

Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)

What is a HRA?

A Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) looks at the likely impacts of implementing a plan or policy on a Natura 2000 Site. This includes considering if a land use plan will work against any conservation objectives. Where significant negative effects are identified, alternative options are examined to avoid any potential damaging effects. Visit the [Natura 2000 website](#) for more details.

Why do a HRA?

Carrying out a HRA is not only a statutory duty but helps the planning policy process by looking at and addressing early on any adverse effects that draft policies and proposals may have. Unlike the Sustainability Appraisal process the HRA requires decisions on the content of the plan to be based on its findings.

What are the stages in a HRA?

Stage one - Screening stage: this identifies the likely impacts upon a Natura 2000 site of a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, and considers whether these impacts are likely to be significant.

Stage two - Appropriate Assessment (AA): this considers the impacts of a plan or project against the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site. This is done to identify whether there may be any adverse effects on the site's integrity and features.

Stage three - Assessment of alternative solutions: where significant negative effects are identified at the AA stage, alternative options should be examined to avoid any potential damaging effects to a site.

Stage four - Assessment where adverse impacts remain: an assessment of compensatory measures where, in the light of an assessment of Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest, it is deemed that the project or plan should proceed. The Secretary of State will inform the European Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.