

# CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES FOR MARINE PROTECTED AREAS FOR REEFS AND CAVES

JUNE 2018



This document sets out the Conservation Objectives (COs) for marine protected areas (MPAs) designated through LIFE BaHAR for reefs and caves under **S.L. 549.44 – Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Protection Regulations**, which transpose the EU Habitats Directive (HD) - **Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora**.

The above legislation states that “conservation means a series of measures required to maintain or restore the natural habitats and the populations of species of wild fauna and flora at a favourable status...”.

Conservation Objectives define the overall target for the habitat types and/or species (for which the site has been designated) in order for it to contribute to maintaining or achieving favourable conservation status of the habitat and species concerned.

Management measures for these MPAs are in the process of being developed, with the aim of achieving the COs.

The drafting of COs for the proposed Sites of Community Importance (pSCIs), designated through the LIFE BaHAR project, was streamlined with the drafting of COs for Malta’s existing Nature 2000 (N2K) network of MPAs, which is composed of both Sites of Community Importance (SCIs; designated under the EU Habitats Directive) and Special Protected Areas (SPAs; designated under the EU Birds Directive).

This document will form part of a wider framework for the management of Malta’s MPA network.

**BACKGROUND** : Before 2016, Malta had five coastal MPAs, which were designated primarily for the presence of *Posidonia* beds. These sites also host other relevant habitats including sandbanks, marine caves and reefs, while some are also important for the Maltese topshell.

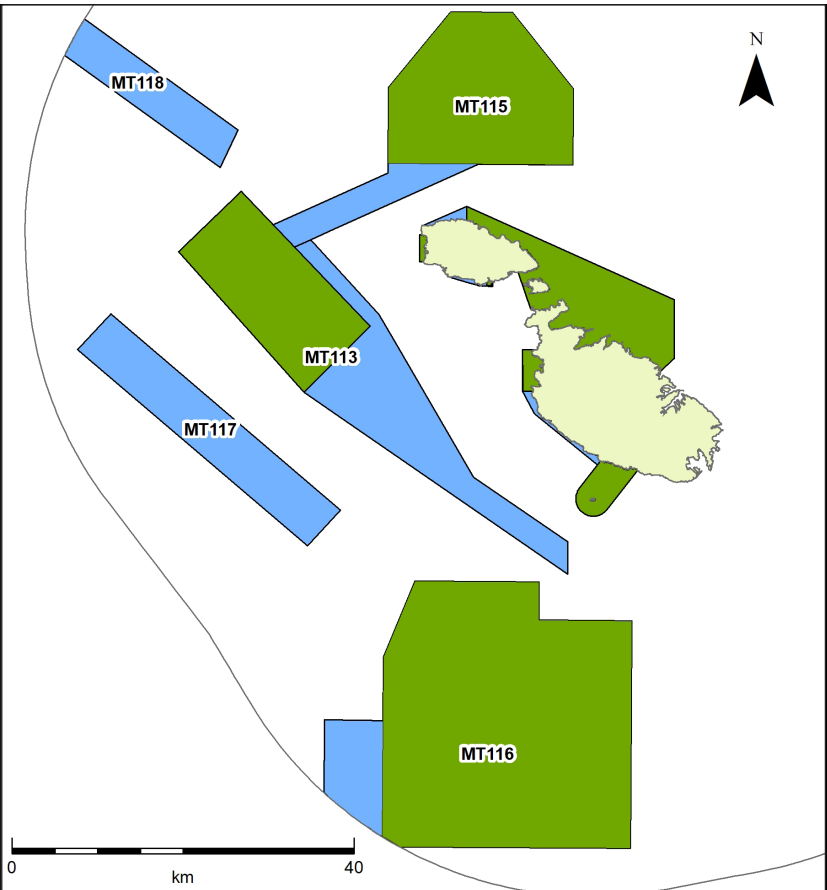
In 2016, the LIFE+ MIGRATE and LIFE+ Malta Seabird projects resulted in the designation of nine additional sites for areas which are important for the loggerhead sea turtle, the bottlenose dolphin, and three species of seabirds that breed in the Maltese islands.

The LIFE BaHAR for N2K project has led to a further three inshore and five offshore areas being proposed for inclusion in the Natura 2000 network due to the presence of marine caves and reefs. The three inshore areas are all extensions of existing coastal MPAs. Two of the offshore areas are entirely new sites, while the other three are extensions of MPAs previously declared in 2016.

Malta has now designated 2,279 km<sup>2</sup> of its waters in line with the Habitats Directive for the conservation of various marine species and habitats, as shown in Table 1 and below maps.

**Table 1.** Malta’s MPAs, including results of the LIFE BaĦAR for N2K project.

Site Code	Site Name	Annex I Habitats	Annex II Species
MT0000101	Żona fil-Baħar bejn Rdum Majjiesa u Għar Lapsi	<i>Posidonia</i> beds Reefs Sandbanks Caves	<i>Gibbula nivos</i> a
MT0000102	Żona fil-Baħar fl-inħawi ta' Għar Lapsi u ta' Filfla	<i>Posidonia</i> beds Reefs	
MT0000103	Żona fil-Baħar fl-inħawi tad-Dwejra (Għawdex)	<i>Posidonia</i> beds Reefs Caves	
MT0000104	Żona fil-Baħar bejn Il-Ponta tal-Ħotba u Tal-Fessej (Għawdex)	<i>Posidonia</i> beds Reefs Sandbanks Caves	<i>Gibbula nivos</i> a
MT0000105	'Żona fil-Baħar bejn Il-Ponta ta' San Dimitri (Għawdex) u Il-Qaliet	<i>Posidonia</i> beds Reefs Sandbanks Caves	<i>Gibbula nivos</i> a
MT0000113	Żona fil-Baħar fil-Punent	Reefs Caves	<i>Carretta carretta</i> <i>Tursiops truncatus</i>
MT0000115	Żona fil-Baħar fl-inħawi tal-Graben tat-Tramuntana ta' Għawdex	Reefs Caves	<i>Carretta carretta</i> <i>Tursiops truncatus</i>
MT0000116	Żona fil-Baħar fl-inħawi tal-Graben ta' Medina	Reefs Caves	<i>Carretta carretta</i> <i>Tursiops truncatus</i>
MT0000117	Żona fil-Baħar fl-inħawi tal-Punent tal-Graben ta' Malta	Reefs Caves	
MT0000118	Żona fil-Baħar fl-inħawi tal-Majjistral tal-Graben ta' Malta	Reefs Caves	



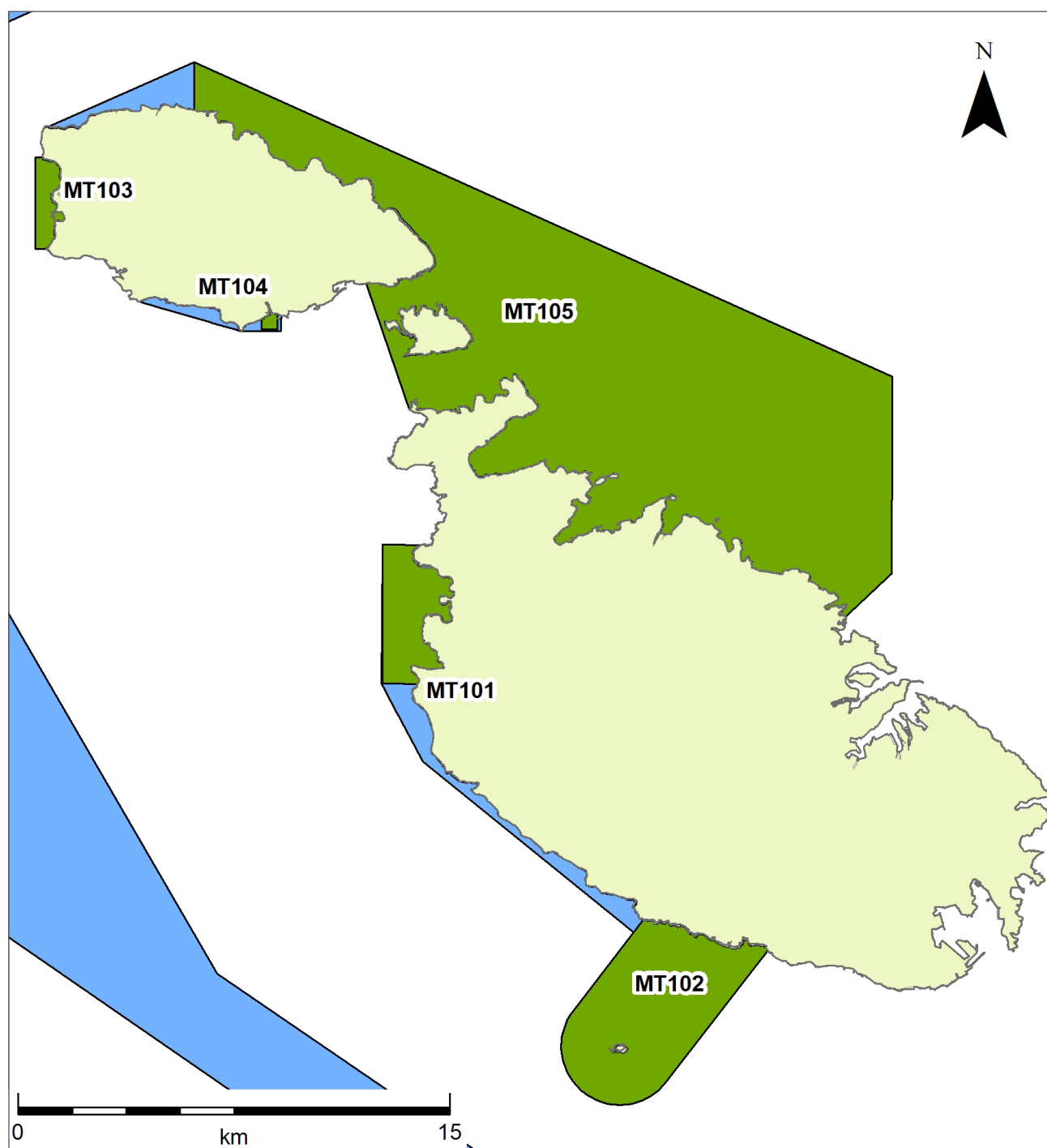
**Figure 1:** Map showing marine protected areas designated for habitats and species listed under the EU Habitats Directive

**Legend**

- Sites designated in 2018 as a result of the LIFE BaĦAR for N2K project
- Sites designated pre-2018
- 25 nautical mile Fisheries Management Zone (partially shown)



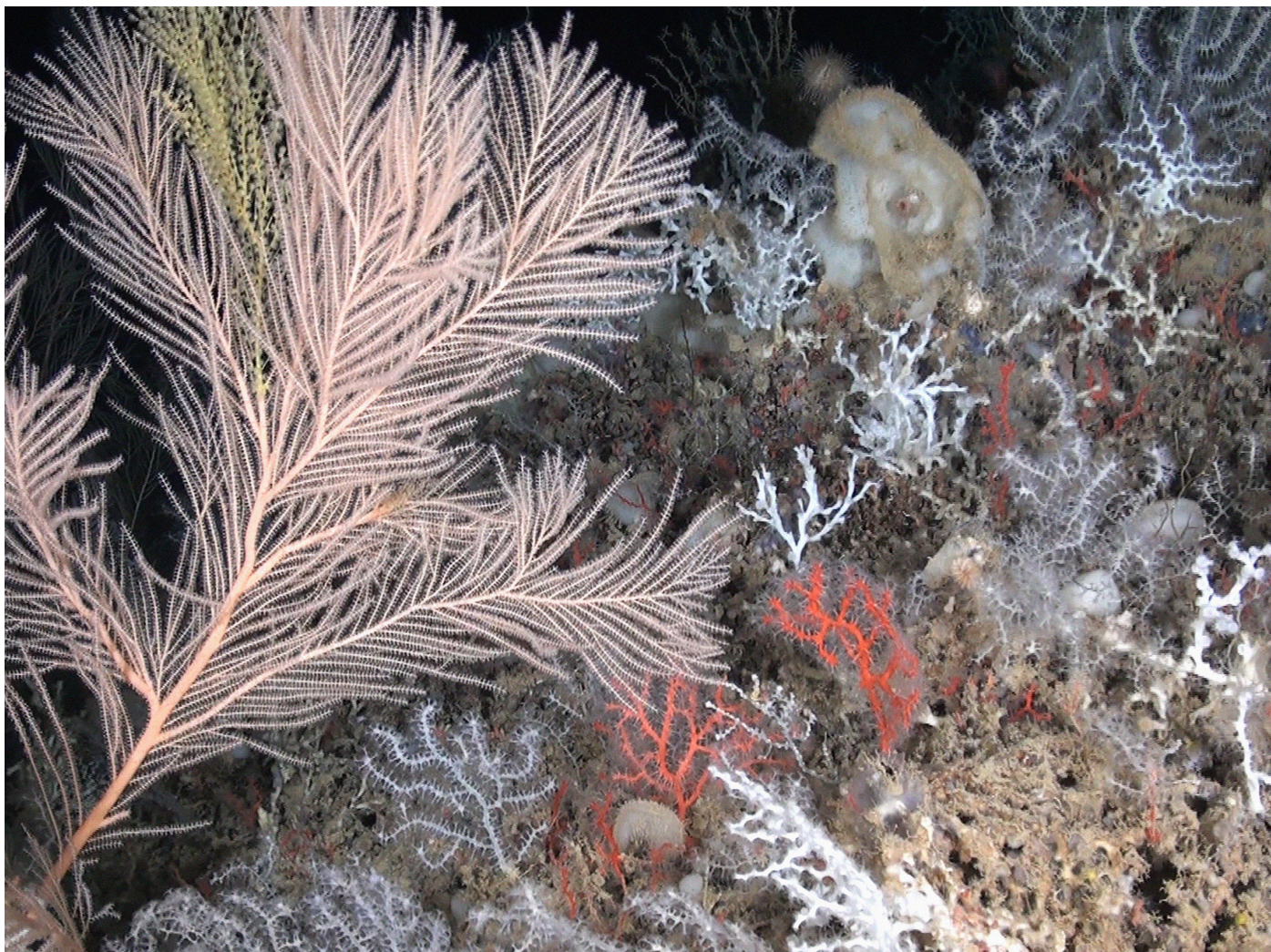
Figure 2: Map showing coastal marine protected areas designated for habitats and species listed under the EU Habitats Directive



## Legend

- Sites designated in 2018 as a result of the LIFE BaHAR for N2K project
- Sites designated pre-2018
- 25 nautical mile Fisheries Management Zone (partially shown)





## **CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES FOR SITES DESIGNATED FOR REEFS AND CAVES**

In parallel with the process outlined in the previous section, COs have been developed for the new and extended sites identified through the LIFE BaHAR for N2K project. The COs were drafted according to the requirements of the Habitats Directive, and considering the guidance provided through the 'Commission Note on Setting Conservation Objectives for Natura 2000 Sites' (dated 23/11/2012). These COs will form part of the After-LIFE Conservation Plan, which will set out the steps to be taken by the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA) and the relevant stakeholders after the project ends.

The measurable attributes for COs targeting related criteria, focus on their conservation status and related criteria such as habitat structure, function and range. Measurable attributes for other COs are contingent upon their component management measures. These are being developed under the LIFE BaHAR After-LIFE Conservation Plan, and Malta's N2K MPA Network Management Plans in general.

**Table 2.** Conservation Objectives for the new and extended Habitat Directive MPAs, as a result of the LIFE BAHAR for N2K project.

Conservation Objective:	MT0000101	MT0000102	MT0000103	MT0000104	MT0000105	MT0000113	MT0000115	MT0000116	MT0000117	MT0000118
To provide the conditions that would allow the area of <i>Posidonia</i> beds / reefs / caves / sandbanks to increase and its structure and function to be improved or maintained (as appropriate to the features present within each site).	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
To maintain healthy populations of the Red Data Book species present in the site.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
To address any illegal activities occurring in the site in the long term.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
To ensure a synergistic management with other relevant MPAs.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
To raise public awareness and appreciation of the habitats and species among specific target groups and the general public.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
To ensure that there is the right setup where different stakeholders can exchange and share their views.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
To ensure that anthropogenic activities occurring in the area are carried out in a manner that do not jeopardise the site's conservation objectives.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

COs relevant to: Benthic habitats = Pink; All sites = Yellow.

**This document will be updated in due course to provide additional guidance and links.**