

Annex 2 Special Protection Area (SPA) Citation

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

Name: Farne Islands

Counties/Unitary Authorities: Northumberland, North Tyneside

Boundary of the SPA:

The boundary is defined by the Mean Low Water Mark.

Size of SPA: The SPA covers an area of 101.86 ha.

Site description:

The Farne Islands are a group of low-lying islands 2-6 km off the coast of Northumberland in north-east England. They form the easternmost outcroppings of the Great Whin Sill of quartz dolerite, and although some islands retain cappings of boulder clay or peaty deposits, vegetation is limited to pioneer communities. Vegetation is further affected by the maritime conditions and large numbers of seabirds. The islands are important as nesting areas for these birds, especially terns, gulls and auks. The seabirds feed outside the SPA in nearby waters, as well as more distantly in the North Sea.

Qualifying species:

The site qualifies under **Article 4** of the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) for the following reasons (summarised in Table 1):

- The site regularly supports more than 1% of the GB populations of four species listed in Annex I of the EC Birds Directive. Therefore, the site qualifies for SPA classification in accordance with the UK SPA selection guidelines (stage 1.1).
- The site regularly supports more than 1% of the biogeographical population of one regularly occurring migratory species not listed in Annex I of the EC Birds Directive. Therefore, the site qualifies for SPA designation in accordance with the UK SPA selection guidelines (stage 1.2).

Table 1 Summary of qualifying ornithological interest in the Farne Islands SPA

Feature	Count (period)	% of subspecies or population	Interest type
Common tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>	183 pairs 366 individuals (Farne Islands SPA citation 1985) ¹	1.69% of GB population (1985) ⁴	Annex 1
Arctic tern <i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	2,003 pairs 4,006 individuals (2010-2014) ²	3.78% of GB population ⁵	Annex 1
Roseate tern <i>Sterna dougallii</i>	13 pairs 26 individuals	1.88% of GB population	Annex 1

Feature	Count (period)	% of subspecies or population	Interest type
	(Farne Islands SPA citation 1985) ¹	(1985) ⁶	
Sandwich tern <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	862 pairs 1,724 individuals (2010-2014) ²	7.84% of GB population ⁵	Annex 1
Common guillemot <i>Uria aalge</i>	32,875 pairs 65,751 individuals (2010-2014) ^{2,3}	1.72% of <i>aalge</i> biogeographic population ⁷	Regularly occurring migrant

¹ Data from: Farne Islands SPA citation (Available from: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4521874151178240?category=4698884316069888>) as recent data contemporary data (2010-2014) reveal that these species are no longer present at the site in qualifying numbers. It is not clear whether anthropogenic influences have affected the populations at the site. Defra policy indicates that in these circumstances the feature should be retained until such time as the reasons for the reduction in population can be established.

² Data from: Seabird Monitoring Programme (SMP) and colony managers (pairs multiplied by 2 to arrive at breeding adults; this rule applies to all species listed within the table, with the exception of common guillemot).

³ Common guillemots are counted as “individuals on land”; this is multiplied by a correction factor of 0.67 (Harris 1989) to translate to breeding pairs and multiplied by 2 to yield an estimate of the number of breeding adult individuals.

⁴ GB breeding population (10,800 pairs) derived from data Operation Seafarer (Cramp *et al.* 1974). This is assumed to be the relevant GB breeding population at the time of classification of the existing Farne Islands SPA in 1985. Current five year peak mean (2010-2014) = 97 pairs (0.97% GB breeding population of 10,000 pairs (Musgrove *et al.* 2013)).

⁵ GB breeding populations derived from Musgrove *et al.* (2013)

⁶ GB breeding population (691 pairs) derived from data Operation Seafarer (Cramp *et al.* 1974). This is assumed to be the relevant GB breeding population at the time of classification of the existing Farne Islands SPA in 1985. Current five year peak mean (2010-2014) = 0 pairs.

⁷ Birds breeding at the Farne Islands are assumed to belong to the nominate race of *Uria aalge aalge* in line with UK SPA and Ramsar Scientific Working Group (2014) paper: *International Population Estimates for some seabird species* in which a population midpoint estimate of 1,909,417 pairs (rounded to 3,820,000 individuals) is given.

Assemblage qualification:

The site qualifies under **Article 4.2** of the Directive (2009/147/EC) as it used regularly by over 20,000 seabirds in any season:

During the breeding season (2010-2014)¹, the area supports 163,819 individual seabirds including the 5 qualifying species listed above plus: Atlantic puffin (76,798 breeding adults), great cormorant (230 breeding adults), European shag (1,677 breeding adults) and black-legged kittiwake (8,241 breeding adults) all of which are present in nationally important numbers (6.62%, 1.37%, 3.11% and 1.11% of the GB breeding populations respectively) and therefore are named as key assemblage components.

¹ With exception of Atlantic Puffin for which censuses in 2008 and 2013 have been used. Due to the complexity and costs of Atlantic puffin burrow surveys these are not carried out yearly by all colony managers, but are surveyed as a minimum on a 5-yearly basis as part of a UK-wide puffin census. Given this constraint to the availability of population estimates for puffins, the most recent of these censuses at the Farne Islands in 2008 and 2013 have been used in our assessment.

Principal bird data sources

Colony counts from JNCC Seabird Monitoring Programme contributed by colony managers: National Trust, supplemented by most up to date counts in some instances from those colony managers.