



# Powering Healthy Seas: Accelerating Nature Positive Offshore Wind



Thriving seas, vibrant with wildlife, must define a healthy net zero planet. As action to decarbonise accelerates, the UK's seas exemplify the challenges of protecting nature whilst addressing climate change. World-leading ocean recovery and secure renewable energy is within our grasp if we take transformative Nature Positive action, now.

## QUICK DEFINITION

**Nature Positive action** - measures to restore resilient habitats and species rather than contributing to their decline.

The UK Government has **ambitious targets** to develop offshore windfarms in UK waters, essential for reducing our net carbon emissions to zero by 2050. However, an outdated, disconnected approach to marine development is contributing to mounting pressures and the poor state of our seas. Modernising this approach would not only help safeguard nature, but would also contribute to a just transition to renewable energy, increasing energy security and helping to tackle the cost of living.

## Seabirds

The UK is home to almost 8 million seabirds, including globally important numbers of several species, such as gannet and puffin. Seabirds are a key indicator of the overall health of marine ecosystems, but UK populations have fallen drastically in recent decades. The mounting pressures behind these declines include:

We need **more joined-up thinking** to match priorities for all marine uses. Offshore wind deployment can't be considered in isolation - it must be integrated as part of a Nature Positive movement alongside restoring thriving seas, our ally in action on climate change. It's also essential to include considerations for the wide array of other marine uses, such as fishing, resource extraction, and pipelines and cables. The momentum of offshore wind presents an opportunity to drive change, to ensure that the whole marine environment is properly protected.

- ✦ Diminishing prey availability through poorly planned marine development and unsustainable fishing.
- ✦ Collision risk and flight path disturbance from offshore windfarms.
- ✦ Risk of entanglement in fishing gear (bycatch).
- ✦ Invasive predator species in nesting areas.
- ✦ The varied effects of climate change on their environment.

The **Powering Healthy Seas** report was constructed collaboratively by a collection of environmental NGOs and the offshore wind sector. It sets out an **ambitious but pragmatic approach** to place development firmly within the context of holistic marine management. This brief provides a succinct summary of the report's main recommendations.



Reversing seabird declines depends upon secure food availability alongside safer places to feed and nest. These conditions can be supported through a holistic and strategic, Nature Positive approach to offshore wind, benefitting overall ocean health.

**Flamborough and Filey Coast SPA**  
Displaying: kittiwake and gannet density, SPAs, Offshore wind and Cabling.

To read the full report, follow the link below:



**POWERING HEALTHY SEAS:  
ACCELERATING NATURE  
POSITIVE OFFSHORE WIND**





## Accelerating offshore wind: recommendations for management

Planning systems have failed to keep pace with the evolution and scale of offshore wind, and now a more holistic approach is needed. A frontloaded, strategic approach to integrate offshore wind, environmental considerations, and other marine uses is necessary. The British Energy Security Strategy has further increased the UK's offshore wind ambition for 2030, aiming for 50GW of operational capacity, almost five times 2022 levels.

The report recommends decision-makers pursue the following to accelerate offshore wind deployment whilst taking account of nature:

- ✦ A robust ecological **evidence base** to inform environmentally conscious siting of new offshore windfarms.
- ✦ **Country-level marine plans** for offshore renewables, incorporating ecological considerations and other marine users.
- ✦ **Impact assessments** that identify cumulative impacts of multiple offshore developments.
- ✦ **Innovative industry standards**, supported by government policy, to protect and restore nature.
- ✦ **Adaptive management** techniques that offer flexibility in the face of changing conditions or new information.
- ✦ **Strategic compensation** to ensure ecological impacts are appropriately addressed.
- ✦ A **marine net gain system** to help drive nature recovery and improvement.

## A Nature Positive approach: recommendations for policy

Nature Positive is a call to action urging governments to not only halt the loss of biodiversity but ensure recovery. For offshore wind, this entails industry and government-led action to go beyond halting nature loss, in order to restore resilient, thriving seas as part of our renewable energy transition.

To protect seabirds, Nature Positive recommendations are as follows:



- ✦ **Strategic, holistic and truly spatial marine planning.**
- ✦ **Closure of industrial sandeel fisheries** (a key prey species for many seabirds) in UK waters.
- ✦ **Measures to mitigate and eliminate seabird bycatch** by fishing vessels.
- ✦ **Strengthen the UK's Marine Protected Area network.**
- ✦ **A UK island biosecurity programme** to establish safer nesting areas by eliminating and protecting against invasive species.

The Powering Healthy Seas: Accelerating Nature Positive Offshore Wind Report is supported by the following:



**The UK Government has the potential to be a world leader in truly Nature Positive offshore wind. We are calling on UK policy makers to follow the recommendations of this report to help make our seas as healthy, vibrant, and productive as possible.**



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