

EC Directive 2009/147/EC on the Conservation of Wild Birds Special Protection Area (SPA)

Name: Bowland Fells

Unitary Authority/County: Lancaster, Ribble Valley, Wyre, Lancashire.

Consultation proposal: Bowland Fells is classified as a Special Protection Area because of its importance for the Annex I upland breeding birds hen harrier and merlin. It also supports an internationally important population of breeding lesser black-backed gulls which is proposed as an additional feature of the site. The SPA boundary is coincident with the boundary of Bowland Fells SSSI. For details of the SPA boundary see map.

Site description: The Bowland Fells SPA encompasses the main upland block within the area of Lancashire known as the Forest of Bowland. This is an outlier of the Pennine Range situated in the north of the county and to the east of the M6 motorway.

Most of this land, stretching from Clougha and Whitray Fell in the north to Parlick in the south, is over 250 m OD and rises sharply to a stream dissected plateau with the highest point being Ward's Stone at 561 m. The underlying rock is Millstone Grit beneath which lies Carboniferous Limestone. These extensive upland fells support the largest expanse of blanket bog and heather moorland in Lancashire and provide suitable habitat for a diverse upland breeding bird community which includes the Annex I species hen harrier and merlin for which the SPA is classified. The site also qualifies as it supports more than 1% of the biogeographic population of breeding lesser black-backed gull.

The most extensive plant communities within the site are dry heather dominated heathland, generally found on the steeper slopes, and heather *Calluna vulgaris* and cotton grass *Eriophorum vaginatum* dominated blanket bog which covers the tops of the ridges and shallow slopes.

Size of SPA: 16,002.3 ha

Qualifying species: The site qualifies under **article 4.1** of the Directive (2009/147/EC) as it is used regularly by 1% or more of the Great Britain populations of the following species listed in Annex I in any season:

Species	Count (period)	% of population	Interest type
Hen harrier <i>Circus cyaneus</i>	12 pairs 1986-1990	2.4% (GB population)	Annex I
Merlin <i>Falco columbarius</i>	21 pairs 1986-1990	3.2% (GB population)	Annex I

Proposed new interest: The site qualifies under **article 4.2** of the Directive (2009/147/EC) as it is used regularly by 1% or more of the biogeographical populations of the following regularly occurring migratory species (other than those listed in Annex I) in any season:

Species	Count (period)	% of population	Interest type
Lesser black-backed gull <i>Larus fuscus graellsii</i>	4575 pairs 2009-2012 ¹	2.5% (biogeographic population) ²	Migratory

¹Data from: i) Sowter, D. J., 2009-2011. Tarnbrook Fell gullery reports, unpublished, and ii) Coyle, S. P., 2012. The Tarnbrook Fell gullery report 2012 and Langden Head gullery report 2012, unpublished.

²Biogeographic reference population cited in Mundkur T., & Nagy S. eds 2012. Waterbird Population Estimates - Fifth edition. Wetlands International. Wageningen, The Netherlands.