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## **Proposed changes to three of Wales' Special Protection Areas for Birds**



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Key facts about the proposed changes

# **Proposed changes to three of Wales' Special Protection Areas (SPA) for Birds: Glannau Aberdaron ac Ynys Enlli/Aberdaron Coast and Bardsey Island SPA, Skokholm and Skomer SPA and Grassholm SPA**

## **Key facts about the proposed changes**

- A Special Protection Area (SPA) is an area of land, water or sea which has been identified as being of international importance for the breeding, feeding, wintering or the migration of rare, vulnerable or migratory species of birds. SPAs are European designated sites, classified under the European Wild Birds Directive.
- Natural Resources Wales is the principal adviser to the Welsh Government on the environment. We aim to ensure that SPAs are protected and managed for the conservation of their bird populations.
- Following scientific advice the Welsh Government proposes to:
  - extend the boundaries of three SPAs: Glannau Aberdaron ac Ynys Enlli/ Aberdaron Coast and Bardsey Island SPA, Skokholm and Skomer SPA and Grassholm SPA; and
  - modify the lists of bird species for Glannau Aberdaron ac Ynys Enlli/Aberdaron Coast and Bardsey Island SPA and Skokholm and Skomer SPA.
- The proposed boundary changes are to extend the existing sites to between 2km and 9km from the existing boundaries, depending on the site. This is to include the

areas around the nesting areas, where seabirds “loaf” or congregate during the breeding season.

- These proposals are not connected with Marine Conservation Zones. SPAs and Marine Conservation Zones are different designations, with different objectives and different legislation.
- Activities that don't have a detrimental effect on the bird populations of the SPAs are likely to continue as they do now, so you will still be able to walk on the beach, fly a kite, scuba dive and so on. There is no indication that current commercial or recreational fishing or boating poses a threat to the bird populations, so these proposals do not make new regulations or restrictions any more likely. In fact, we know that certain activities may have contributed to the success of the birds, e.g. certain farming practices on the Llŷn Peninsula which have created the right conditions to support the chough.
- The presence of SPAs does not automatically prohibit development and change – but there is a process to follow for any regulated activity to consider how proposals will affect an SPA.
- If a proposal is likely to have a significant negative effect on the bird populations of an SPA or their habitat then an assessment must be carried out. Permission can normally be granted if there won't be damage to the wildlife, or if damage can be avoided by changes to the original plans.
- In exceptional cases the Welsh Government may permit the development if there are imperative reasons of over-riding public interest and no satisfactory alternatives.

- SPAs represent some of our most important sites for biodiversity, and these three sites include some of Wales' most beautiful and valued landscapes, seascapes and islands, attracting many thousands of visitors every year and enhancing the quality of life for the people who live in and near them. The proposals are designed to ensure that the legal basis for protection of these areas for the benefit of present and future generations, is clear, robust and up to date, reflecting their local, national and international importance.

