

Klondyke Building
Cromac Avenue
Belfast BT7 2JA
Telephone: 02890 569235
Email: Marine.InfoRequests@daera-ni.gov.uk

Date: 20 December 2018

Dear Sir/Madam

UPDATE OF THE REGISTER OF EUROPEAN SITES FOR SKERRIES & CAUSEWAY, RED BAY AND THE MAIDENS SPECIAL AREAS OF CONSERVATION

In accordance with Regulation 11(1) of The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended), notice is hereby given that the Department has updated the Register of European Sites to reflect the fact that Skerries & Causeway, Red Bay and The Maidens have been formally designated as Special Areas of Conservation. This is the last stage in the designation process. There have been minor amendments to the boundaries of the sites due to a re-mapping exercise. The features for which the sites have been designated and their Conservation Objectives have not changed.

I am writing to you because of your role as either: a Competent Authority; a Local Council; or a Crown Estate lease-holder, or land owner within one of these sites.

I have enclosed a copy of the relevant Register entries for your information, in accordance with Regulation 11(2). Please note that if you are a lease-holder or land owner only the entry for the site in your location is enclosed. The Register is compiled and maintained under Regulation 10 of

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If you are deaf or have a hearing difficulty you can contact the Department via the Next Generation Text Relay Service by dialling 18001 + telephone number.



the same Regulations. A copy of the Register is available in this office for inspection by the public during normal working hours, free of charge.

Further information about these sites is available on the Joint Nature Conservation Committee's website via the following links:

- Latest SAC updates - <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1488>
- Skerries & Causeway - [JNCC - Skerries & Causeway information](#)
- Red Bay - [JNCC - Red Bay information](#)
- The Maidens - [JNCC - The Maidens information](#)

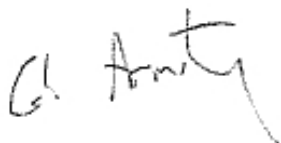
The updated shapefiles are available from the Department - Marine.InfoRequests@daera-ni.gov.uk

You may also be interested to know that the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Privacy Notice has been updated in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and is available to view online here:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/daera-privacy-statement>

If you require any further information please contact Marine Conservation and Reporting as detailed above.

Yours sincerely



Colin Armstrong

MARINE CONSERVATION AND REPORTING
MARINE & FISHERIES DIVISION

A living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.

If you are deaf or have a hearing difficulty you can contact the Department via the Next Generation Text Relay Service by dialling 18001 + telephone number.





Register entry UK 0030383 under regulation 10 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended).

This is the register entry for the European site known as Skerries and Causeway Special Area of Conservation. The site has been designated by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, pursuant to Article 4(4) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, as a Special Area of Conservation.

The register reference number for this European site is UK 0030383 and a folder, kept under this reference as part of the register, contains a map of the European site and a citation giving the reasons for the designation of the site as a Special Area of Conservation. The map and citation are identified by the register reference number, and signed by me on the date of registration.

Other details of the European site are as follows:

Date of Designation: 27 September 2017

Site centre location (1):

Longitude: 06° 35. 81' W

Latitude: 55° 14. 55' N

Area: 10,857.43 hectares

Priority status (2): No

Date of Registration: 11 December 2018

**The Official Seal of the
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
hereunto affixed is authenticated
by**




On behalf of the Department of
Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

1. This indicates the approximate centre of the site. Where the European site consists of several distinct areas, the co-ordinates of the most important sub-area are entered.
2. Indicates if the site has been identified under Article 4(2) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora as hosting one or more priority natural habitat or priority species.

Reasons for designation as a Special Area of Conservation

Area Name: Skerries and Causeway, County Antrim

Administrative Area: Antrim

Component Area of Special Scientific Interest: Small component of intertidal ASSI within the SCI boundary but the majority of the site is wholly marine not underpinned by ASSI.

This area has been recommended as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) because it contains habitat types and/or species which are rare or threatened within a European context. The SAC Selection Assessment fully describes the uniqueness of this site within both a Northern Ireland and wider UK/European context with regards to its special physical structure and the presence of rare and special habitats and species. The site boundary is wholly marine with Low Water Springs defined as the landward boundary, except on the Skerries islands and rocks where High Water Springs is the landward boundary to include seal haul-out areas.

The habitat for which this area has been designated as a Special Area of Conservation is listed below. The reasons for its selection are listed, together with a brief description of the habitats and species as they typically occur across the UK. This area contains the interests described although it may not contain all the typical features.

Qualifying Interest(s) submitted to the European Commission:

European Interest(s)

- ***Annex I Reef***
 - The Skerries reef area has been recognised as being an area of conservation importance since the Northern Ireland Sublittoral Survey (NISS) (Erwin *et al.*, 1986). The reefs in this area include a diversity of reef type and community structure: bedrock and stony reefs; flat sloping and terraced bedrock reef; vertical reef including 30m high sublittoral cliffs; silt covered and sand scoured reef; coastal shallow infralittoral reefs and reefs that are five miles from the coast and extend to over 90m deep. The varied reef types and conditions in this area support a number of rare and priority species, and several southern species that are found nowhere else in Northern Ireland.
- ***Annex II Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time***
 - Both in the area shallower than 20m, and in the deeper flanks and sandwaves, there is a diversity of sandbank type and communities in a relatively small area; within the Broad Sound there are relatively stable areas of coarse sediment. Just south of the Skerries there is an area of Eelgrass *Zostera marina* and there are also large areas of mobile sandwaves with a relatively poor fauna that provide an important habitat for sandeels which are characteristic of this type of sandbank.

- **Annex I Submerged or partially submerged sea caves**
 - Much of the Skerries and Causeway coastline is characterised by rocky cliffs: and those cliffs have numerous sea caves (perhaps 40 in total), many of them with both submerged and partially submerged elements. There are also an unknown number of fully submerged sea caves including one swim through tunnel through the Great Skerrie Island.
- **Annex II Harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*)**
 - Although the number of Harbour porpoise are relatively small, monitoring has shown there to be a permanent presence with the boundary area. Calves and juveniles are regularly recorded in the area indicating that this site may be an important Harbour porpoise nursery ground.

The Skerries and Causeway Antrim inshore marine SAC also host small numbers of Common seals (*Phoca vitulina*), (referred to in Directive as Common Seal), Grey seals (*Halichoerus grypus*) and Bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) which have been graded as non-significant presence Grade D under Annex III selection criteria.

The Skerries and Causeway SAC was first identified as being of marine conservation interest in the Northern Ireland Sublittoral Survey (Erwin *et al.*, 1986). More recent dive surveys to determine the extent of its conservation interest were completed in 2006-2008 as part of the Sublittoral Survey of Northern Ireland and in 2009-2010 as part of the Survey of Nationally Important Marine Features. The dive surveys of both 2009-2010 also include reefs identified for the first time from multi-beam mapping of the Joint Irish Bathymetric Survey (JIBS). The JIBS survey also allowed the first sight of the dramatic sand wave features that characterise this area.

More information on the JIBS survey can be found on the following website <http://www.marine.ie/home/service/surveys/seabed/JIBS.htm>

References

ERWIN, D.G., PICTON, P.E., CONNOR, D.W., HOWSON, C.M., GILLEECE, P. and BOGUES, M.J. (1986). The Northern Ireland Sublittoral Survey, Report for the Department of the Environment Northern Ireland, Ulster Museum, Belfast.

GOODWIN, C., BREEN, J., EDWARDS, H., BENNETT, S., BURROWS, G., and PICTON, B. (2012). Skerries and Causeway Survey - A Survey Report from the Nationally Important Marine Features Project 2006-2009. Northern Ireland Environment Agency Research and Development Series No. 12/01.

Register Reference Number: UK0030383

Date of Registration: 11/12/18.

Signed: *D. Speers*

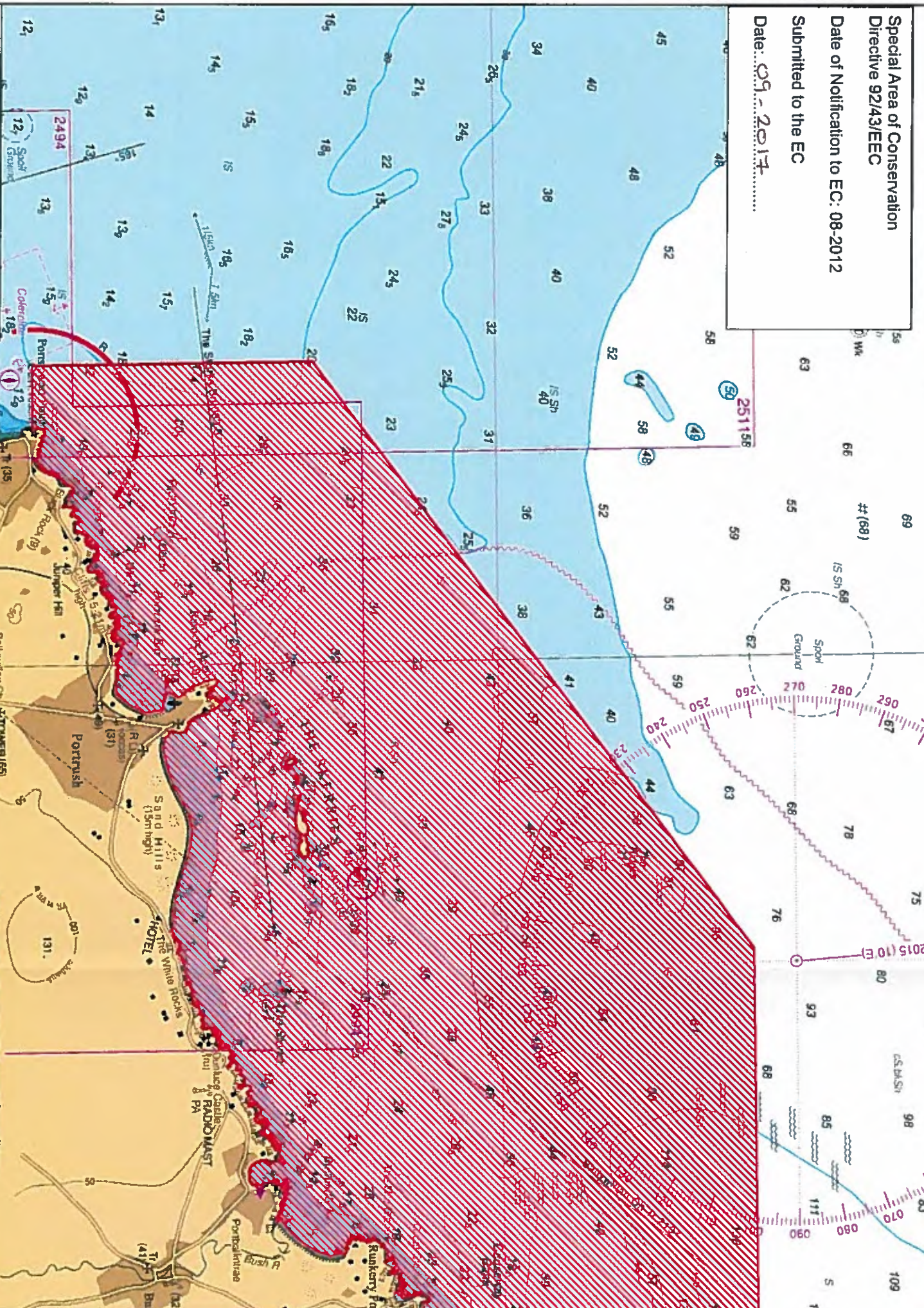
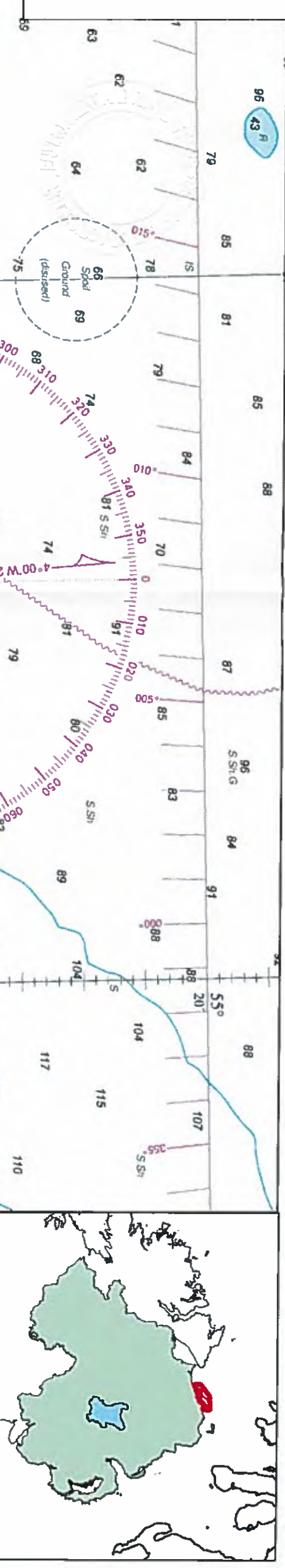
on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

Special Area of Conservation Directive 92/43/EEC

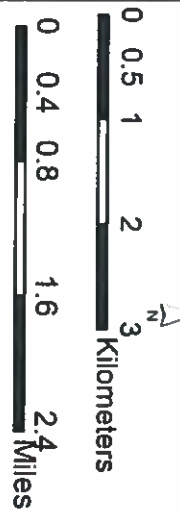
Date of Notification to EC: 08-2012

Submitted to the EC

Date: 09-2014



Scale 1:75,000



Tidal Levels referred to Datum of Soundings

Place	Lat N	Long W	Heights in metres above datum				Datum and Remarks
			MHWS	MHWN	MLWN	MLWS	
Scotland	55° 25'	5° 45'					0.65m below Ordnance Datum
Matchanish	55 19	5 38	2.1	1.6	0.5	0.1	0.89m below Ordnance Datum
Soutland, Killyra	55 12	6 14	1.3	1.0	0.7	0.4	0.89m below Ordnance Datum
Ballycastle Bay	55 12	6 40	2.1	1.6	1.0	0.5	1.24m below Ordnance Datum

Skeries and Causeway
EC Site Code: UK0030383
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Longitude: 06° 35.81' W
Latitude: 55° 14.55' N
Area of SAC: 10,867.43 ha
Map 1 of 1
Version number 2 (22/05/2018)

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Register entry UK0030365 under regulation 10 of The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended).

This is the register entry for the European site known as Red Bay Special Area of Conservation. The site has been designated by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, pursuant to Article 4(4) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, as a Special Area of Conservation.

The register reference number for this European site is UK0030365 and a folder, kept under this reference as part of the register, contains a map of the European site and a citation giving the reasons for the designation of the site as a Special Area of Conservation. The map and citation are identified by the register reference number, and signed by me on the date of registration.

Other details of the European site are as follows:

Date Designated: 27 September 2017

Site centre location (1):

Longitude:	06° 01.42' W
Latitude:	55° 06.87' N

Area: 965.81 hectares

Priority status (2): No

Date of Registration: 11 December 2018

**The Official Seal of the
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
hereunto affixed is authenticated
by**

On behalf of the Department of
Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

1. This indicates the approximate centre of the site. Where the European site consists of several distinct areas, the co-ordinates of the most important sub-area are entered.
2. Indicates if the site has been identified under Article 4(2) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora as hosting one or more priority natural habitat or priority species.

Reasons for designation as a Special Area of Conservation

Area Name: Red Bay, County Antrim

Administrative Area: Antrim

Component Area of Special Scientific Interest: No component ASSIs since it is a wholly marine inshore site

This area has been recommended as a Special Area of Conservation because it contains habitat types and/or species which are rare or threatened within a European context. The SAC Selection Assessment fully describes the uniqueness of this site within both a Northern Ireland and wider UK/European context with regards to its special physical structure and the presence of rare and special habitats and species. The site boundary is wholly marine with Low Water Springs defined as the landward boundary.

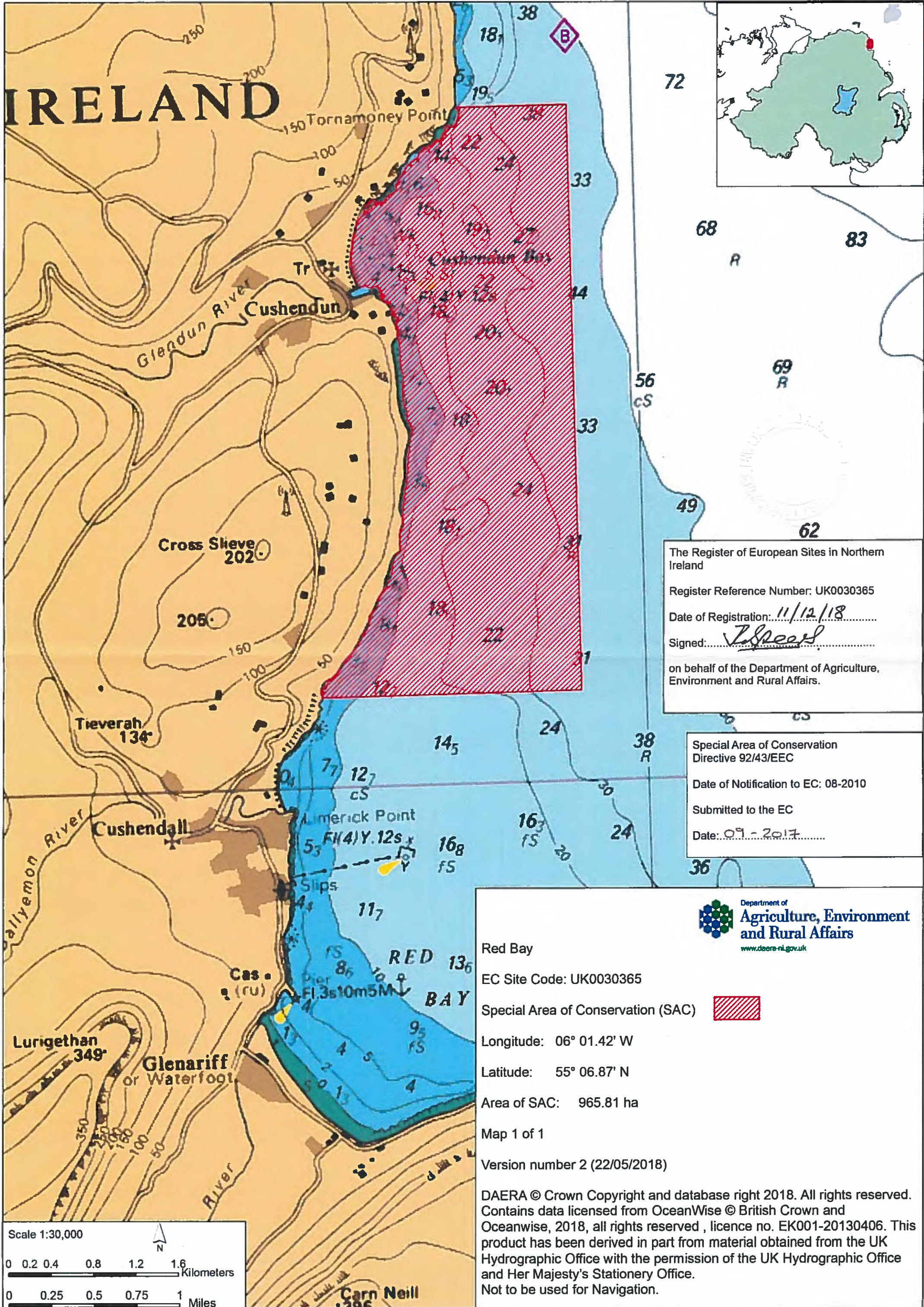
The habitat for which this area has been designated as a Special Area of Conservation is listed below. The reasons for its selection are listed, together with a brief description of the habitats and species as they typically occur across the UK. This area contains the interests described although it may not contain all the typical features.

Qualifying Interest(s) submitted to the European Commission:

European Interest(s)

- ***Annex II Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time***
 - For which the areas is considered to support a significant presence and a unique mega-ripple underwater maerl dune system overlying drowned drumlins. The biodiversity of the sandbank feature is considered to be amongst the highest within the United Kingdom.


The Red Bay County Antrim inshore marine SAC contains a relatively large area of the rare biotope "*Phymatolithon calcareum* maerl beds with red seaweeds in shallow infralittoral clean gravel or coarse sand". *Phymatolithon calcareum* is listed under Annex Vb of the Habitats Directive as a species of community interest when taken in the wild and exploitation may be subject to management measures.

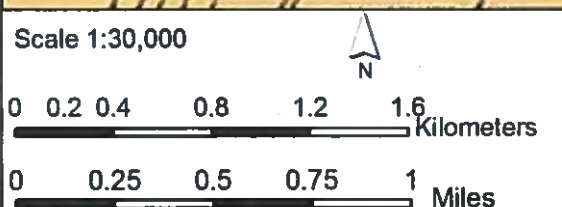


The Register of European Sites in Northern Ireland
 Register Reference Number: UK0030365
 Date of Registration: 11/12/18
 Signed: *J. Speer*
 on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

Special Area of Conservation
 Directive 92/43/EEC
 Date of Notification to EC: 08-2010
 Submitted to the EC
 Date: 09-2017



Red Bay
 EC Site Code: UK0030365
 Special Area of Conservation (SAC) 
 Longitude: 06° 01.42' W
 Latitude: 55° 06.87' N
 Area of SAC: 965.81 ha
 Map 1 of 1
 Version number 2 (22/05/2018)



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Register entry UK 0030384 under regulation 10 of The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended).

This is the register entry for the European site known as The Maidens Special Area of Conservation. The site has been designated by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, pursuant to Article 4(4) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, as a Special Area of Conservation.

The register reference number for this European site is UK0030384 and a folder, kept under this reference as part of the register, contains a map of the European site and a citation giving the reasons for the designation of the site as a Special Area of Conservation. The map and citation are identified by the register reference number, and signed by me on the date of registration.

Other details of the European site are as follows:

Date Designated: 27 September 2017

Site centre location (1):

Longitude: 05° 45. 13' W
Latitude: 54° 56. 66' N

Area: 7,464.05 hectares

Priority status (2): No

Date of Registration: 11 December 2018

**The Official Seal of the
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
hereunto affixed is authenticated
by**




On behalf of the Department of
Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

1. This indicates the approximate centre of the site. Where the European site consists of several distinct areas, the co-ordinates of the most important sub-area are entered.
2. Indicates if the site has been identified under Article 4(2) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora as hosting one or more priority natural habitat or priority species.

Reasons for designation as a Special Area of Conservation

Area Name: The Maidens, County Antrim

Administrative Area: Antrim

Component Area of Special Scientific Interest: Small component of intertidal ASSI within the SCI boundary but the majority of the site is wholly marine not underpinned by ASSI.

This area has been recommended as a Special Area of Conservation because it contains habitat types and/or species which are rare or threatened within a European context. The SAC Selection Assessment fully describes the uniqueness of this site within both a Northern Ireland and wider UK/European context with regards to its special physical structure and the presence of rare and special habitats and species. The site boundary is wholly marine with High Water Springs defined as the landward boundary.

The habitat for which this area has been designated as a Special Area of Conservation is listed below. The reasons for its selection are listed, together with a brief description of the habitats and species as they typically occur across the UK. This area contains the interests described although it may not contain all the typical features.

Qualifying Interest(s) submitted to the European Commission:

European Interest(s)

- ***Annex I Reef***

- The Maidens reef area has been recognised as being an area of conservation importance since the Northern Ireland Sublittoral Survey (NISS) (Erwin *et al.*, 1986). The reefs in this area support very rare communities of hydroids and sponges that are found elsewhere in the UK only in Rathlin Island SAC and in the Firth of Lorne.

- ***Annex II Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time***

- The area of The Maidens that has been classed as Annex I *sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time* runs north south between East Maiden and West Maiden, continuing down to west of the Sheafing Rock where there is a small but important maerl bed with rare algal species.

- ***Annex II Grey Seal***

- While Annex II Grey seals (*Halichoerus grypus*) are not the primary feature of The Maidens SAC; these relatively remote rocks and islands, and the waters surrounding them in the North Channel, may be important, providing haul-out sites and foraging areas, with up to 70 Grey seals recorded.

The Maidens County Antrim inshore marine SAC also host small numbers of Common seals (*Phoca vitulina*), and Harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) which have been graded as non-significant presence grade **D** under Annex III selection criteria.

National Interest(s)

Both seal species and intertidal rock (reef sub-feature) are features of the underpinning intertidal Maidens ASSI.

The Maidens SAC was first identified as being of marine conservation interest in the Northern Ireland Sublittoral Survey (Erwin *et al.*, 1986). There are a wide range of habitats present, from bedrock and boulder to sand. They are important in a Northern Ireland context as the hydrographic conditions result in the presence of a suite of deeper water species, only known from this site and Rathlin Island. Elsewhere in the UK the same suite of species has only been found at a few sites in the South of Jura. These include a particular hydroid assemblage of *Polysiphonia flabellate* and *Diphysia alata* and a community of deeper water sponges. During the Sublittoral Survey Northern Ireland (Goodwin *et al.*, 2008) the area was found to be a stronghold for several Northern Ireland Conservation Priority species, and one of the findings of the SSNI was that The Maidens should be considered for higher level of protection, possibly to include designation as a European Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

The primary reason for the proposed designation of The Maidens as an SAC is for the Annex I habitat *reef*. Most of the reef area of The Maidens is bedrock reef with smaller proportion of stony reef. However, from the multibeam echo sounding (MBES) survey analysis some of the area has been classified as 'rock with sand infill'. While it is suggested that most of this 'rock with sand infill' should be classed as Annex I *reef* (because the ground truthing suggests that a mobile veneer would cover and uncover much of that reef area), other smaller areas have been shown by ground truthing to be shallow water stable sediments including maerl and other long-lived species and have therefore been classed as Annex I *sandbanks slightly covered by sea water all of the time*. Like the reef areas of The Maidens, these small sandbank areas also contain rare habitats and species of conservation importance, but the area covered by Annex I *sandbanks slightly covered by seawater all the time* is much smaller.

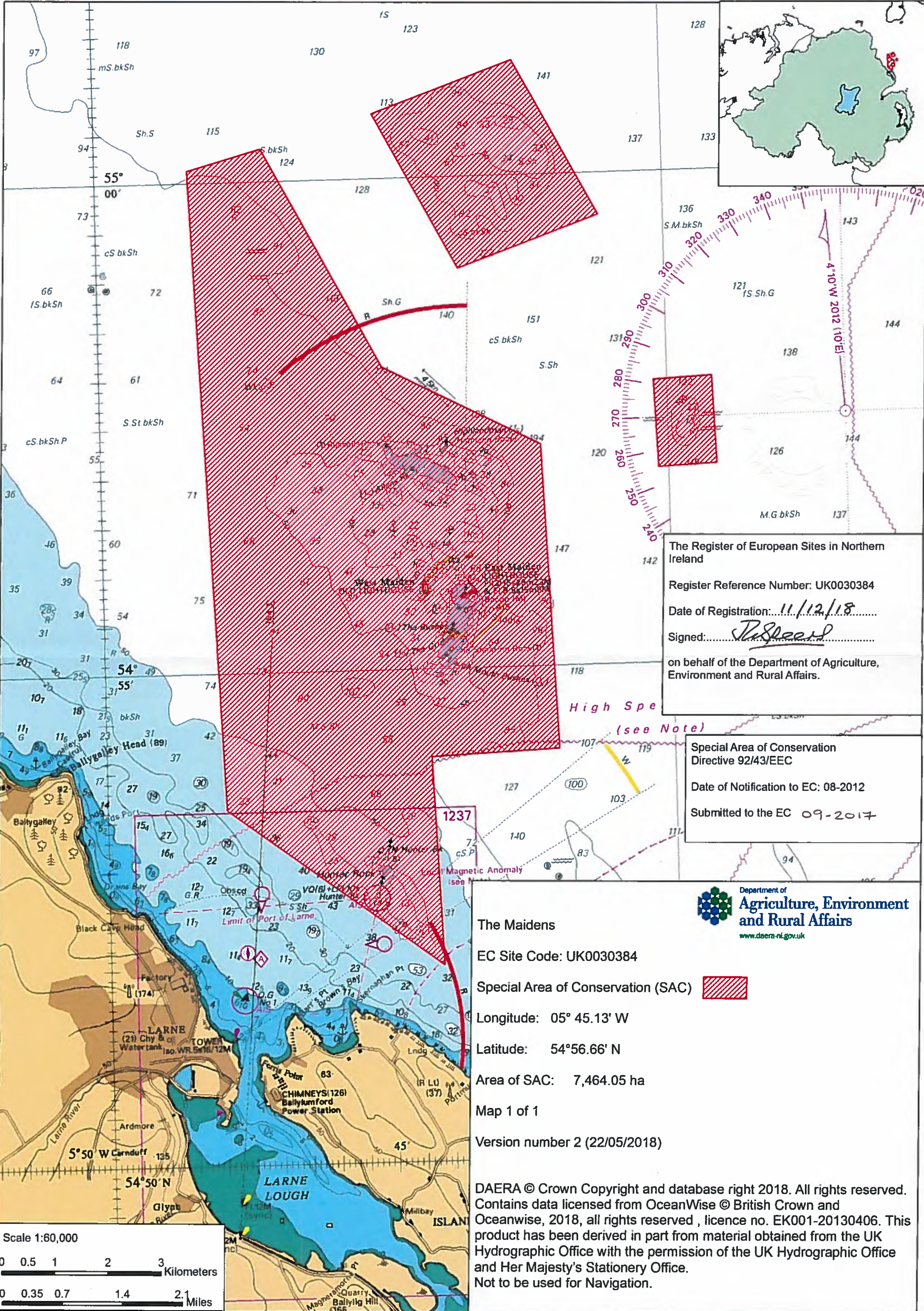
The Grey seal, *Halichoerus grypus*, is included as a secondary interest feature of The Maidens SAC. Surveys have shown there to be up to 70 Grey seals hauled out on the rocks around The Maidens, and while the area is used for a pupping ground, it is suggested that it may be a more valuable area for non-breeding haul-outs and for accessing feeding grounds.

References

ERWIN, D.G., PICTON, P.E., CONNOR, D.W., HOWSON, C.M., GILLEECE, P. and BOGUES, M.J. (1986). The Northern Ireland Sub littoral Survey, Report for the Department of the Environment Northern Ireland, Ulster Museum, Belfast

GOODWIN, C.E., PICTON, B.E., BREEN, J. & EDWARDS, H 2008. Sub littoral Survey Northern Ireland: A review of the status of Northern Ireland Priority Species of marine invertebrates. National Museums Northern Ireland/Northern Ireland Environment Agency.


GOODWIN, C., PICTON, B., BREEN, J., and EDWARDS, H., 2010. The Maidens, Report from the Sublittoral Survey Northern Ireland (May 2006- May 2009).



The Register of European Sites in Northern Ireland
 Register Reference Number: UK0030384
 Date of Registration: 11/12/18
 Signed: *[Signature]*
 on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

Special Area of Conservation Directive 92/43/EEC
 Date of Notification to EC: 08-2012
 Submitted to the EC 09-2017



The Maidens
 EC Site Code: UK0030384
 Special Area of Conservation (SAC) 
 Longitude: 05° 45.13' W
 Latitude: 54° 56.66' N
 Area of SAC: 7,464.05 ha
 Map 1 of 1
 Version number 2 (22/05/2018)

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