



## South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands

Office of the Commissioner  
Government House,  
Stanley,  
Falkland Islands.

### **PRESS RELEASE: New Spatial and Temporal Closed Areas added to the South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands Marine Protected Area**

**Monday January 21<sup>st</sup> 1100 hrs GMT**

Following scientific advice and a stakeholder consultation the Government of South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands (GSGSSI) is delighted to announce the addition of extra spatial and temporal protection to the existing South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands Marine Protected Area (SGSSI MPA). The additional measures will add extra protection to the SGSSI MPA, which was created in February 2012 and covers over 1 million km<sup>2</sup> of the highly productive waters around the islands.

As part of a long-term management and conservation strategy for the Territory, today's announcement will add to the existing no-take zones and establish:

- A seasonal closure of the fishery for Antarctic krill (from November 1<sup>st</sup> until March 31<sup>st</sup>) to avoid competition with krill eating predators (particularly penguins & fur seals) during the breeding season;
- Twelve nautical mile pelagic no-take zones around each of the South Sandwich Islands, protecting 18,042 km<sup>2</sup>, including important feeding areas of chinstrap and Adelie penguins;
- A ban on all bottom fishing deeper than 2250 m, which covers 920,000 km<sup>2</sup> (an area similar to the size of Spain), to protect deep-water habitats;
- Additional closed areas to protect sensitive benthic fauna and provide refugia for the highly valuable Patagonian toothfish, covering 12,662 km<sup>2</sup> (approximately the size of Northern Ireland).

Fishing shallower than 700 m was already prohibited, meaning that only 83,500 km<sup>2</sup> (8%) of the sea-floor is available for bottom fishing. Bottom trawling was already banned throughout the MPA.

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This combination of spatial and temporal (seasonal) closed areas ensures that the waters around South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands remain amongst the best managed in the world.

Announcing the new protection from the Territory's administrative centre at King Edward Point, Nigel Haywood, Commissioner for South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, stated:

“The waters around South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands are among the most productive in the Southern Ocean, with very high biodiversity. We remain committed to the highest standards of environmental management in this unique and globally important UK Overseas Territory.

Following the establishment of the MPA in February 2012, we have sought expert scientific advice and consulted widely to ensure that the waters around South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands are one of the best managed maritime areas in the world.”

Dr Martin Collins, Chief Executive of the Government of South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands said:

“South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands are remarkable places, supporting an amazing density of wildlife. Our continued good management of this UK Overseas Territory demonstrates that, even in a place as special as South Georgia, you can have sustainable fisheries with minimum impact on the ecosystem.”

“This combination of spatial and temporal closures gives excellent protection to the abundant and diverse marine life of the region and provides an example of best practice in marine management that I hope other areas will follow”

Dr Phil Trathan, Head of Conservation Biology at the British Antarctic Survey, who advised the Government of South Georgia on the establishment of the MPA said:

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“The seasonal closure of the krill fishery reduces the potential competition between the fishery and the natural predators of krill, including for seals, penguins, and other seabirds, particularly during the summer months when they are rearing their offspring and have high energy requirements. Outside the breeding season these krill-eating predators have lower energy requirements as they do not need to feed their young, and many also leave South Georgia's waters.”

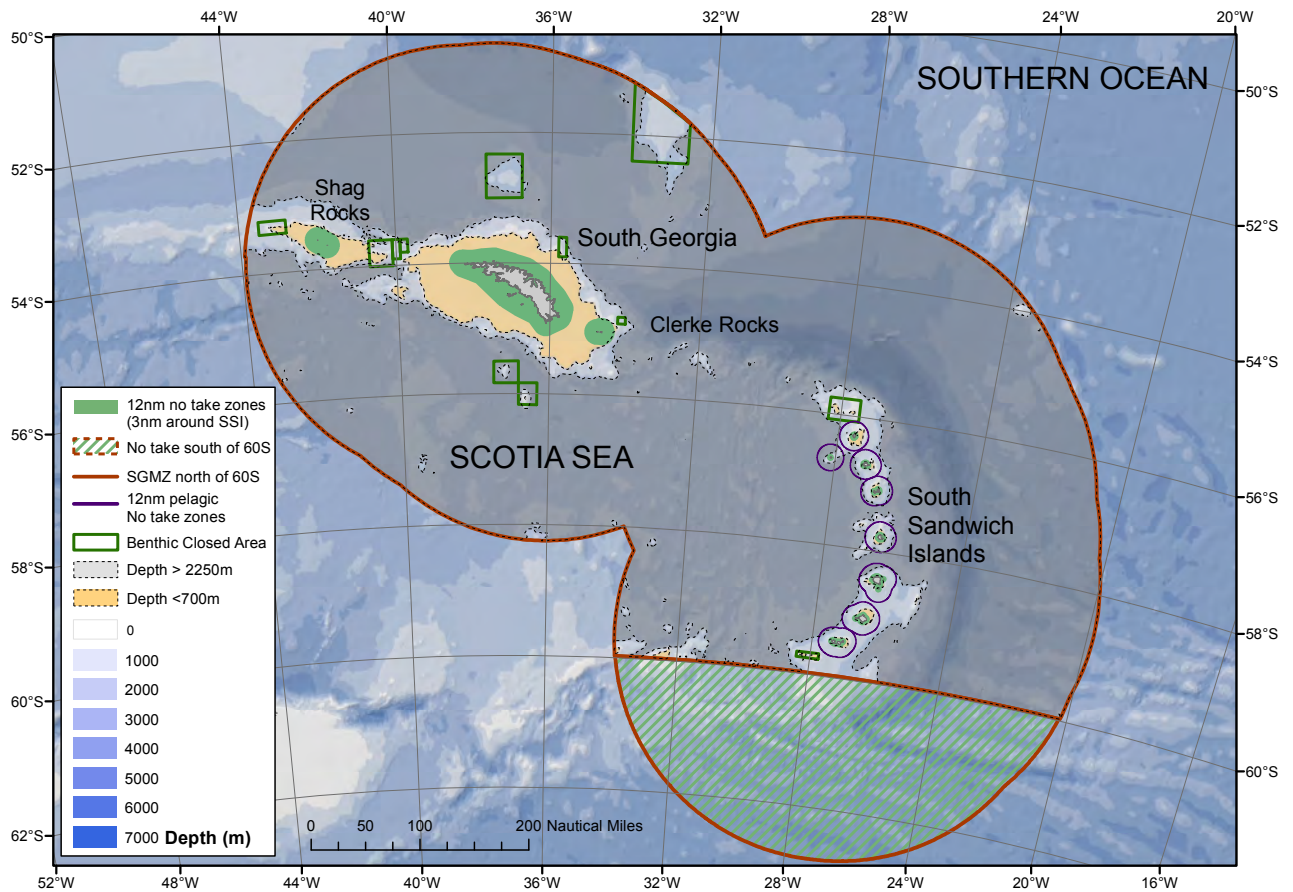
"Further developments in the management of the krill fishery will need to take into account the way that the fishery develops in the future and the way that climate change may alter ecosystems. At the moment such changes are difficult to predict, so the South Georgia government will need to remain vigilant to make sure that future management actions preserve the remarkable biodiversity in South Georgia's waters."

The MPA already includes significant areas of no-take zone (IUCN Category I) around the coast of each island. These no-take zones (over 20,000 km<sup>2</sup> in total, equivalent to the total area of Wales) will protect the foraging grounds of many of the Territory's land-based marine predators such as penguins, seals and seabirds and protect the spawning areas of many demersal fish species.

GSGSSI will continue to licence fisheries for toothfish, icefish and krill in the MPA (outside of the no-take zones and closed areas) and use the revenue to patrol the region to prevent illegal fishing and undertake research and monitoring. These fisheries are extremely carefully managed, with both the icefish and toothfish fisheries certified as sustainably managed by the Marine Stewardship Council.

**For further information please contact Dr Martin Collins, Chief Executive, Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. E-mail: [ceo@gov.gs](mailto:ceo@gov.gs); Tel: +870 382 359 033.**

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Map showing the South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands Marine Protected Area with the additional benthic and pelagic closed areas.

**NOTES:**

1. The green areas are the No-Take zones around South Georgia, Shag Rocks, Clerke Rocks and each of the South Sandwich Islands.
2. The pale orange area indicates depths less than 700 m in which bottom fishing is prohibited.
3. The dark shaded area includes depths greater than 2250 m in which bottom fishing is prohibited.
4. The narrow band between the pale orange area and the shaded area includes the depths between 700 and 2250 in which bottom fishing is permitted.
5. The boxes with a green border are the additional benthic closed areas in which bottom fishing is also prohibited.
6. The blue-bordered areas around the South Sandwich Islands are the pelagic closed areas.
7. The area south of 60 °S, with green stripes, that falls within the SGSSI Maritime Zone whilst not formally part of the MPA is already a no-take zone as no fishing licences are issued for this area.

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### Key points

- South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands is one of the UK's most remote and environmentally pristine Overseas Territories. It is internationally recognised for its biological importance, including its biodiversity and breeding populations of seabirds and marine mammals and was regularly featured in the recent BBC series *Frozen Planet*.
- On February 27<sup>th</sup> 2012, as part of a long-term management and conservation strategy for the Territory, the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (GSGSSI) announced the creation of a large (over 1 million km<sup>2</sup>) sustainable use Marine Protected Area (MPA) in a key part of the Southern Ocean.
- The initial announcement, which created one of the largest MPAs in the world, included a ban on bottom trawling throughout the MPA and prohibited any bottom fishing (primarily longlining for toothfish) in depths less than 700 m.
- Today's announcement of additional spatial and temporal closures is the result of a scientific workshop and consultation with stakeholders, including environmental NGOs and fishing industry.
- The seasonal closure of the krill fishery will ensure that krill fishing does not cause localised reductions in krill abundance at key times for krill-eating predators such as macaroni and gentoo penguins and fur seals.
- The closure of areas deeper than 2250 m to any form of bottom fishing is a precautionary measure, which takes account of the relatively slow growth and vulnerability of the species that inhabit these depths. This means that less than 8 % of the seafloor will be available for any form of bottom fishing.
- The additional benthic closed areas (14,000 km<sup>2</sup>) are designed to protect sensitive and vulnerable marine fauna, such as cold water corals and provide refuges for Patagonian toothfish.
- Within the MPA fishing continues to be highly regulated, with licences issued to fish for Patagonian toothfish, krill and mackerel icefish. The South Georgia Patagonian toothfish fishery is currently one of the highest rated of the Marine Stewardship Council certified fisheries.

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- This multiple-use MPA includes over 20,000 km<sup>2</sup> of no-take zones (equal to the size of Wales), which protect inshore, shelf areas from any form of fishing, and includes all depths less than 100 m. These no-take zones will protect the foraging grounds of many of the Territory's land-based marine predators such as penguins and seabirds (including several species of albatross) and also protect the spawning areas of many demersal fish species.
- The MPA is regularly patrolled by a fishery patrol vessel to prevent illegal fishing activity and ensure that the requirements of the MPA are upheld.
- The GSGSSI is committed to a programme of scientific research to monitor the MPA.
- This work has been underpinned by scientific investigations undertaken by the GSGSSI, British Antarctic Survey, the Marine Resources Assessment Group, the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Sciences and many other scientific organisations.