

## **News**

### **Liverpool Bay/Bae Lerpwl pSPA and Outer Thames pSPA**



The formal public consultation on these two pSPAs closed on 26 February 2010. Since then, Natural England, CCW and JNCC have been collating and addressing consultation responses. There were a number of challenges to the scientific basis of boundary placement for both sites. NE and JNCC recommend that the landward boundary of the Outer Thames pSPA be amended slightly based on shore-based counts of red-throated divers and existing SPAs and the seaward boundary remain unchanged. The Liverpool Bay pSPA recommended boundary remains unchanged. NE, with support from JNCC and CCW, is

completing a report of the consultation, including the recommended outcome, for the boards of each organisation. The next steps will be to submit amended site recommendations and impact assessments with the report of the consultation to Defra and Welsh Assembly Government, with a view to sending the sites to the European Commission by 1<sup>st</sup> October 2010.

### **Data collection and analysis for identification of inshore SPAs**

Aerial surveys of aggregations of wintering waterbirds in Broad Bay and around Shetland were carried out this winter, along with shore-based counts of parts of the Outer Hebrides and the south coast of Cornwall. Numerical and spatial analyses of aerial survey, boat survey and land-based counts of wintering seaduck, divers and grebe have now been carried out for seven areas around Scotland (east coast, Orkney and Outer Hebrides). A draft report was delivered to SNH at the end of March and the work was also presented to SNH in a workshop in April. A further 10 areas around Scotland will be analysed during the forthcoming winter. Data on wintering waterbirds in Cardigan Bay and Belfast Lough are currently being analysed and a draft report on each area will be delivered to CCW and DoENI by the end of the summer.



### **Identifying important seabird concentrations at sea**

Analyses aimed at identifying important aggregations of seabirds at sea that might be considered as possible SPAs have been extensively peer reviewed. A report is currently in press and will be available on the JNCC website soon. In May, the report and its implementations were discussed by the Marine Protected Areas Committee Sub-Group and a workshop will take place in July to provide policy officials from the country agencies and DEFRA with the necessary background to fully understand JNCC's work and methodologies described in the report.



### **Second field season of tern surveys underway**

Many of our team are currently taking part in the second season of fieldwork in support of work to identify possible marine SPAs for breeding terns. Surveys are being carried out around 12 tern colonies across the UK and these data will be integrated, along with various oceanographic variables, into a model to assess which marine habitat features are important for terns. As in 2009, we are using a combination of transect boat surveys, visually tracking individual birds from rigid-hulled inflatable boats, and shore based observations.

### **Other Marine Ornithological Advice**

As well as the Marine SPA work, the team has been involved with providing technical ornithological and scientific advice to JNCC's Marine Advice Team. Sue O'Brien has provided advice on a Population Viability Analysis (PVA) that was carried out to assess the possible impact of proposed offshore windfarm developments on a Sandwich tern SPA and also attended a conference on PVA in Trondheim, Norway, with Sophy Allen.

## Seabird Colony SPA Extensions

CCW have recommended to the Welsh Assembly Government that three seabird colony SPAs be extended into the marine environment (Grassholm by 2km, Bardsey by 9km and Skokholm and Skomer by 4km). These recommendations are based on advice from the JNCC Marine SPA team.

## Staff changes

Since the last Marine SPA news, our Marine Surveyor, Mark Lewis has left JNCC and his post has not been replaced. Andy Webb has moved to work in Marine Surveillance. Linda Wilson has moved into Andy's old post and her previous post has been frozen. Julie Black and Chris Bingham have been made permanent. We are currently discussing how the delivery of our Marine SPA work programme may be affected by these changes.

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## Publications

### [Aerial survey report 2007/08](#)

The report on aerial surveys carried out during the 2007/08 winter was published and is available to download from the JNCC website.

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## Recent meetings / conferences

### JNCC / SNH inshore SPA workshop

In April, JNCC and SNH held a workshop, attended by Natura 2000 staff and casework staff. The workshop started with a presentation by JNCC staff of the numbers and distribution of birds in seven areas of search for inshore SPAs (Firth of Forth, Firth of Tay, Aberdeen Bay, Moray Firth, North Orkney, Scapa Flow and Outer Hebrides) which included details of the methods used to place boundaries on grids of bird density. The workshop went well and the next steps for the Scottish inshore SPA work were agreed, to analyse data on the remaining 10 Scottish inshore areas of search.

### NE / CCW / JNCC / RSPB workshop on Liverpool Bay pSPA and Outer Thames pSPA

In February Jim Reid, Andy Webb, Sue O'Brien and Linda Wilson attended a workshop to discuss RSPB's comments on the consultation on the above pSPAs.

### MPA Technical Group and SPA Ramsar Scientific Working Group

Jim Reid and Linda Wilson have been providing regular updates on the marine SPA work at the meetings of these groups.

### [World Seabird Conference](#)

The first World Seabird Conference will be held in September 2010 and includes a special symposium on "*Spatial Ecology at-sea: Opportunities and Challenges for Seabird Marine Protected Areas*". This symposium, co-organised by Jim Reid, will include a talk by Linda Wilson. Andy Webb and Kerstin Kober will contribute talks on Inshore SPAs and Offshore SPAs respectively in regular sessions of the conference. Andy Webb is also co-organising two workshops on seabird databases.

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## And finally...

In April 2010, JNCC Aberdeen staff moved into their new office at [Inverdee House](#). JNCC, SEPA and SNH are sharing the new premises which were officially opened on 10 May 2010 by Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment, Richard Lochhead. The new building is based on an eco-friendly design and is one of only five buildings in Aberdeen to have achieved a BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) excellent rating.

The observant among you will also have noticed that JNCC now has a new logo, which features 'Nature's globe', representing abstract habitats of the air, sea and land, and our work both in the UK and across the world.

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**Photos:** Common scoter (anon.), great northern diver (Renton Charman), Sandwich tern (Christopher Plummer)

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