all previous updates (but not the most recent): <a href="http://magic.defra.gov.uk/News_Dataset_Archive.htm">http://magic.defra.gov.uk/News_Dataset_Archive.htm</a> . Search (control+F) for 'marine' or similar to determine when changes have been made – if third parties are trying to work out if they need to download open/boundary datasets again etc.</p>
<p><b>How can I query a marine polygon on the map to find out what it is?</b></p>	<p>Use the 'identify' tool on the Feature Tools toolbar to click on the desired feature. For more information see the <a href="#">Help Library</a>.</p>
<p><b>Can I query the map to determine which marine features are within a set distance of a particular location?</b></p>	<p>Yes – via the 'site check' tool on the Feature Tools toolbar. First ensure the desired marine feature layers are turned on. Then activate the site check tool; select which method of marking your point of interest suits (point/line/polygon) and mark the area on the map accordingly. If you would then like to add a buffer, then enter a figure (in metres) and press the Buffer button. When happy then perform the site check. This will return a list of features that intersect your point of interest (and buffer area, if selected). For more information see the <a href="#">Help Library</a>.</p>
<p><b>Is there an easier way of determining what a symbolised feature is without having to return to the Table of Contents?</b></p>	<p>Yes – using the 'Legend' button on the Feature Tools toolbar. This displays the current legend for all activated layers. As it pops-up, can be easily moved and scrolled it may be easier than returning to the Table of Contents. For more information see the <a href="#">Help Library</a>.</p>
<p><b>Sharing</b></p>	
<p><b>Can stakeholders download the data? Is it possible to download the MPA feature data from MAGIC for use in our own GIS systems?</b></p>	<p>A large majority of the data in the datasets are sourced from third parties; meaning we are unable to provide them for download. In these instances, the data providers can be found in the Conservation Advice packages and via the identify button on MAGIC.</p> <p>As a part of our contribution to Defra's Open Data commitment, however, qualifying Marine Habitat and Marine Species</p>

	<p>datasets that are owned and made available by the Defra family, and Priority Habitats Inventory (PHI) datasets are available for download under the Natural England <a href="#">data portal</a>. Designated site boundaries are also available for download via the Natural England <a href="#">Open Data</a> Geoportals.</p>
<p><b>Can Natural England provide the data to stakeholders?</b></p>	<p>Under the terms of the licensing agreement for use of the <b>third party</b> data, these datasets can only be provided to the Defra “family” to assist with the preparation of MPA management measures and reporting. In addition to publishing our data on MAGIC, we will provide the underlying datasets directly to the IFCA’s and to the MMO to enable them to use their own GI systems to examine the data more closely and help them consider possible management measures. They will be provided with updates as new data becomes available, at the same update frequency. Data sets must not be extracted and sent to stakeholders.</p> <p>We can share our own data (i.e. data we own the copyright to and the IPR to) to stakeholders and partners under the terms of the Natural England Open Government Licence, as long as it does not contain any third party data. There may be circumstances where we can share data with stakeholders and partners that does contain third party data, but please check the metadata, or check with the Marine GI team if you are not sure.</p> <p>Open datasets already available for download can be used freely under the terms of the <a href="#">Open Government Licence</a>.</p>
<p><b>Can Natural England provide pdf’s to stakeholders?</b></p>	<p>Due to the continual updating and improvement of the data layers as shown on MAGIC and the GI being provided to the MMO and the IFCA’s, we would recommend you do not produce pdf/jpeg maps as part of your advice to stakeholders and partners as these static maps are likely to become out of date as new evidence comes into Natural England.</p>

## Supplementary Advice on Conservation Objectives | (FAQs)

### ***How to use Supplementary Advice***

The SACOs provide a framework which should inform any ‘Habitats Regulations Assessments’ or Marine Conservation Zone assessments that a competent authority may be required to make. They can be used to inform measures necessary to conserve or restore a protected site and/or to prevent the deterioration or significant disturbance of its qualifying features as required under the provisions of Articles 4(1) and 4(2) of the Wild Birds Directive and Article 6(2) of the Habitats Directive respectively. Similarly, the advice applies to Marine Conservation Zones. The Supplementary Advice on Conservation Objectives present attributes which are ecological characteristics or requirements of the designated species and habitats within a site. The listed attributes are considered to be those which best describe the site’s ecological integrity and which if safeguarded will enable achievement of the Conservation Objectives.

We have not changed the process of conducting a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). Supplementary Advice is a tool to inform the process. A *‘how to use guidance’* is currently being devised for external use.

### ***What do maintain and restore targets mean?***

The target identifies as far as possible the desired state to be achieved for the attribute. Maintain and restore targets indicate whether current evidence suggests that a feature is being impacted or has been impacted in the past in relation to the specific attribute. Restoration may be needed to ensure that a feature reaches a favourable condition and contributes to favourable conservation status in the case of European protected sites.

The targets given for each attribute do not represent thresholds to assess the significance of any given impact in Habitats Regulation Assessments.

Maintain’ targets do not preclude the need for management, now or in the future, to avoid a significant risk of damage or deterioration to the feature. The supporting and/or explanatory notes in the SACOs set out why the target was chosen and any relevant site based supporting information. This is based on the best available information, including that gathered during monitoring of the feature’s current condition.

### ***What are reduce/restrict targets?***

For undesirable attributes such as non-native species, a reduce target equates to a recover/restore objective and a restrict target equates to a maintain target.

### ***What is a subfeature?***

Marine features are very broadly defined habitats that are often represented by large sites. To describe, monitor and manage such features effectively, it has often been necessary to divide the features into smaller units called sub-features. Sub-features are distinctive biological communities (e.g. eelgrass beds, common mussel beds, cockle beds), or particular structural or geographical elements of the feature. It has often proved helpful, both in the development of conservation objectives and of monitoring programmes, to separate the feature into a number of constituent sub-features, and then to identify attributes and targets for the sub-features (JNCC, 2014<sup>1</sup>). In the case of applying the Habitats Directive, an Annex 1 habitat feature may be made up of a number of subfeatures. A subfeature is likely to be ecologically distinct.

### ***How are targets determined, particularly in the absence of condition assessment?***

Direct evidence has been used to inform targets. Where there is no evidence to determine a marine feature's condition, a vulnerability assessment, which includes sensitivity and exposure information for features and activities in a site, has been used as a proxy for condition. Where complete baselines do not exist, an exercise to collate all relatable evidence has been undertaken and, in conjunction with the Advice on Operations, an expert judgement has been made to refine NE's advice. Evidence used in preparing the SACOs has been cited with hyperlinks included where possible. Where references have not been provided, Natural England has applied ecological knowledge and expert judgement.

Conservation advice packages are live documents and can be reviewed and updated if new evidence becomes available, including updated condition assessments.

### ***How does setting a target link to favourable condition and condition assessment?***

Targets set in the supplementary advice (SACOs) are for the purpose of assessing a plan or project and conducting a Habitats Regulations Assessment or MCZ equivalent, and for determining proactive management. The attributes and associated targets in the SACOs are used for the purposes of condition assessment to assess the condition of features and sub-features at a site level. The results of these assessments inform on future monitoring needs and management measures.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/PDF/CSM\\_marine\\_introduction.pdf](http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/PDF/CSM_marine_introduction.pdf)

Attributes are assigned a 'pass' or 'fail' score, depending on whether the SACO targets have been met. Attribute assessments for each (sub-) feature are then aggregated to decide on condition categories of the (sub-) features. For example, for SACs where most features have sub-features, we assess attributes per sub-feature, then aggregate them to get 1 condition category for each sub-feature, and then combine sub-feature results to get feature level results.

***How has it been determined what evidence to include?***

Supplementary advice on conservation objectives brings together the findings of the best available scientific evidence which may be updated or supplemented in further publications from Natural England and other sources. If you have further evidence relating to specific protected sites, please share this with your local Natural England area team Advisers.

***Why hasn't a target been chosen for the 'key structural and influential species' attribute?***

Natural England is currently in the process of determining the process by which key structural and influential species are identified in the marine environment. Once developed, a list of species per habitat will be produced nationally to ensure consistency. Area teams will use this list to refine the conservation advice based on the evidence for species that are present in a specific site. Although typical species are not protected in their own right, it is important that they are a functional part of the habitat, this is how they will be considered. For each species listed, the reason for its inclusion as structural or influential and the information supporting its presence within the site will be provided.