



SEA Screening Template

Based on S.L. 549.61 (L.N. 497 of 2010, as amended by Act XXV of 2015 and April 2021 LN82 of 2019)

This screening template has been drafted by the SEA Focal Point based on the SEA Regulations and is being distributed in document format for ease of use. Submitted versions shall only be considered if they align with this original version also available on the SEA website.

Part A – Plan/Programme (PP) & Responsible Authority (RA)	
Title of PP: Conservation Objectives and Conservation Measures for Malta’s terrestrial Natura 2000 sites (Part 1)	
Responsible Authority: Environment and Resources Authority (ERA)	
Contact Person: Marie Therese Gambin	Position: Unit Manager (Biodiversity & Water Unit)
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Date: April 2025	
As per S.L., when more than one entity is responsible for the PP (or parts thereof), a single responsible authority should be nominated by agreement between the authorities responsible for the PP.	

Part B – General Information about the Plan/Programme (PP)
Purpose of PP: In terms of Article 51 of the Environment Protection Act (Cap. 549), ERA has prepared updated site-specific Conservation Objectives and Measures for a selection of Malta’s Terrestrial Natura 2000 Sites, in line with the Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Protection Regulations (S.L. 549.44) and the Conservation of Wild Birds Regulations (S.L. 549.42). The revised conservation objectives and measures build upon Malta’s first “Management Plans and Conservation Orders for Terrestrial Natura 2000 Sites in Malta & Gozo” which were adopted in 2016, in order to continue the Government’s long-term efforts on Natura 2000 site management and biodiversity conservation. This revision process is being carried out in a staggered approach to facilitate consultation and adoption. Additional sites or extensions to existing sites which have been designated since the previous management plans / conservation orders will also be covered by this same process.

Period Covered by PP: up to 2030 (and beyond)

Envisaged updates/modifications: An Interim management effectiveness review will be carried out. Apart from informing any necessary updates to the conservation objectives and measures, it will also inform EU Habitats Directive reporting obligations, and assessments related to the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) to 2030, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and UN targets under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). It will also feed into aspects of the EU Nature Restoration Regulation adopted in 2024.

Area covered by PP (also attach map):

The first set of 13 terrestrial Natura 2000 sites covered by this policy document are:

- L-Inħawi ta' Pembroke
- Il-Maqluba
- Is-Simar
- Is-Salini
- L-Għadira s-Safra u l-Iskoll tal-Għallis
- L-Inħawi tar-Ramla tat-Torri u tal-Irdum tal-Madonna
- Għar Dalam
- Iċ-Ċittadella
- Il-Ballut ta' Marsaxlokk
- L-Inħawi ta' l-Għadira
- Filfla u l-Gzejjer ta' Madwarha
- Il-Gzejjer ta' San Pawl (Selmunett)
- Il-Magħluq tal-Baħar ta' Marsaskala

Summary of PP content:

The Conservation Objectives and Measures for Malta's terrestrial Natura 2000 sites were developed for the conservation of terrestrial habitats and species as listed in Annex I and Annex II to the Habitats Directive and birds listed in Annex I to the Birds Directive. The development and implementation of such measures is a legal obligation under Article 6(1) of the Habitats Directive, in order to prevent deterioration and ensure their conservation.

The main objectives of the proposed revision process for the "Conservation Objectives and Measures for Malta's Terrestrial Natura 2000 sites" when considering the sites covered are to:

- contribute to maintain or restore, at a favourable conservation status, the natural habitat types and species of wild fauna and flora of community interest for which the sites were designated;

- reduce direct and indirect pressures and threats affecting the conservation status of habitats and species of community interest and hence their future prospects;
- elaboration of SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound) objectives and tangible measures;
- improve knowledge on and monitoring of habitats and species;
- increase conservation and restoration efforts for pertinent habitats and species following a prioritised approach;
- manage activities within terrestrial Natura 2000 sites;
- ensure cooperation among entities and stakeholder involvement;
- further research on terrestrial habitats and species;
- fulfil the obligations under the European Union Nature Directives, namely the Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC) and the Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC) and related multilateral environmental agreements.

The conservation objectives proposed by the PP specify the targets to be achieved in order for the Natura 2000 sites to contribute to maintaining or restoring the desired status of the habitats and species. The conservation measures are the actions through which the conservation objectives would be achieved. As specified in EU Commission Notes¹, the conservation measures outlined in the policy document are accompanied by an indication of the responsible entity and a timeline for implementation. However, a more detailed work plan for implementation of the measures will be developed once all measures for all terrestrial Natura 2000 sites are adopted. Operational Objectives were included when current knowledge/information in relation to the existing conditions in the site, on the status of the habitats or species or on the main pressures and threats that can affect them was not available and hence did not permit elaboration of further targeted conservation objectives and measures at this point in time.

The elaboration of the conservation objectives and measures was undertaken in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, and on the basis of the conservation status of the listed habitats and species and associated pressures and threats. Achievement of common goals across related policies was also an important consideration throughout the whole process.

¹ <https://circabc.europa.eu/ui/group/3f466d71-92a7-49eb-9c63-6cb0fadf29dc/library/da138066-6136-4dec-9f98-07ed00e64231/details>

Part C – Applicability of the SEA Regulations		
Criterion	Yes/No	Explanation
Exemptions – Regulation 4(9)		
Is the PP's sole purpose to serve national defence or civil emergency? OR	No	The PP is not related to national defence or civil emergency.
Is this a financial or budget PP?	No	The is not a financial or budget PP.
Qualification of PP - Regulation 3		
Is the PP subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional, or local authority? OR	Yes	The PP was prepared by the Environment and Resources Authority in consultation with relevant Government entities. The PP will be adopted at a national scale by the Government and will be reported to the EU Commission as part of the requirements of Article 6 and 7 of the Habitats Directive.
Is the PP prepared by an authority for adoption through legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? AND	Yes	The PP was prepared by the Environment and Resources Authority and will be adopted by the Government (as per above).
Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory, or administrative provisions?	Yes	The PP has been developed pursuant to the requirements of the EU Habitats Directive as transposed into national legislation through the Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Protection Regulations (S.L. 549.44). ERA is the designated Competent Authority for the implementation of these Regulations.
Regulations 4(1) to 4(4)		
The SEA Regulations require that a strategic environmental assessment, in accordance with regulations 5 to 10, shall be carried out by the responsible authority for PPs referred to in sub-regulations 4(2) to 4(4) which are likely to have significant environmental effects, as follows:		

<p>(i) Regulation 4(2) identifies PPs that are already considered to have a significant environmental effect. Moreover, Regulation 4(2)(b) requires liaison with the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA) as the authority responsible for the Habitats Directive and protection of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs).</p> <p>(ii) Responsible authorities should determine, in line with the provisions of the SEA Regulations, whether PPs identified in Regulations 4(3) to 4(4) are likely to have significant environmental effects [also see Regulation 4(5) below].</p>		
<p>Regulation 4(2) – SEA required automatically</p>		
<p>Is the PP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use? AND</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The PP is prepared with the aim to manage terrestrial Natura 2000 sites within the Maltese Islands with a view to achieve or maintain the desired conservation status of terrestrial habitats and species in line with the requirements of the EU Habitats and Birds Directive.</p>
<p>Does the PP set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive (85/337/EEC – as updated by Directive 2014/52/EU). [These Annexes are transposed as Schedule 1 in the national EIA Regulations] OR</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The PP does not set a framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive.</p> <p>Conservation measures included in the draft policy document are mainly related to habitat conservation and restoration efforts, such as the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • removal and control of invasive alien species; • planting of species typical of the respective habitat types; • mitigation of pressures and threats impacting the conservation status of habitats and species, such as visitor management and access measures.

Will the PP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment (Appropriate Assessment) under Articles 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)?	No	The conservation objectives and measures are developed with the framework of the EU Habitats Directive and aim for the conservation of the habitats and species listed in the said Directive.
Regulation 4(3) – Applied only for PPs referred in 4(2)		
Does the PP in 4(2) determine the use of small areas at a local level? OR	N/A	N/A
Is it a minor modification of a PP referred in 4(2)?	N/A	N/A
Regulation 4(4) – Applied only for PPs <u>not</u> referred in 4(2)		
Is the PP, which set the framework for future development consent of projects, likely to have a significant effect on the environment?	No	<p>The PP does not set a framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive.</p> <p>Conservation measures included in the draft policy document are mainly related to habitat conservation and restoration efforts, such as the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • removal and control of invasive alien species; • planting of species typical of the respective habitat types; • mitigation of pressures and threats impacting the conservation status of habitats and species, such as visitor management and access measures.

Part D – Determining the Likely Significance of Effects on the Environment referred to in Regulation 4(5)
(Schedule II)

Regulation 4(5) – Applied for PPs referred to in 4(3) and 4(4)		
Criteria	Likely to have significant environmental effects? Yes/No	Explanation on the significant environmental effects (both positive and negative)
Characteristics of the PP		
The degree to which the PP sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating condition; or by allocating resources	No	<p>The PP does not set a framework for projects and other activities in the terrestrial environment. It is mainly geared at addressing pressures by building on existing legislative requirements, while taking into consideration the management of activities in selected areas.</p> <p>The interventions that would result from the PP are soft interventions or interventions that would be implemented following recommendations from already commenced studies. These studies would determine the requirement of the interventions and the type of such interventions to ensure no significant impacts to the terrestrial environment.</p>
The degree to which the PP influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	No	The PP builds on existing policies, plans and programmes and ensures synergies with the objectives emanating from other EU and national policies pertaining to the terrestrial environment. The PP is providing site-specific management regimes that contribute to

		overarching strategies under the EU Habitats and Birds Directives and the NBSAP.
The relevance of the PP for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development		The PP will be engaging all relevant sectors in the conservation of the terrestrial environment, thus providing the knowledge and tools to work towards sustainable development in the terrestrial environment across all sectors.
Environmental problems relevant to the PP	No	The management process set through the PP is geared at maintaining or achieving the favourable conservation status (FCS) for relevant habitats and species and protection of seabirds. For this purpose, the PP seeks to address and mitigate environmental problems. Amongst others, the PP addresses pressures and threats on terrestrial habitats and species that were identified as medium/high significance that are reported in Malta's reports to the EU Commission, including the Standard Data Forms of each protected area. This is to ensure that habitats/species that are at most risk of not achieving the desired conservation status are targeted.
The relevance of the PP for the implementation of community legislation on the environment (eg. PPs linked to waste management or water protection)	No	The PP is directly relevant to the implementation of community legislation on the environment. The conservation objectives and measures are pursuant to Articles 2(2), 2(3), 6(1) and 7 of the EU Habitats Directive.
Characteristics of the effects and area likely to be affected		

<p>The probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of the effects</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The conservation measures are designed to achieve conservation of important habitats and species as required by the Habitats and Birds Directives. The measures will be implemented on the basis of a work plan outlining milestones and associated timeframes. Within this context, the positive environment effects of the PP are highly likely. The duration of such positive effects will depend on regular monitoring and maintenance, following the implementation of each action.</p> <p>No negative effects are envisaged through the implementation of these measures.</p>
<p>The cumulative nature of the effects</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The measures proposed through the PP are expected to have a positive cumulative effect on the environment, resulting in improvement of terrestrial ecosystems.</p>
<p>The transboundary nature of the effects</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The measures are in line with EU and international environmental policy and goals. The implementation of these measures will contribute to the further protection and improvement of status of the terrestrial environment. Furthermore, targeted measures for specific species (such as bats and birds), play a significant role in enhancing their conservation status at the regional level.</p>
<p>The risks to human health or the environment (eg. due to accidents)</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The conservation measures are designed to maintain and/or improve the conservation status of targeted terrestrial habitats and</p>

		species. Therefore, the measures would contribute to improved quality of resources and associated human health issues. None of the measures proposed as part of the PP are considered to pose a risk on human health.
The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of population likely to be affected)	No	The effects of the conservation measures will cover the terrestrial Natura 2000 sites within the Maltese Islands. They will also contribute to the overall conservation of habitats and species within the Mediterranean region as a whole.
The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: I) Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage II) Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values III) Intensive land use	No	Terrestrial ecosystems are expected to be positively affected through the implementation of the PP. The status of these ecosystems in terms of their distribution and condition is expected to improve.
The effects on areas or landscapes which have recognized national, community or international protection status	No	The measures are expected to have positive effects on Natura 2000 sites designated pursuant to the EU Habitats and Birds Directives.

Part E – Summary of Environmental Effects

Provide a comprehensive statement on the significant environmental effects of the PP.

The conservation objectives and measures do not set a framework for future development consent and are aimed towards the achievement of the Favourable Conservation Status of terrestrial habitats and species as listed under Annexes I and II to the Habitats Directive and protection of birds and their habitats listed in Annex I to the Birds Directive. The measures are designed to address current pressures and reduce negative effects on these habitats and species. Therefore, the PP is not considered to have significant environmental effects.

Part F – Screening Outcome

Following the screening, as required under the Strategic Environmental Assessment regulations, including all required consultations, the RA is of the view that:

- A SEA is required because the PP falls under the scope of regulation 4(2)
- A SEA is required because the PP falls under the scope of regulation 4(3) and is likely to have significant environmental effects
- A SEA is required because the PP falls under the scope of regulation 4(4) and is likely to have significant environmental effects
- A SEA is not required because the PP is unlikely to have significant environmental effects

Mr Kevin Mercieca, CEO

Name of Officer responsible for this report

Signature of Officer responsible for this report

Environment and Resources Authority

Name and Stamp of Responsible Authority

Date

09/05/2025

Notes to Responsible Authority

A signed copy of this document should be provided to the SEA Focal Point after conducting all consultations. The RA should also attach:

- the draft plan/programme
- a copy of the public notification obligatory under Regulation 4(7)
- If appropriate, a copy of the notification for public participation (see Schedule III Article 5 (3) to S.L.549.61)
- Copy of consultation correspondence by the Responsible Authorities to designated authorities