Statements on Conservation Benefits, Condition & Conservation Measures for Fulmar MCZ

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JNCC

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What the conservation advice package includes

The information provided in this document sets out JNCC's current view of the site's condition, the conservation benefits which the site can provide and the measures required to support achievement of the site's conservation objectives. This forms part of JNCC's formal conservation advice package for the site and must be read in conjunction with all parts of the package as listed below:

- Background document explaining where to find the advice package, JNCC's role in the provision of conservation advice, how the advice has been prepared, when to refer to it and how to apply it;
- Conservation Objectives setting out the broad ecological aims for the site;
- Statements on:
    - the site's protected feature condition and General Management Approach;
    - conservation benefits that the site can provide; and
    - conservation measures needed to further the conservation objectives stated for the site (this document).
- Supplementary Advice on Conservation Objectives (SACO) providing more detailed and site-specific information on the conservation objectives; and
- Advice on Operations providing information on those human activities that, if taking place within or near the site, could impact it and hinder the achievement of the conservation objectives stated for the site.

The most up-to-date conservation advice for this site can be downloaded from the conservation advice tab in the Site Information Centre (SIC) on JNCC's website.

Conservation benefits

By maintaining or achieving favourable condition for the protected features, the site will contribute to delivering:

- Clean, healthy, safe, productive, and biologically diverse oceans and seas as set out in the Government's Strategy for contributing to the delivery of delivery of a UK network of marine protected areas;

- An ecologically coherent network of MPAs which are well managed under the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-east Atlantic (OSPAR Convention), specifically OSPAR Region II: Greater North Sea; and
- Good Environmental Status under the UK Marine Strategy.

This site has been designated to afford protection to the following features representative of the northern North Sea: the broad-scale habitats Subtidal mud, Subtidal sand, Subtidal mixed sediments and the marine species Ocean quahog (*Arctica islandica*). Ocean quahog are a Feature of Conservation Importance (FOCI), and are included on the OSPAR list of threatened and/or Declining Habitats & Species across the North-east Atlantic.

This site provides conservation benefits to the wider marine environment and society by affording protection to Ocean quahog and a range of Broad-scale habitats and their associated biological communities and consequently the provision of the following ecosystem services:

Ocean quahog

- Nutrition: by providing prey for a broad range of fish and invertebrate species;
- Regulatory processes: providing a bentho-pelagic link by removing plankton and detritus from the water column;
- Scientific study: the longevity of species makes it of value in the study of long term climatic and environmental change and ageing research. They are also of value as an indicator species for heavy metal pollutant concentrations on seabed sediments; and
- Carbon cycling and nutrient regulation: maintaining healthy and productive ecosystems through the laying down of carbonate during shell growth and filter-feeding.

Broad-scale habitats

- Nutrition: Different sediment types offer habitat for breeding and feeding for various commercial species, which in turn are prey for larger marine species, including birds and mammals; and
- Climate regulation: by providing a long-term sink for carbon within sedimentary habitats.

Further detail on ecosystem services which the site can provide are available in the Supplementary Advice on Conservation Objectives (SACO) under structure and function.

Managing activities that affect the protected features of the site to maintain them at, or recover them to, favourable condition will support provision of ecosystem services and help fulfil the policy obligations listed above.

Site Condition

Table 1 sets out JNCC's view on the overall condition of the site's protected features. This view is based on information provided in the Supplementary Advice on Conservation Objectives (SACO). The SACO sets out our understanding of the feature attributes, which are listed in the conservation objectives. In summary, a feature is considered to be in unfavourable condition either where evidence indicates one or more of its attributes need to be recovered or where recovery is not considered to be possible through human intervention. Conversely, a feature is considered to be in favourable condition where evidence indicates none of the attributes are being adversely affected. To understand JNCC's view on condition you will need to refer to the SACO.

Table 1. JNCC's view on the condition of the protected features in the site.

Protected feature	View of condition and General Management Approach (GMA)
Broad-scale habitats	Favourable
Ocean quahog (*Arctica islandica*)	Favourable

The conservation measures listed below set out JNCC's view as to which, if any, human activities may require additional management to maintain the features within the site.

Conservation measures

As set out in Table 1 above, the broad-scale habitats and Ocean quahog need to be maintained in favourable condition. Please see the Supplementary Advice on Conservation Objectives for more detail. Using evidence available about the site and information contained within the Advice on Operations for this site, we consider that the activities listed below are capable of significantly affecting the qualifying features of the site. These activities should be managed to prevent further deterioration to Ocean quahog by removing or reducing (where appropriate) their associated pressures:

- Oil and gas operations;
- Demersal trawling and dredging: Research surveys occur in the site but should more regular demersal trawling take place appropriate management measures may need to be put in place; and
- Renewable energy: Associated activities have not yet occurred, but should development take place appropriate mitigation may need to be put in place.

Management of the site should be informed by the sensitivity of protected features to pressures associated with human activities. The Advice on Operations provides an initial assessment of whether a proposed plan or project (or ongoing activity) may have an impact on a protected feature in the site. The Advice on Operations identifies pressures associated with the most commonly occurring marine activities, and provides a detailed assessment of feature sensitivity to these pressures. A human activity is considered capable of affecting a feature where the feature is known to be sensitive to the activity associated pressures. The sensitivity assessments provided in the Advice on Operations workbook, and the guidance within, should be used at an early stage of a plan or project when considering potential impacts of an activity.

The simple presence of such human activities would not necessarily significantly affect the site were they to occur. Advice on Operations should be used in conjunction with the specific details of a proposed plan or project (e.g. indirect and/or additive impacts, activity duration, time of year, scale etc.) and the site-specific SACO to develop assessments of impacts to features within the site. You may also find the information available in the Activities and Management tab of the site's Site Information Centre useful.