[Climate benefits of Marine Protected Areas revealed](#)

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) could play an important role in offering 'nature-based solutions' to climate change, new research published today on World Ocean Day reveals.

The study conducted by the [Joint Nature Conservation Committee](#) (JNCC) on behalf of the government found that over half of Marine Protected Areas contain habitats vital for the nation's future climate resilience. 43% of MPAs contain habitats such as sand banks, seaweed and other plant beds that play a role in protecting the coastline from severe weather events. Climate change is predicted to lead to an increase in the frequency of storm surges together with rising sea levels.

It also found that 29% of MPAs protect habitats such as coastal saltmarshes, seagrasses, salt water reedbeds and muddy habitats, which support the absorption and storage of carbon dioxide.

The announcement underlines the importance of the government's commitment to create a 'Blue Belt' of marine protection for Britain's overseas territories and its own coast, as these habitats can be damaged by human activity like anchoring boats, dredging and trawling.

The study also provides new tools for scientists to measure the impacts of climate change such as increases in sea surface temperatures, ocean acidification, ocean heatwaves and rising sea levels on marine sensitive habitats. This could in future be used to help in inform future protection measures.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

> Our Blue Belt of marine protection around our coast is now an area twice the size of England and truly a world-leading level of protection; however there is always more that can be done. We have a duty to ensure that our marine life recovers and thrives for future generations.

> This research published on World Ocean Day gives us the tools to measure the impacts of climate change on some of our most sensitive habitats and provides an important insight into the benefits of Marine Protected Areas – not just for nature but for own resilience in the face of a changing climate.

Dr John Goold, Director of Marine Evidence and Advice, JNCC:

This collaborative research is a major step forward in helping us develop tools to explore climate smart decision-making in the marine environment.

Marine Protected Areas have the potential to act as nature-based solutions around the world.

The UK has today announced that seven new countries have joined the UK led Global Ocean Alliance, an initiative aimed at securing protection of 30% of the world's oceans by 2030. There are now a total of 20 countries in the Alliance following today's announcement. Germany and Italy are amongst the major new players to join, other joiners include Fiji, Cabo Verde, Monaco, Senegal, and Luxemburg.

The report ['Developing the evidence-base to support climate-smart decision making on MPAs'](#) is now available on the Defra website.