

# Santon Gorge & Port Soldrick Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI)

## Designation Documents

Please note:

- Notification as an ASSI confers no public right of entry to any land without the permission of the landowner.
- The citations and lists of operations requiring the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture's consent may be subject to minor editorial changes and should not be assumed to be an exact facsimile of the original legal document.

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**Isle of Man**  
Government

*Reilig: Ellan Vannin*

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## **NOTIFICATION OF AN AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST Appendix I**

**Site Name:** Santon Gorge and Port Soldrick      **Parish(es):** Malew and Santon

**Status:** Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) notified under Section 27 of the Wildlife Act 1990.

**Planning Authority:** Department of Infrastructure

**Local Authorities:** Malew Commissioners and Santon Commissioners

**National Grid Reference (centroid):** SC 2984 6924      **Area:** 24.35 hectares  
(60.17 acres)

**Ordnance Survey Sheet: 1:50,000:** OS Landranger Map No.95  
**1:10,000:** OS Sheets SC 26 NE and 37 SW

**Notification Date:** 27<sup>th</sup> July 2012

**Confirmation Date:** 20<sup>th</sup> November 2012

### **Reasons for notification:**

Santon Gorge is situated on the boundary between carboniferous limestone and Manx slate and is an important site primarily for the semi-natural woodland that exists on the gorge cliffs on either side of the Santon Burn. The woodland exists in association with many other habitats including scrub, coastal grassland, species-rich neutral marsh, coastal grassland and flushes and saltmarsh as well as an extensive area of inter-tidal habitat. These habitats support a large number of breeding birds.

### **General description:**

The woodland at Santon Gorge forms the lower part of extensive semi-natural riparian woodland that extends several kilometres upstream along the banks of the Santon Burn. This lower section is the most botanically important and contains approximately 0.7 hectares of relic oak woodland within a larger area of 1 hectare of species-rich secondary semi-natural woodland.

The oak trees *Quercus x rosecea* would appear to be of coppice origin and are some of the Island's few relic ancient trees with stems over 200 years old. Other tree species include alder and ash. Many ancient woodland indicator species occur here, such as bitter vetchling *Lathyrus linifolius*, hazel *Corylus avellana* and aspen *Populus tremula*.

It is the only Island location for the hawkweed *Hieracium scabrecetum* which is a British Isles endemic and spindle *Euonymus europaeus*. Santon Gorge was a former site for hairy brome *Bromopsis ramosus* but this plant has not been recorded on the site since 2005, though it may still be re-found. Southern polypody *Polypodium cambricum* grows at the woodland fringe not far from the river and this location is one of only two sites on the Island for the species. Just south of the bridge at the northern end of the ASSI are a group of

veteran sycamores. Despite being non-native they are an impressive feature and may provide roost habitat for bats.

Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, burnet rose *Rosa pimpinellifolia* and European gorse *Ulex europaeus* scrub is intimately mixed with coastal grassland and bracken.

The coastal scrub is contiguous with the riparian woodland. At the boundary between the woodland and scrub the woodland is naturally regenerating with ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, oak and sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* encroaching.

The most significant species amongst the scrub is the wood small-reed *Calamagrostis epigejos* that grows between and sometimes through the more patchy areas of scrub at Port Soldrick. The scrub at Port Soldrick is composed of blackthorn and there are occasional trees such as ash and notably one oak (*Quercus x rosacea*), indicating that the most sheltered parts of the bay will become woodland over time.

The promontory fort Cass ny Hawin (Grid Ref SC 297 693) contains a very species-rich calcareous grassland, a rare habitat on the Island. The area is sufficiently high above the open sea to only have minimal direct maritime influence. Due to the presence of the Fort the grassland has been afforded protection from agricultural improvement such as ploughing and fertilising. It is well grazed and at the peak of the monument the habitat is very dry and rich in plants such as knotted clover *Trifolium striatum*, kidney vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria* and spring sedge *Carex caryophyllea*. Spring sedge is a particularly notable species in the area.

Unimproved and very species-rich marsh occurs on the fringe of the woodland areas often intimately mixed with grazed woodland. The marshes are fed by permanent fresh water springs and grade from fresh spring habitat, with ivy-leaved crowfoot and watercress, to more stagnant and species-rich areas dominated by rush with ragged robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, water forget-me-not *Myosotis scorpioides* and water pepper *Persicaria hydropiper*.

A small and unmodified area of saltmarsh occurs in the lower reaches of the Santon Burn just before the gorge opens out on to the beach. The saltmarsh is dominated by red fescue *Festuca rubra* and saltmarsh rush *Juncus gerardii* with sea milkwort and sea club rush *Bolboschoenus maritimus* also present.

The Santon Burn is regarded as one of the most natural river systems on the Island. Salmon *Salmo salar*, sea trout *S. trutta morpha lacustris* and brown trout *S. trutta morpha fario* are present. Salmon and sea trout both migrate to and from the sea through Santon Gorge.

A line of freshwater springs from Santon Gorge to Port Soldrick create an extensive area of flush habitats along the coast. These flushes are species-rich and grade into brackish marsh towards the sea. Notable species include many-stalked spike rush *Eleocharis multicaulis*, slender clubrush *Isolepis cernua* and bog pimpinell *Anagallis tenella*.

The grazed slopes are species-rich and occur alongside coastal flushes. Typical species include thrift *Armeria maritima* and spring squill *Scilla verna*.

The mouth of the Santon Burn and Port Soldrick contain significant areas of un-vegetated and sparsely-vegetated shingle. Accumulations of seaweed make these areas attractive to feeding chough which nest on the coastal cliffs.

The shore to the north of the Runway extension includes limestone ledges that are more exposed than those to the south of the runway. They are diverse, with knotted wrack *Ascophyllum nodosum* and acorn barnacles *Semibalanus balanoides* and a number of pools containing beadlet anemones *Actinia equina* and other species. The "Runway Lights" area which was mainly lost when the Runway Extension Safety Area (RESA) was constructed was found to be the most species-rich site of all those surveyed on the Isle of Man, and the North Ronaldsway site also showed relatively high species richness. From an intertidal point of view, there is a natural boundary from where the RESA finishes up to Port Soldrick, including a diverse mosaic of rocky shore and shingle beaches, with freshwater input and a range of exposure levels.

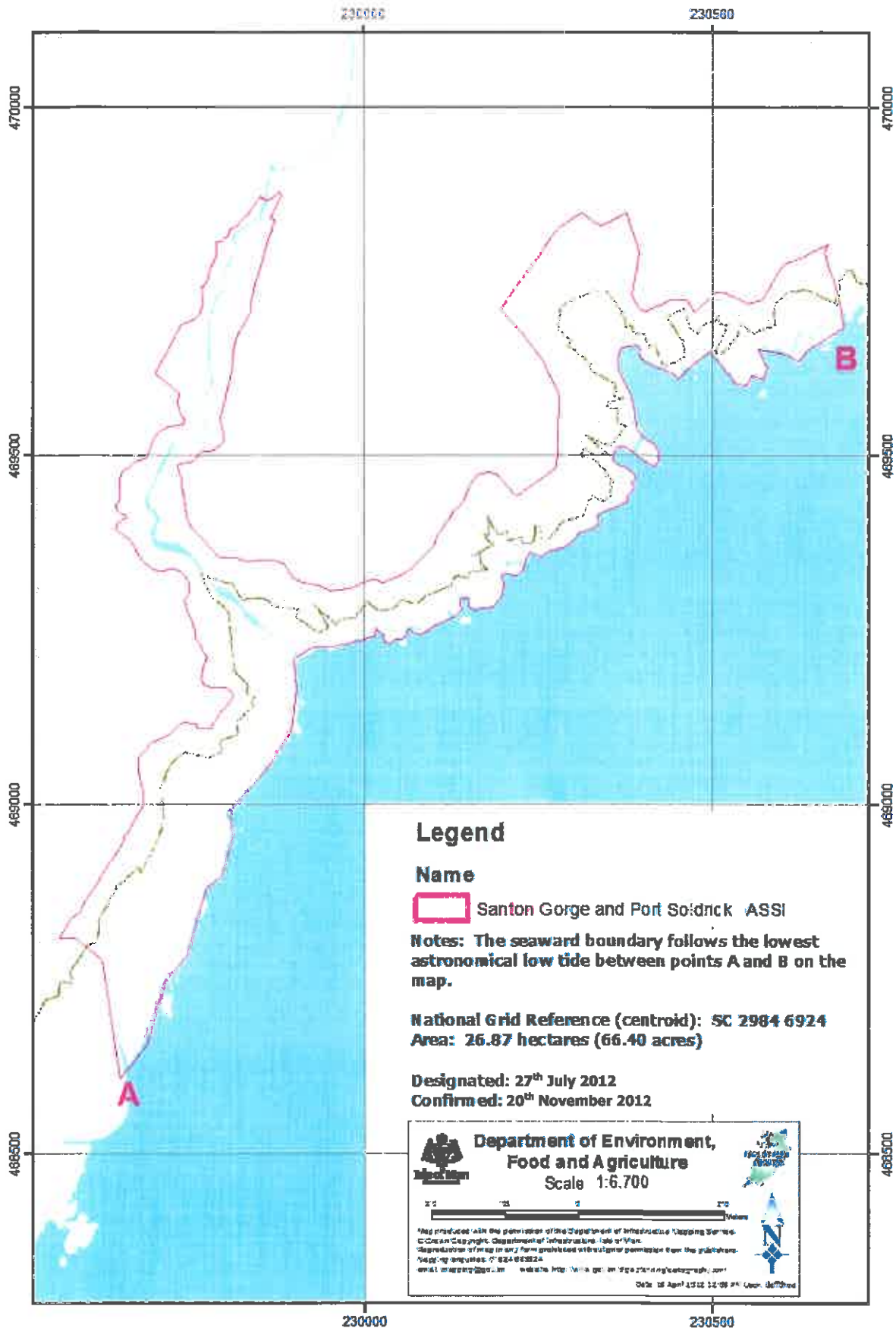
The shores of the coves at Santon Gorge and Port Soldrick area are barren shingle and gravel, a common habitat in the Isle of Man but one considered uncommon in the UK. The upper shore along the coast between the two coves is rocky with a covering of lichens, including black tar lichen *Verrucaria maura*.

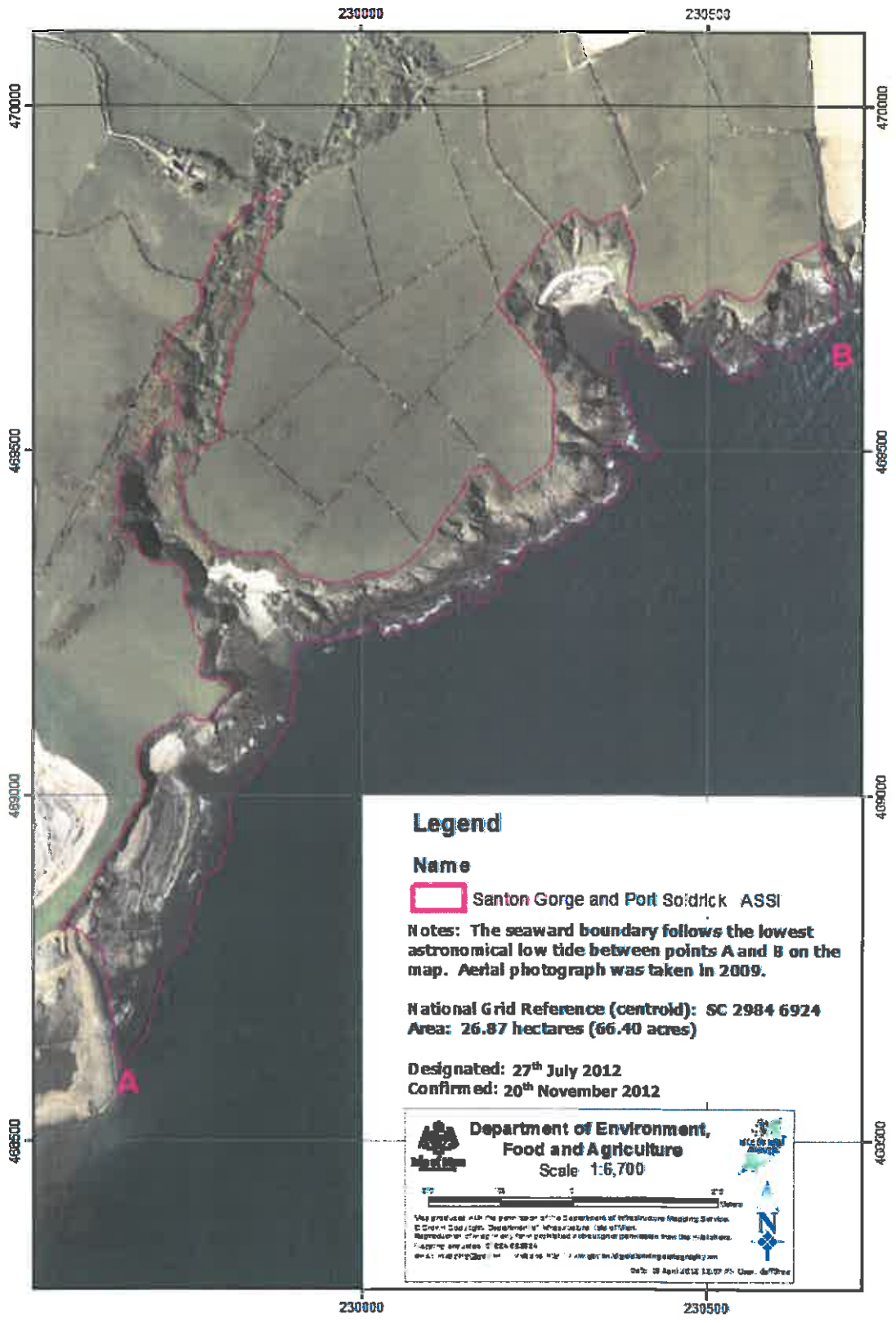
The lower shore throughout the site is dominated by furoid (brown seaweeds) on rock. There are large areas of dense knotted wrack *Ascophyllum nodosum* on the mid shore to the south of Santon Gorge and to the south of Port Soldrick. To the north and south of this, the mid shore is dominated by bladder wrack *Fucus vesiculosus*, barnacle and limpet *Patella* sp. mosaic whilst the lower shore boulders are covered in serrated wrack *Fucus serratus*. The extreme lower shore from Ronaldsway to Santon Gorge is dominated by oarweed *Laminaria digitata* on moderately exposed sublittoral fringe rock. The input of freshwater at Santon Gorge creates an unusual freshwater-influenced intertidal environment, dominated by *Enteromorpha* spp on rock.

### **Additional information**

#### **Geological importance**

At the mouth of the Santon Burn the Ordovician Manx Group rocks meets Carboniferous Limestone of the Derbyhaven Formation. The limestone beds tilt against the Ordovician strata along the boundary fault. In the inter-tidal zone of the west side of the gorge runs an Ordovician age igneous dyke which probably pushed through surrounding seabed sediment before it became rock and is irregularly shaped as a result. The Santon Gorge area is a candidate Manx Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS).





**Legend**


**Name**


 Santon Gorge and Port Soldrick ASSI

**Notes:** The seaward boundary follows the lowest astronomical low tide between points A and B on the map. Aerial photograph was taken in 2009.

**National Grid Reference (centroid):** SC 2984 6924  
**Area:** 26.87 hectares (66.40 acres)

**Designated:** 27<sup>th</sup> July 2012  
**Confirmed:** 20<sup>th</sup> November 2012


**Department of Environment,  
 Food and Agriculture**  
 Scale 1:6,700



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NOTIFICATION OF SANTON GORGE AND PORT SOLDRICK AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST Appendix II

Standard reference number	Type of operation
1	Cultivation, including ploughing, rotovating, harrowing and re-seeding.
2	Grazing, the introduction of grazing and alterations to the grazing regime (including type of stock, intensity or seasonal pattern of grazing).
3	Stock feeding, the introduction of stock feeding and alterations to stock feeding practice.
4	Mowing or cutting of vegetation (where already damaging), the introduction of mowing and alterations to the mowing or cutting regime (such as from haymaking to silage).
5	Application of manure, slurry, silage liquor, fertilisers and lime.
6	Application of pesticides, including herbicides (weedkillers) whether terrestrial or aquatic, and veterinary products.
7	Dumping, spreading or discharge of any materials.
8	Burning and alterations to the pattern or frequency of burning.
9	Release into the site of any wild, feral, captive-bred or domestic animal, plant, seed or micro-organism (including genetically modified organisms).
10	Killing, injuring, taking or removal of any wild animal (including dead animals or parts thereof), or their eggs and nests, including pest control and disturbing them in their places of shelter.
11	Destruction, displacement, removal or cutting of any plant or plant remains, including tree, shrub, herb, hedge, dead or decaying wood, moss, lichen, fungus, leaf-mould, and turf.
12	Tree and/or woodland management (where already damaging), the introduction of tree and/or woodland management (where applicable) and alterations to tree and/or woodland management (including planting, felling, pruning and tree surgery, thinning coppicing, changes in species composition, removal of fallen timber).
13 a)	Draining (including moor- gripping, the use of mole, tile, tunnel or other artificial drains).
13 b)	Modification to the structure of water courses (e.g. rivers, streams, springs, ditches and drains), including their banks and beds, as by re-alignment, regarding, damming, or dredging.
13 c)	Management of aquatic and bank vegetation for drainage purposes.
14	Alterations to water levels and tables and water utilisation (including irrigation, storage, abstraction from existing water bodies and through boreholes). Also the modification of current drainage practices.
15	Infilling of ditches, dykes, drains, ponds, pools, marshes or pits.
16 a)	Freshwater fishery production and/or management, including sporting fishing and angling (where already damaging), the introduction of freshwater production and/or management (where applicable) and alterations to freshwater fishery production and/or management.
16 b)	Coastal fishing, fisheries management and seafood or marine life collection, including the use of traps or fish cages (where already damaging), the introduction of coastal fishing (where applicable), alterations to coastal fishing practice or fisheries management and seafood or marine life collection.
17	Reclamation of land from sea, estuary or marsh.
18	Bait digging in inter-tidal areas.
19	Erection and repair of sea defences or coastal protection works, including cliff or landslip drainage or stabilisation measures.
20	Extraction of minerals including peat, shingle, hard rock, sand, gravel, topsoil, subsoil, lime, limestone pavement, shells and spoil.
21	Destruction, construction, removal, rerouting, or regarding of roads, tracks, walls,

	fences, hardstands, banks, ditches or other earthworks, including soil and soft rock exposures or the laying, maintenance or removal of pipelines and cables, above or below ground.
22	Storage of materials.
23	Erection of permanent or temporary structures or the undertaking of engineering works, including drilling.
24 a)	Modification of natural or man-made features (including cave entrances) and clearance of boulders, large stones, loose rock or scree.
24 b)	Battering, buttressing or grading of geological exposures and cuttings (rock and soil) and infilling of pits and quarries.
25	Removal of geological specimens, including rock samples, minerals and fossils.
26	Use of vehicles or craft.
27	Recreational or other activities.
28 a)	Game and waterfowl management and hunting practices (where already damaging), introduction of game or waterfowl management (where applicable) and alterations to game and waterfowl management and hunting practice.
28 b)	Use of lead shot.

### Notes:

1. This is a list of operations appearing to DEFA to be likely to damage the special features of this ASSI, as required under Section 27 of the Wildlife Act 1990.
2. Any reference to 'animal' in this list shall be taken to include any mammal, reptile, amphibian, bird, fish or invertebrate.

Date Notified: 27<sup>th</sup> July 2012

Date Confirmed: 20<sup>th</sup> November 2012