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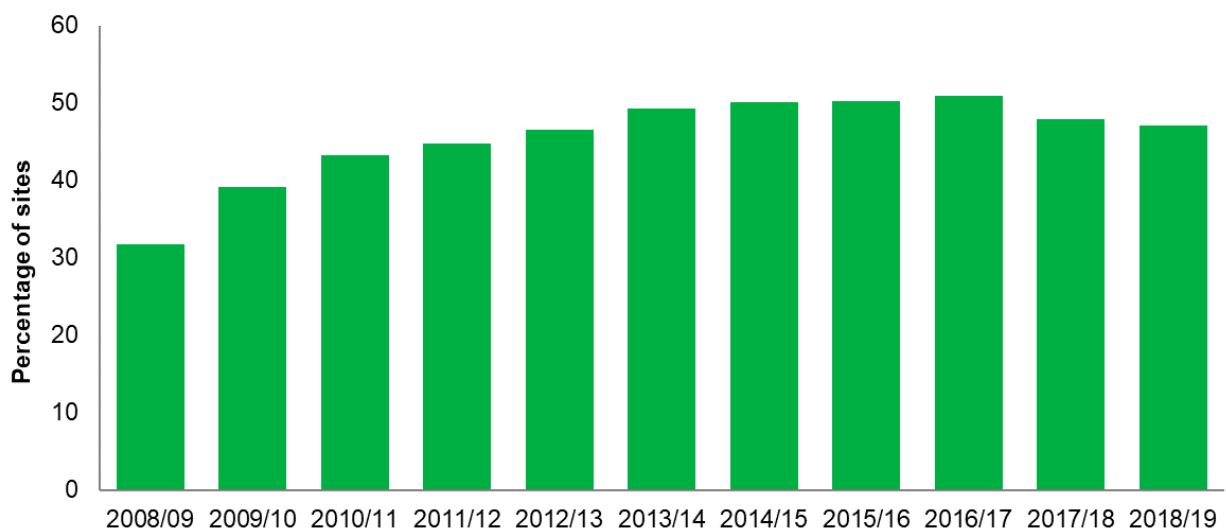
Nature conservation: Local Sites in positive conservation management in England, 2008/09 to 2018/19

In 2018/19, 47% of Local Sites across England were in positive conservation management. This is an increase of 15 percentage points in the proportion of sites in positive management since 2008/09 when data were first collected, and little changed compared to last year.

Local Sites are sites designated locally for their substantive nature conservation importance, either for wildlife or geology. Sites in positive conservation management are defined as those sites which are being managed in order to conserve their nature conservation interest.

Assessing the extent of positive management can help to identify sites where positive management is lacking and will help to focus the efforts of Local Site Partnerships in ensuring Local Sites are managed and their nature conservation value is maintained or enhanced.

Figure 1: Proportion of Local Sites in positive conservation management, England, 2008/09 to 2018/19



Notes: The total number of responding local authorities and number of sites varies between years. In 2018/19, 101 (68%) local authorities were included in the analysis.

Reasons for change

A small number of local authorities chose to explain the reasons for changes to their results from previous years. Although this is not necessarily representative of all local authorities, it does give an insight into possible reasons for change.

Over recent years, reasons given include:

- the introduction of local management plans (positive change);
- the inclusion of more Local Sites in environmental management schemes (positive change);
- financial investment (positive change);
- collaborative working with a local Wildlife Trust (positive change);
- ability to obtain information from private land owners (positive/negative change);
- the designation of additional Local Sites not yet in positive management (negative change);
- a lack of information about whether sites were still in positive management (negative change);
- Local Sites that have come out of funding schemes and are awaiting approval for a new scheme (negative change);
- and merging several smaller sites together into larger areas, thereby reducing the overall number of sites (negative change).

Missing data

Out of the 149 local authorities expected to submit their results this year (a decrease from 150 local authorities last year due to some merging; see dataset [here](#)), 87 (58%) responded. The majority of local authorities that did not submit data this year also failed to provide data last year, or in a number of previous years, and 3 local authorities did not submit data for the first time this year. Local authorities continue to report that they have insufficient funding or resources to carry out the assessment needed to provide the information.

For handling of missing data, see notes on data collection and estimation below.

Background

Local Sites are non-statutory areas designated at local level for their significant nature conservation value. They include both local wildlife sites (designated for significant biodiversity value) and local geological sites (designated for their significant geological value). Local Site systems are operated at a local level, with local authorities working with Local Sites Partnerships made up of key stakeholders.

There are more than 40,000 Local Sites in England, covering contrasting landscapes in coastal, rural and urban situations. Although they do not have any statutory status, many are equal in quality to the representative sample of sites that make up the series

of statutory Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). They are an important component of England's ecological network and have an important role to play in meeting our national biodiversity objectives.

There are currently a number of different terms in use locally to describe these sites, including Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs) and Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS). Defra uses the common term Local Site.

More background on Local Sites can be found [here](#).

Notes on data collection and estimation

These data (attached in the accompanying data sheet) are from local authority single data list 160-00 on local nature conservation/biodiversity.

The data for 2010/11 to 2018/19 were collected by Defra from unitary and higher tier local authorities. Data for 2008/09 and 2009/10 were previously published by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

In 2018/19, 58% of local authorities submitted data on Local Sites, compared with 55% in 2017/18. Where local authorities did not submit data in 2018/19, the most recently submitted data for those local authorities was used to calculate the percentage of sites in positive conservation management in that local authority. Where a local authority has not submitted data for 3 consecutive years they have been excluded from the analysis as we can no longer be confident that the most recent estimate reflects the current situation. A total of 101 local authorities were included in the analysis in 2018/19 and 48 local authorities were excluded due to not providing data for 3 consecutive years.