

# A possible new marine Special Protection Area for birds within the Solent and along the Dorset Coast

**This Technical Information Note (TIN) has been prepared to help inform you about the development of recommendations for a new Special Protection Area (SPA) within the Solent and around the east Dorset coastline. If more detailed information is required about the process of classifying new SPAs or the species involved please refer to the specific TINs available on our website which are outlined below.**

## Background

There is already a large number of SPAs designated around parts of the English coastline and sea that are important for birds. However, the UK government has ongoing obligations under article 4.1 of the Birds Directive regarding the protection of species listed on Annex 1 of that Directive and regularly occurring migratory species, to “classify in particular the most suitable territories in number and size as special protection areas for the conservation of these species in the geographical sea and land area where this Directive applies”. In seeking to fulfil this obligation Natural England applies the selection criteria and advises Government on the sites that should be considered for designation and has:

- Reviewed information from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) based on survey work carried out in the waters around a number of seabird colonies.
- Assessed recent breeding seabird data within the Solent and Poole Harbour.

Based on this we have explored a number of potential options within the region. Having

selected the option that we consider to be the best, we are in the process of compiling a recommendation for the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) to consider. Our proposed recommendation is to:

- Create a new SPA within the Solent and around the Dorset coast for three Tern species; common, sandwich and little tern.



Tern nesting site, Langstone Harbour. © Louise MacCallum

## Special Protection Areas

Why are we developing recommendations for a new SPA in this area?

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There are internationally important populations of common, sandwich and little tern breeding at a number of terrestrial SPAs around the Solent and within Poole Harbour. This area is particularly important to the birds as much of the sea around their breeding colonies is the ideal habitat for their foraging which they do primarily by plunge diving for fish.

All seabird species are termed central place foragers. This means that they go out from and return to a central place (their nest) on every foraging trip. This constraint means that they have a limited foraging range and have a strong energetic incentive to forage as close to their colony as they can. Therefore, the waters around the existing areas of SPA where birds breed also need to be considered for protection.



Common tern, foraging within the Solent. © Louise MacCallum

### A new marine SPA for common, sandwich and little tern

Natural England is considering recommending a new marine SPA which we suggest is named the "Solent and Dorset Coast SPA". At present it is proposed that this new marine SPA will cover an area from Worbarrow Bay in the west, to Middleton-on-Sea in the east. It will have its landward boundary at Mean Low Water (MLW) where it abuts any existing SPA where terns are already a feature. Elsewhere the landward

boundary will be Mean High Water (MHW) so as to afford the birds protection within the intertidal; for example at Portsmouth harbour. The seaward extent of the new boundary is a composite of various foraging ranges of Tern species away from existing colonies within the area. The seaward extent is shown on the map below.

The SPA is for breeding terns which are only present within the area in summer for their breeding period.

### What happens next?

Natural England is responsible for recommending potential SPAs in English waters (out to 12 nautical miles) to Defra for classification.

Once we have developed initial site recommendations for a new SPA and have held informal discussions with stakeholders, we will submit proposals (approved by our Executive Board) as formal advice to Defra.

Towards the end of 2015, we hope to obtain Ministerial approval to start the formal public consultation process which will last for twelve weeks. After the consultation we will consider the responses and submit our final recommendations to Defra. It is Government's intention to make a decision regarding the site's classification by December 2016.

### How can you get involved?

We will be contacting a range of local stakeholders who may have an interest in the proposals from late July 2014 over an initial twelve week period. We would like to hear from you if:

- You wish to discuss further the scientific proposals.
- You hold any additional bird data that you would like to share with us to inform the recommendations.
- You have any information about your interests or activities in the area that could help us determine the potential socio-economic impacts of the classification.

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## Further information

Natural England Technical Information Notes are available to download from the Natural England website: [Establishing Marine Special Protection Areas](#). In particular see:

- TIN120: *Establishing marine Special Protection Areas*
- TIN135: *Sandwich Tern: species information for marine Special Protection Area consultations*
- TIN138: *Common Tern: species information for marine Special Protection Area consultations*
- TIN139: *Little Tern: species information for marine Special Protection Area consultations*

## If you want to know more

If you would like to know more about the proposals or ask any questions, please get in touch with:

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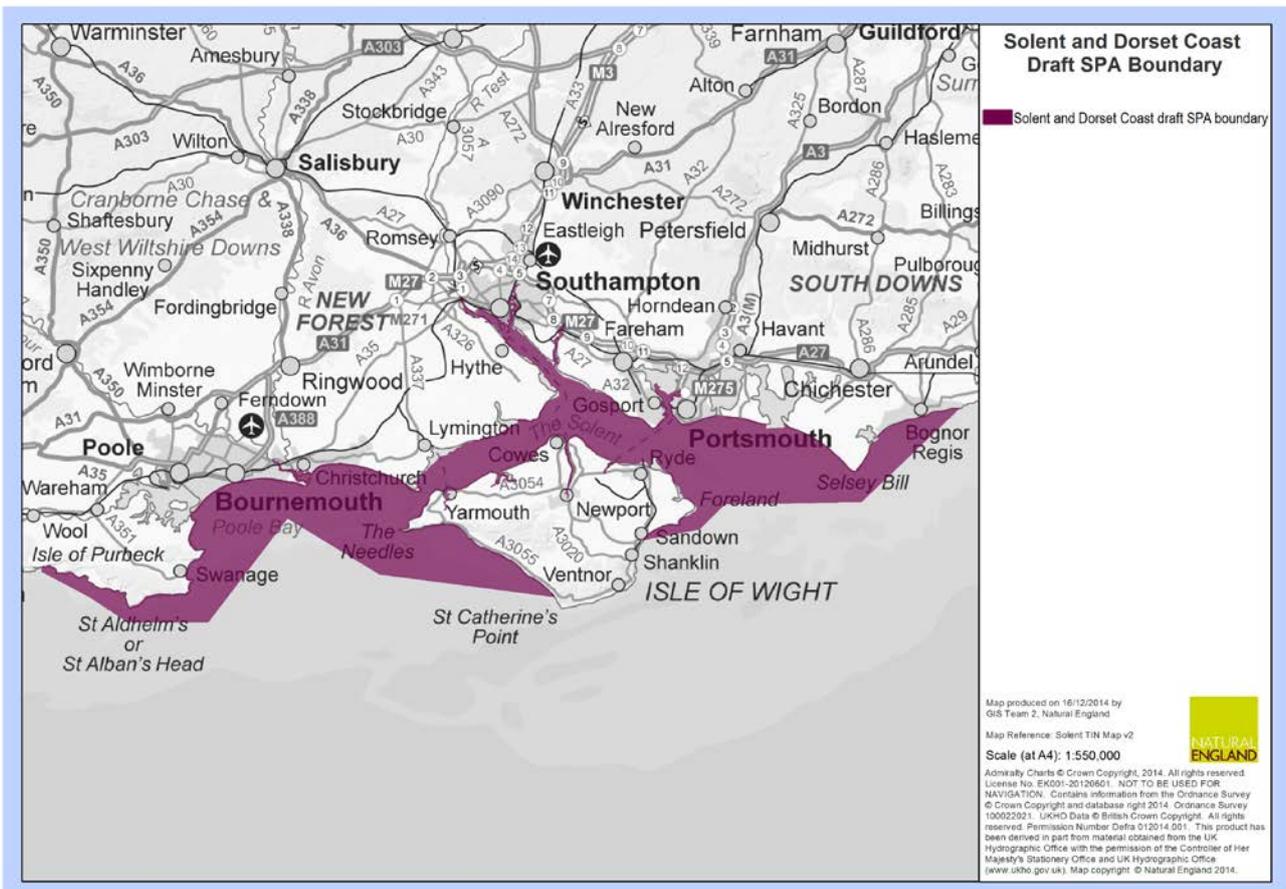
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Possible Solent and Dorset Coast Marine SPA boundary