

Defra has now published details of the second tranche of Marine Conservation Zones, in which 23 sites will be given protection. This will extend the country's 'Blue Belt' to cover over 20% of English waters and providing vital protection for the diverse array of wildlife in our seas.

More information on these 23 sites can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/marine-conservation-zone-designations-in-england>.

A government consultation preceded these designations. Responses can be seen here, along with the government replies to these responses:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/marine-conservation-zones-second-tranche-of-designations>.

This announcement supports further work by government to protect the marine environment. Natural England and JNCC will be publishing consultations later this month on Special Areas of Conservation for harbour porpoise and further Special Protection Areas to protect feeding and bathing areas used by birds.

The government are planning a comprehensive third and final tranche for designation in 2018, following a public consultation in 2017. The government will continue to work with stakeholders as they develop their plans to complete the 'Blue Belt'.