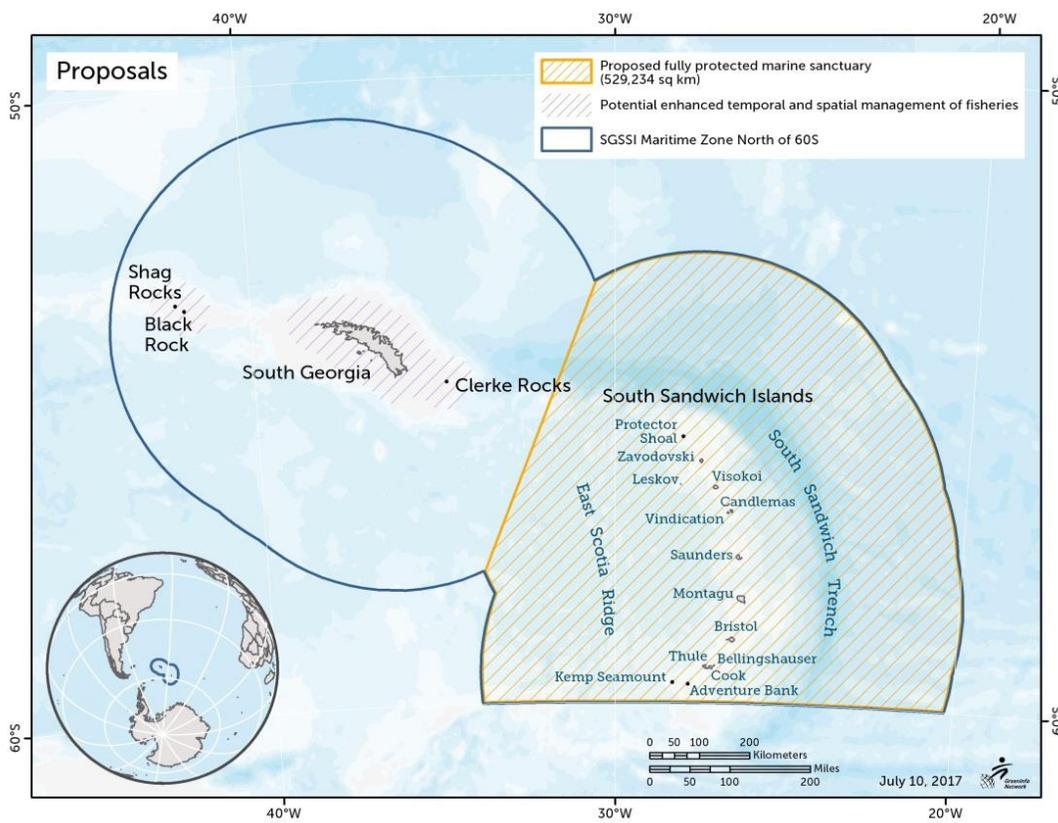


## Great British Oceans

### Campaign to Fully-Protect the South Sandwich Islands

#### Key messages

- The South Sandwich Islands are near pristine and host globally significant wildlife, including approximately 10% of the world's penguins. The world's largest chinstrap penguin colony (1.5 million pairs) are found on one of the islands, Zavodovski [1997 numbers]<sup>i</sup>.
- The Great British Oceans coalition is calling for full protection from extractive practices, of the waters surrounding the South Sandwich Islands, an area twice the size of the UK mainland.
- Protecting these important habitats will allow wildlife to continue to thrive and ensure species are not lost before they have even been discovered.
- The UK Government can fully protect this outstanding area within existing domestic legislation – enabling them to meet internationally accepted Marine Protected Area (MPA) standards<sup>ii</sup>.
- This proposal will provide an important complement to the well managed South Georgia fisheries to the north.
- Large, fully protected marine reserves, when implemented effectively, are increasingly considered by scientists and policy makers as a key tool<sup>iii</sup> for addressing many challenges to ocean health such as overfishing, pollution and climate change.



Proposed no-take marine protected area around the South Sandwich Islands



GREENPEACE



## Great British Oceans rationale

There are several reasons why the Great British Oceans coalition supports full protection of the South Sandwich Islands in the southern Atlantic Ocean:

- The South Sandwich Islands have been identified as an important habitat for Antarctic marine predators including seabirds and cetaceans. For example, they host the world's largest chinstrap penguin colony (1.5 million breeding pairs, based on 1997 figures<sup>i</sup>), approximately 95,000 breeding pairs of macaroni penguins and more than a hundred thousand breeding pairs of Adélie penguins.
- Designation of the South Sandwich Islands as a large, fully protected area in the South Atlantic will provide a long-term sanctuary for recovering and migratory species, including whales.
- The South Sandwich Island arc<sup>iv</sup> and associated sea floor trench system<sup>v</sup> is exceptional in the Antarctic and may host species which are unique or rare elsewhere.
- Other habitats known to be associated with high biodiversity, especially seamounts, are known to occur within the waters of the South Sandwich Islands<sup>i</sup>.
- The islands occur on a biogeographic boundary representing the northern-most limit of some Antarctic species and southern-most limit of sub-Antarctic / warmer water species<sup>i</sup>. As such the islands represent an important scientific reference area – an opportunity for monitoring the effects of climate change on marine communities away from other pressures such as fishing.
- Full protection of the South Sandwich Islands would constitute a key UK contribution towards global marine conservation targets such as Aichi Target 11<sup>vi</sup> of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which calls for protection of 'areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services'.
- The Antarctic and sub-Antarctic waters are some of the fastest warming on the planet<sup>vii</sup> and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands are likely to be heavily impacted.
- Full protection of the waters around the South Sandwich Islands will futureproof this area from exploitation and build on international efforts to fully protect unique and vulnerable habitats.

## Additional information

The South Sandwich Islands marine environment is an area over twice the size of the UK, 529,000 km<sup>2</sup>. It is a global biodiversity hotspot worthy of protection. Overwhelming scientific evidence exists detailing both the declining health of the world's oceans and the importance of large scale marine reserves in both slowing this decline and future-proofing near-pristine areas<sup>iii</sup>. The UK is in a privileged position to make a globally significant contribution to marine protection via the reclassification of the South Sandwich Islands to a fully-protected MPA.

The Great British Oceans proposal has the backing of prominent UK scientists and 283 MPs across the political spectrum, who have signed a Blue Belt Charter asking for full protection of the waters surrounding the South Sandwich Islands<sup>viii</sup>.



The South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands (SGSSI) Marine Protected Area management plan<sup>ix</sup> clearly states that it is a Category VI Marine Protected Area ('protected area with sustainable use of natural resources' as defined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)). A small proportion of this consists of areas closed to fishing (20,000 km<sup>2</sup> or 2% of the total area) which is classified as IUCN Category Ia ('strict nature reserve'). Experts from the IUCN have reviewed that claim and concluded that 98% of SGSSI waters "do not qualify" as a Category VI MPA, for two reasons: 1) The primary objective of the management plan is not conservation, and 2) The MPA allows industrial fishing in all but 2% of its waters<sup>x</sup>. The IUCN have said that large areas of full protection could compensate for industrial fishing in some of the MPA. Full protection of the South Sandwich Islands would be a clear means of achieving that aim – and would enable the Government of SGSSI to show international leadership on marine conservation. This opinion is shared by the Great British Oceans coalition.

The South Sandwich Islands have the potential to become a scientific monitoring and assessment zone of global importance. The Great British Oceans coalition believes that active management of MPAs, including monitoring, surveillance and enforcement alongside scientific and biodiversity assessment are crucial to ensure that such designations deliver their conservation objectives.

The focus of the campaign is the South Sandwich Islands. The Great British Oceans coalition publicly recognises the high standards to which the South Georgia fisheries to the north operate<sup>xi</sup>. Great British Oceans' member organisations also work within an extensive range of other marine fora concerned with sustainable management of fisheries – not solely MPAs.

A number of Great British Ocean member organisations are working within the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) toward achieving a network of MPAs and a more sustainable distribution of krill quota in 2021. We believe that UK leadership on the South Sandwich Islands could build momentum for further protection and sustainable management of resources around Antarctica in the Weddell Sea, East Antarctica, and the Antarctic Peninsula.



Adélie penguins, Saunders Island, South Sandwich Islands – Credit – Jim Wilson



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- <sup>i</sup> Rogers, A. D., Yesson, C. & Gravestock, P. [A Biophysical and Economic Profile of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands as Potential Large-Scale Antarctic Protected Areas](#). *Adv. Mar. Biol.* 70, 1–286 (2015).
- <sup>ii</sup> IUCN. Marine Protected Areas: global standards for success. (2018). Available at: <https://www.iucn.org/news/protected-areas/201802/marine-protected-areas-global-standards-success> . (Accessed: 20<sup>th</sup> June 2018)
- <sup>iii</sup> Edgar, G. J. et al. [Global conservation outcomes depend on marine protected areas with five key features](#). *Nature* 506, 216 (2014). by scientists and policy makers as a key tool
- <sup>iv</sup> Trathan, P. N. et al. [The South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands MPA: Protecting A Biodiverse Oceanic Island Chain Situated in the Flow of the Antarctic Circumpolar Current](#). *Adv. Mar. Biol.* 69, 15–78 (2014).
- <sup>v</sup> Douglass, L. L. et al. [A Hierarchical Classification of Benthic Biodiversity and Assessment of Protected Areas in the Southern Ocean](#). *PLoS One* 9, e100551 (2014).
- <sup>vi</sup> CBD. TARGET 11 - Technical Rationale extended. (2011). Available at: <https://www.cbd.int/sp/targets/rationale/target-11/> (Accessed: 29<sup>th</sup> June 2018)
- <sup>vii</sup> Stocker, T. F. et al. Technical Summary. [Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (Cambridge University Press, 2013). doi:10.1017/ CBO9781107415324.005
- <sup>viii</sup> <https://greatbritishoceans.org/take-action-backthebluebelt/>
- <sup>ix</sup> Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. [South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands Marine Protected Area Management Plan](#). (2013).
- <sup>x</sup> Letter to Nigel Phillips, March 2018 RE: South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands Marine Protection. Available at: <http://www.gov.gs/docsarchive/Environment/Marine%20Protected%20Area/FINAL%20submission%20to%20Nigel%20Phillipssdocx.docx> (Accessed: 29<sup>th</sup> June 2018)
- <sup>xi</sup> Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. Fisheries overview. Available at: <http://www.gov.gs/fisheries/overview/> (Accessed: 29<sup>th</sup> June 2018)