

Consultation process and responses

In March 2016, Scottish Ministers approved a consultation on the proposal to designate the Inner Hebrides and the Minches as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The aim of this site is to help protect harbour porpoise and their supporting habitats and to meet the objectives of the EU Habitats Directive.

The consultation process

The consultation was carried out by Scottish Natural Heritage and was open to all members of the public for eight weeks between the 23rd March and 18th May 2016. All supporting information was made available on a dedicated SNH webpage: www.snh.gov.uk/porpoiseSAC.

An online response form was made available to the public with an option to request an emailed electronic version or paper version of the consultation questions. All respondents were required to complete a Respondent Information Form with personal details and whether or not they wanted their response published. See Appendix A for a copy of the Respondent Information Form and consultation questions.

Overview of responses

Submissions were received via the online form and via email to dedicated SNH consultation email box.

No submissions were received by post.

A total of 117 consultation responses were received; 79 from individuals and 38 from organisations. A further two responses represented campaigns initiated by conservation organisations in support of the SAC designation. One campaign initiated by Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC) attracted 8,621 submissions of their standard text while the other, initiated by the Marine Conservation Society (MCS), attracted 169 submissions.

A copy of the responses received to the consultation is available on our SAC consultation webpage www.snh.gov.uk/porpoiseSAC.

We have only published responses from those respondents who gave us permission to do so. Comments on the consultation process itself have been addressed below.

Specific comments made on the consultation process

Timing

The timing of the consultation was mentioned by three respondents. The consultation period covered the Easter holiday period as well as the purdah period leading up to the election. These respondents felt that this left a limited time period for consideration of the questions raised in the consultation as well limited time as for engagement or discussion of these questions and preparation of a consultation response.

Our response:

The consultation timeline was specifically intended to enable Scottish Ministers to submit a candidate SAC for harbour porpoise to the European Commission in 2016.

Consultation process

Four respondents commented on the consultation process, with an NGO noting that the process has been scientifically robust and based on best available evidence. Two NGOs welcomed the peer-reviewed process and an organisation in the energy sector praised the modelling process and the qualitative data that was presented.

Our response: We have noted these comments.

Progression of draft SAC

Two respondents felt there should have been an initial draft stage to the SAC designation process in order to increase the transparency of the consultation process. Concern was raised that the consultation missed out the 'draft SAC' stage and went straight to proposed SAC status. They compared this to the consultation on the proposed SPAs that had a longer period at the 'draft SPA' stage and of which they had been alerted to.

Our response:

We submitted our advice on the 9th March 2016 to Marine Scotland at which point the site became a draft SAC (dSAC). Ministers confirmed on 23rd March 2016 that the site should go to consultation and the site became a proposed SAC (pSAC) at this point. We spoke to some stakeholders just before the site became a dSAC and in the intervening period before it became a pSAC.

Appendix A - consultation response form

1. INTRODUCTION

Thank you for taking the time to respond to the consultation on the Inner Hebrides and the Minches proposed Special Area of Conservation (pSAC) to support harbour porpoise in Scotland.

The consultation will be open for **eight weeks: 23rd March - 18th May 2016**. More information on this proposal can be found at www.snh.gov.uk/porpoiseSAC.

2. INTRODUCTION

This response form has three parts

PART A - Respondent Information
PART B - Consultation response
PART C - Supporting documentation

Contacts:

email porpoiseSAC@snh.gov.uk

phone 01463 725 025

Mail Harbour porpoise SAC consultation

Great Glen House

Leachkin Rd

Inverness

IV3 8NW

*Field marked with * are mandatory*

Q3.

PART A - RESPONDENT INFORMATION

As part of analysing consultation responses, we may need to share your response with other government Agencies. Please read our [Privacy and data security statement](#) (see Appendix A) and email porpoiseSAC@snh.gov.uk if you have any queries or concerns.

I am responding*

- As an individual (go to Q4)
- On behalf of a group or organisation (go to Q5)

Do you or your organisation identify with any of the groups listed below?

- Academic & scientific
- Aquaculture
- Energy (non-renewables)
- Energy (renewables)
- Fishing (all forms)
- Local authority
- Local community group
- Non-government organisation
- Ports & harbours
- Public sector
- Recreation & Sport
- Shipping
- Tourism
- Private individual

Other

Q4.

**PART A – INDIVIDUALS RESPONDENT
INFORMATION**

Your details *

Name

Email

How do you wish your response to be treated? *

- Make both my response and name available
- Make my response but not my name available
- Keep my response and name confidential (please provide reason)

If required, may we contact you regarding your response? *

- Yes
- No

Q5.

**PART A – GROUPS/ ORGANISATIONS
RESPONDENT INFORMATION**

Organisation's / Group's details *

Name

Email

How do you wish your response to be treated?

Your organisations name will be published, please tell us how you would like your response to be handled. *

- Make my response available
- Keep my response confidential (please provide reason)

If required, may we contact you regarding your response? *

- Yes
- No

Q6.

PART B - CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Do you support the designation of the Inner Hebrides and the Minches proposed Special Area of Conservation?

[Site summary](#)

[Boundary map](#)

- Yes
- No
- Undecided
- Don't know

Comments:

Do you agree that the scientific evidence presented for the Inner Hebrides and the Minches proposed Special Area of Conservation supports and justifies the case for its designation?

[Site Assessment Document](#)

[Overview document](#)

- Yes
- No
- Undecided
- Don't know

Comments:

Do you have any comments to make on the proposal to develop a harbour porpoise conservation strategy for Scottish waters?

[Proposal for harbour porpoise conservation strategy.](#)

- Yes (please comment below)
- No

Comments:

Q7.

ADVICE TO SUPPORT MANAGEMENT

Do you have any comments on the Advice to Support Management document for the Inner Hebrides and the Minches proposed Special Area of Conservation?

[Advice to Support Management document.](#)

- Yes **(see below)**
- No **(go to Q8)**

If YES – do your comments on the Advice to Support Management document relate to specific activities or industries please select from the list below.

- Acoustic survey
- Aquaculture
- Cables and pipelines
- Commercial shipping
- Fishing (all forms)
- Marine renewable developments
- Ports and harbours
- Recreational activity
- Scientific research
- Wildlife tourism
- Other (please include in your response)

Comments:

Q8.

PART B - BUSINESS AND REGULATORY IMPACT ASSESSMENT - RESPONSE

Do you have any comments on the Business and Regulatory Impact Assessment (BRIA) report for the Inner Hebrides and the Minches proposed Special Area of Conservation?

[BRIA report](#)

- Yes (please comment below)
- No

Comments:

Q10. PART C - UPLOAD SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Do you wish to submit any documentation in support of your response? *

- Yes
- No

Please attach in email or provide hard copies.

Q11. SUBMIT YOUR RESPONSE

Please submit your response to

Email: PorpoiseSAC@snh.gov.uk

Mail:

Harbour porpoise SAC consultation

Great Glen House

Leachkin Rd

Inverness

IV3 8NW

If you have any comments on the consultation process please call on 01463 725 025

Privacy and data security statement

In the context of the harbour porpoise consultation 'Agencies' refers to any or all of the following government agencies and statutory nature conservation bodies:

Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Government, Marine Scotland, Joint Nature Conservation Council, Natural England, DEFRA, Northern Ireland Department of Environment and Natural Resources Wales.

Privacy & Data Protection

All Agencies will process all personal data in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Acts. Your personal data, i.e. name and email address will be held securely and only for as long as is detailed within the Agency's Retention Schedule. The Agency will not make any unauthorised disclosure of this information and will only share it with the other Agencies for the purposes of response analysis. We will also only contact you in relation to this consultation if you authorise us to do so.

Handling your response:

We need to know how you wish your response to be handled and, in particular, whether you are happy for your response to be made public. Accurate completion of **PART A - Respondent Information Form** will ensure that we treat your response appropriately.

Unless you have requested confidentiality, Agencies will normally publish the consultation responses we receive, although we will redact any part of a response where we believe it would be inappropriate to release someone's personal data or other sensitive information.

All respondents should be aware that the Agencies are subject to the provisions of Freedom of Information Acts and therefore are required to consider any request made to it under these Acts for information relating to responses made to this consultation.

Please note: If you wish your response to remain confidential, you must also state the reasons why.