

# Consultation summary document for Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary potential Special Protection Area (pSPA)

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## **Purpose of this document**

This document provides guidance to stakeholders for the formal consultation on Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary pSPA

*It explains:*

- Natural England's proposal
- the background information which is helpful in understanding Natural England's proposal
- how to respond

## **Site maps**

Available to view on the consultation page

## **Natural England's proposal for Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary as a potential SPA**

Terrestrial and inter-tidal areas down to Mean Low Water (MLW) in Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary were classified originally as SPAs under the European Union's Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (the Birds Directive) in 1998 and 1996 respectively. The UK Government has an ongoing obligation under the Birds Directive to "classify in particular the most suitable territories in number and size as Special Protection Areas for the conservation of these species in the geographical sea and land area where this Directive applies".

Natural England is responsible for recommending potential SPAs in English waters (out to 12 nautical miles) to Defra for classification. As part of that recommendation, Natural England, upon reviewing information from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and breeding seabird data for Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPAs have identified additional marine areas needed to provide protection for foraging terns breeding in these SPAs. It was also recognised that although there is evidence for little tern nesting colonies re-locating between the two SPAs, little tern is not a qualifying feature of the Duddon Estuary SPA.

The recommendations developed so far propose to combine the existing SPAs with the marine extensions identified for foraging little and Sandwich terns. The pSPA comprises areas for breeding seabirds, foraging seabirds, and non-breeding waterbirds.

The site summary and the potential economic impacts summary provide the background information to support the proposal.

The departmental brief provides the full scientific rationale for the proposal.

## Site summary

Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary pSPA is proposed to protect important areas of land, coast and sea used for a variety of purposes by the qualifying features. The new pSPA amalgamates the existing Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPAs and adds marine areas identified for foraging terns breeding in these SPAs. Amalgamation of the existing SPAs is proposed because of evidence of terns moving between nesting colonies in these SPAs, and the overlap in marine foraging areas of terns breeding in these colonies.

The total area of the proposed Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary pSPA is approximately 68,550 ha covering the intertidal areas of Morecambe Bay, Duddon Estuary and the Ravenglass Estuary together with the intervening Cumbria coast, and extending approximately up to 8 km seawards at its widest point. The existing seaward boundary for Morecambe Bay SPA, from Wyre Estuary to north Morecambe Bay, remains unchanged and follows Mean Low Water (MLW). In north Morecambe Bay, around Walney Island and along the Cumbria coast to the Ravenglass Estuary the seaward boundary follows the JNCC recommended boundary based on the modelled foraging area for Sandwich tern. The landward boundary around the existing Morecambe Bay SPA and Duddon Estuary SPA remains unchanged. The boundary of the section of coastline previously outside the existing SPAs follows Mean High Water (MHW) as provided by JNCC for Sandwich tern foraging requirements. At the Port of Barrow, the boundary has been identified as a line between the north and south harbour wall at the entrance to the dock system.

The features of both the existing SPAs are to be retained and new qualifying features are added based on a review of current bird abundance information. New features proposed not on the original SPA citations include non-breeding black-tailed godwit, whooper swan, little egret, Mediterranean gull, lesser black-backed gull and ruff. For some features it is considered necessary to retain the original citation values as the basis for qualification (breeding Sandwich tern, common tern, seabird assemblage and herring gull; non-breeding golden plover, grey plover and sanderling), in line with Defra policy that indicates the feature should be retained until such time as the reasons for the reduction in population can be established. The Morecambe Bay SPA citation was updated in 1997, superseding that prepared in 1991. The new citation preserves the ambition established in both previous citations by retaining all original qualifying features meeting UK SPA selection guidelines, with one exception. Breeding common eider *Somateria mollissima* is no longer thought to fall within scope of Article 4 of the Birds Directive, as the UK breeding population is considered non-migratory but will remain a main component of the waterbird assemblage.

## Summary of potential economic impacts

A preliminary assessment of the potential economic impacts of classifying the Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary pSPA has been completed. This concluded that the costs imposed by the site's classification were relatively low as:

- a) With regards to the extension area for foraging terns, Article 3 of the Birds Directive already requires the *"upkeep and management in accordance with the ecological needs of habitats inside and outside the protected zones."* Natural England therefore already advises authorities to consider the impact of activities on areas outside of the current SPA boundary that support features of the SPA. This includes the management of supporting habitats for foraging terns which are qualifying features of the existing SPAs.
- b) With regards to new species (non-breeding little egret, ruff, lesser black-backed gull, whooper swan and black-tailed godwit) within the boundaries of the existing SPAs, the ecological requirements of the new species being added are the same as for those species already protected by the existing designations. Therefore no new management measures are required for these new species within the boundaries of the existing SPAs.
- c) The Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA would protect a number of overwintering bird species which are also present along the coast within the proposed extensions for foraging terns. Should the proposed extensions be classified these species would be protected within the extension as well. Available evidence suggests that the extension supports very low numbers of these other qualifying species compared with the Duddon Estuary and Morecambe Bay. It is assumed that this is due to the Ravenglass Estuary and the open coastline within the extension being less favourable for overwintering birds than the larger estuaries found to the south. Given the above, it is considered unlikely that any activities within or affecting the extension would have a significant impact on the overall population of these species within the extended pSPA. This means that no additional management would be required.

The potential costs that can be attributed directly to the classification of the site are those required for additional site monitoring. Depending upon the monitoring strategy and based upon similar monitoring, it has been estimated that Natural England will need to spend up to an additional £25,000 every 6 years to assess and report on the condition of the site. No other significant costs have been identified.

The estimated costs of classifying the Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary pSPA are too low to trigger a requirement for Natural England to produce a full socio-economic impact assessment.

## How to respond

This consultation runs for 13 weeks from 21<sup>st</sup> January 2016 to 21<sup>st</sup> April 2016 and is run in accordance with the [government consultation principles](#).

- Read the departmental brief setting out the scientific case for the pSPA

You may also find it useful to read:

- [Establishing marine Special Protection Areas: TIN 120](#) -
- [Sandwich tern: species information for marine Special Protection Area: TIN 135](#)
- [Little tern: species information for marine Special Protection Area: TIN 139](#)
- [Common tern: species information for marine Special Protection Area: TIN 138](#)

Use these documents to help with your response. Submit your response by completing the survey on the consultation page.

If you have any queries regarding the SPA consultation, please email them to [CumbriaMarineSPA@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:CumbriaMarineSPA@naturalengland.org.uk) or post to:

FAO: Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary pSPA  
Natural England  
Juniper House  
Murley Moss  
Kendal, LA9 7RL

Results from the consultation will be submitted as a report to the Secretary of State for the Environment (SoS). The SoS will decide if this site is suitable for designation as a European Marine Site and make a recommendation to the European Commission.

If you don't have access to the Internet, please contact us for copies of the documents you need.

## Confidentiality

Using and sharing your consultation response

Natural England will publish a summary of all responses on GOV.UK. It will include a list of names of organisations that responded to the consultation but not the names, addresses or other contact details of individual respondents. See Natural England's [personal information charter](#) on how your information is handled.

If you don't want your response - including your name, contact details and any other personal information - publicly available, explain clearly why you regard the information you have provided as confidential.

Natural England will acknowledge your explanation, but can't give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances, such as a request for release of information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not be regarded as binding on Natural England.

## **Use of maps**

Natural England has provided maps which show the complete boundary and additional maps where necessary to support the explanations given for the boundary locations.

Maps which accompany the site summary should ideally be printed on A3 paper. If you don't have this facility:

- print the relevant chapter text
- view the associated map on your computer screen, using the zoom tool to view it at a suitable size