

# Southern Trench

Possible Marine Protected Area



A minke whale feeding ground

# Southern Trench

## Possible Marine Protected Area

The Southern Trench possible Marine Protected Area (pMPA) lies off the Aberdeenshire coast, stretching from Buckie in the west to Peterhead in the east, and hosts a fantastic range of marine life. Minke whales feeding at the surface offer a remarkable wildlife watching experience, while up to 250 m below in the darkness of the Southern Trench a diverse seabed community thrives on the muddy sea floor.



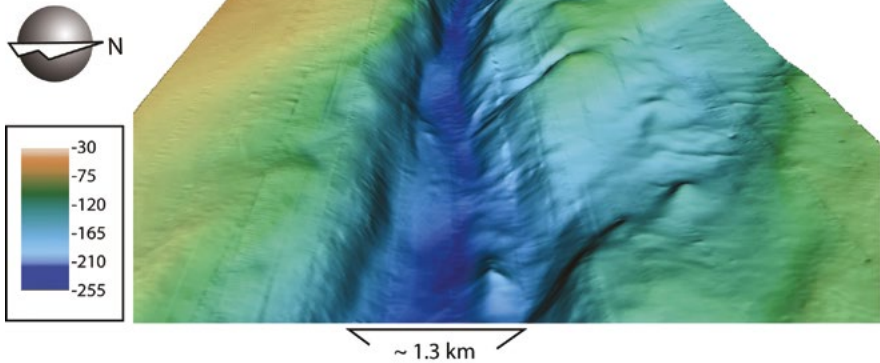
The pMPA also features a dynamic mixing zone of warm and cold waters, known as a front that attracts shoals of herring, mackerel and cod to the area. The soft sands covering much of the seabed also provide abundant habitat for sandeels. The presence of these key prey species in turn draws top predators like minke whale to the area in search of a good meal.



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Location: 57° 44.103' N 2° 08.056' W

Area: 2536 km<sup>2</sup>



3D underwater multibeam imagery of the Southern Trench (looking westwards)

## Proposed Protected Features

### Biodiversity

Minke whale, burrowed mud, fronts, shelf deeps.

### Geodiversity

Quaternary of Scotland, Submarine Mass Movement.

### Conservation Objectives

The aim is to conserve these features in order to make a long-lasting contribution to the MPA network.

Research within the pMPA has recorded some remarkable techniques used by minke whales to catch their prey. Working alone or in pairs, minke whales blow large bubble rings which panic shoals of fish into tight 'bait balls'. Once a bait ball has formed, minke whales drive the shoal upwards towards the surface before engulfing the lot in an explosive lunge from below.

Below the action at the surface, there is a quieter side to life on the seabed along the Aberdeenshire coast. The Southern Trench pMPA takes its name from the 58 km long, 9 km wide and 250 m deep trench running parallel to the coast that was carved out by glaciers. This important geodiversity feature also contains rock features thought to be over 250 million years old. The trench functions as a nursery ground for juvenile fish and the thick soft mud covering the trench floor is home to an assortment of mud-loving animals. These include the Norway lobster and crabs that build their burrows in the mud, elegant seapens and tube anemones which rise out of the mud to filter food from passing water and squat lobsters on the mud's surface looking for food.

# Making a response and further information

You can make a response to this consultation using the Scottish Government's consultation hub: [www.consult.gov.scot/marine-scotland/four-new-marine-protected-areas](http://www.consult.gov.scot/marine-scotland/four-new-marine-protected-areas)

If you are unable to use the online response form, you can also respond:

By Email: [marine\\_conservation@gov.scot](mailto:marine_conservation@gov.scot)

Or by Post: pMPA Consultation, Scottish Government,  
Marine Planning and Policy Division,  
Area 1-A South, Victoria Quay,  
Edinburgh EH6 6QQ

For more information on the 2019 Marine Protected Areas consultation and the Southern Trench possible MPA please visit: [www.nature.scot/2019-possible-nature-conservation-marine-protected-areas-consultation](http://www.nature.scot/2019-possible-nature-conservation-marine-protected-areas-consultation)

Burrowed mud with a phosphorescent sea pen



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