

**EC Directive 2009/147/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds
Citation for Potential Changes to Special Protection Area (SPA)**

Name: Grassholm

Counties/Unitary Authorities: The SPA and potential extension lie within or adjacent to Pembrokeshire Unitary Authority and the landward area sits within Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. The seaward part of the proposed site lies entirely within UK territorial waters.

Boundary of the potential SPA: See potential SPA map. The proposed boundary lies mostly within 1 nautical mile of the island of Grassholm, with a small portion lying just over 1 nautical mile from the island. Only that area of the potential SPA below mean high water mark is co-incident with Pembrokeshire Marine / Sir Benfro Forol Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which was designated by the National Assembly for Wales in December 2004 under the 1992 EC Habitats and Species Directive (92/43/EEC), and the entire potential SPA is surrounded by the SAC site.

The new site includes the existing terrestrial areas designated as the Grassholm SPA by the Secretary of State for the Environment in January 1986 under the 1979 EC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC).

Size of SPA: The existing site and the potential SPA combined cover an area of 1744ha approximately.

Site description: Grassholm is a low-lying basalt island, situated approximately 18km off the south-west Wales coast. The island has limited terrestrial vegetation owing to the effects of the large number of breeding seabirds and the influence of salt spray and exposure, and its foreshore and sublittoral habitats are amongst the most wave and tide-exposed in Britain. From January to October Grassholm island supports the third largest breeding population of the north Atlantic gannet (*Morus bassanus*) in the world.

Gannets use the marine waters immediately adjacent to the colony for a number of essential activities, such as preening, bathing and displaying. The nesting seabirds using the site also feed both within and outside the SPA in surrounding marine areas, as well as more distantly.

Qualifying species: The site qualifies under **article 4.2** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) as it is used regularly by 1% or more of the biogeographical population of the following regularly occurring migratory species (other than those listed in Annex I) in any season:

Migratory species	Count and season	Period	% of subspecies or population
Gannet <i>Morus bassanus</i>	33,000 pairs – breeding season	Count as at 1994/5	12.5% of the breeding North Atlantic population

DATA: The 2001 SPA Review (Stroud *et al.*, 2001) updated the earlier assessment of UK SPAs published in 1992 in view of new information and possible gaps. The UK Government requested the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) to review the UK SPA network and to recommend a definitive list of sites, identified against explicit selection guidelines. This established a baseline throughout the UK against which the need for future change can be assessed. The data quoted above is taken from this 2001 review, which was based on the most current and comprehensive data that was available at the commencement of the review. They provide a comparative assessment and a fixed baseline, even though more recent data have since become available.

Principal bird data sources:

JOHNSTON, C.M., TURNBULL, C.G., REID, J.B. & WEBB, A. 2004. **Marine Natura 2000: Update on Progress in Marine Natura**. Paper to the Joint Committee Meeting, March 2004.

MCSORLEY, C.A., DEAN, B.J., WEBB, A. & REID, J.B. 2003. **Seabird use of waters adjacent to colonies: Implications for seaward extensions to existing seabird breeding colony SPAs**. JNCC Report, No. 329

MCSORLEY, C.A., WILSON L.J., DUNN, T.E., GRAY, C., DEAN, B.J., WEBB, A. & REID, J. B. 2008. **Manx shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* evening rafting behaviour around colonies on Skomer, Rum and Bardsey: its spatial extent and implications for recommending seaward boundary extensions to existing colony Special Protection Areas in the UK**. JNCC Report No. 406.

REID, J.B. & WEBB, A. 2005. **Marine Natura 2000 – Recommendations for the extension of existing seabird (colony) Special Protection Areas into the marine environment**. JNCC Committee paper 05 P14B.

STROUD, D.A., CHAMBERS, D., COOK, S., BUXTON, N., FRASER, B., CLEMENT, P., LEWIS, I., MCLEAN, I., BAKER, H. & WHITEHEAD, S. 2001. **The UK SPA network: its scope and content**. JNCC, Peterborough.

Volume 1: Rationale for the selection of sites. 90 pp.

Volume 2: Species accounts. 438 pp.

Volume 3: Site accounts. 392 pp.