

Marine consultation summary document for the Greater Wash potential Special Protection Area (pSPA)

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1. Purpose of this document

This document provides guidance to stakeholders for the formal consultation on the proposal to classify the Greater Wash as a Special Protection Area (SPA).

It explains:

- The proposal to classify
- the background information which is helpful in understanding the proposal
- how to respond

2. Site maps

Available to view on the consultation page <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/natural-england-marine/greater-wash-potential-special-protection-area-com>

3. The proposal to classify the Greater Wash as an SPA

Following advice from Natural England and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), the Secretary of State is proposing to classify The Greater Wash area, located off the eastern coast of England, as a SPA under the European Union's Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds ('Birds Directive'). Natural England and the JNCC are consulting stakeholders on that proposal. At this stage, the site is considered a potential SPA (pSPA) and treated as a fully designated European site subject to protection under the EU Habitats Directive¹.

The following is a summary of the different kinds of sites which protect different habitats or species:

Special Protection Areas (SPA) protect areas which support significant populations of rare, vulnerable and migratory bird species of European importance.

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) such as the Flamborough Head SAC protect habitats and species (apart from birds) of European importance.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) sites are notified to protect the best examples of the UK's plants, animals or geological features. They are primarily land-based, but some sites extend below the low water mark.

Marine Conservation Zones protect nationally important marine habitats and associated species.

Further information on the different nature conservation designations can be found at: <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/designations/default.aspx>

The site summary and impact assessment summary below provide the background information to support the proposal.

The departmental brief provides the full scientific rationale for the proposal, while the impact assessment details the socio-economic effects the classification of the SPA may have.

¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/habitatsdirective/>

4. Site summary

Site surface area:

The Greater Wash pSPA is located off the coast of Eastern England, extending seaward from mean high water to a maximum of approximately 30km or 16nm offshore. It covers the marine environment from Bridlington Bay in the north to approximately Great Yarmouth in the south.

The Greater Wash is known to provide areas of importance for over-wintering red-throated diver, little gull and common scoter during the winter period (October to April), and the classification as a SPA is proposed to protect these areas. In addition, the Greater Wash SPA would provide protection to important foraging areas for common, Sandwich and little tern, which breed along the adjacent coastline.

The seaward extent of the boundary is a composite of the seaward distribution of red throated diver and the tern species, approximately 30km or 16nm from shore at its furthest extent. It will encompass the;

- foraging areas of breeding little tern found at the existing Humber Estuary, Gibraltar Point, The Wash, North Norfolk Coast and Great Yarmouth & North Denes Special Protection Area (SPA) colonies;
- breeding Sandwich tern at The Wash and North Norfolk Coast SPA colonies; and
- breeding common tern at North Norfolk Coast and Breydon Water SPA colonies.

The boundary also includes areas with high densities of common scoter and little gull, and so these two species are being proposed as features to be protected within the SPA.

The landward extent of the boundary will follow mean high water and abuts the SPAs along the East coast listed above.

5. Summary of the impact assessment

A summary of the potential socio-economic impacts should the site become a SPA is provided below.

Cost to industry

Industries which may potentially incur economic impacts from the pSPA are commercial fisheries and the renewable energy sector.

The netting and longline fisheries may incur a cost as a result of this site. The risk and level of bycatch (where birds get caught in fishing nets leading to mortality) is unknown within the Greater Wash pSPA. The size of the risk posed by netting and longlines depends on many factors including:

- type of netting (e.g. colour or mesh size),
- location,
- frequency,
- seasonality,

- intensity of the fishing activity, and
- behaviour and distribution of the birds.

There is a need for a site-specific monitoring study to be carried out to investigate the incidence of bycatch on the interest features as a result of net and longline fisheries within the pSPA. Only once this work has been undertaken will the possibility of management of these fisheries be considered.

Costs to the renewable energy industry may include undertaking Habitats Regulations Assessments and providing information for a potential review of existing consents.

Cost to public bodies

The majority of the cost to public bodies is associated with ongoing monitoring.

The public bodies that will help to manage the site will be responsible for:

- Creation of a management group for the SPA.
- Implementing this management plan for example through changes to working practices and training, including direct liaison with stakeholders.
- Establishing and carrying out a monitoring plan for periodic assessment.
- Conducting a digital aerial survey to enable monitoring of red-throated diver, common scoter and little gull populations.
- Gather evidence to understand whether activities such as recreation or fishing are having an impact on the site's objectives.
- Promoting existing voluntary codes of conduct to encourage responsible use of the classification.

Additional costs may be incurred by public bodies when reviewing outstanding permissions, consents and other existing activities, and undertaking assessment of future plans and projects.

Benefits of the pSPA

The site will provide benefits for:

- waterbirds
- education
- research
- people who value conservation, and
- people who watch wildlife

6. How to respond

This consultation runs for 13 weeks from 18th October 2016 to 17th January 2017 and is run in accordance with the [government consultation principles](#). The principles ensure that consultation should be clear and concise, have a purpose and be informative to the reader. It forms part of a wider process of engagement with targeted stakeholders and should last

for a proportionate amount of time. Consultation should be agreed before publication and facilitate scrutiny. Responses from Natural England shall be published in a timely manner.

Before responding it will help you in making your response to read the Departmental Brief and the Impact Assessment documents.

- departmental brief - setting out the scientific case for the pSPA
- impact assessment - setting out the economic, environmental and social impacts of the proposal

You may also find it useful to read:

- [Establishing Marine Special Protection Areas: TIN120](#)
- [Greater Wash TIN169](#)

Use these documents to help with your response. Submit your response by completing the [survey](#) on the consultation page. Alternatively, you can submit a written response to the address provided below.

The Greater Wash SPA Classification Team
Natural England
Dragonfly House, 2 Gilders Way
Norwich, NR3 1UB

Results from the consultation will be submitted as a report to the Secretary of State for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs. Following consideration of that report, the Secretary of State will decide whether or not to classify the site as a SPA.

If you don't have access to the Internet, please contact us for copies of the documents you require.

7. Confidentiality

Using and sharing your consultation response(s)

In line with Natural England's Access to Information Statement, at the end of the consultation period copies of the responses and/or the information contained in them may be subject to publication or release to the public on request and/or on our website.

A report will also be produced collating all representations made during the formal consultation period together with any recommendations arising from the consultation for the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State will consider this report before deciding whether or not to classify the site as a SPA. If you do not want your response - including your name, contact details and any other personal information – to be publicly available, please explain clearly why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for release of the information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not be regarded as binding on Natural England.

We will summarise all responses and place this summary on our website at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?departments%5B%5D=natural-england&publication_filter_option=consultations.

This summary will include a list of names of organisations that responded but not the names, addresses or other contact details of individual respondents.

See Natural England's [personal information charter](#) on how your information is handled.

8. Use of Maps

Natural England has provided maps which show the complete boundary and additional maps where necessary to support the explanations given for the boundary locations.

Maps which accompany the site summary should ideally be printed on A3 paper. If you don't have this facility:

- print the relevant chapter text
- view the associated map on your computer screen, using the zoom tool to view it at a suitable size