



British Ecological Society

Public consultation as part of the 'fitness check' on EU nature legislation (Birds Directive, Habitats Directive): BES Response

Part 1 – General Questions

Question	Response
1. How important is nature conservation to you?	Very Important
2. How familiar are you with EU nature conservation measures?	Very Familiar (to all)
3. How important to nature conservation are the Birds and Habitats Directives?	Very Important
4. Are the Directives' strategic objectives appropriate for protecting nature in the EU?	Very Appropriate
5. Is the approach set out in the Directives an appropriate way to protect species and habitats in the EU?	Very Appropriate
6. Have the Directives been effective in protecting nature?	Very Effective
7. How important is the Natura 2000 network for protecting threatened species and habitats in the EU?	Very Important
8. How do the costs of implementing the Birds and Habitats Directives compare with the benefits from their implementation?	The benefits of implementation far exceed the costs
9. While the Directives are primarily focused on conserving nature, to what extent have the following been taken into account in implementing them?	Enough (to all)
10. Do EU policies in the following areas generally support the objectives of the Birds and Habitats Directives? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Agriculture & rural development b. Fisheries & maritime c. Cohesion (regional) d. Energy e. Transport f. Environment g. Industry/enterprise h. Climate change i. Health j. Research & innovation 	No Could contribute more Could contribute more Could contribute more Could contribute more Yes Could contribute more Could contribute more Could contribute more Could contribute more



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Question	Response
11. To what extent have the Directives provided more value than could have been achieved through national or regional laws in this area?	Significant Added Value
12. To what extent have the Directives added value to the economy (e.g. job creation, business opportunities linked to Natura 2000)	Significant Added Value
13. To what extent have the Directives brought additional social benefits (e.g. health, culture, recreation, education)?	Significant Added Value
14. Is there still a need for EU legislation to protect species and habitats?	Yes

Part 2 – Specific Questions (Optional)

Question	Response
<p>15. How effective have the Birds and Habitats Directives been in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Protecting threatened bird species? b. Protecting all wild bird species? c. Protecting threatened species (other than birds)? d. Protecting Europe’s most threatened habitat types? e. Establishing a system to protect species? f. Ensuring that species are used sustainably (e.g. hunting, fishing)? g. Establishing an EU-wide network of protected areas (the Natura 2000 Network)? h. Managing and restoring sites in the Natura 2000 network? i. Ensuring proper assessment of risks to Natura 2000 sites from new plans and projects? j. Regulating the impact of new plans & projects on Natura 2000 sites? k. Encouraging the management of landscape features outside Natura 2000 sites? 	<p>Very effective Somewhat effective Very effective Very effective Very effective Somewhat effective Very effective Somewhat effective Very effective Very effective Not very effective</p>
<p>16. To what extent do the Directives help meet the EU Biodiversity Strategy Objectives?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Protecting species & habitats b. Maintaining & restoring degraded ecosystems & their services c. Conserving & improving biodiversity on agricultural & forested land d. Ensuring sustainable use of fisheries resources e. Combating the introduction & spread of invasive alien species f. Helping conserve biodiversity worldwide 	<p>A very significant contribution A significant contribution A small contribution A small contribution A significant contribution</p>



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17. How effective overall have the Directives been so far?	Very effective (to both)
<p>18. Where the Directives have succeeded, to what extent have the following contributed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Directives are clearly worded b. Effective enforcement c. Effective EU-level coordination d. Effective national coordination e. Effective regional coordination f. Effective local coordination g. Guidance & best practice on implementation h. Sufficient scientific knowledge of species & habitats i. Dedicated funding j. Appropriate human resources k. Stakeholder involvement l. Public awareness & support m. Nature conservation is well integrated into other policies n. Appropriate management of protected areas o. International cooperation to protect species & habitats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major contribution Major contribution Major contribution Major contribution Moderate contribution Minor contribution Major contribution Major contribution Major contribution Moderate contribution Major contribution Minor contribution Major contribution Major contribution Moderate contribution
<p>19. To what extent are the following limiting progress towards the Directives' objectives?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Directives are not clearly worded b. Ineffective enforcement c. Ineffective EU-level coordination d. Ineffective national coordination e. Ineffective regional coordination f. Ineffective local coordination g. Insufficient guidance & best practice on implementation h. Unclear guidance & best practice on implementation i. Gaps in scientific knowledge of species & habitats j. Insufficient funding k. Insufficient human resources l. Insufficient stakeholder involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not restricting progress Significantly restricting progress Not restricting progress Significantly restricting progress Somewhat restricting progress Not restricting progress Somewhat restricting progress Somewhat restricting progress Somewhat restricting progress Significantly restricting progress Significantly restricting progress Significantly restricting progress Somewhat restricting progress



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Question	Response
<p>m. Low public awareness & support</p> <p>n. Insufficient integration into other policies</p> <p>o. Lack of appropriate management of protected areas</p> <p>p. Lack of or limited international cooperation to protect species & habitats</p>	<p>Somewhat restricting progress</p> <p>Significantly restricting progress</p> <p>Somewhat restricting progress</p> <p>Somewhat restricting progress</p>
20. How significant are the benefits associated with the Directives?	Major benefits (to all)
21. How significant are the costs associated with the Directives?	Minor (to all)
22. Are these costs proportionate, given the benefits associated with the Directives?	Proportionate (to all)
<p>23. On the basis of experience to date, to what extent have the following caused any inefficiency?</p> <p>a. How the directives are written</p> <p>b. How compliance is enforced at EU level</p> <p>c. How the directives are implemented nationally</p> <p>d. How the directives are implemented regionally</p> <p>e. How the directives are implemented locally</p> <p>f. Interaction with other EU law & policies</p>	<p>Not at all</p> <p>To some extent</p> <p>To a large extent</p> <p>To some extent</p> <p>To some extent</p> <p>To a large extent</p>
24. Have any of the following become more or less efficient over time?	More efficient (to all)
25. Overall, how well are funding needs for implementing the Directives being met?	Insufficient funding, efficiently used
25. How important are the Directives to safeguarding Europe's biodiversity? ¹	Very important (to both)
<p>26. How important are the Directives to protecting species and habitats from the following pressures and threats?</p> <p>a. Loss or fragmentation of habitats</p> <p>b. Unsustainable use of species & habitats</p> <p>c. Pollution</p> <p>d. Introduction & spread of non-native plants & animals</p> <p>e. Climate change</p>	<p>Very important</p> <p>Very important</p> <p>Important</p> <p>Important</p> <p>Very important</p>
27. How well do the Directives cover the habitats and species that most need conservation in the EU?	Sufficiently (to both)

¹ Yes, there are two questions numbered 25 on the online form!



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28. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?	Totally agree (to all)
29. Are there any significant gaps, overlaps or inconsistencies between the Birds and Habitats Directives and the following EU environment legislation that limit the extent to which the Directives can be effectively implemented?	No (to all)
30. To what extent have the Birds and Habitats Directives helped improve the following, over and above what could have been achieved through national or regional legislation?	Significant contribution (to all)
31. If the EU nature Directives did not exist, would the overall state of species and habitats in the EU be...	Much worse

Final Remarks: Any further comments

The British Ecological Society is the world's oldest ecological society, with over 5000 members. As an independent learned society and a leading voice for ecologists, the BES is committed to an evidence-informed approach to policy-making.

The Birds and Habitats Directives, and the Natura 2000 network, provide an effective framework for protecting biodiversity within the EU, and where implemented well are delivering positive outcomes for species and habitats. They are integral to making progress towards the aim of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to halt biodiversity loss by 2020, but as the recent State of Nature in the EU report finds, are not currently being implemented to the level necessary to achieve this goal.

Scientific evidence has demonstrated the positive impact of the Directives on biodiversity. For example, recent studies by Donald et al (<http://bit.ly/1CjKC7W>) and Pellisier et al (<http://bit.ly/1LTQR5x>) reported positive impacts of the Birds Directive and Natura 2000 network on bird populations. Further research (<http://bit.ly/1HJckbL>) has underlined the importance of networks of protected sites such as Natura 2000 for protecting biodiversity under climate change.

The Directives provide a stable and coherent regulatory framework for businesses and governments across Europe, and are compatible with sustainable development, as the UK Government's recent review of their implementation concludes (<http://bit.ly/1CXVjla>). A recent study (<http://bit.ly/1CjLUQa>) found that the socio-economic benefits of the Natura 2000 network clearly outweigh the costs.

In order to achieve the objectives of the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the focus should be on scaling up and improving implementation of the Directives. Changing the Directives at this crucial time could create significant economic uncertainty by jeopardising the current stable regulatory framework, whilst also threatening vital protection for species and habitats and the ecosystem service benefits they provide.