

Press release: International protection for UK's second largest seabird colony

The newly designated Northumberland Marine Special Protection Area (SPA) stretches 12 miles from the coastline into the North Sea, and covers an area of more than 120,000 football pitches.

It's the most important site in the UK for Arctic, common and roseate terns, the second most important site for sandwich tern, and the third most important site for Atlantic puffin.

International designation will help ensure any disturbance to the birds' essential open water feeding areas is minimised, so the birds have a safe space to feed in.

It builds on the protection already afforded to important breeding sites via the network of SPAs at Coquet Island, Farne Islands, Lindisfarne and Northumbria Coast. Today's designation will help to protect the full range of habitats needed by the birds.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

We already have one of the strongest track records in the world when it comes to looking after our precious marine environment, and today's designations will strengthen our blue-belt of protected areas while helping seabirds across the country thrive.

Andrew Sells, Natural England's Chairman said:

This is a momentous day for a huge number of our best-loved and most charismatic seabirds, many of which have suffered population declines over recent decades.

These designations will protect vital feeding areas for seabirds along the English coast, creating safe havens to help the birds thrive for generations to come.

Chris Corrigan, Director, RSPB England said:

It is fantastic to see these special places being recognised and given the protection they so need and we hope to see more designations in the very near future.

As the UK moves closer to leaving the EU, we urge the government to

continue to recognise the significance of protecting these sites, based on scientific evidence, and they continue to protect and manage these sites to the same or even higher standards than those currently secured by European law for generations to come.

Along with the new Northumberland Marine SPA, Natural England also announced extensions to Hamford Water SPA in Essex and Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA in Cumbria.

These designations add an area of more than 150,000 football pitches (450 square miles) to the existing Marine Protected Area network. This gives international protection to feeding habitats for over 425,000 seabirds for the first time.

Further information

As an important breeding site in the UK Northumberland Marine SPA ranks:

- top for Arctic tern (9,564 individuals), common tern (2,572) and roseate tern (160)
- 2nd for sandwich tern (43,24 individuals)
- 3rd for Atlantic puffin (108,484 individuals)
- 4th for common guillemot (65,751 individuals)
- 11th for little tern (90 individuals)

Arctic terns make the longest annual migration of any bird species in the world – an average of 44,000 miles each year.

The new Northumberland Marine SPA covers a 41 mile stretch between Scremerston and Blyth.

The most important site for breeding seabirds in the UK is at Flamborough, along the Yorkshire coast.

Contact Natural England for more information

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[Press release: New and revised permits for Horse Hill oil and gas site](#)

The company already held a permit to drill the exploratory borehole and manage wastes arising from that process. This variation allows them to drill a new borehole, drill a side track from the original borehole and carry out

flow testing to understand the long term economic viability of the oil and gas reserves. No hydraulic fracturing will take place as part of this activity.

The company has also been issued with an environmental permit to allow them to store oil on site following production.

The company will need to adhere strictly to the conditions set out in these permits, which will ensure the local community and environment are protected.

The Environment Agency considered the opinions raised by local people during the 4 week consultation with communities, interested groups and other professional organisations before reaching this decision.

A spokesperson for the Environment Agency said:

We would like to thank all those people who responded to the consultation. Since the consultation period closed, Horse Hill Developments Limited has provided additional information to clarify some of the aspects of their application for flow testing.

After considering all of the information available and completing our assessment we are confident that the environment and people will be protected. Environment Agency officers will now ensure compliance with these operating conditions during the next phase of works.

For all media enquiries please contact 0800 141 2743 or email Southeastpressoffice1@environment-agency.gov.uk.

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SRUC student Rachel Foley enjoys summer placement with SAC Consulting in Edinburgh

Rachel Foley, a fourth year BSc Agriculture student from Musselburgh in East Lothian has enjoyed a 10 week placement with the Edinburgh office of SAC Consulting, part of Scotland's Rural College.

SRUC student Gemma Waugh enjoys summer placement with SAC Consulting in Ayr

Gemma Waugh, a fourth year BSc Agricultural Bioscience student from Closeburn near Dumfries has enjoyed a 10 week placement with the Ayr office of SAC Consulting, part of Scotland's Rural College.