

CITATION

**PAPA STOUR
SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST**
Shetland Islands

Site code: 1267

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: HU166608

OS 1:50,000 SHEET NO: Landranger Series 3
1:25,000 SHEET NO: Explorer Series 467

AREA: 629.48 hectares

NOTIFIED NATURAL FEATURES

Geological:	Geomorphology	:	Coastal Geomorphology of Scotland
	Palaeontology	:	Silurian - Devonian Chordata
Biological:	Coastlands	:	Maritime cliff
	Intertidal marine habitats and saline lagoons	:	Rocky shore
	Birds	:	Arctic skua (<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>), breeding
			Arctic tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>), breeding
			Ringed plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>), breeding

DESCRIPTION:

Papa Stour SSSI is located on the island of Papa Stour off the west side of Shetland. The site includes the entire coastline between high and low water marks, skerries and common grazings land at the North Ness and in the north and west of the island, excluding the area on the east of Hamna Voe.

The coast is notified for its varied assemblage of landforms, which are important for rock coast geomorphology, and for the presence of fish fossils of Middle Devonian age on the east side of the island at Lambar Banks. The site comprises habitats of biological interest including lichen-rich maritime heathland and wave-exposed rocky shores. The heathland supports significant breeding populations of Arctic terns, Arctic skuas and ringed plover.

The coast of Papa Stour comprises igneous rocks, of middle Old Red Sandstone, mainly rhyolites and ignimbrites. Landforms include cliffs, caves, geos, stacks, blowholes, storm beaches and wave-stripped bedrock. The assemblage of rock coast landforms on Papa Stour is one of the best of its kind in Britain. It demonstrates a variety of cliff types, some of the best subterranean caves in the country and is also significant for studying the effects of differential exposure.

The fish bed at Lambar Banks contains broken but unrolled fish remains. These include *Coccosteus cuspidatus* making it possible to match it with the Achanarras fish-bearing horizon and to date it to the Middle Devonian. The fish bed also yielded probable acanthodians and as yet undescribed taxa. The site has potential for future research.

The *scattald* lands of Papa Stour, which form the bulk of the site, have been scalped of peat in the past leaving a thin-soiled, lichen-rich heathland. This is very exposed and shows strong maritime influence throughout. The vegetation is all prostrate, dominated by ling *Calluna vulgaris*, with some thyme *Thymus praecox*, mountain everlasting *Antennaria dioica*,

spring squill *Scilla verna*, sea plantain *Plantago maritima*, heath spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata* and woolly hair moss *Rhacomitrium* sp.

The coast of Papa Stour shows good examples of wave-exposed and sheltered rocky shores. Exposed areas are characterised by rich and extensive lichen zones, numerous rock pools, barnacles and small mussel crusts, with dense red algae, sparse fucoids including the nationally rare brown algae *Fucus distichus* subsp. *anceps* and kelps such as dabberlocks *Alaria esculenta* and oarweed *Laminaria digitata*. Sheltered zones within the voes provide examples of tide-swept biotope and under-boulder communities.

Papa Stour supports large concentrations of breeding birds, with 15 species of seabirds nesting. The site is designated for holding 1% of the British population of Arctic terns, and 3% of the British population of Arctic skuas, but both species have suffered severe declines in recent years due to food shortage. These species nest on the heathland, along with over 1% of the British population of the population of ringed plover.

NOTIFICATION HISTORY

First notified under the 1949 Act: 1961

The whole island was notified for its geological and geomorphological interest.

Re-notified under the 1981 Act: 4 November 1997

Bird and maritime cliff features were previously notified in 1987. In 1990, geological features were notified as two separate sites: Papa Stour Coast SSSI and Papa Stour Fish Bed SSSI. In 1997, the three sites were joined into one SSSI and intertidal areas were included.

Notification reviewed under the 2004 Act: 11 January 2011

REMARKS

Part of Papa Stour SSSI is designated as part of Papa Stour special area of conservation (SAC) for the European habitats listed below and as Papa Stour special protection area (SPA) for the birds listed below.

Papa Stour SAC

Habitats: Reefs
 Sea caves

Papa Stour SPA

Birds: Arctic tern (*Sterna paradisaea*), breeding
 Ringed plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*), breeding