

# New advice to protect homes of England's seahorses and seabream

These new packages of online advice, now available on the Natural England's [Designated Site System](#), cover sites which are home to England's seahorses, black bream breeding sites and internationally important populations of seabirds.

These sites include the Isles of Scilly Special Protection Area (SPA), Utopia Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), and Studland Bay MCZ in Dorset. In line with the government guidance, Natural England is also working on advice for four new Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs), protecting our diverse species and habitats in the blue belt around the English Coast.

In common with most organisations dealing with the effects of COVID-19, Natural England is following [government guidance](#) and taking all steps necessary to protect our staff and help prevent the spread of the virus. This includes the advice and guidance we offer, and our regulatory work.

Anna Millard, Conservation Advice Project Manager said:

Conservation Advice helps us turn protected sites from lines on a map into something that can be well-managed and delivers conservation gains.

By conserving and restoring these sites, we can help to build more resilience into our landscapes and seas, protecting them for future generations.

The nine sites are found in the Western Channel and Celtic Sea and the Eastern Channel. Gavin Black, Marine Senior Adviser, Wessex Team, tells us more about why this piece of work is important in aiding conservation efforts in the Dorset area.

## **Studland Bay, Dorset**

Studland Bay is a sheltered bay just outside Poole Harbour. It is home to important seagrass beds and the only known location where both species of British seahorse have been recorded breeding. Due to its location and sheltered conditions it is a very popular place to anchor for recreational vessels. Making sure activities in the site do not damage seahorse habitat is highly important for the survival of this species.

Since the Government [designated Studland Bay MCZ](#) in May 2019, the Marine Management Organisation ([MMO](#)) has a duty to introduce appropriate management to further the conservation objectives of the site. The new conservation

advice package will enable targeted discussions on the most suitable and sustainable management options available.

## **Black seabream Marine Conservation Zones (Southbourne Rough, Poole Rocks, Purbeck Coast)**

Black seabream move up and down the English Channel. Every year between March and July they come inshore to find areas of flat bedrock with a shallow veneer of gravel to make nests. The male bream constantly clears the nests of wayward gravel particles and must continuously protect the eggs against a whole host of hungry predators.

To safeguard nesting black bream at this vulnerable stage of their life cycle, last year three sites in Dorset, namely Southbourne Rough, Poole Rocks and Purbeck Coast, were designated MCZs. Natural England's expert advice will inform discussions with stakeholders and, alongside gathering additional data, will refine options for management.

Across Natural England, colleagues have been working hard, meeting our statutory obligations to deliver well evidenced, easily accessible conservation advice for protected sites on land and in the sea. Conservation Advice packages are now available for over 350 of our most important protected areas in both the marine and terrestrial environments.

All nine draft packages will be open for comments online until Wednesday 17 June 2020.

- learn more about how to access the Conservation Advice packages by watching the how to video on Natural England's [YouTube channel](#)
- marine advice packages are now available on the [Designated Site System \(DSS\)](#).
- terrestrial sites are available on the 'Access to Evidence' [catalogue](#)
- organisations and individuals can comment on the NE draft advice until Wednesday 17 June 2020. For more information, please email [MCAProject@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:MCAProject@naturalengland.org.uk)
- all sites will be available through the DSS in the near future