

Date: 27th November 2009
Our ref:
Your ref:



Dear Colleague

FORMAL CONSULTATION ON MARINE SPECIAL AREAS OF CONSERVATION AND SPECIAL PROTECTION AREAS – COMMENCING 27th NOVEMBER 2009

This letter is to inform you about the formal consultation being undertaken by Natural England, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) on 10 possible marine Special Areas of Conservation and 2 potential Special Protection Areas in English, Welsh and offshore waters around the UK.

The closing date of this formal consultation is 26th February 2010.

Background

Natural England, JNCC and CCW have been working together as Government statutory advisors to identify and propose:

- i. examples of marine habitats in territorial waters around the coast of England and Wales for designation as marine Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) to meet the requirements of the European Habitats Directive;
- ii. examples of marine habitats in the UK offshore waters for designation as offshore SACs to also meet the requirements of the European Habitats Directive; and
- iii. sites of particular importance for seabirds for designation as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) to meet the requirements of the European Birds Directive.

The Habitats and Birds Directives together require the creation of a network of protected areas for important or threatened wildlife habitats across the European Union to be known as 'Natura 2000' sites. Once sites have been identified as draft SACs or potential SPAs they are recommended to Government for approval to undertake a public consultation. Government determines which sites are put forward to the European Commission for inclusion in the Natura 2000 network.

The sites

The sites subject to formal consultation are as follows.

Possible SACs:

1. Haisborough Hammond and Winterton (inshore and offshore waters of Outer Wash)
2. Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge (inshore and offshore waters of Outer Wash)
3. Margate and Long Sands (Thames Estuary)
4. Poole Bay to Lyme Bay (Dorset and Devon coast)
5. Prawle Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone (Devon coast)
6. Lizard Point (Cornwall)
7. Lands End and Cape Bank (Cornwall)
8. Shell Flat and Lune Deep (Morecambe Bay)
9. Bassurelle Sandbank (offshore waters of Dover Strait)
10. North West Rockall Bank (off northwestern Scotland).

Potential SPAs:

1. Liverpool Bay/Bae Lerpwl (inshore waters in England and Wales)
2. Outer Thames Estuary (inshore and offshore waters).

The purpose of the formal consultation

The purpose of this consultation is to seek the view of all interested parties on:

- The scientific case for the designation of SACs and SPAs in the areas listed above; and
- The assessment of the likely economic and social impact of the designation of each site.

The Habitats and Birds Directives do not permit social or economic considerations to influence the choice of sites or their boundaries. The UK as a member state must identify the sites and boundaries based only on the presence of qualifying habitats and bird populations specified in the Directives. This means that the impact assessments cannot influence site selection or the boundaries.

Impact assessments have been produced to meet with government guidance. The information in the impact assessments may be used to inform the design of any measures that may be needed to manage activities to ensure the features for which the sites have been designated are conserved.

What to do next

You may first wish to read the document enclosed with this letter, titled '*Consultation on marine Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) in English, Welsh and offshore waters around the UK*' which provides you with full guidance to the consultation, including important information about confidentiality and how to respond.

You may then wish to read the documents relevant to the sites that you are interested in. These are posted on the websites

- Natural England (for inshore and joint sites): <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/marine/sacconsultation/default.aspx>; or
- JNCC for offshore sites: <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/marineconsult>.

You can submit your response to the consultation using the template available on both these websites. We will let you know how your response is being processed, and ask if you are willing to share any information you provide with colleagues and other public bodies to assist future work on

management of the coastal and marine environment, such as the marine conservation zones and coastal access.

Following the consultation

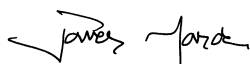
After the consultation, Natural England and JNCC will report to Defra on stakeholder views submitted through the formal consultation and CCW will report similarly to the Welsh Assembly Government. In July 2010, Natural England, JNCC (for offshore sites) and CCW (for Liverpool Bay/Bae Lerpwl) plan to submit to Defra and devolved administrations for Cabinet Committee consideration, a) the final site recommendation for each site, b) an impact assessment for each site, and c) a report on the consultation with stakeholders and interested parties.

Taking account of the consultation responses, it is anticipated that by August 2010 Government will decide whether to submit the SACs to the European Commission, and whether to designate the SPAs.

If you have any queries please email them to natura2000.consultation@naturalengland.org.uk or offshoreconsult@jncc.org.uk. If you do not think that you are the most appropriate person in your organisation to receive this letter, please forward it on and we would be grateful if you'd copy to us so that we can maintain the register of interest.

We would like to add your contact details to a database that will be used by Natural England, the JNCC and other public bodies (including CCW and also for example the Environment Agency or Scottish Natural Heritage) to identify stakeholders who may be interested in future consultations related to the terrestrial and marine natural environment in the UK. Please let us know if you do **not** wish for your details to be added to the database.

Yours faithfully



James Marsden
Director, Marine
Natural England



John Goold
Director of Marine
JNCC



David Parker
Director of Science
Countryside Council for
Wales