

A scenic photograph of a coastal town built on a cliffside overlooking a harbor. A prominent white lighthouse with a black base stands on a stone wall. The sea is a deep blue, and a seagull is captured in flight against a clear sky. The foreground shows a sandy beach with a few people walking.

Protecting harbour porpoises in UK waters

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Outline



- Harbour porpoise
- Protection to date in the UK
- Legal challenge
- Next steps
- Recommendations



Harbour porpoise



- Up to 1.9m length
- Smallest and most abundant cetacean
- Coastal, shallow cold waters
- UK has large proportion of EU population

Threats from human activities:

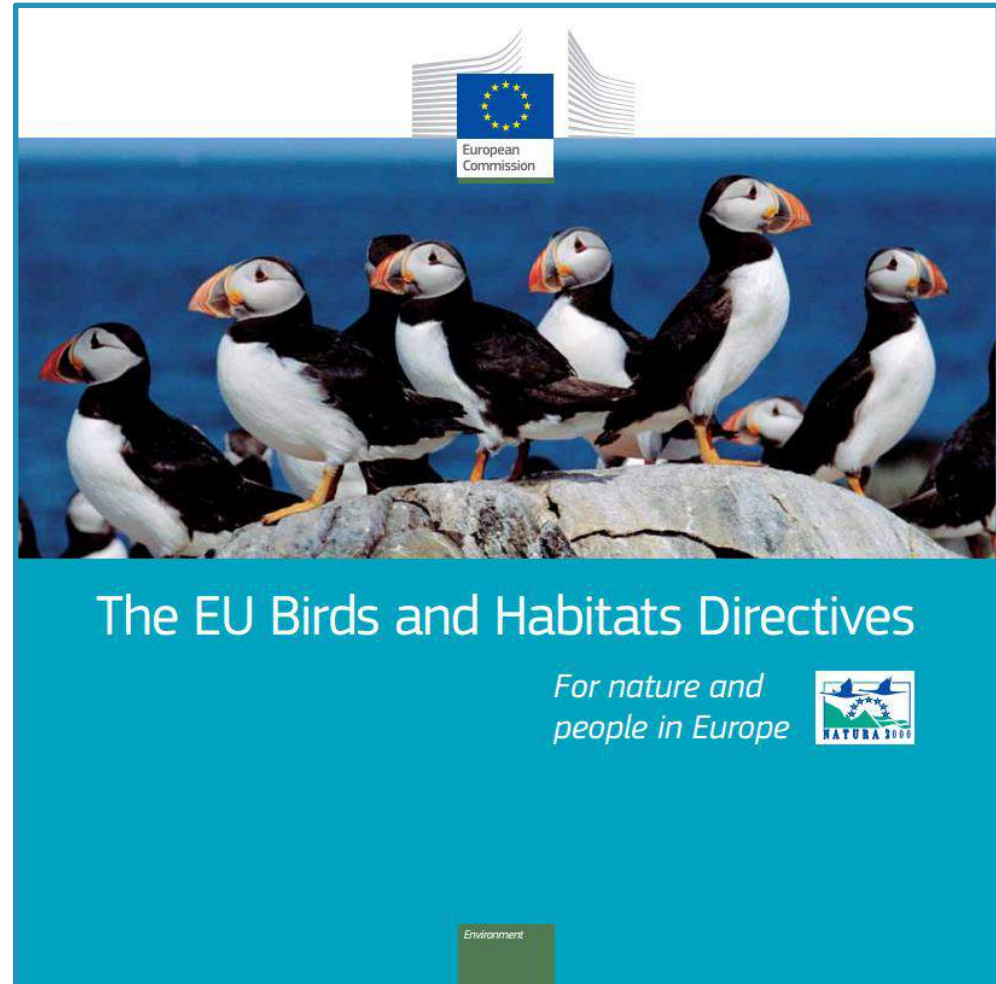
- Bycatch – accidental entanglement
 - Impacts from underwater noise
 - Pollution
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EU Habitats Directive (1992)



- Strict protection for Annex IV – cetaceans
- Designate SACs for Annex II species in proportion to their representation in UK waters
- Maintain favourable conservation status
- 1 SAC to date...



WWF report and complaint



- WWF 'shadow list' of SACs
- Complaint raised with European Commission
- Reasoned Opinion issued



The necessity of Management Options
for effective harbour porpoise
conservation in the UK

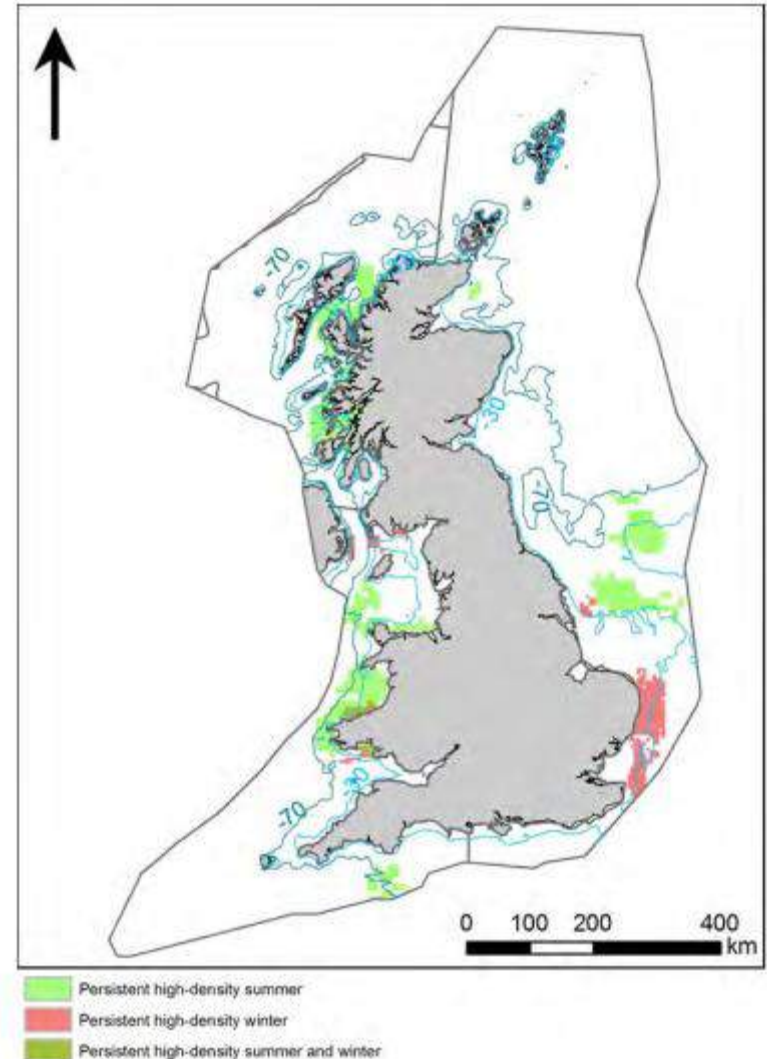
Case studies of emerging Areas of Concern
2015



Identifying SACs



- JNCC process
- Boat and land based*
- Identified 8 possible SACs in UK waters
- JNCC/NRW consultations January to April 2015



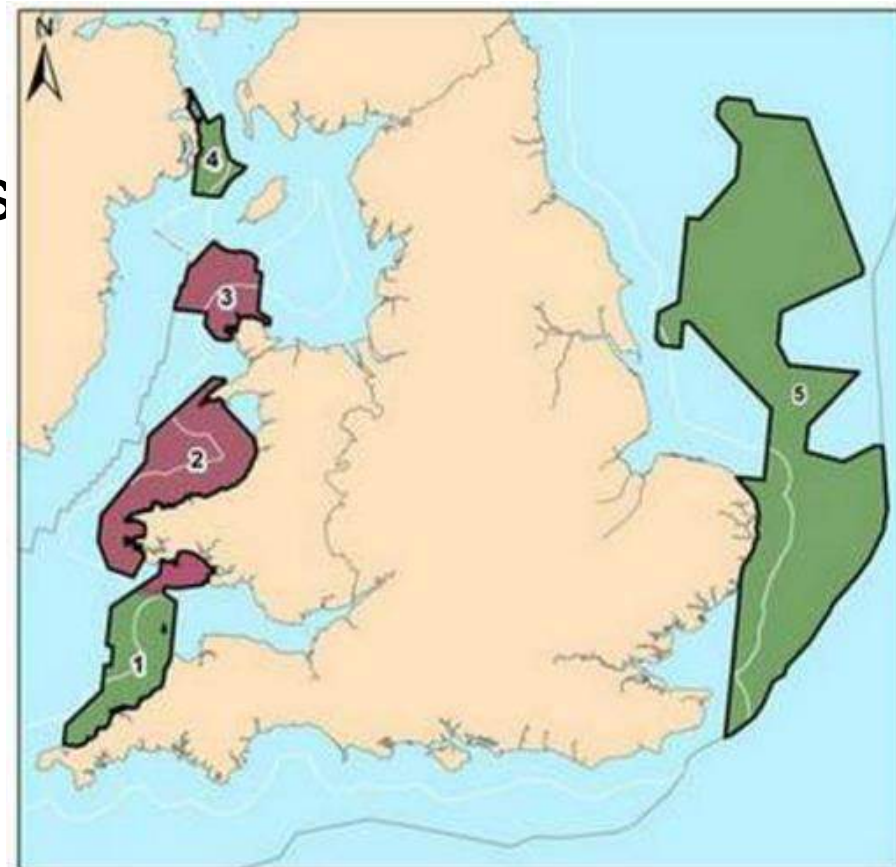
JNCC report 544 Heinnan & Skov 2015

JNCC report 543 Evans et al. 2015

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jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-7059



JNCC report 544 Heinnan & Skov 2015

JNCC report 543 Evans et al. 2015

WWF recommendations



- SACs designated based on best available evidence
- Effective management measures



What else?



- **Long-term commitment and investment in monitoring and enforcement of sites**, with the involvement and support of industry users and NGOs.
 - **A single, comprehensive, shared database on the spatial and temporal distribution and density of harbour porpoise**
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Protection throughout our seas



- A government-led **forum for pooling experience**, evidence and resources on harbour porpoise distribution and interactions with human activities.
 - **JNCC underwater noise protocol updated** to reflect advances in knowledge for noise avoidance, minimisation and mitigation.
 - European **Regulation 812/2004** revised effectively, and potentially extended to vessels under 12m.
 - Strategic role of Marine Planning and SEA
 - Regional coordination – North Sea
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Key messages



- Long overdue consultation on SACs
 - Sites needed across the UK to contribute to a coherent network
 - Wider conservation measures required to protect harbour porpoise
 - Coordinated and collaborative approach needed
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Thank you



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