

Save our Ocean giants

The protected areas we need
for dolphins, whales and basking sharks



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#oceangiants

Megafauna such as whales, dolphins and basking sharks are the UK's most spectacular marine wildlife.

Long-lived and slow to reproduce, they are acutely vulnerable to pollution, industrial fishing and other human activities.

We can protect them in the few special places where they gather to eat, breed and socialise.

RISSO'S DOLPHIN, NIRO CLEAR



We are campaigning for the creation of 17 Marine Protected Areas around England and Wales to help save whales, dolphins and basking sharks

The areas at sea we want to protect

After many years of campaigning by The Wildlife Trusts and others, the UK government has finally begun protecting areas at sea so that marine wildlife and habitats can recover from decades of damage, decline and over-exploitation.

It's long overdue but these new Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) only protect habitats and wildlife on the seabed. It's a different story for our marine 'megafauna' – the 29 species of whales, dolphins and porpoises, and the basking sharks – regularly found around our coast. All are at risk from damaging activities and some species are in decline. But currently there are no areas of English waters protected for them, and only one in Wales.

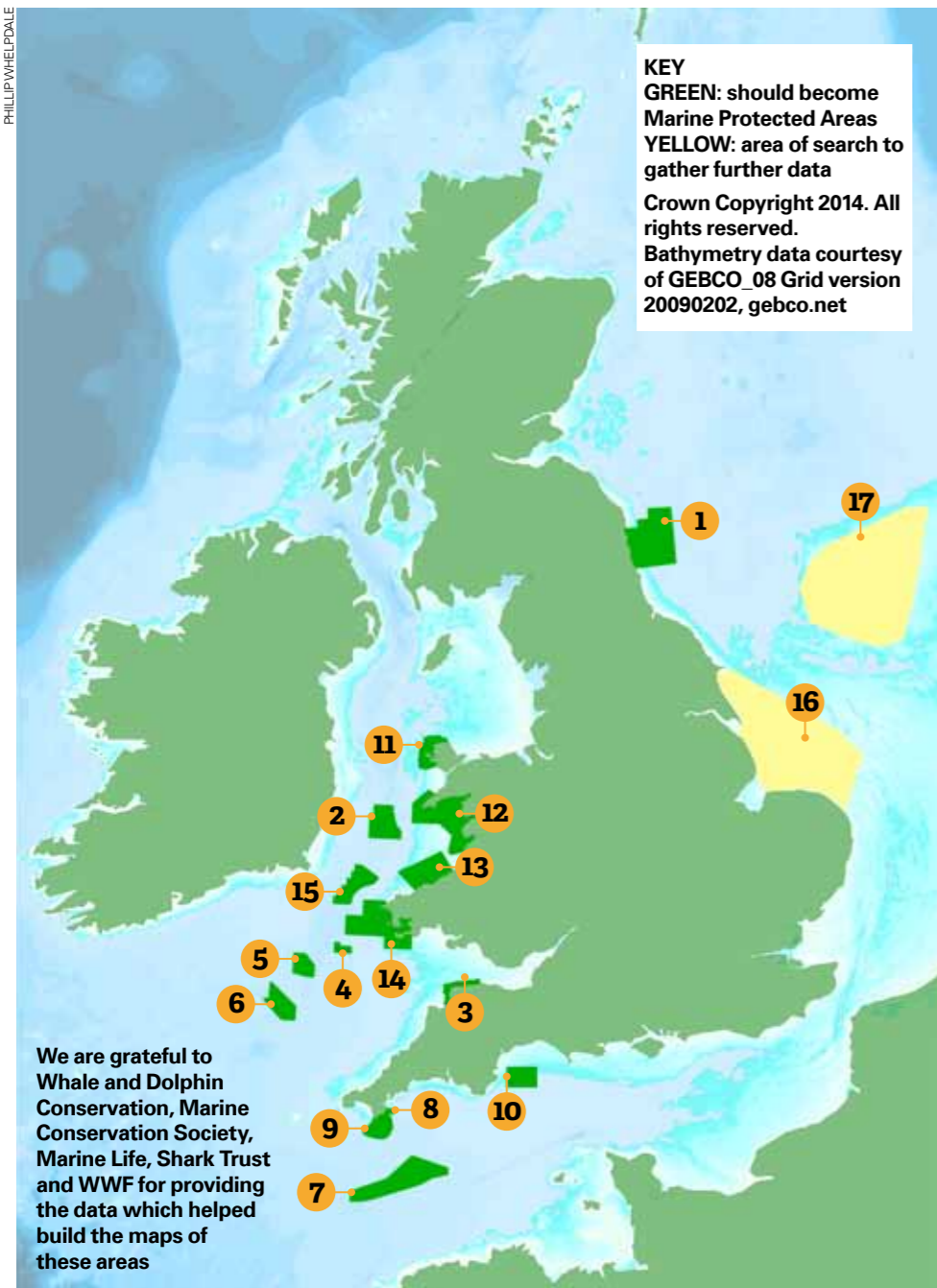
We want to change that. The Wildlife Trusts are proposing 17 areas around England and Wales, which should become protected areas especially for whales,

basking sharks and dolphins. These are the places where these charismatic animals gather to feed, breed and socialise, and are worth protecting.

The 17 initial 'megafauna hotspots' we have identified are based on combining data gathered by The Wildlife Trusts with publicly available data. There will be other important areas for which data is not yet available. So what we are proposing here is step one. More research is needed to ensure all the right areas have the protection they need.

Pollution, some types of fishing and industrial development at sea also affect our ocean giants and work is underway to address this impact. But protecting our megafauna hotspots and their ecosystem processes is an important start.

You can read a full technical report at wildlifetrusts.org/oceangiants



1 Farnes, Coquet St Mary's

Currently: Proposed MPAs **We propose:** merge to include area between, add new species: minke whale, white-beaked dolphin, harbour porpoise



Many whale and dolphin species spend long periods in this proposed area, including white-beaked dolphin, harbour porpoise, and humpback and minke whale. Orca and sperm whale have also been recorded in recent years. New research shows white-beaked dolphins range more widely around Farnes East than was first thought, and probably calve within Coquet St Marys, so we believe this MPA should expand to include both sites and the waters in between.

2 Mid St George's Channel

Currently: Proposed MPA **We propose:** add new species: common dolphin



Seasonal warming and cooling here create thermal fronts which lead to plant plankton blooms – the source of the marine food chain. The result is a wide range of wildlife. On the seabed (largely sand and gravel) are annelid worms, clams and crustaceans. Cobbled areas support delicate creatures such as sea fans, anemones and sponges. The channel is also an important feeding ground for passing whales and particularly common dolphins.

3 Bideford to Foreland

Currently: Proposed MPA **We propose:** boundary extension, add new species: harbour porpoise



This site is being considered for designation as an MPA. However, we believe the boundary should be altered to include a new area which is important for harbour porpoises. This is based on work by Devon Biodiversity Records Centre and data from harbour porpoise research carried out along the North Devon coast. Harbour porpoises are visible from headlands along the coast, and mothers with calves are frequently seen.

4 5 6 Celtic Deep sites

Currently: Proposed MPAs **We propose:** add new species: common dolphin, fin whale



Comprises East of Celtic Deep (4), Celtic Deep (5) and South of Celtic Deep (6). In (4), summer frontal systems attract whales, dolphins and seabirds; seabirds go on to use the area all year. (5) recently saw one of the largest known gatherings of fin whales in British waters while (6) borders the UK continental shelf limit. We recommend that all three sites should be designated to protect common dolphins and fin whales.

7 Western Channel

Currently: Proposed MPA **We propose:** add new species: common dolphin, humpback, fin whale



Western Channel's southern boundary follows the UK continental shelf limit and therefore attracts open ocean species such as humpback and fin whales. Productive frontal systems make this a hotspot for marine life, bringing together many wide-ranging species including seabirds, whales and dolphins, particularly the common dolphin. A mosaic of habitats support seafloor creatures too, such as bivalve molluscs, polychaete worms and echinoderms.

8 Manacles

Currently: MPA **We propose:** boundary extension, add new species: basking shark, harbour porpoise, seasonally minke whale



The Manacles was designated as an MPA for its rich invertebrate life. It's also important for fish such as bass and mackerel, and acoustic data collected by Cornwall Wildlife Trust shows a great deal of harbour porpoise activity. Minke whales use the area seasonally to feed. And there is also very good evidence (from Seaquest South West and the Marine Strandings Network) that this is one of the UK's basking shark hotspots.

9 Lizard, Western Channel

Currently: unprotected **We propose:** designate as a new MPA for basking shark, common and bottlenose dolphin, and porpoise



The sea here is renowned for being rich in biodiversity – it is one of the UK's top four whale and dolphin hotspots, with 14 species recorded. The most frequent are harbour porpoises, and common and bottlenose dolphins, including the famous Cornish inshore pod which has been monitored since it first appeared in 1991. Small whales and dolphins in particular use the area to feed. Fin, minke and killer whales also visit, as do basking sharks.

10 Lyme Bay

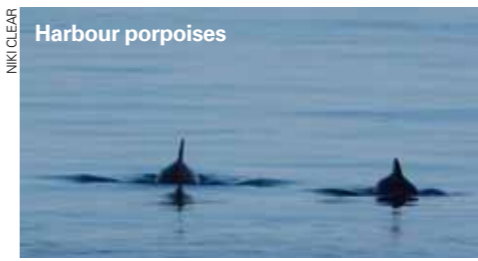
Currently: unprotected **We propose:** designate as a new MPA for harbour porpoise, common dolphin and white-beaked dolphin



Standing apart from the currently protected Lyme Bay reefs, this site sits in the south west portion of the bay, which is known for its tidal fronts and productivity. It is a nationally important foraging area for white-beaked dolphins, which spend most of their time here. There are also important numbers of harbour porpoise, Manx and balearic shearwater, guillemot, razorbill, common dolphin, bottlenose dolphin, minke whale, basking shark, great skua and gannet.

11 12 13 14 Welsh MPAs

Currently: one unprotected, three MPAs **We propose:** all need to be designated as MPAs for harbour porpoise, and 12 for Risso's dolphin too



There are four areas off the Welsh coast: North and West Coasts of Anglesey (11, a proposed MPA); Lleyn Peninsula and the Sarnau (12, a Special Area of Conservation); Cardigan Bay (13, also an SAC); and Pembrokeshire Marine (14, SAC). The waters here provide the strong tidal races and eddies that porpoises are known to forage in. At least some of these sites are also used for social, mating and nursing purposes.

15 North of Celtic Deep

Currently: unprotected. **We propose:** designate as a new MPA for common dolphin



The area provides a classic example of upwelling as nutrient-rich water rises to the surface, feeding the food chain. St George's Channel within the Celtic Deep area is a critical habitat for the common dolphin. Individuals congregate there in large numbers between May to November to feed and calve. The Government has promised that areas of sea can be considered as MPAs if there is clear evidence that it would benefit a highly mobile species, such as dolphins.

16 Eastern Coastline, inc. Silver Pit

Currently: unprotected, **We propose:** search



Observations at coastal sites such as Cromer, Spurn Head, and Bempton/Flamborough Head show numbers of harbour porpoises peaking at the start of the breeding season (April – May), with newborns regularly observed. The Eastern Coastline has harbour porpoises all year round, with highest numbers during calving in spring and early summer. We recommend that the area of Eastern coastline, including Silver Pit, is investigated further as an area of search.

17 Dogger Bank

Currently: MPA, **We propose:** it should become an area of search to gather further data



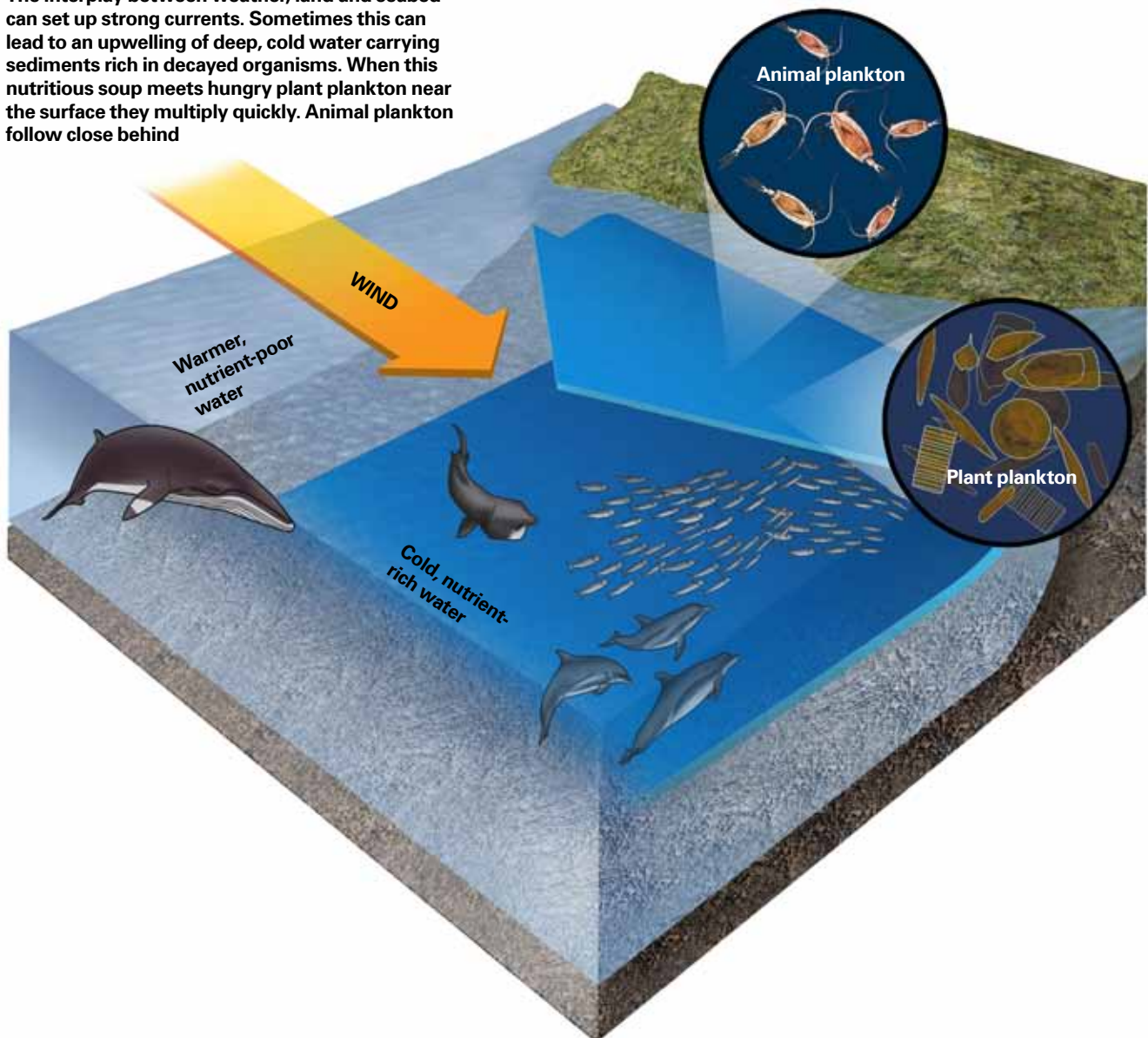
At 17-70 metres, Dogger Bank is the UK's largest open area of shallow water. Ecologically diverse, it has a rich variety of marine species and habitats. It has good numbers of harbour porpoise, and white-beaked dolphins have been shown to overwinter here. German and Dutch aerial surveys have already led to inclusion of harbour porpoises as a designated feature of the MPA. So far this has not happened in the UK portion.

Why these areas are special

All of these areas share one characteristic: they are highly productive. Productivity in the ocean happens in areas of upwellings or frontal systems, where a body of nutrient-rich water meets a body of nutrient-poor water. The resulting bloom of plant plankton kicks off the food chain, attracting animal plankton, then fish – and finally the ocean giants.

How the sea creates areas of plenty

The interplay between weather, land and seabed can set up strong currents. Sometimes this can lead to an upwelling of deep, cold water carrying sediments rich in decayed organisms. When this nutritious soup meets hungry plant plankton near the surface they multiply quickly. Animal plankton follow close behind



What you can do to help

Support our campaign for protecting UK waters where whales, sharks and dolphins live.

1. Sign our e-petition

It's time to start protecting areas at sea for whales, dolphins and basking sharks. Add your name and next year we'll present your signatures to Government. wtru.st/act4giants

2. Share our campaign

Help raise awareness. Use [#act4giants](https://twitter.com/act4giants), [#oceangiants](https://twitter.com/oceangiants) and our link wtru.st/act4giants

3. Read the full report

Download the full megafauna hotspots technical report wildlifetrusts.org/oceangiants

4. Support our work

Several Wildlife Trusts are undertaking important marine conservation projects to protect whales, dolphins and basking sharks. Find out more wildlifetrusts.org/oceangiants

The Wildlife Trusts

With more than 800,000 members, The Wildlife Trusts are the biggest grassroots organisation in the UK dedicated to the protection and restoration of all wildlife on land and sea.

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