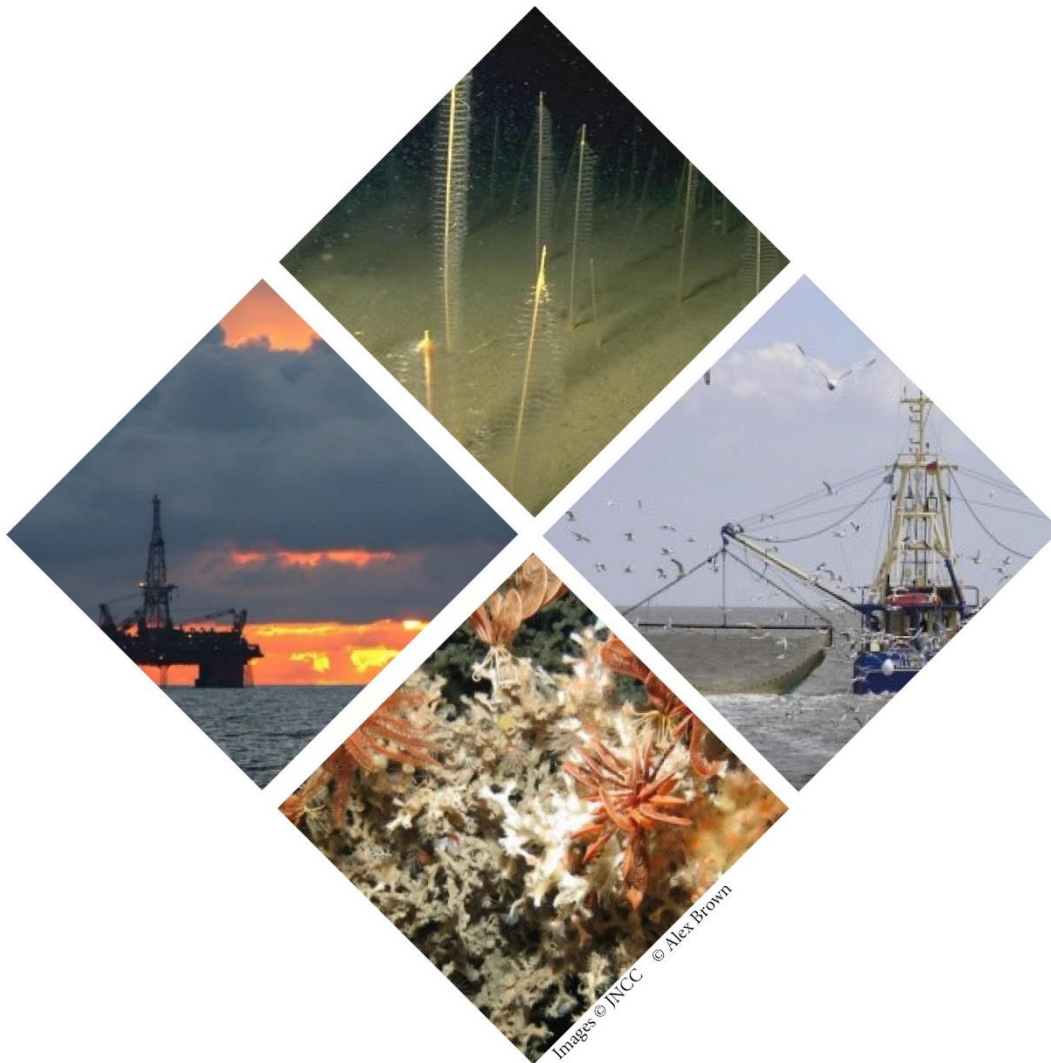


# Statements on conservation benefits, condition & conservation measures for Bassurelle Sandbank Special Area of Conservation

December 2020



## 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 qualifying feature condition;
  - conservation benefits that the site can provide; and
  - conservation measures needed to support achievement of the conservation objectives set 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, can affect it and present a risk to the achievement of the conservation objectives.

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 feature, the site will contribute to delivering:

- Favourable Conservation Status of Annex I Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time in the Eastern Channel.
  - Favourable Conservation Status of habitats of European importance, including Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time, is one of the aims of the Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (Habitats Directive) as transposed

into the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017);

- An ecological network of areas of special conservation interest under the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) An ecologically coherent network of MPAs which are well managed under the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Greater North Sea Region (OSPAR Convention);
- Good Environmental Status under the UK Marine Strategy; and
- Resilience of the UK's network of marine protected areas and wider marine biodiversity to impacts of climate change (2013 EU Guidance<sup>1</sup>).

This site has been designated to afford protection to a representative example of Annex I Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time. The site is located in the Dover Strait and straddles the boundary between UK and French waters. The sandbank feature in this site is an open shelf ridge type formed by tidal currents with sand waves and mega ripples of up to 2.5 m in height abundant on parts of the bank. Although the surrounding seabed is also predominantly sandy, the sandbank feature in this site is distinct due to the thickness of the sediment (up to 25 m thick) and its elevation above the surrounding seafloor.

This site provides conservation benefits to the wider marine environment and society by affording protection to a range of seabed habitat types characteristic of Sandbanks partly covered by seawater all the time and their associated species and consequently the provision of the following ecosystem services. In summary:

- Nutrition: by providing a habitat for a variety of fauna, enhancing the availability of prey for commercially important fish species;
- Bird and whale watching: by providing a habitat for a variety of fauna, enhancing the availability of prey for seabirds and marine mammals; and
- Climate regulation: by providing a long-term sink for carbon.

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<sup>1</sup> 2013 EU Guidelines on Climate Change and Natura 2000. Dealing with the impact of climate change on the management of the Natura 2000 Network of areas of high biodiversity value. Available here: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/climatechange/pdf/Guidance%20document.pdf>

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

Managing activities that affect the qualifying feature of the site to maintain it at or restore it to, favourable condition, will support the site's provision of the benefits and delivery of obligations listed above.

## Site Condition

Table 1 below sets out JNCC's view on the overall condition of the site's qualifying feature: Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all of the time. This view is based on information provided in the Supplementary Advice on Conservation objectives (SACO) (hyperlink is provided in the box at the top of this document).

The SACO sets out our understanding of the feature's attributes which are listed in the conservation objectives (hyperlink is provided in the box at the top of this document). In summary, a feature is in unfavourable condition either where evidence indicates one or more of its attributes need to be restored or where restoration is not considered to be possible through human intervention. Conversely, a feature is 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 for this site.

**Table 1. JNCC's view on the condition of the qualifying feature of the site.**

Protected feature	View of condition
Annex I Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time	Unfavourable

The conservation measures listed below set out JNCC's view as to which, if any, human activities require management to maintain or restore the qualifying feature of the site.

## Conservation measures

As set out in Table 1 above, the Annex I Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time need to be restored to 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 (hyperlink is provided in the box at the top of this document), we consider that the activities listed below are capable of significantly affecting the qualifying feature of the site.

These activities should be managed to restore the Annex I Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time by reducing or removing associated pressures:

- mobile demersal fishing.

Management of the site should be informed by the sensitivity of Annex I Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time 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 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 Supplementary Advice on Conservation Objectives (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.