



Annual report on Natural England’s enforcement activity 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014

1. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)

There was a large rise in the total number of offences committed on SSSIs in 2012-13 (Figure 1.1). However, the vast majority of incidents remain minored and were sanctioned through warning letters. We brought 3 prosecutions and administered 1 caution and 1 civil sanction (see section 5).

In recent years, the number of offences committed by those who own or occupy sites (e.g. farmers and land managers) compared to those who have no connection with the land (e.g. recreational off-roaders) has been very similar (Figure 1.2). The number of offences committed by public bodies has been much lower.

Offences continue to be concentrated in the south of England compared to the midlands and north (Figure 1.3). Coastal and lowland grassland habitats are most frequently damaged (Figure 1.4). The variety of illegal activities continues to be wide, but dominated by vehicle use and the direct loss of habitat through construction activities (Figure 1.5).

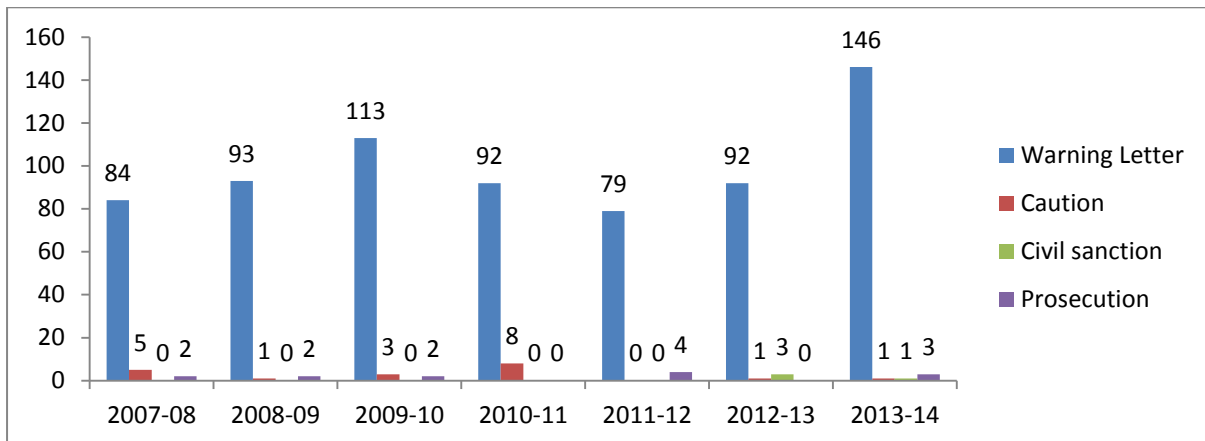


Figure 1.1. Criminal activity on SSSIs by financial year and sanction.

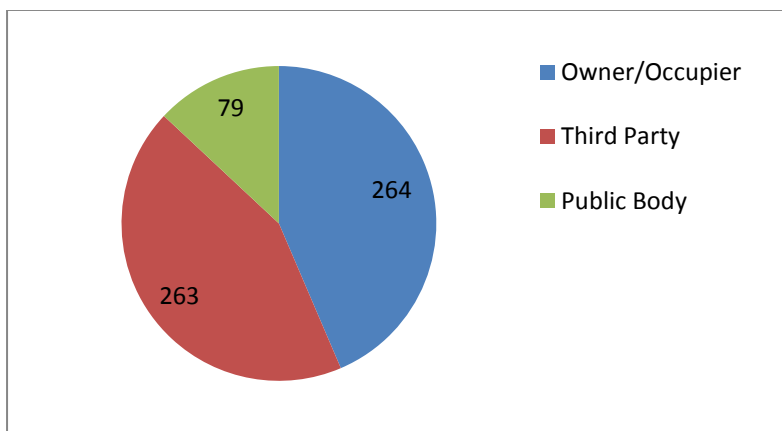


Figure 1.2. Criminal activity on SSSIs by responsible party. Data from 1 April 2008 - 31 March 2014.

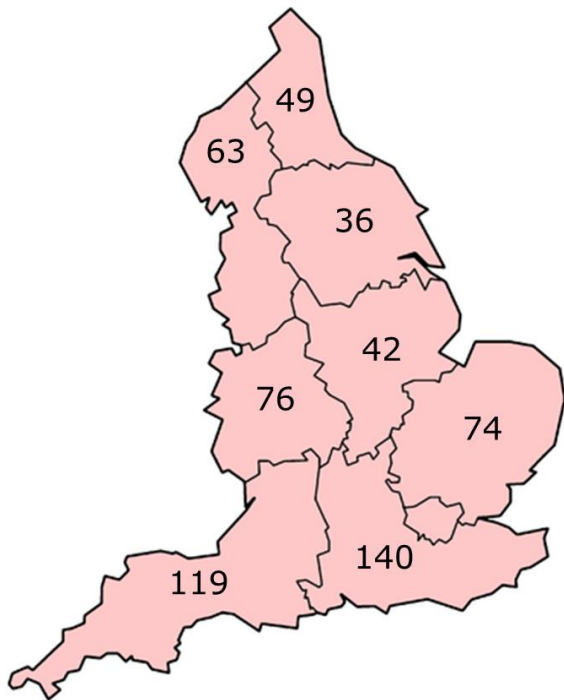


Figure 1.3. Spatial variability in criminal activity on SSSIs. Data from 1 April 2008 – 31 March 2014.

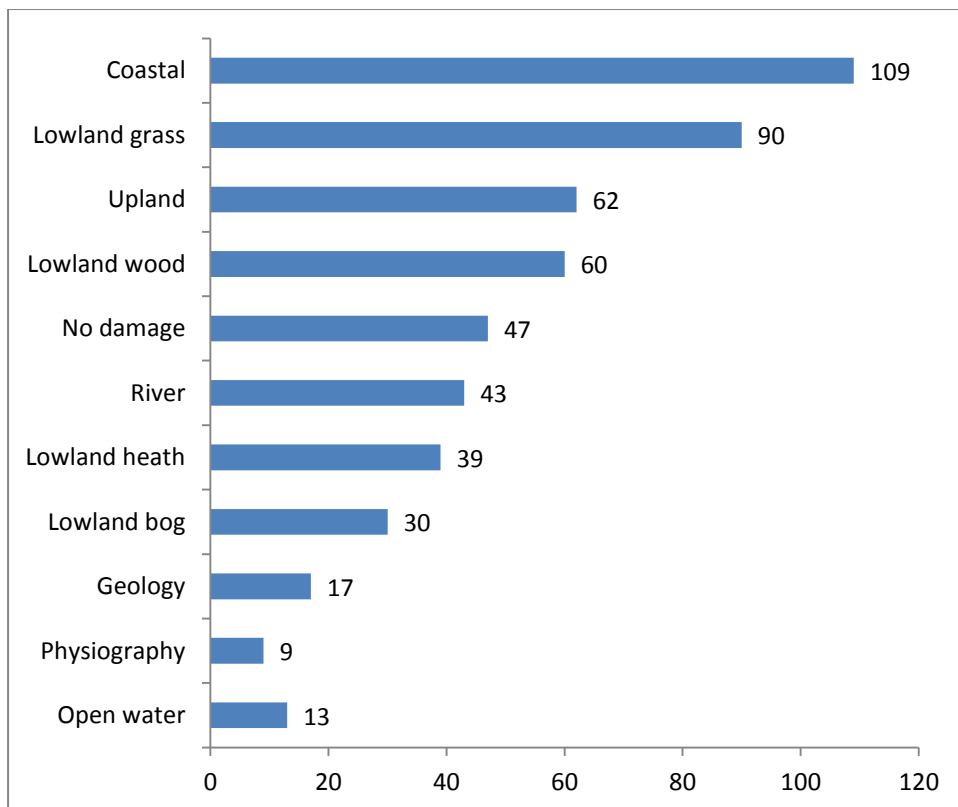


Figure 1.4. Criminal activity on SSSIs by affected habitat. Data from 1 April 2008 – 31 March 2014.

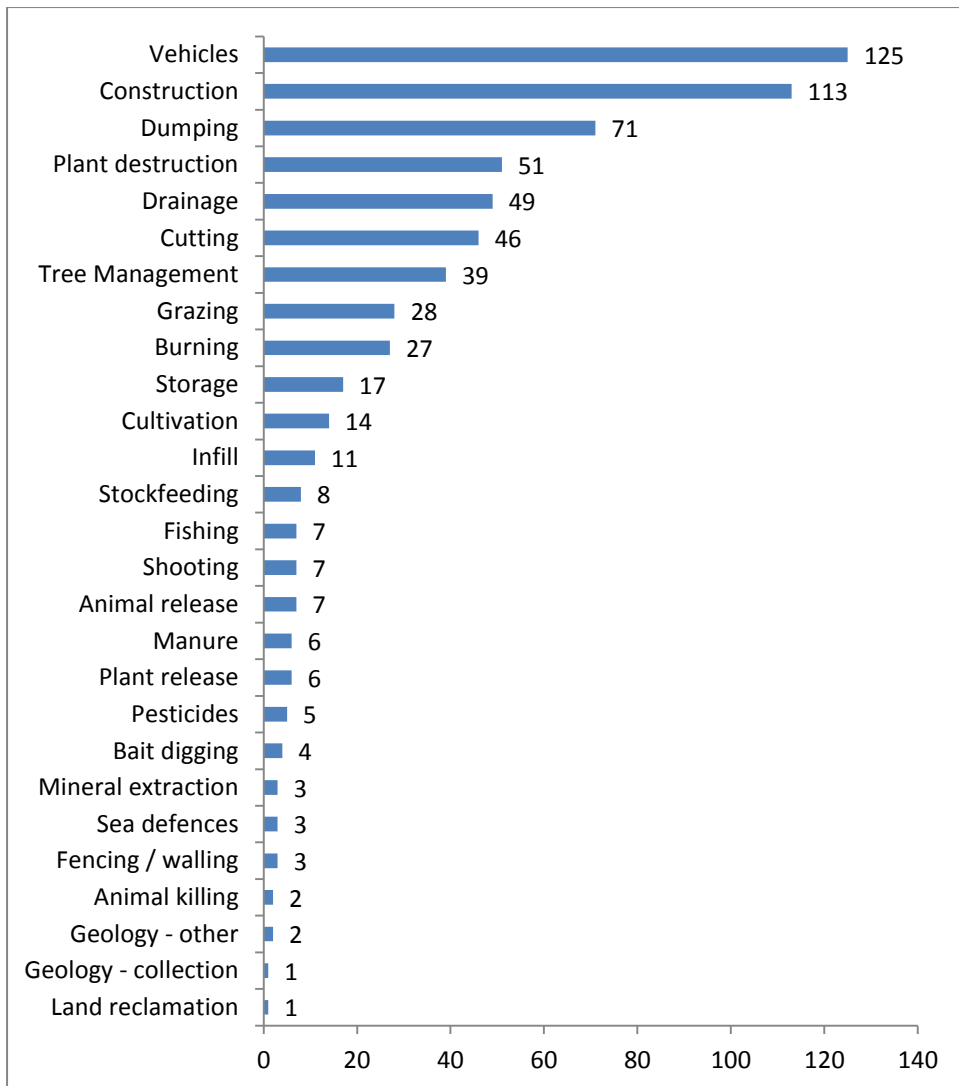


Figure 1.5. Criminal activity on SSSIs by activity. Data from 1 April 2008 – 31 March 2014.

2. Species Licensing

The number of breaches of licences that we issue rose slightly in 2013-14 (Figure 2.1), but most breaches remain minor and are responded to by warning letters. No cautions, civil sanctions or prosecutions were brought in 2013-14 for a breach of a species licence. The most frequently affected species are great crested newts, bats, cormorants and badgers (Figure 2.2). Offences remain concentrated in the east and south-east of England (Figure 2.3).

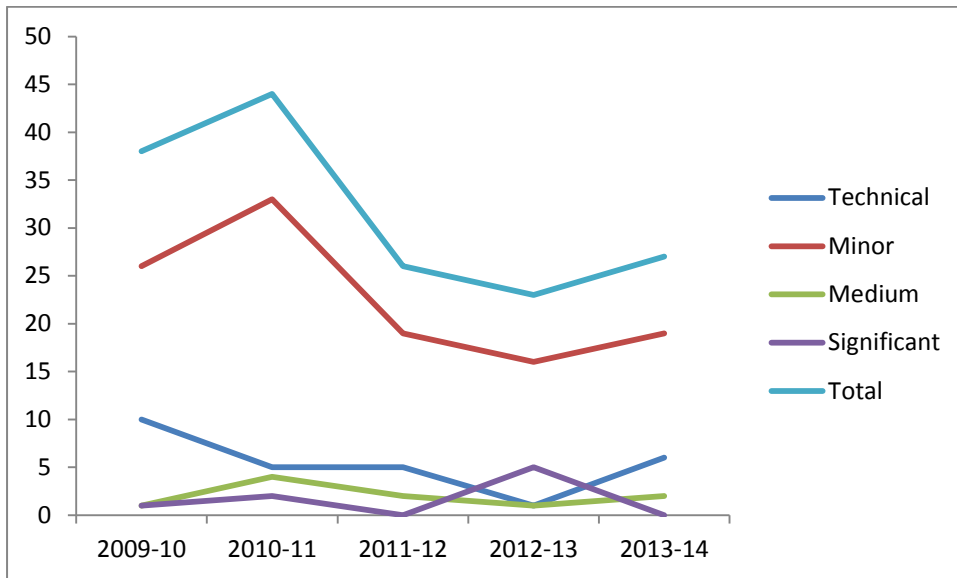


Figure 2.1. Breaches of species licences by classification. Classifications of technical, minor, medium or significant are based mainly on the environmental impact of the breach but also on a range of aggravating and mitigating factors.

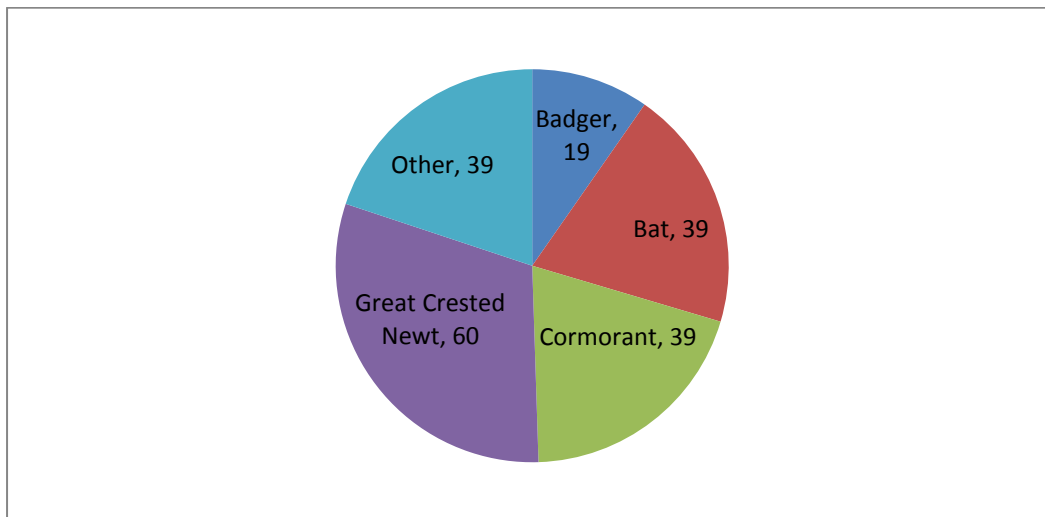


Figure 2.2. Species affected by breaches of species licences. Data from April 2009 – March 2014.

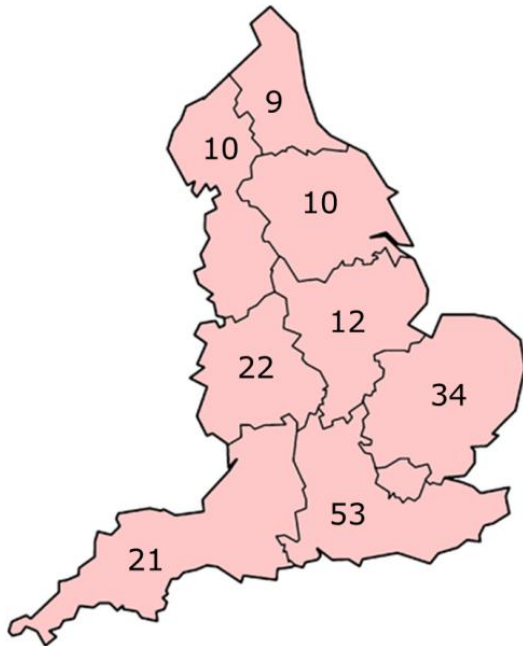


Figure 2.3. Spatial variability in breaches of species licences. Data from April 2009 – March 2013.

3. Animal poisonings

Although the number of reports of animal deaths under the Wildlife Incident Investigations Scheme rose slightly in 2013-14, the number of incidents accepted into the scheme has remained steady in recent years (Figure 3.1). Cases are rejected where it is not thought that pesticides were implicated. In 2013-14 reports of vertebrate poisonings rose whilst invertebrates fell (Figure 3.2). The deliberate abuse of pesticide rose whilst other uses fell. Cases remain unevenly spread throughout England with the highest number of incidents in the east of England (Figure 3.4).

We issue Enforcement Notices to remedy immediate issues with storage and use of pesticides discovered as part of our enquiries. In 2013-14 we worked in conjunction with the Chemicals Regulation Directorate of HSE who issued 2 Enforcement Notices in relation to storage issues arising in Wildlife Incidents.

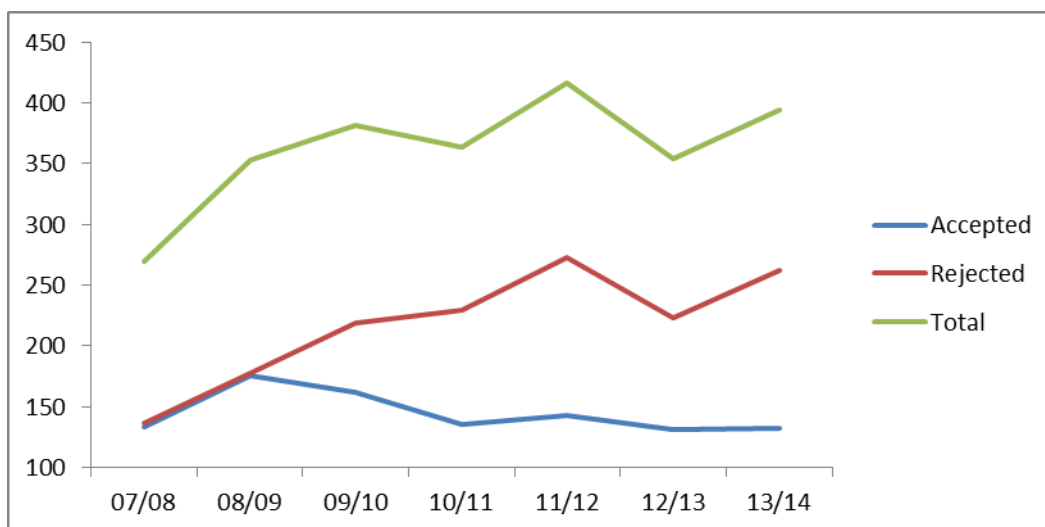


Figure 3.1. Reports of injury of death of animals to the Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme. Cases are accepted if pesticides are suspected of being involved.

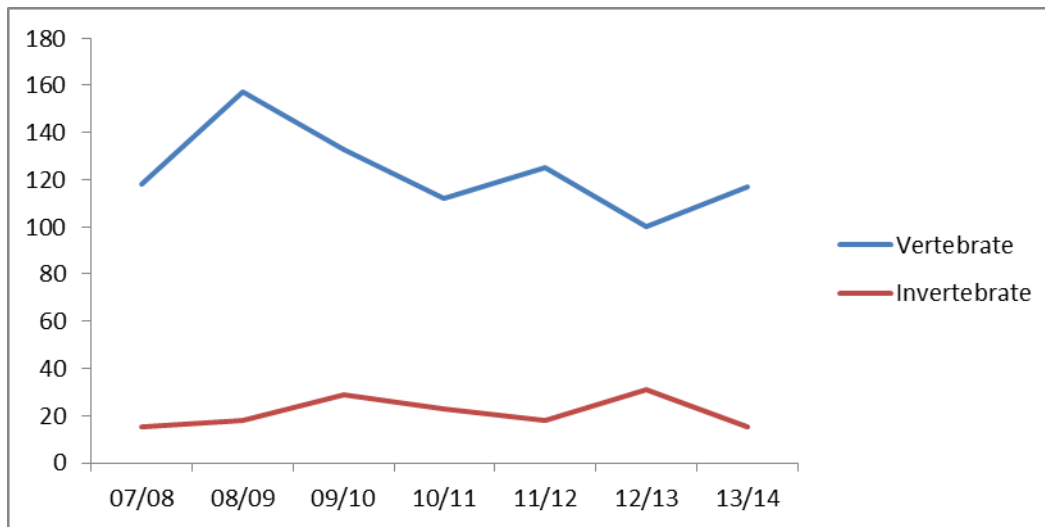


Figure 3.2. Vertebrate and invertebrate cases accepted into the WIIS scheme

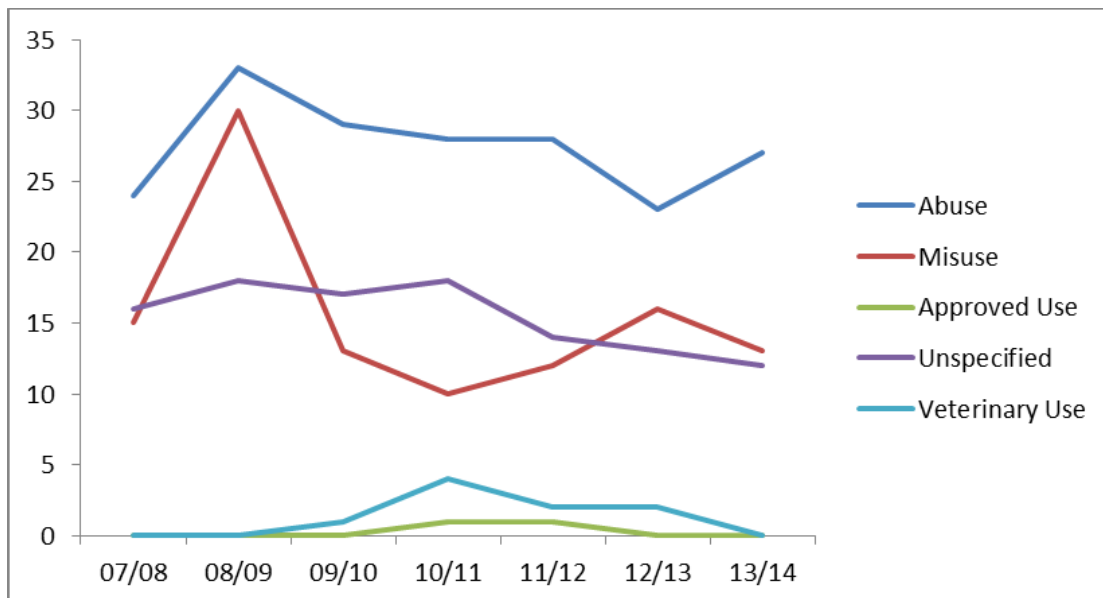


Figure 3.3. Classification of poisoning incidents by suspected use of pesticide

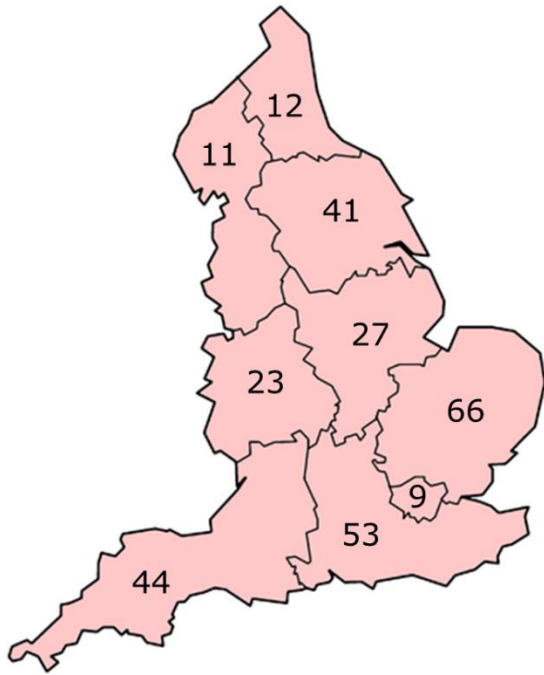


Figure 3.4. Confirmed pesticide cases by Government Region. Data from April 2009 – March 2014.

4. Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) Regulations

The number of queries received by our helpline was similar in 2013 to 2012, but the number of incidents that we investigated rose slightly (Table 4.1). One restoration notice was served and one prosecution was taken, the details of which are in section 6.

Table 4.1. Enforcement action relating to the EIA (Agriculture) Regulations

Year	Queries	Investigations	Stop Notices	Restoration Notices	Prosecutions
2006	1795	21	0	0	0
2007	1462	20	2	0	0
2008	1105	23	1	0	0
2009	633	19	0	1	0
2010	575	23	0	0	0
2011	899	48	2	1	0
2012	1627	51	1	1	0
2013	1640	68	0	1	1

5. Injurious weeds

Contacts, queries and complaints of damage caused by injurious weeds have continued to fall in recent years (Table 5.1). In 2013 37 enforcement notices were served but no clearance actions were required.

Table 5.1. Enforcement action relating to injurious weeds

Year	Contacts/ queries	Complaints	Inspections	Enforcement notices	Clearance actions	Prosecutions
2006	1950	342	67	19	5	0
2007	1924	234	117	52	2	0
2008	2664	319	136	39	3	0
2009	944	202	73	40	0	0
2010	684	145	41	24	2	0
2011	1775	230	86	46	0	0
2012	1384	193	72	36	1	0
2013	1096	127	59	37	0	0

6. Prosecutions, civil sanctions and cautions

April 2013

A 49-year-old pigeon fancier from Sunderland has pleaded guilty to three charges of illegally using and storing a banned pesticide. He was fined £200 for each of the three charges. This police prosecution was handled as a WIIS case by Natural England.

June 2013

A company agreed an Enforcement Undertaking to restore a damaged area of blanket bog within Bewick and Beanley Moors SSSI in Northumberland

July 2013

A landowner was fined £450,000 and ordered to pay £457,318 costs for tree felling and track construction within Gelt Woods SSSI in Cumbria.

September 2013

A landowner was fined £45,000 and ordered to pay £90,000 costs for carrying out numerous unauthorised activities within Pevensy Levels SSSI in East Sussex. The activities included planting non-native trees, erecting fencing, erecting temporary structures, constructing a track and constructing a bridge. The court also served a restoration order.

October 2013

A man was cautioned for scraping mudflats within St John's Lake SSSI in Cornwall

January 2014

Two men were prosecuted for causing damage to blanket bog through recreational off-roading in Leek Moors SSSI within the Peak District National Park.

April 2014

A landowner was fined £2,500 and ordered to pay £10,000 costs and a £250 victim surcharge after failing to comply with the terms of a remediation notice served under the Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) Regulations. The landowner had unlawfully installed a number of underground pipes which drained water into Miller Beck.