

TABLE 11.2 Summary of current status of the North Sea in relation to Ecological Quality Objectives (EcoQOs) based on assessments in Chapters 4 to 10. Further EcoQOs are under development on seabird populations, threatened and/or declining habitats and marine beach litter. Confidence: *** High; ** Moderate; * Low. ? Status not known

	Ecological Quality Objective	Status for the North Sea
Biological diversity	Healthy seal populations	→ CHAPTER 10
	No decline of greater than 10% in grey seal pup populations or harbour seal populations over a five-year running mean, taking into account natural population dynamics and trends	 <p>Some problems ***</p> <p>Harbour seals: EcoQO not met: Shetland; Orkney; North and East Scotland; South-East Scotland; Greater Wash to Scroby Sands; Limfjorden; west coast of Norway south of 62° N EcoQO met: the Netherlands Delta area; the Wadden Sea; Heligoland; the Kattegat, Skagerrak and Oslofjord Grey seals: EcoQO met in all areas</p>
	Reduce by-catch of harbour porpoises	→ CHAPTER 8
	By-catch rates should be no more than 1.7% of the population	 <p>?</p> <p>Unknown status in absence of reliable by-catch information</p>
Commercial fish stocks/Food webs	Increase proportion of large fish in the fish community	→ CHAPTER 8
	More than 30% of fish should be longer than 40 cm	 <p>Many problems ***</p> <p>EcoQO not met, but movement towards the objective detected</p>
	Fish stocks at biologically safe levels	→ CHAPTER 8
	All commercial stocks should be at or above safe levels	 <p>Some problems ***</p> <p>EcoQO met for 9 stocks EcoQO not met for 3 stocks Unknown status for 13 stocks</p>
Eutrophication	Eliminate eutrophication	→ CHAPTER 4
	Dissolved inorganic nitrogen and phosphorus, chlorophyll a, phytoplankton, oxygen and benthic species should not exceed assessment levels	 <p>Many problems ***</p> <p>EcoQO not met in coastal areas along the continental coast of the North Sea, some offshore areas in the southern North Sea and some UK estuaries</p>
Contaminants	Reduce level of imposex in dogwhelks and other gastropods	→ CHAPTER 5
	Imposex should be below levels indicating negative effects from exposure to TBT	 <p>Many problems ***</p> <p>EcoQO not met at most locations, but levels of imposex are decreasing</p>
	Reduce number of oiled guillemots	→ CHAPTER 9
	There should be less than 10% of birds found dead or dying which are oiled	 <p>Many problems ***</p> <p>EcoQO met: Shetland, Orkney. Percentage of oiled guillemots is decreasing EcoQO not met: Belgium, Netherlands, Germany No information: East Scotland, East England, Denmark, Sweden, Norway</p>
	Reduce levels of hazardous substances in seabird eggs	
	Mercury should not exceed reference levels Organochlorines should not exceed set values	 <p>Some problems ***</p> <p>EcoQO not met for organohalogens and mostly not met for mercury. Concentrations are decreasing</p>
Marine litter	Reduce levels of litter (plastic particles) in fulmar stomachs	→ CHAPTER 9
	There should be less than 10% of fulmars with more than 0.1 g of plastic in their stomach	 <p>Many problems ***</p> <p>EcoQO not met: Current levels still well above the objective</p>