

West Shetland Shelf

Marine Protected Area

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Has a great diversity of
sand and gravel habitats

Cup sponges



Cuckoo ray



Dahlia anemone



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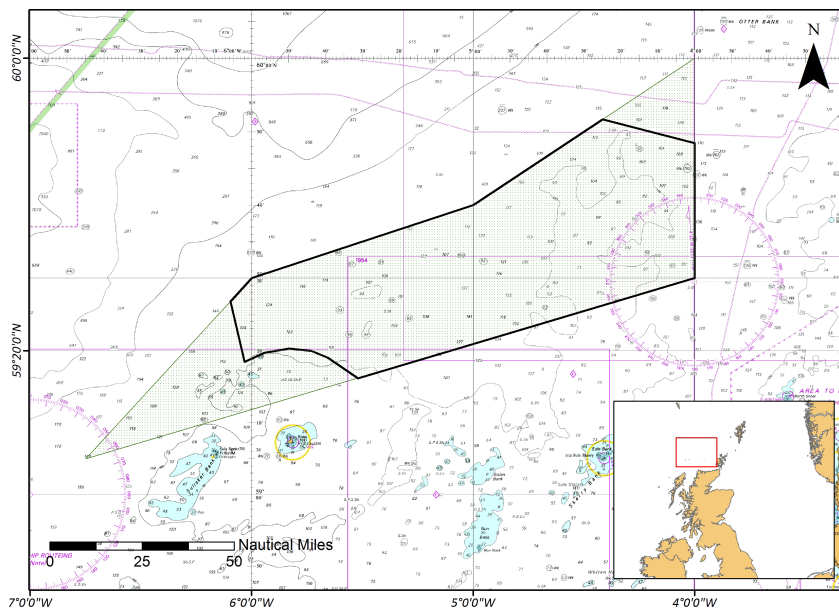
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West Shetland Shelf

Marine Protected Area (MPA)

Lying to the north of Scotland in offshore waters, the **West Shetland Shelf MPA** overlaps with the **Windsock Fisheries Area** which is managed for the recovery of the cod population.

The MPA was chosen for the wide variety of sand and gravel habitats present in the area, providing an important example of the northern extent of their range on the continental shelf in Scotland's seas. From coarse gravels to fine-grained sands, the different habitats provide conditions suitable for a diverse range of animals to thrive in and on the seabed.



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Boundaries of the West Shetland Shelf MPA and the Windsock Fisheries Area (dotted area)

Location: 59° 32.485' N 4° 55.089' W

Area: 4,083 km²



Diverse sand and gravel habitats

Protected Features & Conservation Objectives

The aim is to **conserve** the **offshore subtidal sands and gravels** within the West Shetland Shelf MPA.

Although a relatively common habitat in Scotland seas, the range of different types of sand and gravel habitats present within the MPA support a particularly rich diversity of wildlife. On the surface, anemones and several types of crab can be found living between small rocks, whilst urchins and starfish roam the surface looking for their next meal. Sea snails, bivalves (shellfish with a pair of shells) and sand mason worms (so named for the tube they build by cementing together grains of sand and shell) are adapted to living buried in the sand to avoid passing predators.

The area enclosed within the MPA is also important for several species of fish, including cod, plaice, bass, skate and rays. Certain types of fishing are already managed within the overlapping Windsock Fisheries Area to help cod populations recover.

Further Information

Further information on Nature Conservation MPAs, the wider network and protected areas management is available at www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork

For Nature Conservation MPA site documents and more information about the fascinating range of marine life found in Scotland's seas, please visit

www.jncc.defra.gov.uk/scottishmpas - for offshore waters

www.snh.gov.uk/mpas - for territorial waters



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JNCC
Joint Nature Conservation Committee

A predatory sunstar roaming the gravel

