

Background to JNCC's formal conservation advice for offshore Special Areas of Conservation March 2025



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What the conservation advice package includes

The information provided in this document offers background information on JNCC's formal conservation advice for offshore Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).

This document forms part of JNCC's formal conservation advice packages for offshore SACs and must be read in conjunction with:

- The **Conservation Objectives and Management Advice** document - setting out the broad ecological aims (conservation objectives) for the SAC and JNCC's advice on;
 - qualifying feature condition;
 - conservation benefits that the SAC can provide if managed effectively; and
 - conservation measures that JNCC consider are required to support achievement of the conservation objectives stated for the qualifying features of the SAC.
- The **Supplementary Advice on Conservation Objectives (SACO)** - providing more detailed and site-specific information on the conservation objectives of the qualifying features of the SAC; and
- The **Advice on Operations** - providing information on those human activities that, if taking place within or near to the SAC, could impact it and present a risk to the achievement of the conservation objectives stated for the SAC.

Where to find the most up-to-date conservation advice package for an offshore SAC

The most up-to-date conservation advice for an offshore SAC can be downloaded from the conservation advice section in the Site Information Centre (SIC) accessible on JNCC's [Offshore Marine Protected Areas webpage](#). By clicking on the SAC site name in the table provided, you will be directed to the SIC and then by clicking on conservation advice listed in the contents table, you will be directed to the conservation advice available for the SAC.

JNCC's role in providing conservation advice

Under Regulation 21 of the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, JNCC has a statutory obligation to:

- establish conservation objectives for all offshore SACs and notify relevant competent authorities;
- advise competent authorities of any operations which in JNCC's opinion may adversely affect the integrity of a SAC;

The Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitat and Species Regulations 2017, provide a legal mechanism to help ensure clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas by affording protection to SACs in the marine and coastal environment.

The conservation advice package supports JNCC's delivery of the obligations under Regulation 21 listed above and specifically individuals who are:

- proposing to undertake an activity, within or near a SAC, that may affect qualifying feature or features within it;
- preparing or providing information for a Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) of an activity taking place within or near the site and that may affect qualifying features within it. You can find further guidance on undertaking HRAs in [Defra's Habitats Regulations Assessment Guidance](#); and
- considering the need to implement measures to manage human activities within or near a SAC.

How the advice package has been prepared

Conservation advice packages for SACs have been developed using the best available evidence and expert interpretation in accordance with [JNCC's Evidence Quality Assurance Policy](#), following best practice as set out in [Defra's 2012 Habitats Directive Implementation Review recommendations](#) and the [European Commission's 2012 Guidance Note on setting conservation objectives](#).

When to refer to the site's conservation advice package

You must refer to the conservation advice package for a SAC if you are:

- intending to carry out any licensed activity in or near a SAC and need to find out how to operate within the law;
- an authority providing advice on specific proposals;
- an authority responsible for putting management measures in place.

You may also find it useful to refer to the conservation advice package for a SAC if you are intending to carry out an activity in or near a SAC that does not require a license.

Using the advice package

It is important that you use the most up-to-date conservation advice. Our scientific understanding of the ecology and status of a SAC will change over time and the advice will be periodically updated as required to reflect this. Updates to the conservation advice package for a SAC will be delivered on the conservation advice section in the Site Information Centre, accessible via JNCC's [Offshore MPAs webpage](#). Users must always refer to JNCC's website for the most up-to-date version of advice, rather than using previously downloaded (or printed) advice.

The advice package supports you in deciding whether a planned activity will have an impact on the qualifying feature or features of a SAC and in doing so, presents a risk to the achievement of its stated conservation objectives. To assess if your activity, or one which you regulate, is going to impact a SAC, either in isolation or in combination, you should:

- consider the evidence shown in the map for the SAC on [JNCC's Interactive Marine Protected Area Mapper](#) to help you determine if the planned activity or other ongoing activities are located in or near the site. You can also access the map for a SAC through the relevant SIC;
- use the advice on operations to determine which pressures activities can cause that could harm a SAC's qualifying feature or features and hinder the achievement of the conservation objectives;
- screen those aspects into or out of an assessment;

- use the conservation objectives and SACO to assess the impacts of the planned activity on the important attributes of the qualifying features;
- refer to the conservation benefits to understand how any impacts may affect a SAC's ability to deliver wider benefits to the marine environment and to understand what measures JNCC consider are required to support achievement of a SAC's conservation objectives; and
- bring this together in an assessment of the overall impacts on a SAC.

Queries or site-specific information

Should you have any queries regarding the conservation advice for a SAC, know of any information pertinent to a SAC that JNCC should be aware of, please contact JNCC at OffshoreMPAs@jncc.gov.uk or if you have queries about what evidence is available for a SAC, please contact JNCC at OIA@jncc.gov.uk.