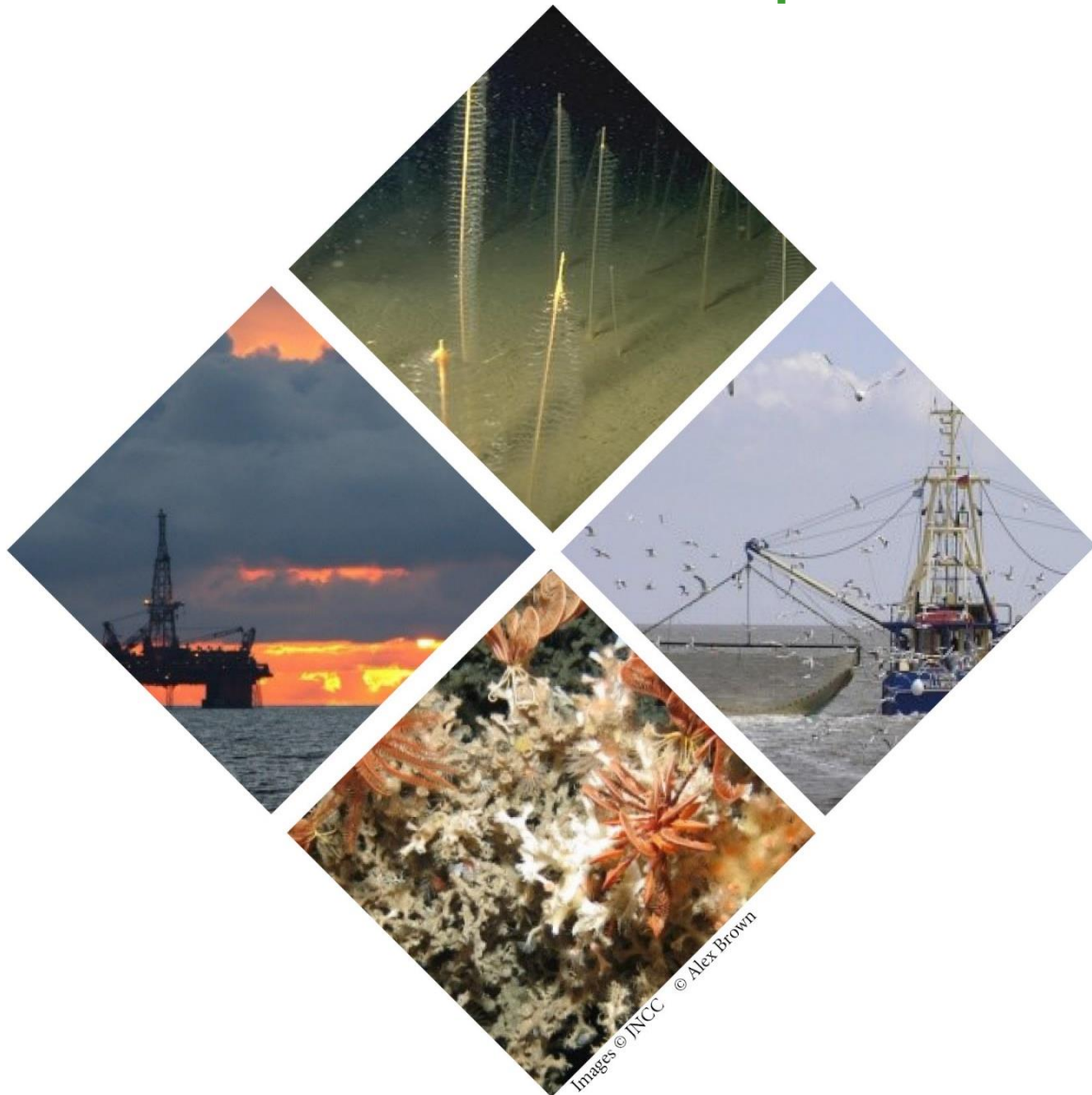


Conservation objectives for Faroe-Shetland Sponge Belt Nature Conservation Marine Protected Area

April 2018



What the conservation advice package includes

The information provided in this document sets out 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 (this document);
- [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;
- [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) accessible on JNCC's website.

JNCC provide supplementary advice on the conservation objectives in the SACO document (see link in the box above). The SACO is essential reading to support interpretation of these conservation objectives set out below. It provides further detail and site-specific information for each feature within the site, including which of the attributes need to be conserved and which ones recovered.

The Conservation Objective for the Faroe-Shetland Sponge Belt Nature Conservation Marine Protected Area is that the protected features listed below -

- so far as already in favourable condition, remain in such condition; and
- so far as not already in favourable condition, be brought into such condition, and remain in such condition.

With respect to **Deep-sea sponge aggregations** and **Offshore subtidal sands and gravels**, this means that—

- Extent is stable or increasing; and
- Structures and functions, quality, and the composition of characteristic biological communities (which includes a reference to the diversity and abundance of marine fauna forming part of or inhabiting each habitat) are such as to ensure they remain in a condition which are healthy and not deteriorating;

Any temporary deterioration in condition is to be disregarded if the habitats are sufficiently healthy and resilient to enable their recovery from such deterioration. Any alteration to the features brought about entirely by natural processes are to be disregarded.

With respect to the **Ocean quahog (*Arctica islandica*) aggregations**, this means that the quality and quantity of its habitat and the composition of its population are such that they ensure that the population is maintained in numbers which enable it to thrive.

Any temporary reduction of numbers is to be disregarded if the population of Ocean quahog is thriving and sufficiently resilient to enable its recovery from such reduction. Any alteration to that feature brought about entirely by natural processes is to be disregarded.

With respect to the **Continental slope channels, Iceberg plough marks, Prograding wedges, Slide deposits, Sand wave fields** and **Sediment wave fields** representative of the West Shetland Margin Paleo-Depositional System and West Shetland Margin Contourite Deposits Key Geodiversity Areas, this means that:

- Their extent, component elements and integrity are maintained;
- Their structure and functioning are unimpaired; and
- Their surfaces remain sufficiently unobscured for the purposes of determining whether the points noted above are satisfied.

Any obscuring of the features entirely by natural processes is to be disregarded. Any alteration to the features brought about entirely by natural processes is to be disregarded.

With respect to the area of the Faroe-Shetland Channel **Continental slope** protected as a large-scale feature, this means that:

- Its extent, distribution and structure is maintained;
- Its function is maintained so as to ensure that it continues to support its characteristic biological communities (which includes a reference to the diversity of any species associated with the large-scale feature) and their use of the site for, but not restricted to, feeding, courtship, spawning, or use as nursery grounds; and
- The processes supporting it are maintained.

Any alteration brought about entirely by natural processes is to be disregarded.