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## Marine Bird Special Protection Areas consultation

The Scottish Wildlife Trust welcomes the opportunity to comment on the 10 proposed SPAs in Scotland's inshore waters. In line with our 25-year vision for a *'network of healthy, resilient ecosystems supporting expanding communities of native species across large areas of Scotland's land, water and seas'*, the Trust considers the implementation of the 10 pSPAs will provide a valuable contribution to the coherence of Europe's Natura 2000 network of protected areas and also to Scotland's MPA network. Therefore, **the Trust strongly supports the proposal.**

The Trust welcomes the continued commitment of the Scottish Government to identifying and protecting ecologically important sites in Scotland's marine environment and safeguarding marine biodiversity through the implementation of EU legislation. Scotland's coastal habitats support a wide-ranging suite of internationally important seabird populations that are currently facing significant declines and the Trust considers the pSPAs will play a valuable role in the recovery of these populations. The protection of these sites through the EU Birds Directive will assist with identifying and mitigating potentially damaging activities and provide the foundations for improving the ecological status of Scotland's coastal waters.

The pSPAs signify an important step in protecting Scotland's and Europe's seabird populations, although the protection of offshore foraging areas is still lacking. The Trust is pleased to hear that four additional offshore pSPAs have been agreed by the UK Government and the Scottish Government will be consulting on these in the future. We hope that Scottish Ministers will continue to demonstrate their commitment to EU legislation by proceeding with the consultation on the four offshore pSPAs without delay. The absence of the Solway Firth pSPA in the consultation, due to delays in England, is disappointing and the Trust hopes that a resolution between DEFRA and the Scottish Government can be reached and the consultation is advanced without further delay.

Please could you keep the Trust informed of how this consultation progresses.

Yours sincerely,

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