

Statements on Conservation Benefits, Condition & Conservation Measures for Norwegian Boundary Sediment Plain Nature Conservation MPA

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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;
 - conservation benefits that the site can provide; and
 - conservation measures needed to further the conservation objectives stated for the site. This includes information on those human activities that, if taking place within or near the site, can impact it and hinder the achievement of 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, can 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 feature of the site (Ocean quahog aggregations and Offshore subtidal sands and gravels as their supporting habitat), the site will contribute to delivering:

- Strategic objectives and policies within [Scotland's National Marine Plan](#), particularly 5 (climate change) and 9 (natural heritage);

- [Scottish Biodiversity Strategy's](#) Big Step 6 (Marine and coastal ecosystems restored) Priority Project 12 (Increase environmental status of our seas);
- A network of MPAs around the UK, as outlined under the [UK Marine & Coastal Access Act \(2009\)](#) (Section 123) of relevance to Scotland;
- 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 protect Ocean quahog (*Arctica islandica*) aggregations, including their supporting habitat. Ocean quahog aggregations are a [Priority Marine Feature](#) (PMF) in Scotland's seas and Ocean quahog are included on the [OSPAR list of threatened or declining habitats and species](#) across the North-east Atlantic.

This site provides conservation benefits to the wider marine environment and society by affording protection to Ocean quahog aggregations and their supporting habitat and consequently the provision of the following ecosystem services:

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

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 protected features of the site to conserve 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 below sets out JNCC's view on the overall condition of the site's protected feature. 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 attributes which are listed in the conservation objectives (hyperlink is provided in the box at the top of document). In summary, a feature is 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 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 protected features in the site.

Protected feature	View of condition
Ocean quahog aggregations (including sands and gravels as their supporting habitat)	Unfavourable

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

Conservation measures

As set out in Tables 1 above, Ocean quahog aggregations (including sands and gravels as their supporting habitat) need to be recovered to favourable condition. Please see the Supplementary Advice on Conservation Objectives for more detail (hyperlink is provided in the box at the top of this document).

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 protected feature of the site.

These activities should be managed to prevent further deterioration (and where feasible enable recovery) to the protected feature of the site by reducing or removing associated pressures:

- Demersal trawling; Additional management is needed for demersal trawling within the site to prevent further deterioration of the feature from exposure to associated pressures like abrasion and removal of non-target species; and
- Oil and gas operations.

Management of the site should be informed by the sensitivity of protected feature 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 the protected feature of 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 an assessment of impacts to the protected features of the site. You may also find the information available in the Activities and Management tab of the site's [Site Information Centre](#) useful.