

THE ANALYSIS OF ECOSYSTEM EFFECTS OF SO₂, NO_x AND AMMONIA EMISSIONS - A HABITATS DIRECTIVE CASE STUDY

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The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC: On the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna) makes provision for the conservation of a number of defined habitats and species. Member States have been required to designate a network of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) under the Directive, and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for the conservation of wild birds, which together form the 'Natura 2000' sites. Any proposed developments and consents under the Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control Directive will need to consider possible impacts on Natura 2000 sites. Under the Habitats Directive, an environmental regulator may modify or revoke licences to operate. In the U.K., the electricity generation sector has been working with the Environment Agency to define an approach to the assessment of potential impacts on these ecologically valuable sites. Impacts assessed under the Directive which are of particular relevance to the electricity generation sector include acidification and eutrophication and also effects of ambient concentrations of gaseous pollutants. A description is given of a proposed methodology for selection and assessment of sites designated under the Habitats Directive which combines models of local and long-range transport with measures of ecosystem sensitivity. Some results of applying this methodology to SACs and SPAs in the U.K. are presented, and a discussion given of key scientific and policy issues which have arisen from this work relating to interpretation and implementation of the Habitats Directive in the U.K.