



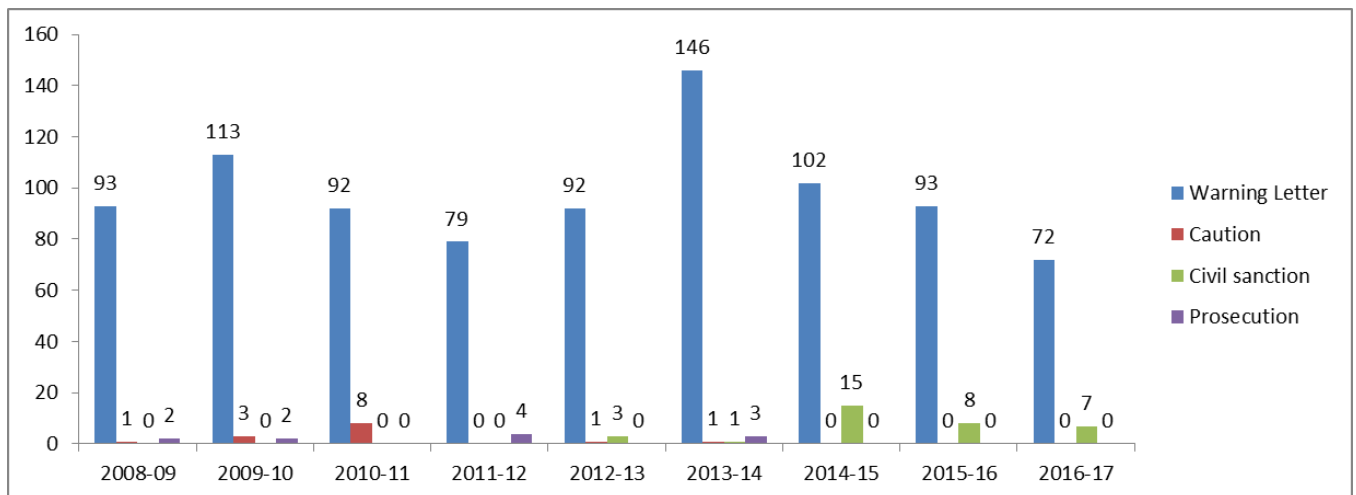
**Annual report on Natural England's enforcement activity  
1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017**

**1. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)**

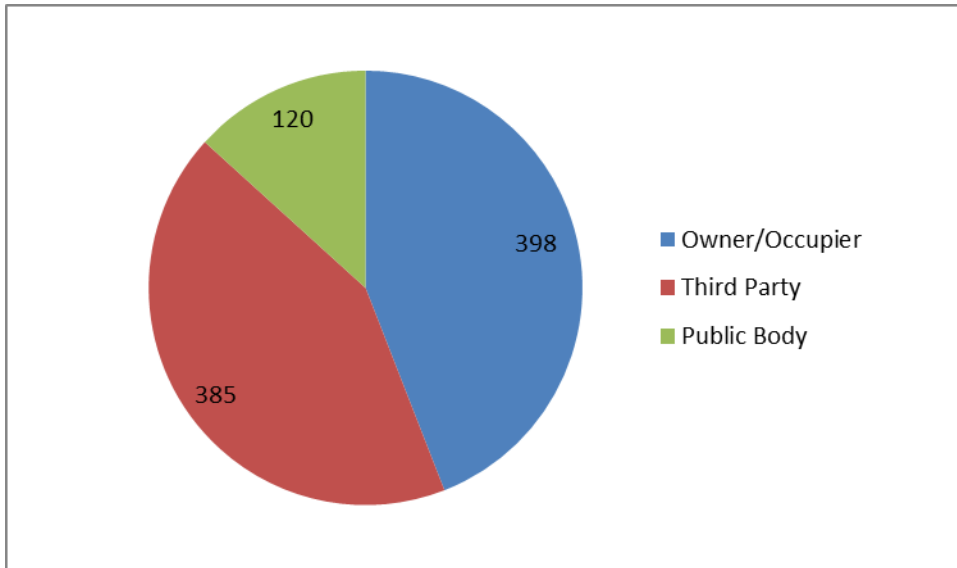
A total of 79 offences were recorded on SSSIs in 2016-17, a significant decline from the peak which occurred in during the financial year 2013/14 (Figure 1.1). The majority of incidents were minor and were concluded using warning letters. The number of civil sanctions utilised has declined slightly from the previous year. The use of civil sanctions during 16/17 was confined to Enforcement Undertakings. No criminal proceedings were brought in 2016-17.

Since data collection began in 2008, 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.

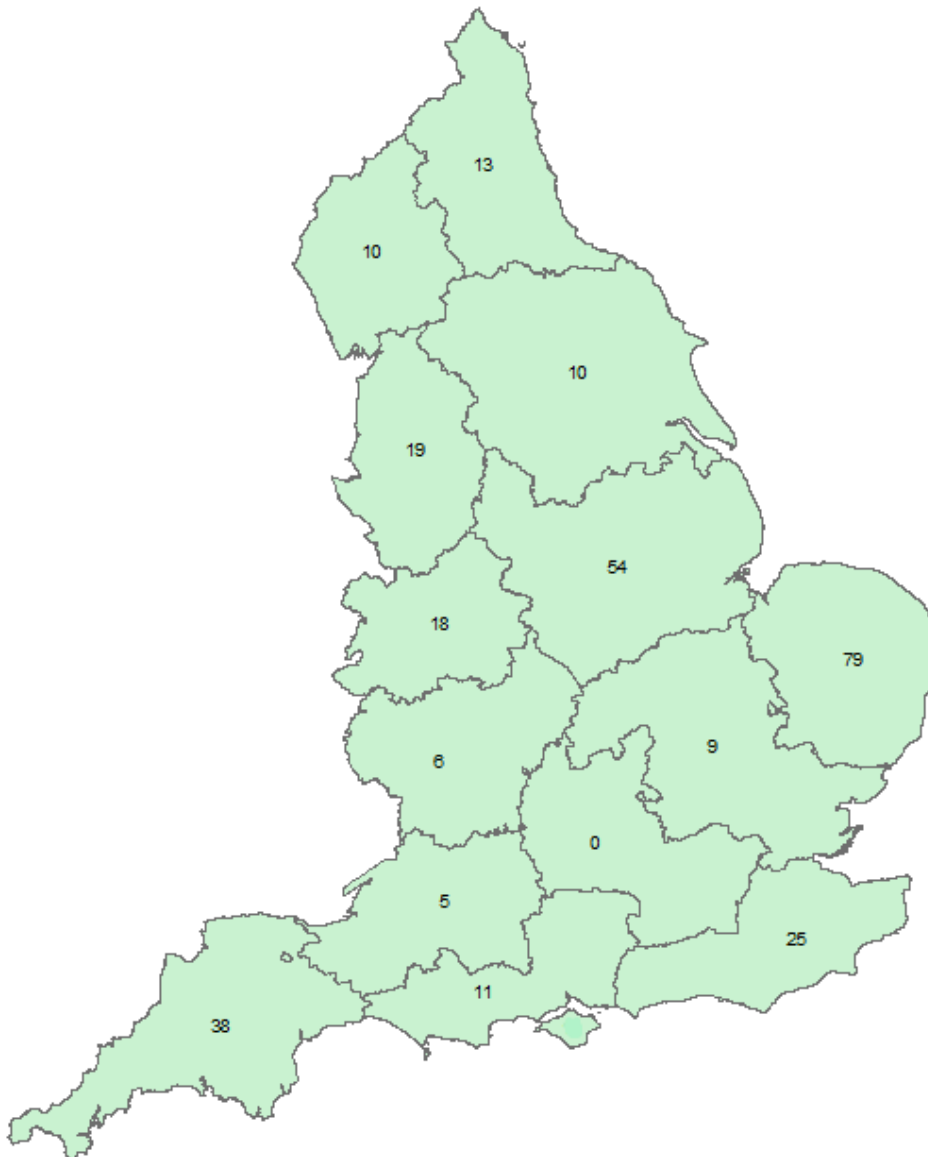
Based on the number of offences reported from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017, offences appear to be concentrated in the south of England (Figure 1.3). However, in recent years the number of recorded offences is greatest in the East of England and East Midlands (this shift could be attributed to reporting effort rather than a change in the frequency of offending). 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 related activities (Figure 1.5).



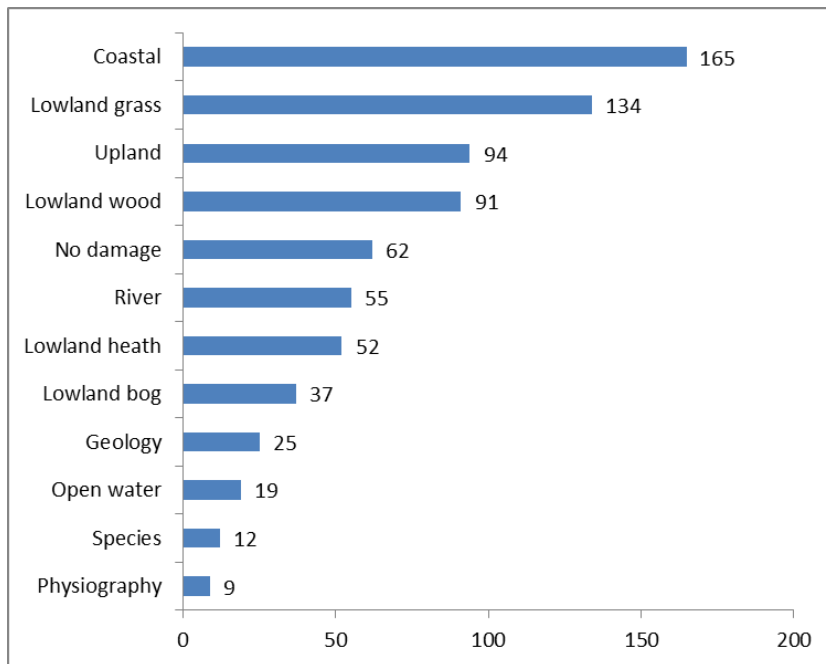
**Figure 1.1.** Criminal activity on SSSIs by financial year and sanction.



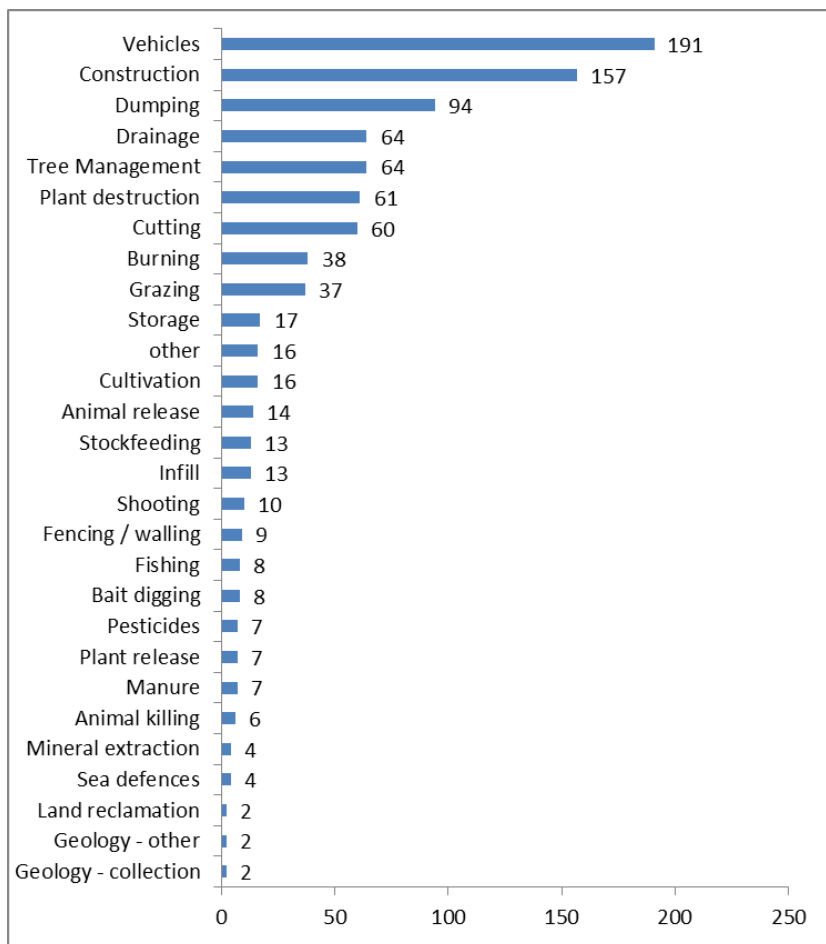
**Figure 1.2.** Criminal activity on SSSIs by responsible party. Data from 1 April 2008 - 31 March 2017



**Figure 1.3.** Spatial variability in criminal activity on SSSIs by Natural England Area Team. Data from 1 April 2014 – 31 March 2017.



**Figure 1.4.** Criminal activity on SSSIs by affected habitat. Data from 1 April 2008 – 31 March 2017.



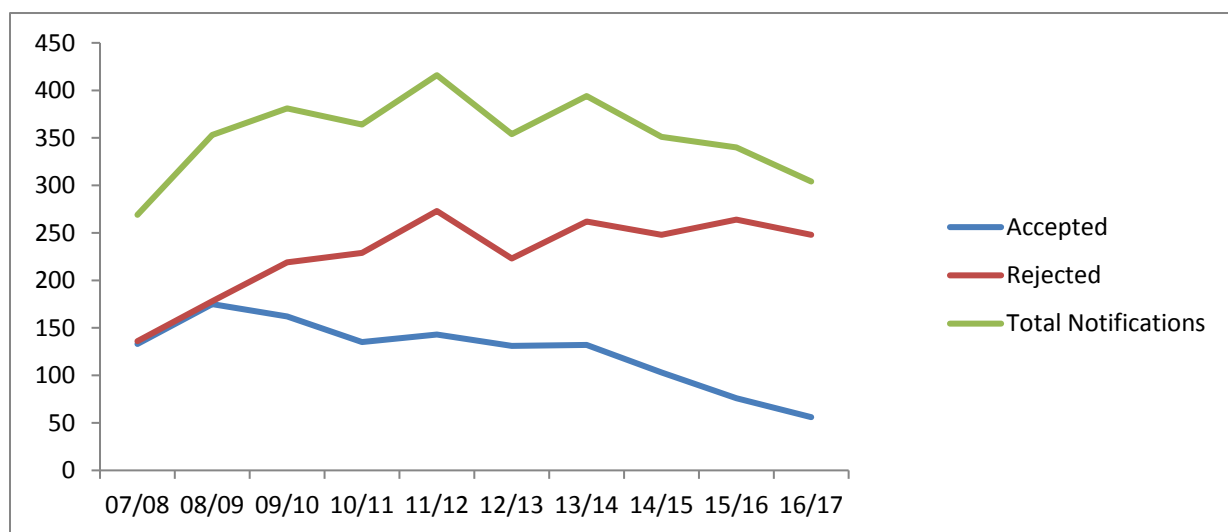
**Figure 1.5.** Criminal activity on SSSIs by activity. Data from 1 April 2008 – 31 March 2017.

## 2. Species Licensing – Data not currently available

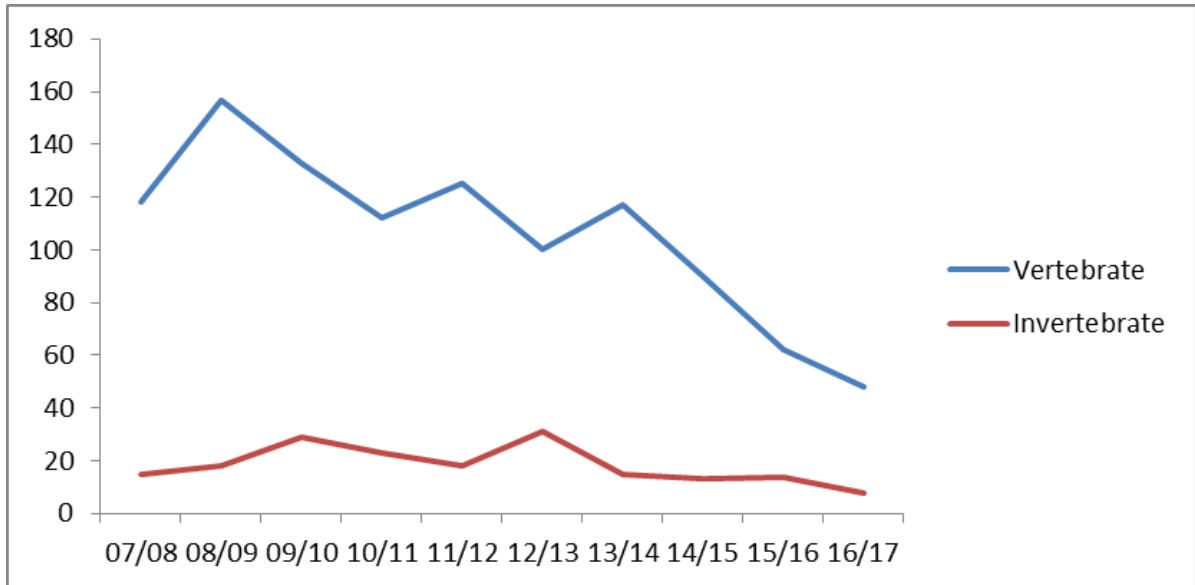
### 3. Animal poisonings

The total number of reports of animal deaths under the Wildlife Incident Investigations Scheme fell in 2016-17 to from at or above 350 reports per year to 304 reports. Of these reports 248 cases were rejected on the basis that pesticides were not thought to be involved, and 56 cases were accepted into the scheme (Figure 3.1).

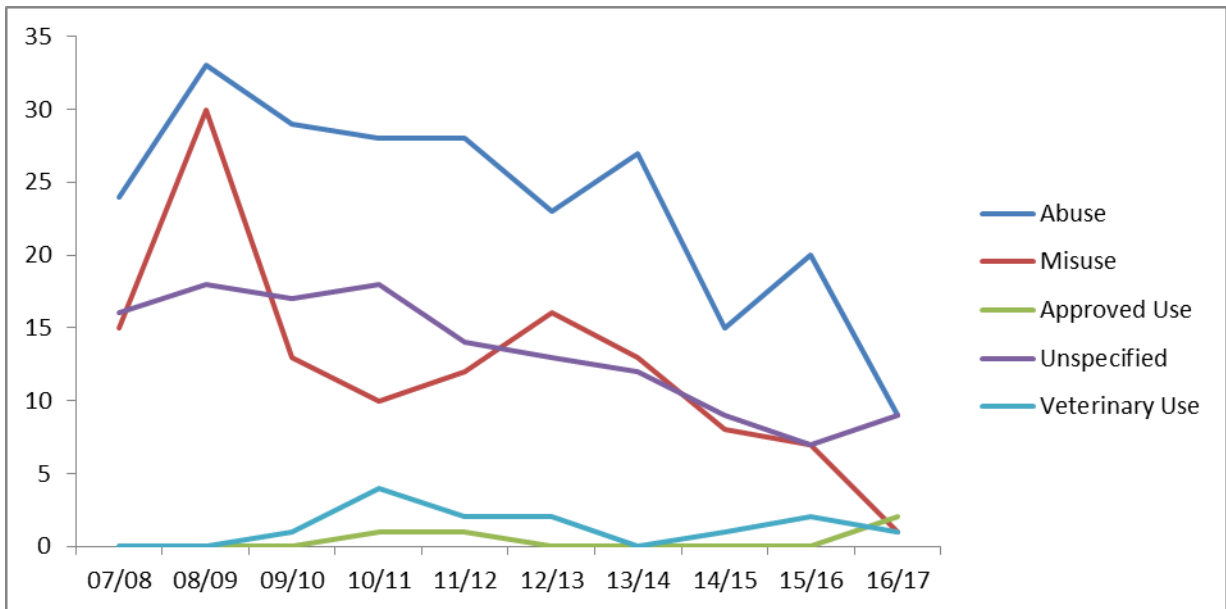
In recent years, both vertebrate and invertebrate poisonings accepted into the scheme have fallen (Figure 3.2). The number of incidents of deliberate abuse of pesticides fell again after a peak in 2015/16 (Figure 3.3). Cases remain unevenly spread throughout England with the highest number of incidents in the East midlands and Yorkshire and norther Lincolnshire Area Teams (Figure 3.4).



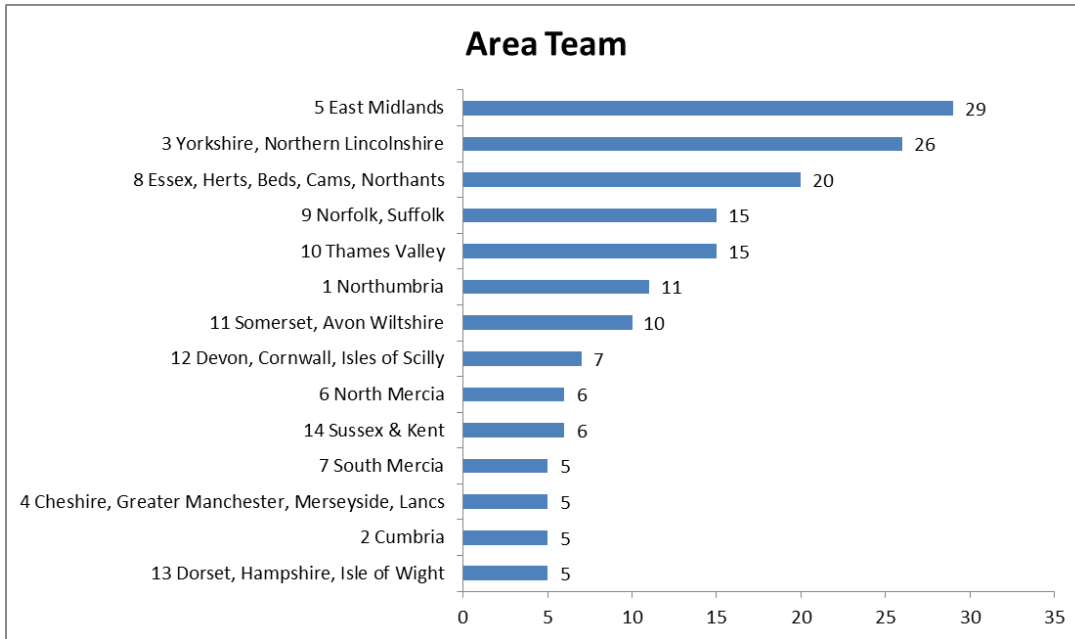
**Figure 3.1.** Reports of injury of death of animals to the Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme. Cases are accepted if pesticides are suspected of being involved.



**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 Natural England Area Team. Data from April 2014 – March 2017

#### 4. Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) Regulations

In 2016 there was a slight decrease in the number of queries received by our helpline and the number of incidents that we investigated (Table 4.1). However, three Remediation Notices were served. During 2017 there was a large increase in the number of queries received by our helpline and we recorded the greatest number of investigations of incidents since 2006. These increases are likely to be as a result of the changes made to the Regulations coming in to force (May 2017) and a greater awareness of the Regulations by members of the public. During 2017, 2 remediation notices and 1 Stop Notice was served.

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

Year	Queries	Investigations	Stop Notices	Remediation 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
2014	1292	50	0	1	0
2015	1391	55	0	1	0
2016	1322	43	0	3	0
2017	2020	76	1	2	0

## 5. Injurious weeds

Complaints of damage caused by injurious weeds increased slightly in 2016 but declined again in 2017 and remains low compared to the peak in 2006 (Table 5.1). In 2016 and 2017 21 and 11 enforcement notices (respectively) were served and no clearance actions were required.

**Table 5.1.** Enforcement action relating to injurious weeds

Year	Complaints	Inspections	Enforcement notices	Clearance actions	Prosecutions
2006	342	67	19	5	0
2007	234	117	52	2	0
2008	319	136	39	3	0
2009	202	73	40	0	0
2010	145	41	24	2	0
2011	230	86	46	0	0
2012	193	72	36	1	0
2013	127	59	37	0	0
2014	94	52	17	0	0
2015	113	49	18	0	0
2016	117	39	21	0	0
2017	107	37	11	0	0

## 6. Prosecutions, civil sanctions and cautions

### May 2016

In May, Natural England served a Remediation Notice, on Mr Cooper of Croyde Hoe Farm, following a breach of Regulation 10 of the EIA (Agriculture) Regulations. The offence committed was the ploughing of semi-natural habitat without the consent of Natural England. The Remediation notice required the removal of the cereal crop and reinstatement of a permanent grassland sward in order to protect the Historic Environment interest found within the relevant land parcel, which is considered to be of at least Regional significance.

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### June 2016

In June, an Enforcement Undertaking was agreed, with Mr Middleton of Killarney Springs, Youlstone, as a result of an uncultivated land project being undertaken without first seeking a screening decision as required by Regulation 5 of the EIA (Agriculture) Regulations. The Enforcement Undertaking provided for the blocking of land drains, removal of surface drains and levelling of a spoil mound to allow reseeded grassland. This EU has resulted in the restoration of 4ha of purple moor-grass and rush pasture (known regionally as culm grassland) which is a priority BAP habitat.

Also In June 2016, Natural England agreed an Enforcement Undertaking with Mr C Jones of Pen-y-llan, Owestry, as a result of an uncultivated land project being undertaken without first seeking a screening decision as required by Regulation 5 of the EIA (Agriculture) Regulations. The activity was considered to have damaged grassland element of the wood pasture and parkland BAP habitat present as well as causing damage to the ridge and furrow and other earthworks of the Llandforda Hall Park SHINE (Historic Environment) feature. The Enforcement Undertaking provided for the re-establishment of a grass sward and reinstating grazing management.

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## **July 2016**

In July 2016, Natural England agreed an Enforcement Undertaking with Mrs P. Bailey following damage caused to the Leek Moors SSSI, Derbyshire. Damage, considered to be an offence under S28P(1) of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (as amended), was caused as a result of the unconsented cutting of new drainage channels and removing vegetation from a series of non-functioning ditches, totalling around 550 m of work. This activity resulted in the active drainage of adjacent rush pasture and blanket bog SSSI habitats and was likely to also impact upon the upland breeding bird assemblage feature of the SSSI. Through the Enforcement Undertaking Mrs Bailey agreed to reinstate appropriate water levels by blocking and damming ditches and also agreed to carry out no further works on site without first seeking Natural England consent.

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## **August 2016**

In August 2016, Natural England agreed an Enforcement Undertaking with Mrs G. Williamson following damage caused to the Leek Moors SSSI, Derbyshire. Damage, considered to be an offence under S28P(1) of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (as amended), was caused as a result of the unconsented drainage of a significant area of species-rich mire and breeding bird habitat through re-excavation of approximately 350m of ditches. In addition, associated damage from the disposal of ditch in-fill material was observed. Through the Enforcement Undertaking Mrs Williamson agreed to reinstate appropriate water levels by blocking and damming ditches and also agreed to carry out no further works on site without first seeking Natural England consent.

Also in August, Natural England agreed an Enforcement Undertaking with the Eastnor Castle Estate following damage caused to the Eastnor Park SSSI, Herefordshire. Damage, considered to be an offence under S28P(1) of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (as amended), was caused as a result of the unconsented felling and limbing of trees that provided supporting habitat for invertebrates and bird features of interest. Through the Enforcement Undertaking the Estate agreed to replant a number of trees and also agreed to carry out no further works on site without first seeking Natural England consent.

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## **November 2016**

In November 2016 Natural England served a Regulation 28 Remediation Notice (EIA (Agriculture) Regulations) on Mr Dennis, Gloucestershire, following a breach of Regulation 10 of the Regulations. The Remediation Notice required the removal of the sown crop, and reinstatement of a grassland sward of the MG5 National Vegetation Classification type. The Notice also made provision for future management of the grassland sward. The remediation Notice should result in the restoration of 8ha of Lowland Meadows BAP habitat.

Also in November 2016, Natural England agreed an Enforcement Undertaking with Mr Shaw, Warrington, following damage caused to the Tatton Meres SSSI, Cheshire. Damage, considered to be an offence under S28P(6) of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (as amended), was caused to wet woodland habitat, a SSSI feature of interest, by the removal of trees and the fen habitat was also damaged by the covering of brash. Through the Enforcement Undertaking Mr Shaw agreed undertake no further vegetation management and also to remove brash and cuttings from the SSSI.

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## **December 2016**

In December, an Enforcement Undertaking was agreed, with Mr Harrison, Market Drayton, as a result of an uncultivated land project being undertaken at Prees Heath Common, Shropshire, without first seeking a screening decision as required by Regulation 5 of the EIA (Agriculture) Regulations. The Enforcement Undertaking provided for restoration of lowland acid grassland BAP habitat known to be of importance to the Silver Studded Blue butterfly population found in this area.

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## **January 2017**

In January, an Enforcement Undertaking was agreed, with Mr Samworth of Ednaston, Derbyshire, as a result of an uncultivated land project being undertaken without first seeking consent of Natural England as required by Regulation 10 of the EIA (Agriculture) Regulations. The Enforcement Undertaking provided for the reseedling of grassland with the aim, over time, of restoring the lowland meadow habitat (a priority BAP habitat) damaged by the unconsented activity.

Also in January, Natural England agreed an Enforcement Undertaking with Messrs GA and SW Wainwright following the unconsented dumping of brash on the SSSI grassland feature and damage to the grassland as a result of vehicle/machinery access, considered to be an offence under Section 28P(1) of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (as amended). The Enforcement Undertaking provided for the removal of brash and agreement that no further works would take place on site without the consent of Natural England.

## **February 2017**

In February, Natural England agreed an Enforcement Undertaking with the Ripon Training Area Military Shoot to address the unconsented positioning of pheasant feeders within the Ripon Parks SSSI, North Yorkshire. This activity, considered to be an offence under Section 28P(1) of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (as amended), was thought to be damaging to the SSSI due to the potential for nutrient enrichment through supplementary feeding and damage and disturbance to ground flora as a result of the intensification of game birds using the area. The Enforcement Undertaking provided for the removal of all feeders and agreement that no future activity would be carried out with the consent of Natural England.

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## **March 2017**

In March 2017, Natural England agreed an Enforcement Undertaking with Durham County Council following damage caused to the Rookhope SSSI upland dry heath and blanket bog notified habitats. This damage included the direct digging up of vegetation, the smothering of vegetation as dug material was placed upon it and interference with the hydrology of blanket bog. Damage occurred following roadside ditch creation and clearance works undertaken by the County Council without Natural England's Assent and this is considered to be an offence under Section 28P(2) of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (as amended). The Enforcement Undertaking provided for the restoration of damaged habitats by the backfilling of dug areas and the replacement of vegetation turves.