

Southern North Sea

Proposed Special Area of Conservation

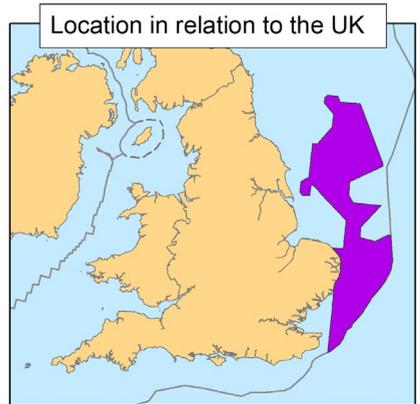
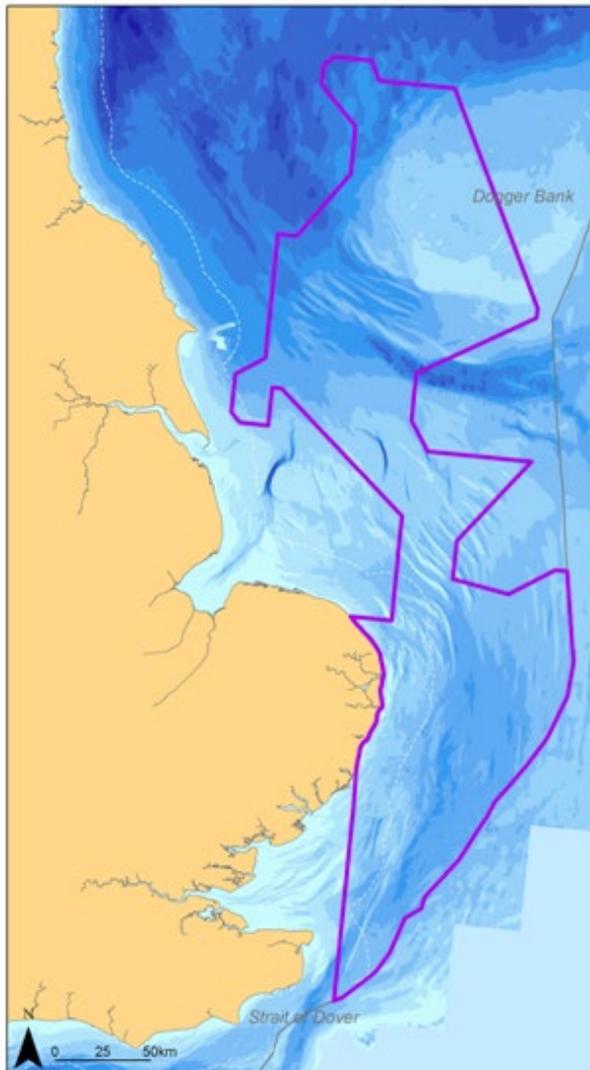


Harbour porpoise
Phocoena phocoena

Southern North Sea

Proposed Special Area of Conservation

The Southern North Sea site has been identified as an area of importance for harbour porpoise and is currently undergoing public consultation. The site extends to 36,958km² extending down the North Sea from the River Tyne south to the Thames, and includes habitats such as sandbanks and gravel beds. The water depths within the site range between 10m and 75m.



Southern North Sea:

Location:

53°33'03.8" N,
01°47'59.3" E

Area: 36,958 km²



Feature for protection

Harbour Porpoise
Phocoena phocoena

Site Objective

The aim is to support the maintenance of harbour porpoise populations throughout UK waters.

Key sensitivities

- Incidental catch
- Pollution
- Noise/physical disturbance

Harbour porpoise are the smallest and most abundant of the marine mammals in our waters and like all cetaceans (the collective term for whales, dolphins and porpoises) they surface to breathe air. They feed on a wide variety of species including gobies, sandeels, whiting, herring and squid.

Around the UK, harbour porpoises are usually found on the continental shelf where the water depths are less than 200m. The majority of the North Sea provides good, sandy habitats and supports approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of the harbour porpoises in UK waters. In these areas, the harbour porpoise appear to favour depths shallower than 50m.

Some highly mobile marine species have clearly identifiable breeding and feeding areas, but relatively little is known about such behaviour of the harbour porpoise. The available data indicate that the Southern North Sea SAC is an important area for the species, persistently supporting higher numbers of porpoises compared to many other parts of their UK range.

The main threats to porpoise include getting caught as bycatch in some fishing gears and they are also sensitive to pollution and disturbance.

Responding to the consultation and further information

For more detailed information on the sites, and the selection and designation process, or to respond to the consultation please visit our webpage:

Harbour porpoise consultation: <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/SACconsultation>

If you would like to contact us before responding:

Post: Marine Species Advice Team
Joint Nature Conservation Committee
Inverdee House, Aberdeen, AB11 9QA

Email: porpoise@jncc.gov.uk

Tel: +44 (0) 1733 562626



Harbour porpoise © Kevin Hepworth/
Seawatch