

Extra protection for Wales' sea birds and harbour porpoise approved

Following a consultation last year for new Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) for harbour porpoise, the Cabinet Secretary has approved three areas. These have now been submitted to the European Commission for consideration.

The three areas are North Anglesey Marine, West Wales Marine and the Bristol Channel Approaches.

The areas have been identified based on 18 years of data on harbour porpoise distribution and have been identified as important, having persistently higher densities of harbour porpoise compared to other areas. The SACs will complement existing conservation measures in place throughout UK waters to help maintain the favourable status of the species.

The Cabinet Secretary has also approved three additional marine areas as Special Protection Areas.

These include Northern Cardigan Bay which is home to the wintering red throated diver and an extension to two important seabird breeding areas, Ynys Feurig, Cemlyn Bay and Skokholm and Skomer, to include areas which are vitally important to preening and other behaviours during the birds' breeding season.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

"We are committed to creating a network of marine protected areas in Wales so species and habitats can thrive. A rich and healthy marine environment ensures the sustainable use of our seas now and in the future.

"The wide response to Natural Resources Wales' consultation on the protection of marine porpoises shows the value people place in protecting marine life. I am pleased we are taking steps to provide protection for our harbour porpoise and protect important areas for sea birds."

Ceri Davies, Natural Resources Wales' Executive Director for Evidence, Policy and Permitting, said:

"We are proud that the seas around Wales support such a rich diversity of wildlife, which is highly valued by local communities and sustains important businesses such as fishing, tourism and recreation.

"NRW looks forward to working with stakeholders to ensure that

these sites are appropriately managed to help conserve them for future generations.”