

Link Freedom of Information request re MPAs – March 2024

In March 2024 Link submitted a Freedom of Information request to the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), requesting information on the percentage of the Marine Protected Area (MPA) network currently being managed effectively to achieve conservation objectives.

The response from JNCC, received on 25.03.24, included a series of charts, with the following explanatory information:

For context, JNCC are the statutory advisor to UK Government and the Devolved Administrations on matters pertaining to nature conservation in the marine environment beyond 12 nautical miles from the coast and out to the extent of the UK Exclusive Economic Zone. This is often referred to as 'offshore' waters and is where JNCC has its statutory advisory remit.

JNCC's response to your enquiry is therefore focussed on MPAs in the offshore marine environment for which JNCC have direct responsibility. Should you require information from within territorial waters (the coastal zone out the 12 nautical miles) please contact the relevant Country Nature Conservation Body

JNCC do not hold information on the percentage of the network currently being managed effectively to achieve its conservation objectives. However, JNCC do hold site level information for all MPAs in UK offshore waters and those that cross the offshore and territorial waters boundary on our Site Information Centres. Site Information Centres provide a publicly available 'one stop shop' for all aspects of MPA implementation; from information on the protected features of the site through to information on progression towards management and as a platform for us to deliver our site-level conservation advice.

JNCC do collate the UK level response once every two years as part of the OSPAR (Oslo-Paris Convention) data call pertaining to OSPAR MPA management status information. Note the OSPAR data call to Governments of Contracting Parties to the Convention is annual to collect new or updated MPA nominations. However, the MPA management status information is only collected every two years. The MPA management status reporting asks the responders to answer four questions with a brief narrative justifying the response in relation to the effective implementation of MPAs:

- 1) Is MPA management information documented?*
- 2) Are the measures considered necessary to achieve the conservation objectives of the site being implemented?*
- 3) Is monitoring in place to assess whether measures are working?*
- 4) Is the MPA moving towards or has it reached its conservation objectives?*

Guidance has been prepared by OSPAR to support each Contracting Party, including the UK, in providing a consistent response to these questions and can be found on the OSPAR website.

In response to this enquiry we have attached the collated UK level dataset (202412-Annex_D_Addendum_3_Management_UK-REDACTED.xlsx), correct as of 1 October 2023 when the last response was submitted to the OSPAR Secretariat with respect to the annual OSPAR data call.

The dataset attached to the response included the following chart, showing how many MPAs in the network positively met each OSPAR questions in 2016, 2018 and 2023:

barometer	2016		2018		2021		2023		% Yes and Partial			
	Yes	Yes and Partial	Yes	Yes and Partial	Yes	Yes and Partial	Yes	Yes and Partial	2016	2018	2021	2023
Is the MPA management documented ?	164	226	191	311	250	369	252	389	83.39483	100	97.36148	100
Are the measures to achieve the conservation objectives being implemented ?	27	225	36	311	47	345	49	355	83.02583	100	91.02902	91.25964
Is monitoring in place to assess if measures are working ?	36	213	31	291	43	329	37	344	78.59779	93.56913	86.80739	88.43188
Is the MPA moving towards its conservation objectives ?	40	131	55	187	81	226	83	242	48.33948	60.12862	59.63061	62.2108

Link notes the very low number of MPAs with full monitoring in place in 2023 (37 out of 377).

For more information, contact matt@wcl.org.uk

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