

Guidance

Offshore wind development: library of strategic compensatory measures

Strategic compensatory measures available to offshore wind developers.

From: [**Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs**](#)
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As an offshore wind developer, you can use strategic compensatory measures for your derogation case as part of your development consent order and marine licence applications.

You must provide compensatory measures in your derogation case where:

- an adverse effect cannot be ruled out on a protected feature in a marine protected area (MPA)

- you cannot avoid, reduce or mitigate the adverse effect
- there is an overriding public interest for the development to proceed

The derogation process is set out in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (Habitats Regulations). It is also set out under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MACAA).

Compensatory measures provide ecological compensation when protected sites are adversely affected by offshore wind development. In this guidance, 'compensatory measures' refers to both:

- compensatory measures under the Habitats Regulations
- measures of equivalent environmental benefit (MEEB) under MACAA

About strategic compensatory measures

Strategic compensatory measures allow environmental considerations to be addressed at a more strategic level, across several offshore wind development projects.

Strategic compensatory measures can deliver compensation:

- at scale
- over extended timeframes
- across multiple offshore wind projects
- to a single project with multiple adverse effects

These measures help:

- speed up offshore wind decisions
- projects in the consenting process that do not currently have compensatory options

Library of strategic compensatory measures

The development of the library of strategic compensatory measures is led by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), in collaboration with other stakeholders.

All measures in the library of strategic compensatory measures are:

- suitable to compensate for specific adverse effects on MPAs
- approved by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Currently, there are 3 measures in the library:

- MPA designation and/or extension – for adverse effects on the seabed (benthic habitats)
- offshore artificial nesting structures – for adverse effects on kittiwakes
- predator reduction – for adverse effects on seabirds

Defra will update this page when new measures are approved for the library.

You can sign up to [get emails when there are updates to this page](#)

https://www.gov.uk/email/subscriptions/single-page/new?topic_id=offshore-wind-development-library-of-strategic-compensatory-measures.

Adverse effects on the seabed (benthic habitats)

MPA designation and/or extension

As set out in a written ministerial statement, this measure is designed to provide strategic compensation for unavoidable damage to seabed (benthic) habitats from eligible offshore wind projects.

This strategic compensatory measure will:

- be developed by Defra
- designate new MPAs and/or extend existing MPAs (including adding protected features to existing sites) in Secretary of State waters

Defra and their stakeholders have started a programme of work to designate the right types of habitats, while balancing the needs of marine users as appropriate. This will include gathering evidence and engaging with affected industries and communities.

Defra will publish information on how potential compensatory MPAs have been identified and selected.

Defra plans to consult on potential compensatory MPAs before the end of 2026.

Adverse effects on seabirds

Offshore artificial nesting structures for kittiwakes

Offshore artificial nesting structures (ANS) are independent marine structures designed to house seabirds and provide nesting sites suitable for numerous breeding pairs. They can increase breeding numbers and reproductive success in areas where natural nest sites are unsuitable or unavailable.

This strategic compensatory measure will only be available:

- to compensate for adverse effects on kittiwakes
- in English waters
- for projects up to and including offshore wind leasing Round 4

Predator reduction

This strategic compensatory measure includes:

- eradication of mammalian predators from island colonies
- control and exclusion of predators from mainland nesting areas
- subsequent biosecurity monitoring and incursion response

Defra is identifying the prioritised target locations for this measure.

Using strategic compensatory measures

Using the Marine Recovery Fund

Strategic compensatory measures will be delivered through the Marine Recovery Fund (MRF), which should become operational by the end of 2025. Applicants will make a payment or payments to the fund. After this, the MRF operator will be responsible for delivering, maintaining, monitoring, decommissioning, and implementing any adaptive management.

Before the MRF becomes operational

For information on using strategic compensatory measures before the MRF becomes operational, you should:

- read the interim guidance on [strategic compensatory measures for offshore wind activities](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-compensation-measures-for-offshore-wind-activities-marine-recovery-fund-interim-guidance) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-compensation-measures-for-offshore-wind-activities-marine-recovery-fund-interim-guidance>), which explains how to refer to strategic compensatory measures before the MRF becomes operational
- email mrf@defra.gov.uk for advice

Contact us

If you have any questions, email offshorewind@defra.gov.uk

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