# Conservation Objectives and Management Advice for the Bassurelle Sandbank Special Area of Conservation UK0030368

**May 2026**

JNCC

jncc.gov.uk

## What the conservation advice package includes

The information provided in this document sets out:

- The conservation objectives for the qualifying feature of the site;
- The conservation benefits which the site can provide if managed effectively;
- JNCC's current view of qualifying feature condition; and
- The conservation measures that JNCC consider are required to support achievement of the site's conservation objectives.

This document forms part of JNCC's formal conservation advice package for the site and must be read in conjunction with:

- **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 it can be applied;
- **Supplementary Advice on Conservation Objectives** (SACO) providing more detailed and site-specific information on the conservation objectives of the qualifying feature of the site; and
- **Advice on Operations** providing information on those human activities that, if taking place within or near to the site, could impact it, adversely affecting the site's integrity and presenting a risk of not achieving the conservation objectives stated for the site.

The most up-to-date conservation advice package for this site can be downloaded from the conservation advice section of the Site Information Centre on JNCC's website.

## Conservation objectives

This site has been designated to protect Annex I habitat **Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time**.

The conservation objectives for the Bassurelle Sandbank MPA are for *the qualifying feature; Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time to be in favourable condition thus ensuring site integrity in the long term and contribution to Favourable Conservation Status. This is achieved by maintaining or restoring as needed, subject to natural change, the qualifying feature's:*

- Extent and distribution within the site;
- Structure and function within the site; and
- The supporting processes on which it relies.

## Conservation benefits

Maintaining or restoring the qualifying feature of the site at or to favourable condition, will contribute to delivering:

- Favourable Conservation Status of Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time in the Eastern Channel region, which is a requirement set out in the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations, 2017.
- An ecological network of areas of special conservation interest under the Convention of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention)
- Good Environmental Status under the UK Marine Strategy; and
- 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;
- Target 3 of The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, known as the 30by30 target is a global commitment to effectively conserve and manage by 2030 at least 30% of terrestrial and inland water areas, and of marine and coastal areas through an ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective areas-based conservation measures.
- The MPA Target as set out in the Environmental Targets (Marine Protected Areas) Regulations 2023.

## Ecosystem Services and Natural Capital

MPAs are typically designated for the conservation and/or recovery of specific habitats and/or species features. Through their effective management, features can function in such a way as to deliver wider benefits to the environment, society and the economy such as provisioning, cultural or regulation and maintenance services.

The universal Asset Service Matrix (uASM) is a tool that evidences the linkages between natural assets (habitats and species) and the ecosystem services they can potentially provide. Examples of the broad categories of ecosystem services that can potentially be provided by the qualifying feature of Bassurelle Sandbank SAC's (Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time) are listed below with the full list of ecosystem services with a high or medium delivery supply score provided in Annex 1.

The ecosystem services which available evidence more reliably shows could be delivered by the Sandbank feature's three component sedimentary habitats; subtidal sand, subtidal coarse sediment and subtidal mixed sediments are:

- **Provisioning services** - such as the provision of 'Wild animals (aquatic) for nutrition, materials or energy' and 'Mineral substances used for nutrition materials or energy'.
- **Regulation and maintenance services** include 'Lifecycle maintenance, habitat and gene pool protection', 'Regulation of sediment quality' and 'Regulation of baseline flows and extreme events'.
- There are also **cultural services** provided by these habitats such as 'Indirect interactions with geophysical systems', and 'Other biophysical characteristics of species or ecosystems that are appreciated in their own right by people'.

Managing activities to restore the qualifying feature to favourable condition will support the provision of ecosystem services, which provide wider benefits to the environment, society and the economy and will help fulfil the policy and legal obligations listed above.

# Qualifying feature Condition

Table 1. JNCC's view on the condition of the qualifying feature in the site.**Table 1** below sets out JNCC's view on the condition of the site's qualifying feature. This view is based on JNCC's assessment of qualifying feature condition using best available information at the

time of writing and which is summarised in the SACO available from the conservation advice section of the Site Information Centre on JNCC's website. The SACO sets out our understanding of the condition of a feature's attributes as listed in the conservation objective for the site; extent and distribution, structure and function and supporting processes.

In summary, a qualifying feature is in unfavourable condition either where evidence indicates one or more of its attributes need to be restored. Conversely, a qualifying feature is in favourable condition where evidence indicates none of the attributes are being adversely affected.

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

| Qualifying feature | View of condition and qualifying feature objective |
|---|---|
| Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time | Unfavourable, restore to favourable condition |

The condition of the feature's attributes in the SACO has been determined by an assessment of the effects of pressures associated with activities occurring within the site. The pressures identified by this assessment can be used within the Marine Ecosystems Services Optimisation (MESO) tool (Tillin *et al.* 2019) to calculate the impact from in-combination pressures on ecosystem service delivery. The MESO tool assesses whether the ecosystem services that the feature provides to the wider marine environment are negatively or positively impacted by these pressures acting together (in combination) as illustrated in Figures 1 to 3 below.

Within Bassurelle Sandbank SAC; the negative impact projected is due to the pressures surface abrasion and subsurface disturbance associated with mobile demersal fishing activities.

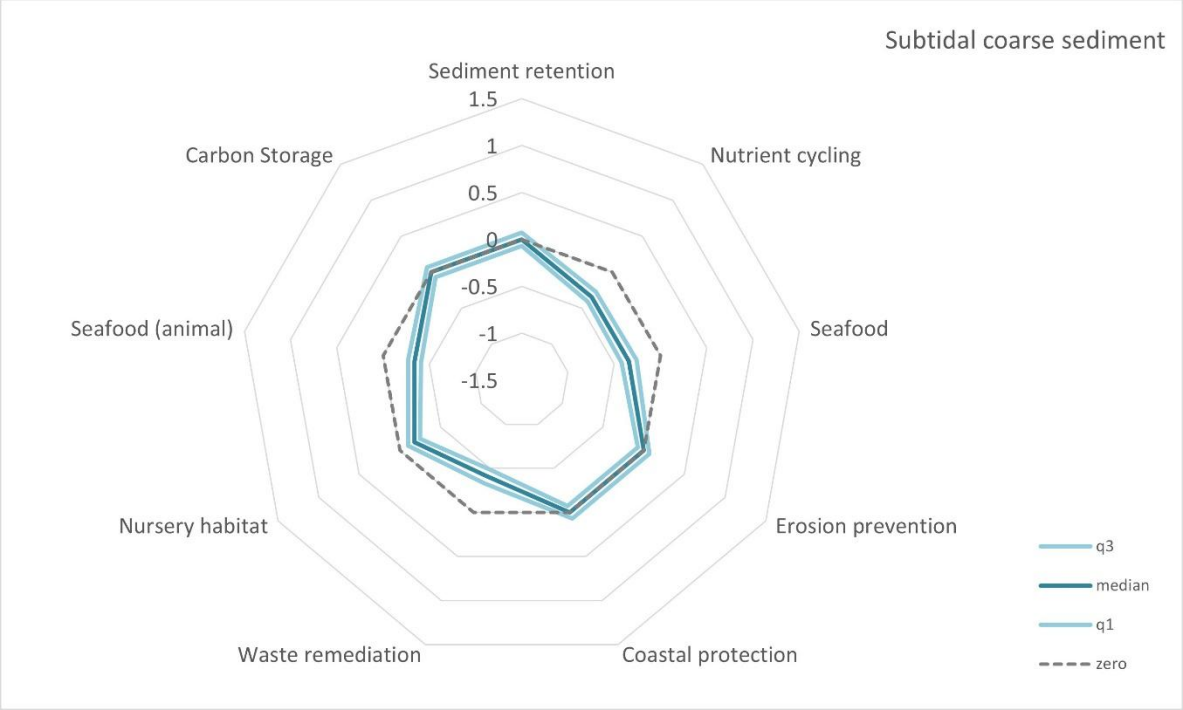



**Figure 1.** The predicted impact from in-combination pressures abrasion and penetration on potential ecosystem services provided by subtidal coarse sediment (MESO tool, Tillin *et al.* 2019).


**Figure 2.** The predicted impact from in-combination pressures abrasion and penetration on potential ecosystem service provided by subtidal sand (MESO tool, Tillin et al. 2019).

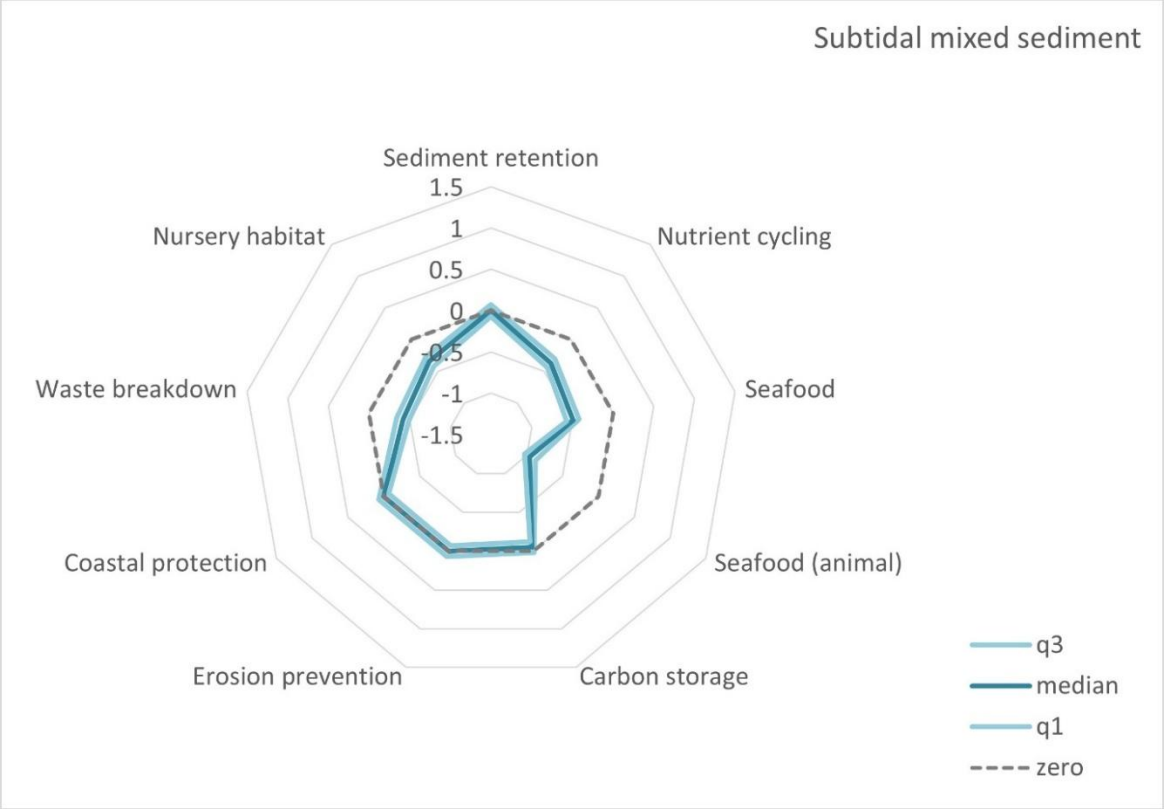



**Figure 3.** Predicted impact from in-combination pressures abrasion and penetration on potential ecosystem service provided by subtidal mixed sediments (MESO tool, Tillin et al. 2019).

The conservation measures listed below set out JNCC's advice regarding management which should be implemented to restore the qualifying feature of the site to or at favourable condition.

## Conservation measures

Based on JNCC's understanding of the pressures associated with human activities taking place within, or in close proximity to, the site, and the sensitivity of the qualifying features to those pressures, we conclude that the qualifying feature sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time needs to be restored to favourable condition.

JNCC advise the following conservation measures are adopted to support restoration to favourable condition and reduce the risk of the site not achieving its conservation objectives to the lowest possible level:

- **No new licensable activities** capable of impacting (either directly or indirectly) the protected feature sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time or hindering its recovery, should be permitted. More information about how activities

can impact the qualifying feature can be found in the Advice on Operations workbook and should be read in conjunction with information provided in the Supplementary Advice on Conservation Objectives.

- Any new activities whether located within or outwith the site, must look to avoid, or, as far as is practicable to do so, **minimise the introduction of contaminants** to ensure compliance with sedimentary and water Environmental Quality Standards within the site.

- There is a significant risk of not achieving the conservation objectives for the qualifying feature of the site if **mobile bottom contact gears** are not managed within the site. Removing all mobile bottom contact gears from the site would reduce the risk of not achieving the conservation objectives to the lowest possible levels.

- Under normal operating conditions, **pelagic fishing gears** are not expected to interact with the protected feature of the site and therefore should not present a risk to the achievement of the conservation objectives. **Therefore, no additional management of this gear type is advised**.

- The use of **static bottom-contacting fishing gear** is occurring within the site**.** It has the potential to impact the qualifying feature of the site, but our understanding of degree of impact is limited. This is due to limitations around knowledge of the extent and intensity of the fishing activity itself, as well as the impact of this fishing type on the site's qualifying feature. **More scientific research** and **better fishing effort data is needed**. In the meantime, JNCC advises that **static gear fishing effort within the site is monitored** and the **effects of ongoing use on the conservation status of the qualifying feature is kept under review**. If monitoring shows evidence of detrimental effects at the scale of the conservation status of the qualifying feature, additional management may need to be considered.

The Advice on Operations for this site is accessible via the conservation advice section of the Site Information Centre. It provides information on the sensitivity of the qualifying features of the site to pressures associated with activities that JNCC consider may conceivably take place within, or in close proximity to, the site. This should be used when undertaking an initial assessment of whether a proposed plan or project (or ongoing activity) may have an impact on the qualifying feature and therefore integrity of the site.

# References

Cordingley A., Anderson L., Matthews S., Beach M., Molloy L., Whittaker L., Van Rein H., McNulty J., Reeve N., Parsons J. & Morgan V., 2023. The universal Asset Service Matrix (uASM). electronic dataset. Marine Life Information Network. Plymouth: Marine Biological Association of the United Kingdom. Joint Nature Conservation Committee. [accessed 14th January 2025] Available from https://www.marlin.ac.uk/asm

Potts, T., Burdon, D., Jackson, E., Atkins, J., Saunders, J., Hastings, E. & Langmead, O., 2014. Do marine protected areas deliver flows of ecosystem services to support human welfare? Marine Policy, 139-148.

Rees, S.E., Ashley, M., Cameron, A., Mullier, T., Ingle, C., Oates, J., Lannin, A., Hooper, T. & Attrill, M.J., 2022. A marine natural capital asset and risk register. Towards securing the benefits from marine systems and linked ecosystem services. Journal of Applied Ecology (4), 1098-1109.

SNH (Scottish Natural Heritage), personal communication

Teixeira, H., Lillebo, A.I., Culhane, F., Robinson, L., Trauner, D., Borgwardt, F., Kuemmerlen, M., Barbosa, A., McDonald, H., Funk, A., O'Higgins, T., Van der Wal, J.T., Piet, G., Hein, T., Arevalo-Torres, J., Iglesias-Campos, A., Barbiere, J. & Nogueira, A. 2019. Linking biodiversity to ecosystem services supply: Patterns across aquatic ecosystems. Science of The Total Environment (20), 517-534.

Tempera F., C. Liquete & A.C. Cardoso (2016). Spatial distribution of marine ecosystem service capacity in the European seas. EUR 27843. Luxembourg (Luxembourg): Publications Office of the European Union. doi:10.2788/753996

Tillin, H.M., Langmead, O., Pegg, S., Carr, S., Gibson- Hall, E., La Bianca, G., Luff, A., Keen, P.W., Wilding, C., Nicholson, J.C., Ivory, P. and van Rein, H. 2019. Development of JNCC Marine Ecosystem Services Optimisation models.

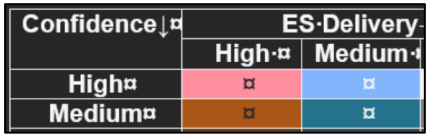
# Annex 1 – uASM

The universal Asset Service Matrix (uASM) provides a qualitative rating system to assess the level of service provided by a habitat or species and can be used to indicate the wider benefits to the environment, society and the economy that marine protected areas (MPAs) provide. The uASM is a tool, and like all tools, the outputs are only as useful as the evidence and data that is input. Some linkages of ecosystem services and assets, while known in the wider literature, may not yet been included in the tool. There are also geographically specific sources of information that can provide MPA-specific context and evidence for ecosystem services. The tool does not take into consideration the condition of an assets, only their potential to provide ecosystem services. Therefore, the information should be used in conjunction with MPA-specific evidence to provide a rounded view and bespoke advice.

Table 2 provides the asset ecosystem service linkages for the component habitats of Bassurelle sandbank (subtidal sand, subtidal coarse and subtidal mixed sediments). The JNCC Level of Ecosystem Service (ES) Supply score is a qualitative rating system to assess the level of service provided by a specific asset. The generated score is unitless and provides a relative comparison only and so cannot be used to quantitatively compare different assets on their ability to provide an ecosystem service. Rather, it is a tool used to quickly identify key linkages between assets and ecosystem services for further investigation. Confidence scores help users to make quick and informed decisions about the available data. The score describes the level of confidence the author has in the asset-to-ecosystem service link. In Table 2 below only the ecosystem services in which we have relatively higher confidence (i.e. medium to high supply level and medium to high confidence) are presented, at CICES level 3.

**Table 2: Bespoke ASM for habitats (EUNIS level 3 sub-features) in Bassurelle sandbank SAC, exported on 24/10/25.** Data extracted from the universal Asset Service Matrix (uASM) (Cordingley et al. 2023, Tempera *et al*., 2016, Rees *et al*., 2022, Potts *et al*., 2014, Teixeira *et al*., 2019, Scottish Natural Heritage). Only the ecosystem services in which we have relatively higher confidence (i.e. medium to high supply level and medium to high confidence) are presented, at CICES level 3, in the table. White boxes are present in the table when the score was low, negligible or data deficient for ecosystem service supply or confidence.

Colour scheme key:




| | | | Bassurelle SAC (habitat sub-features) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **CICES_v5.2 Ecosystem service** | **A5.1 - Sublittoral coarse sediment** | **A5.2 - Sublittoral sand** | **A5.4 - Sublittoral mixed sediments** |
| **1.x.x.x - Provisioning (Biotic/Biophysical)** | 1.1.x.x - Biomass | 1.1.3.x - Reared animals for nutrition, materials or energy | | | |
| | | 1.1.5.x - Wild plants (aquatic) for nutrition, materials or energy | | | |
| | | 1.1.6.x - Wild animals (aquatic) for nutrition, materials or energy | | | |
| **2.x.x.x - Regulation & Maintenance (Biotic/Biophysical)** | 2.1.x.x - Transformation of biochemical or physical inputs to ecosystems | 2.1.1.x - Reduction of nutrient loads and mediation of wastes or toxic substances of anthropogenic origin by living processes | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2.2.x.x - Regulation of baseline flows and extreme events | 2.2.3.x - Hazard mitigation | | | |
| | 2.3.x.x - Regulation of physical, chemical, biological conditions | 2.3.2.x - Lifecycle maintenance, habitat and gene pool protection | | | |
| | | 2.3.3.x - Pest and disease control | | | |
| | | 2.3.4.x - Regulation of sediment quality | | | |
| | | 2.3.5.x - Water conditions | | | |
| | | 2.3.6.x - Atmospheric composition and conditions | | | |
| **3.x.x.x - Cultural (Biotic/Biophysical)** | 3.1.x.x - Physical and experiential interactions with natural environment | 3.1.1.x - Direct, in-situ and outdoor interactions with living systems that depend on presence in the environmental setting, i.e. broadly recreational activities | | | |
| | 3.3.x.x Intellectual and representative interactions with natural environment | 3.3.1.x - Indirect, interactions with living systems | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 3.4.x.x - Spiritual, symbolic and other cultural interactions with natural environment | 3.4.2.x - Other biophysical characteristics of species or ecosystems that are appreciated in their own right by people | | | |
| **4.x.x.x - Provisioning (Abiotic/Geophysical)** | 4.2.x.x - Non-aqueous natural abiotic ecosystem outputs | 4.2.1.x - Mineral substances used for nutrition, materials or energy | | | |
| **5.x.x.x - Regulation & Maintenance (Abiotic/Geophysical)** | 5.2.x.x - Regulation and maintenance of geophysical | 5.2.1.x - Regulation of baseline flows and extreme events | | | |
| **6.x.x.x Cultural (Abiotic/geophysical)** | 6.1.x.x - Physical and experiential interactions with biophysical environment | 6.1.1.x - Direct, in-situ and outdoor interactions with geophysical systems that depend on presence in the environmental setting | | | |
| | 6.3.x.x. - Intellectual and representative interactions with | 6.3.1.x - Indirect, interactions with geophysical systems | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | geophysical environment | | | | |
| | 6.4.x.x.- Spiritual, symbolic and other interactions with geophysical environment | 6.4.2.x - Other biophysical elements of species or ecosystems that are appreciated in their own right by people | | | |