

The UK MPA Network Features List

The purpose of the UK MPA Network Features list is to provide a standardised set of features of importance at the UK level, that can be used to provide information and support reporting of the features protected in UK MPAs. The list underpins the UK MPA stocktake, an exercise to collate a standardised dataset of the MPAs and the habitat and species features that they protect in UK waters. This information allows Defra and the Devolved Administrations to report on the status of the UK MPA network nationally and internationally.

1. Background

The UK MPA Features List was created by JNCC with the assistance of the relevant Country Nature Conservation Bodies (CNCBs). This list of features allows comparison across all of the MPAs that contribute to the UK MPA network. The list was developed using all 'listed' features for which MPAs are designated in the UK as a starting point. 'Listed feature' refers to those species, habitats, geology or assemblages which have been explicitly protected (or 'listed') in the relevant MPA designation orders or designation guidance. As the UK MPA features list needs to be standardised, it only includes the following types of features:

- EUNIS Level 3 features¹,
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC) (or equivalent)²,
- OSPAR Threatened & Declining species and habitats³
- Annex II species⁴ listed in the EU Habitats Directive,
- Annex I species listed in the EU Birds Directive and Regularly Occurring Migratory Species (ROMS)⁵

Features listed under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive and schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) are not included in the UK MPA Network Features list. In relation to UK BAP, this only concerns those features listed on UK BAP lists but *not* subsequently listed on the superseding NERC Act 2006 (or equivalent) list. When the UK MPA Network Features list is used as the basis for identifying features protected in UK MPAs (for the 'UK MPA stocktake'), Annex I habitat features under the EU Habitats Directive are listed using their EUNIS level 3 equivalent habitats, so it is not necessary for Annex I features to be included on the UK MPA Network Features list itself.

https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/birdsdirective/index_en.htm

¹ EUNIS Classification. Available here: https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/data/eunis-habitat-classification

Classification

² In 2006 the list of habitats and species under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) was superseded by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006)) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 in Scotland. Henceforth 'NERC' refers to lists of habitat and species for each country, these are detailed in Annex 1.

³ List of OSPAR Threatened &/or Declining species and habitats. Available here: https://www.ospar.org/work-areas/bdc/species-habitats/list-of-threatened-declining-species-habitats

⁴ List of EU Habitats Directive Annex II species. Available here: https://sac.jncc.gov.uk/species/

⁵ The EU Birds Directive. Available here:

In the instances where a feature is listed across multiple sources (from the list above), all names are included within the UK MPA Network Features list to ensure consistency with the relevant legislation (e.g. Intertidal chalk (NERC) / Littoral chalk communities (OSPAR)).

The bird species listed are those considered to be 'marine' species in a UK MPA context. For a bird to be considered 'marine', the species must be a feature of an MPA protecting an area of the marine environment that is depended upon by that species (i.e. an intertidal or subtidal area below mean high water (MHW) or mean high water Springs (MHWS) in Scotland). Protection of breeding colonies/sites above MHW(S) is not sufficient to be considered marine, even if a true seabird is being protected. Special Protection Area (SPA) colony extensions and marine SPAs specifically protect a marine area for birds and therefore the species using these areas qualify as MPA network features. As of August 2019, several SPAs are still in the process of designation and so the list includes species intended for protection (but not yet legally designated) in these potentially forthcoming sites.

As part of the UK MPA stocktake, it is the responsibility of the CNCBs to provide information on their MPAs, listed features and equivalent UK MPA Network Features and submit these to JNCC's UK MPA database. When there is not a direct equivalent of a listed feature on the UK MPA Network Features list, the CNCBs have translated their listed features into the equivalent correlating features. Features are translated on a case-by-case basis to account for their site-specific occurrence and protection. A listed feature can translate into multiple UK MPA Network Features, for example, an Annex I Large shallow inlet and bay could be affording protection to several EUNIS level 3 habitats. Most, but not all, listed features have an equivalent UK MPA Network Feature, for example SSSI features that are specific to one country may not be represented on the UK MPA Network Features list at all.

JNCC's UK MPA database holds information on both the listed features and equivalent UK MPA Network Features protected in UK MPAs. Where listed features represent a more detailed EUNIS level 4 and/or 5 habitat, these are subsumed into the higher level EUNIS level 3 MPA Network Features in the MPA stocktake dataset, but the more detailed listed feature information is still retained in the UK MPA database. The more detailed and expansive information captured in the UK MPA database is not necessarily excluded from future reporting and assessment.

2. The UK MPA Network Features List

UK MPA Feature list	Feature code / Species common name or description	EUNIS / OSPAR / Annex I (Birds Direc) / ROMS / Annex II (Habitats Direc) / NERC	Comments
	Hab	itat	
High energy littoral rock	A1.1	EUNIS Level 3	-
Moderate energy littoral rock	A1.2	EUNIS Level 3	-
Low energy littoral rock	A1.3	EUNIS Level 3	-
Littoral coarse sediment	A2.1	EUNIS Level 3	-
Littoral sand and muddy sand	A2.2	EUNIS Level 3	-
Littoral mud	A2.3	EUNIS Level 3	-
Littoral mixed sediments	A2.4	EUNIS Level 3	-
Coastal saltmarshes and saline reedbeds	A2.5	EUNIS Level 3	-
Littoral sediments dominated by aquatic angiosperms	A2.6	EUNIS Level 3	-
Littoral biogenic reefs	A2.7	EUNIS Level 3	-
Atlantic and Mediterranean high energy infralittoral rock	A3.1	EUNIS Level 3	-
Atlantic and Mediterranean moderate energy infralittoral rock	A3.2	EUNIS Level 3	-
Atlantic and Mediterranean low energy infralittoral rock	A3.3	EUNIS Level 3	-
Atlantic and Mediterranean high energy circalittoral rock	A4.1	EUNIS Level 3	-

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Atlantic and Mediterranean moderate energy circalittoral rock	A4.2	EUNIS Level 3	-
Atlantic and Mediterranean low energy circalittoral rock	A4.3	EUNIS Level 3	-
Sublittoral coarse sediment	A5.1	EUNIS Level 3	-
Sublittoral sand	A5.2	EUNIS Level 3	-
Sublittoral mud	A5.3	EUNIS Level 3	-
Sublittoral mixed sediments	A5.4	EUNIS Level 3	-
Sublittoral macrophyte-dominated sediment	A5.5	EUNIS Level 3	-
Sublittoral biogenic reefs	A5.6	EUNIS Level 3	-
Deep-sea rock and artificial hard substrata	A6.1	EUNIS Level 3	-
Deep-sea mixed substrata	A6.2	EUNIS Level 3	-
Deep-sea sand	A6.3	EUNIS Level 3	-
Deep-sea muddy sand	A6.4	EUNIS Level 3	-
Deep-sea mud	A6.5	EUNIS Level 3	-
Deep-sea bioherms	A6.6	EUNIS Level 3	-
Deep-sea trenches and canyons, channels, slope failures and slumps on the continental slope	A6.8	EUNIS Level 3	-
Blue mussel beds		NERC (all)	-
Carbonate mounds		OSPAR / NERC (S)	-

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Carbonate reefs		NERC (W)	-
Coral Gardens		OSPAR	-
Deep-sea sponge aggregations		OSPAR / NERC (S)	-
Estuarine rocky habitat		NERC (all)	-
File shell beds		NERC (S)	This feature is referred to as Flame shell beds in Scotland.
Fragile sponge and anthozoan communities on subtidal rocky habitats		NERC (all)	This feature is referred to as Northern sea fan and sponge communities in Scotland.
Intertidal Chalk / Littoral chalk communities		OSPAR / NERC (E & NI)	-
Intertidal <i>Mytilus edulis</i> beds on mixed and sandy sediments	Blue mussel	OSPAR	For UK analysis purposes, this feature will be encompassed by the overarching feature Blue mussel beds.
Intertidal underboulder/boulder communities		NERC (all)	-
Lophelia pertusa reefs		OSPAR	For UK analysis purposes, this feature will encompass the feature Cold-water coral reefs.
Maerl beds		OSPAR / NERC (all)	-
Modiolus modiolus beds	Horse mussel	OSPAR / NERC (all)	-
Mud habitats in deep water		NERC (all)	-
Musculus discors beds		NERC (W)	-
Ostrea edulis beds	Flat/native oyster	OSPAR	-

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Peat and clay exposures		NERC (E, W & NI)	-	
Sabellaria alveolata reefs		NERC (all)	-	
Sabellaria spinulosa reefs		OSPAR / NERC (E)	-	
Seagrass beds	Seagrass (inc <i>Ruppia</i> spps.)	NERC (all)	-	
Seamounts		OSPAR /NERC (S)	-	
Sea-pen and burrowing megafauna communities		OSPAR	-	
Serpulid reefs/aggregations		NERC (S)	-	
Sheltered muddy gravels		NERC (all)	-	
Subtidal chalk		NERC (E & NI)	-	
Subtidal mixed muddy sediments		NERC (W)	-	
Tide-swept channels		NERC (all)	-	
Zostera beds	Seagrass (Genus: <i>Zostera</i>)	OSPAR	For UK analysis purposes, this feature will be encompassed by the overarching feature Seagrass beds.	
	Species			
Alkmaria romijni	Tentacled lagoon worm	NERC (W)		

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Alosa alosa	Allis shad	OSPAR / Annex II / NERC (all)	-
Alosa fallax	Twaite shad	Annex II / NERC (all)	-
Ammodytes marinus	Raitt's (lesser) Sand-eel	NERC (all)	-
Ammodytes tobianus	Lesser Sand-eel	NERC (S)	-
Amphianthus dohrnii	Sea-fan Anemone	NERC (E)	-
Anguilla anguilla	European eel	OSPAR / NERC (all)	-
Anotrichium barbatum	Bearded red seaweed	NERC (E & W)	-
Anseropoda placenta	Goosefoot starfish	NERC (NI)	-
Arachnanthus sarsi	Scarce Tube-dwelling Anemone/ Burrowing sea anemone	NERC (S & NI)	-
Arctica islandica	Ocean quahog	OSPAR / NERC (W)	-
Armandia cirrhosa	Lagoon Sandworm	NERC (E)	-
Atelecyclus rotundatus	Crab	NERC (NI)	-
Atrina fragilis	Fan mussel	NERC (all)	-
Balaenoptera acutorostrata	Minke whale	NERC (all)	-
Cerastoderma glaucum	Brackish cockle	NERC (NI)	-

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Cetorhinus maximus	Basking shark	OSPAR / NERC (all)	-
Cruoria cruoriiformis	Red seaweed	NERC (E & W)	-
Dermocorynus montagnei (synonym: Grateloupia montagnei)	Red seaweed	NERC (E & W)	-
Desmarestia dresnayi (synonym: Desmarestia dudresnayi)	Brown seaweed	NERC (NI)	-
Dipturus batis (synonym: Raja batis, Dipturus flossada, Dipturus intermedia)	Common Skate complex	OSPAR / NERC (all)	-
Edwardsia timida	Burrowing anemone	NERC (E, W & NI)	-
Eunicella verrucosa	Pink sea-fan	NERC (E & W)	-
Funiculina quadrangularis	Tall Sea Pen	NERC (E & S)	-
Gammarus insensibilis	Lagoon Sand Shrimp	NERC (E)	-
Grampus griseus	Risso's Dolphin	NERC (all)	-
Halichoerus grypus	Grey seal	Annex II	-
Haliclystus auricula	Stalked jellyfish	NERC (E, W & NI)	-
Hippocampus guttulatus (synonym: Hippocampus ramulosus)	Long-snouted seahorse	OSPAR / NERC (E, S & W)	-
Hippocampus hippocampus	Short-snouted seahorse	OSPAR / NERC (E)	-
Hoplostethus atlanticus	Orange roughy	OSPAR / NERC (E & S)	-

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Labidoplax media	Burrowing sea cucumber	NERC (NI)	-
Lampetra fluviatilis	River Lamprey	Annex II	-
Leptopsammia pruvoti	Sunset Cup Coral	NERC (E)	-
Lithothamnion corallioides	Coral Maërl	NERC (E, S & W)	-
Lucernariopsis campanulata	Stalked jellyfish	NERC (E, W & NI)	-
Lucernariopsis cruxmelitensis	St John's Jellyfish/ a stalked jellyfish	NERC (E)	-
Lutra lutra	Otter	Annex II / NERC (all)	-
Mitella pollicipes (synonym: Pollicipes pollicipes)	Gooseneck Barnacle	NERC (E)	,
Molva dypterygia	Blue Ling	NERC (E & S)	-
Munida rugosa	Rugose squat lobster	NERC (NI)	-
Nematostella vectensis	Starlet Sea Anemone	NERC (E)	-
Osmerus eperlanus	Smelt (Sparling)	NERC (all)	-
Ostrea edulis	Flat/native oyster	OSPAR / NERC (all)	-
Pachycerianthus multiplicatus	Fireworks Anemone	NERC (S)	-
Padina pavonica	Peacock's tail	NERC (E & W)	-
Palinurus elephas	Crayfish, Crawfish or Spiny Lobster	NERC (all)	-

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Paracucumaria hyndmani	Hyndman's sea cucumber	NERC (NI)	-
Parazoanthus axinellae	Colonial anemone	NERC (NI)	-
Petromyzon marinus	Sea lamprey	OSPAR /Annex II / NERC (E, S & W)	-
Phoca vitulina	Common Seal (on BAP list as: Eastern Atlantic harbour seal/common Seal)	Annex II / NERC (E, S & NI)	-
Phocoena phocoena	Harbour porpoise	OSPAR / Annex II / NERC (all)	-
Phymatolithon calcareum	Common maerl	NERC (all)	-
Pleuronectes platessa	Plaice	NERC (E, W & NI)	-
Pycnoclavella stolonialis	pin head sea squirt	NERC (NI)	-
Raja brachyura	Blonde ray	NERC (W)	-
Raja clavata	Thornback skate / ray	OSPAR / NERC (W)	-
Raja montagui (synonym: Dipturus montagui)	Spotted Ray	OSPAR	-
Raja undulata	Undulate ray	NERC (E, W & NI)	-
Rostroraja alba	White skate	OSPAR / NERC (E & W)	-
Solea solea (synonym: Solea vulgaris)	Common Sole	NERC (E, W & NI)	-
Tenellia adspersa	Lagoon sea slug	NERC (E & W)	-

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Thyonidium drummondii	Sea cucumber	NERC (NI)	-
Tursiops truncatus	Bottlenose dolphin	Annex II /NERC (all)	-
Victorella pavida	Trembling Sea-mat	NERC (E)	-
	Bird Sp	pecies	
Alca torda	Razorbill	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Anas acuta	Northern Pintail	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Anas crecca	Eurasian Teal	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Anas penelope	Eurasian Wigeon	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Anser albifrons flavirostris (-)	Greenland White-fronted Goose	Annex I Birds Directive	-
Arenaria interpres	Ruddy Turnstone	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Aythya marila	Greater Scaup	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Branta bernicla	Brent Goose	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	- -
Bucephala clangula	Common Goldeneye	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-

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Calidris alba	Sanderling	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Calidris alpina	Dunlin	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Calidris canutus	Red Knot	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Calidris maritima	Purple Sandpiper	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Charadrius hiaticula	Ringed Plover	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Chroicocephalus ridibundus (+-)	Black-headed Gull	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Clangula hyemalis	Long-tailed Duck	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Egretta garzetta	Little Egret	Annex I Birds Directive	-
Fratercula arctica	Atlantic Puffin	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Fulmarus glacialis	Northern Fulmar	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Gavia arctica (+-)	Black-throated Diver	Annex I Birds Directive	-
Gavia immer (+-)	Great Northern Diver	Annex I Birds Directive	-

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Gavia stellata	Red-throated Diver	Annex I Birds Directive	-
Haematopus ostralegus	Eurasian Oystercatcher	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Hydrobates pelagicus	European Storm-Petrel	Annex I Birds Directive	-
Larus argentatus	Herring Gull	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Larus canus (+-)	Common Gull	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Larus fuscus graellsii	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Larus marinus	Great Black-backed Gull	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Larus melanocephalus	Mediterranean Gull	Annex I Birds Directive	-
Larus minutus	Little Gull	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Limosa lapponica	Bar-tailed Godwit	Annex I Birds Directive	
Limosa limosa	Black-tailed Godwit	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Melanitta fusca	Velvet Scoter	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-

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Melanitta nigra	Common Scoter	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Mergus merganser	Goosander	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Mergus serrator	Red-breasted Merganser	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Morus bassanus (synonym: Sula bassana)	Northern Gannet	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Numenius arquata (-)	Eurasian Curlew	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Numenius phaeopus (-)	Whimbrel	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Phalacrocorax aristotelis	European Shag	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Phalacrocorax carbo	Great Cormorant	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Platalea leucorodia	Eurasian Spoonbill	Annex I Birds Directive	-
Pluvialis squatarola	Grey Plover	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Podiceps auritus	Slavonian Grebe	Annex I Birds Directive	-
Podiceps cristatus	Great Crested Grebe	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-

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Puffinus puffinus	Manx Shearwater	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Recurvirostra avosetta (-)	Pied Avocet	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Rissa tridactyla	Black-legged kittiwake	OSPAR / Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Somateria mollissima	Common Eider	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Stercorarius parasiticus (+)	Arctic Skua	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Stercorarius skua (+)	Great Skua	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Sterna dougallii (+)	Roseate tern	OSPAR /Annex I Birds Directive	-
Sterna hirundo (+)	Common Tern	Annex I Birds Directive	-
Sterna paradisaea (+)	Arctic Tern	Annex I Birds Directive	-
Sterna sandvicensis (+)	Sandwich Tern	Annex I Birds Directive	-
Sternula albifrons (+)	Little Tern	Annex I Birds Directive	-
Tadorna tadorna	Common Shelduck	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Tringa nebularia (-)	Common Greenshank	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-

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Tringa totanus	Common Redshank	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-
Uria aalge	Common Guillemot	Regularly Occurring Migratory Species	-

- (-) Included as a network feature for non-breeding populations, but not included for breeding populations.
- (+) Included as a network feature, on the assumption that aggregations will be protected in forthcoming new marine SPAs or SPA extensions (yet to be designated).
- (+-) Included as a network feature for non-breeding populations, on the assumption that aggregations will be protected in forthcoming SPAs (yet to be designated).

Annex 1 – Background to the NERC Act 2006 and equivalent legislation

In 2006 the list of habitats and species under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) was superseded by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006)) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 in Scotland. Further information on the history of the UK BAP and the country-level biodiversity strategized that succeeded it can be found here: https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/uk-bap/.

For the purpose of developing the UK MPA Network Features list, 'NERC' features refer to those habitats and species on the following lists for each country:

- Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species which are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. The list was drawn up in consultation with Natural England, as required by the Act. Further information on the list of English habitats and species of principal importance is available at: https://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/habsandspeciesimportance.aspx
- Section 42 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006
 requires the National Assembly for Wales, in consultation with The Countryside Council
 for Wales, to publish, review, revise and act on lists of organisms of principal importance
 in Wales. This list is known as the Section 42 list of species and habitats of principal
 importance in Wales, and more information is available at:
 https://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/Environment-Wales-Act
- Section 2(4) of the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 requires Scottish Ministers
 to publish lists of species of fauna and flora and habitats considered to be of principle
 importance, to allow public bodies and office-holders to further the conservation of
 biodiversity in exercising their functions. The Scottish Biodiversity List is available at;
 https://www.nature.scot/scotlands-biodiversity/scottish-biodiversity-strategy/scottish-biodiversity-list
- Section 3(1) of the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011
 requires the Department of Environment to publish a list of species of flora and fauna
 and types of habitat which are of principal importance for the purpose of conserving
 biodiversity. The Northern Ireland Priority Habitats and Species lists are available at;
 https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-list-priority-habitats.