

Seas off Foula

Proposed Special Protection Area



One of Europe's best wildlife sites

Seas off Foula

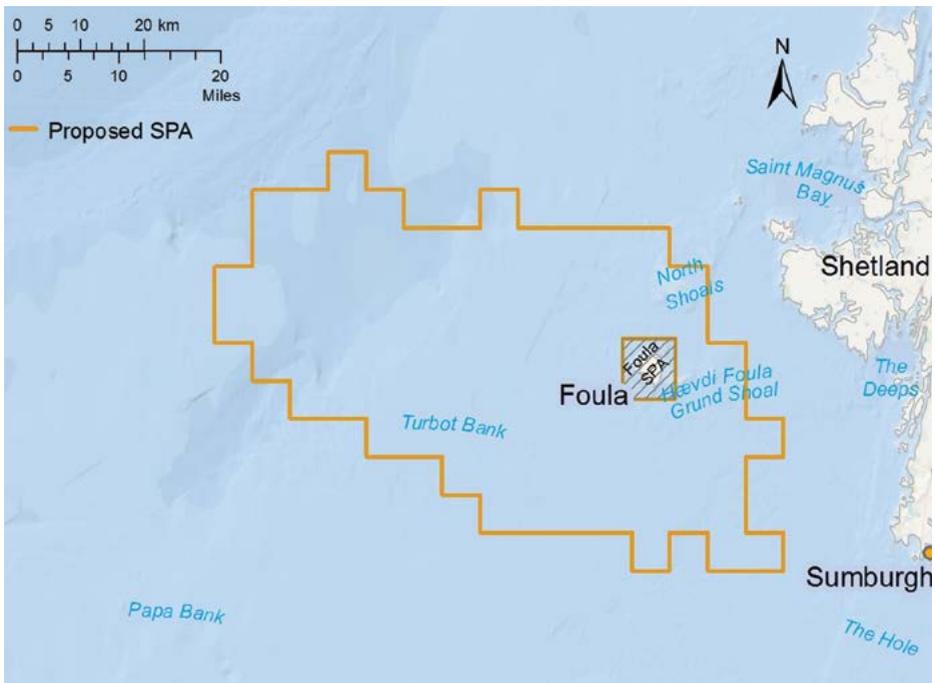
Proposed Special Protection Area

Lying about 15 km west of mainland Shetland, the proposed Seas off Foula Special Protection Area (SPA) covers the waters around and to the north-west of Foula. This island hosts more than 190,000 breeding seabirds, one of the largest and oldest seabird colonies in Britain.



This proposed SPA is an important feeding area for great skuas, fulmars, gulls and auks that make their home on the island. More than 5% of the British great skua population captures its food in this part of the north-east Atlantic.

Small seabirds, such as auks and small gulls, feed mainly on energy-rich sandeels in the waters surrounding Foula. Larger species, such as large gulls and great skuas, supplement their diets with discarded fish and fisheries waste from fishing vessels in the area, or by stealing prey from other seabirds.



© ESRI Ocean basemap: ESRI, DeLorme, GEBCO, NOAA NGDC, and other contributors

Location: 60° 08.520' N 002° 28.539' W

Area: 3,412 km²



Great skuas are robust birds, renowned for skilfully snatching prey from other seabirds

Proposed qualifying interests:

Breeding

Arctic skua
Atlantic puffin

Breeding & Non-breeding

Common guillemot
Great skua
Northern fulmar

The seabirds breeding on Foula are already protected at the colony and in the waters immediately surrounding it by the existing Foula SPA. The proposed Seas off Foula SPA will complement the present protection, ensuring that the marine foraging habitat and the prey on which the seabirds depend are equally protected.

The waters around Shetland, including the proposed Seas off Foula SPA, were once areas of high sandeel productivity. Since the 1980s, however, sandeel stocks have declined markedly and the reduced availability of this important prey species has had an impact on many of the seabirds breeding on Foula. Nevertheless, these remain important spawning and nursery grounds for sandeels, with the sandeel remaining an essential part of the diet of local seabirds.

Sandeel spawning areas immediately south of the Seas off Foula were designated as the North-West Orkney Marine Protected Area (MPA) in 2014. Newly hatched sandeel larvae are likely to migrate from the MPA to Shetland waters where they settle and provide prey for larger predatory fish and seabirds.

Making a response and further information

To make a response online or for more information about the proposals please go to www.jncc.defra.gov.uk/SPAconsultation.

If you are unable to make an online response, please contact us and we will send you a copy of the response form.

Email: seabirds@jncc.gov.uk

Post: JNCC, Marine SPA consultation,
Inverdee House, Baxter Street, Aberdeen, AB11 9QA

1 Northern fulmar; 2 Common guillemot; 3 Atlantic puffin; 4 Arctic skua



The Scottish
Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

marinescotland



Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba
All of nature for all of Scotland
Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad

 **JNCC**
Joint Nature Conservation Committee