

EC Directive 79/409 on the Conservation of Wild Birds Special Protection Area (SPA)

Name: Isles of Scilly SPA

Counties/Unitary Authorities: The SPA covers areas within the Council of the Isles of Scilly Unitary Authority. All areas of sea are within UK territorial waters.

Boundary of the SPA: The SPA encompasses most of the islands and islets within the Isles of Scilly archipelago, including the most important nesting locations for breeding seabirds. It includes areas of shallow water within which the features have been shown to occur, as well as the flight-lines to their breeding sites.

Islands supporting nesting birds that are included within the SPA are encompassed in part or in full by the boundary; other islands, islets and rocks not contributing nesting areas to the SPA meet the boundary at mean high water (i.e. the marine area is within the SPA but the 'terrestrial' area is not).

It should be noted that the SPA boundary encompasses both those areas used for nesting as well as marine areas around the archipelago used for foraging, loafing, preening and other essential behaviours of the birds found at the site.

Size of SPA: The SPA covers an area of 13,332.68 ha

Site description:

The Isles of Scilly lie approximately 45 km (28 miles) offshore from Land's End. They are a collection of over 200 granite islands and rocks, and represent Britain's only oceanic island archipelago. Wind and wave exposure around the islands can be considerable due to their offshore location, and bathymetry drops quickly from shallow waters within the islands to depths of 60-90 m further offshore. The islands hold a unique mix of marine communities derived from variations in exposure to Atlantic storms and currents as well as the south-westerly position of the islands, which has led to the presence of some warm water species living at the northern extremes of their range. Subtidal sediments around the islands are classified as mainly sand and gravelly sand, and there are also spectacular subtidal rocky reef areas around the islands with many nationally rare and scarce marine species present. Some of the most extensive seagrass beds in the country can be found in the sheltered waters in between the islands, and the Isles of Scilly are one of only two locations in south west England protected for their breeding population of grey seals. Coastal habitats around the islands include intertidal rock habitats, such as the rocky shores and under-boulder habitats found around the coastline of St. Mary's and St. Agnes, as well as intertidal sandflats such as the extensive sandflats found on the island of St. Martin's.

Qualifying species:

The site qualifies under **Article 4.1** of the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) as it is used regularly by 1% or more of the Great Britain populations of the following species listed in Annex I in any season:

Species	Season	Count (Period)	% of population
European storm-petrel <i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>	Breeding	2,636 individuals (2015/16)	5.07% of GB population



The site qualifies under **Article 4.2** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) as it is used regularly by 1%¹ or more of the biogeographical populations of the following regularly occurring migratory species (other than those listed in Annex I) in any season:

Species	Season	Count (Period)	% of population
Lesser black-backed gull <i>Larus fuscus graellsii</i>	Breeding	4,922 individuals (2015/16)	1.37% of biogeographic population
European shag <i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis aristotelis</i>	Breeding	2,028 individuals (2015/16)	1.46% of biogeographic population
Great black-backed gull <i>Larus marinus</i>	Breeding	1,882 individuals (2015/16)	N/A – selected under stage 1.4 guideline

Assemblage qualification:

The site qualifies under SPA selection stage 1.3 as it is used regularly by over 20,000 seabirds in any season:

In the breeding season, the site regularly supports at least 26,478 (1999) individual seabirds.

The main components of the assemblage include all of the qualifying features listed above.

Principal bird data sources:

All breeding bird data from the national Seabird Monitoring Programme database, reported in Heaney & St Pierre (2017). At sea data are from bespoke digital aerial surveys carried out by HiDef Surveying Ltd.

Status of the SPA:

1. The Isles of Scilly SPA was classified on 10 August 2001.
2. The site was extended to include additional features (European shag and great black-backed gull) as well as marine areas on 17 November 2020.

¹ With exception of great black-backed gull: 0.90% of biogeographic population, 5.54% GB population.