

Is-adran y Môr a Physgodfeydd / Marine & Fisheries Division



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Adam Cole-King
Senior International Sites Adviser
Natural Resources Wales
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October 2013

Dear Adam,

Re: Proposed Changes to Glannau Aberdaron ac Ynys Enlli/ Aberdaron Coast and Bardsey Island SPA, Skokholm and Skomer SPA, and Grassholm SPA

I am writing further to the email of 16 October 2013 where Natural Resources Wales (NRW) resubmitted departmental briefs for proposed changes to three Special Protection Areas; Glannau Aberdaron ac Ynys Enlli/ Aberdaron Coast and Bardsey Island SPA, Skokholm and Skomer SPA, and Grassholm SPA.

Your recommendations have been considered and I am writing to give you notice that the Welsh Government proposes to reclassify the three SPAs in line with the amended departmental briefs; to take forward the findings of the 2001 SPA Review and incorporate the important marine areas. This letter requests that NRW now undertakes a public consultation on the proposals to give everyone who might be affected by the changes, or has relevant scientific information the opportunity to comment.

The Welsh Government is proposing to amend the basis on which the Glannau Aberdaron ac Ynys Enlli/ Aberdaron Coast and Bardsey Island SPA is classified for the following reasons:

- The change in the number of qualifying species of breeding Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* (species listed on Annex 1 of the Birds Directive) and breeding Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* (regularly occurring migratory species) .
- The site regularly supports more than 1% of the GB population of non-breeding Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* (species listed on Annex 1 of the Birds Directive).
- Site specific data have demonstrated use and ecological dependence by the breeding population of Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* (regularly occurring migratory species) on the waters around Bardsey Island. A seaward extension of

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9km radius from the existing SPA boundary around Bardsey Island is proposed to encompass this marine area.

The Welsh Government is proposing to amend the basis on which the Skokholm and Skomer SPA is classified for the following reasons:

- The change in the number of qualifying species of breeding Storm petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* (species listed on Annex 1 of the Birds Directive), breeding Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* (regularly occurring migratory species) and breeding Puffin *Fratercula artica* (regularly occurring migratory species).
- The site regularly supports more than 1% of the GB populations of breeding Chough *Pyrhocorax pyrrhocorax* (species listed on Annex 1 of the Birds Directive).
- The 2001 SPA Review identified a population of breeding Short eared owl *Asio flammeus* (species listed on Annex 1 of the Birds Directive) as a qualifying feature.
- The site regularly supports more than 1% of the biogeographic population of breeding Lesser black backed gull *Larus fuscus* (regularly occurring migratory species).
- The site regularly supports more than 20,000 seabirds during the breeding season.
- The breeding population of Razorbill *Alca torda* (regularly occurring migratory species) no longer qualifies as a listed species but is a component species of the assemblage of seabirds.
- Site specific data have demonstrated use and ecological dependence by the breeding populations of Manx Shearwater and puffin (regularly occurring migratory species) as well as guillemot and razorbill (as part of the seabird assemblage) on the waters around Skokholm Island and Skomer Island. A seaward extension of 4km radius is proposed to the existing boundary of the Skokholm and Skomer SPA to encompass this marine area.

The Welsh Government is proposing to amend the basis on which the Grassholm SPA is classified for the following reasons:

- The change in the number of qualifying species of breeding Gannet *Morus bassanus* (regularly occurring migratory species).
- Targeted surveys have demonstrated use and ecological dependence by breeding populations of gannets *Morus bassanus* (regularly occurring migratory species) on the waters adjacent to their breeding colonies. A seaward extension of 2km radius is proposed to the existing boundary of the Grassholm SPA to encompass this marine area.

Case law has established that the decision on whether or not to classify (or designate) a site must be made on the basis of scientific information only. However, it is important for the Welsh Government to be aware of any social and economic impacts arising from the proposed changes and so we are in the process of undertaking an Impact Assessment. It is our intention for the Impact Assessment to form part of the consultation package. Therefore, a link to the relevant part of the Welsh Government website will be included on the NRW website alongside the other consultation papers.

Yours sincerely

Julian Bray
Marine Biodiversity & Conservation