

16. Integrating biodiversity considerations into local decision making

Type: Response indicator

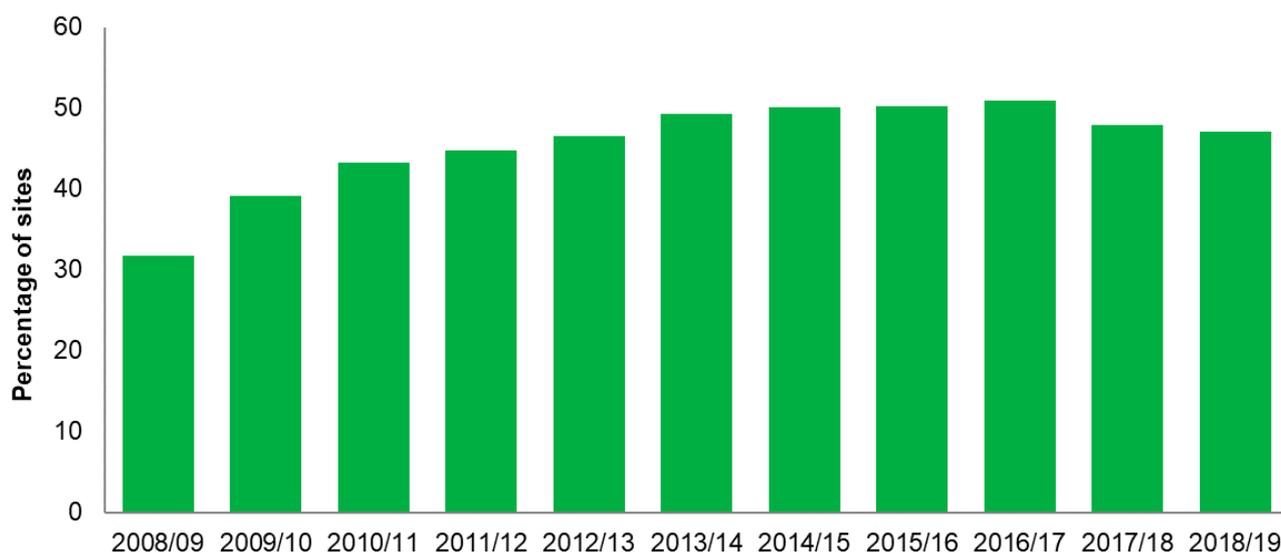
Indicator Description

This indicator shows the proportion of the total number of Local Sites in England where positive conservation management is being implemented or has been implemented in the last 5 years. Local Sites are non-statutory areas identified and selected for their substantive local nature conservation value (Local Wildlife Sites) and/or their local geological value (Local Geological Sites). 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 authorities and Local Site Partnerships in ensuring Local Sites are managed and their biodiversity/geological value is maintained or enhanced.

Local Sites under positive conservation management

In 2018/19, 47% of Local Sites across England were in positive conservation management, an increase of 15 percentage points since the beginning of the time series in 2008/09 and a decrease of 2.0 percentage points since 2013/14 (Figure 16.1).

Figure 16.1: Proportion of Local Sites in England under positive conservation management, 2008/09 to 2018/19



Notes:

1. In 2018/19, 58% of local authorities submitted data on Local Sites. Where a local authority did not submit data in 2018/19, the most recently submitted data were used provided they had been supplied within the last 3 years.
2. 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.

Source: Defra, Local Authority Single data list 160-00 on local nature conservation/biodiversity.

Indicator assessment

Assessment of change in extent and condition of protected areas and local sites

Local Sites under positive conservation management: Long term (2008/09 to 2018/19): Improving; Short term (2013/14 to 2018/19): little change; Latest year (2018/19): decreased.

Note: The long-term and short-term assessment of these measures is based on a 3% rule of thumb. The base years for these assessments use a 3-year average, see [Assessing Indicators](#).

Relevance

The indicator is relevant to outcome 1 in [Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services](#) (see Annex A). It is also relevant to strategy priority action 2.2:

- Promote taking better account of the values of biodiversity in public and private sector decision-making, including by providing tools to help consider a wider range of ecosystem services.

The indicator is relevant to international goals and targets (see Annex B of the aforementioned publication for further details).

Background

Local Sites are non-statutory areas designated at local level for their substantive nature conservation and/or geological 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), although Defra uses the common term Local Site.

The data allow assessment of the proportion (percentage) of the total number of Local Sites in England where positive conservation management is being implemented, or has been implemented in the last 5 years. Evidence that positive (rather than active) conservation management is being or has been undertaken is required and is used as a proxy for positive biodiversity outcomes (for example, site management plans, management schemes such as agri-environment or conservation management agreement or schemes and management guidance and advice).

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, previously published by the Department for Communities and Local Government, are also included here.

In order to try and improve the response rate, Defra updated contact details from a review carried out by the Local Government Association last year. 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 were 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 their most recent estimate can no longer be relied upon to reflect 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.

Web links for further information

Defra : [Local Sites guidance](#)

Last updated: October 2020

Latest data: 2018/19