

Frequently Asked Questions on the designation of Special Areas of Conservation within the Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia

Introduction

This note aims to provide stakeholders with a brief summary of information on the effects of having land designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

What is a Special Area of Conservation?

Special Areas of Conservation are areas designated in order to preserve, maintain or re-establish habitats and flora and fauna species of sufficient diversity and size to support protected habitats and flora and fauna species listed in Schedules 1 and 2 to the Protection and Management of Nature and Wildlife Ordinance 2007 and other important habitats and species.

Why does the Sovereign Base Areas Administration (SBAA) have to designate and protect SACs?

The SBAA has a legal obligation to designate SACs under the Protection and Management of Nature and Wildlife Ordinance which satisfies its commitments to the Bern Convention whilst mirroring the provisions of the Protection and Management of Nature and Wildlife Law of the Republic of Cyprus. The Law in question implements the provisions of the European Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. The designation in the SBAs will support the existing network (NATURA 2000) of SACs in Cyprus and across Europe. The SBAA also has an obligation to prescribe appropriate protection and conservation measures for the designated sites. The SBAA will work closely with all stakeholders in ensuring the protection and appropriate management of these sites.

How will the designation affect development?

The SAC designation does not equate to zero development. Proposals for development will be subject to appropriate consideration of their potential adverse effect on the integrity or the character of the SACs. This requirement, legally known as the “appropriate assessment”, applies both within the sites themselves and their surrounding areas. For most developments the Appropriate Assessment is an uncomplicated, straightforward procedure. The Appropriate Assessment process has been in use since 2007 in accordance with the Policy Statement of the SBAA Administrative Secretary in relation to candidate SACs and will continue to apply to the designated SACs. The same process applies in relation to the Special Protection Areas for birds designated under the Game and Wild Birds Ordinance in 2010. More information on the Appropriate Assessment can be found at:

<http://www.sbaadministration.org/index.php/eco-policy-guidance>

Most, if not all, of the current legal land management activities are expected to remain unaffected.

How SACs are formally designated?

The areas that qualify for designation (based on scientific criteria) are initially published through a Notice under the Protection and Management of Nature and Wildlife Ordinance as a List of Areas of European environmental interest. The List was published on 28 May 2015. Further to the publication there is a minimum requirement of a thirty day consultation period for any stakeholder to make any representations on specific scientific grounds. The SBAA has granted an extension of thirty days to the consultation period which ended on 3 August 2015 instead of 3 July 2015. Once representations are taken into account the final list of areas of European environmental interest are published in the SBA Gazette. The final list was published on 23 December 2015. The areas included in the final list are then formally designated as SACs by an Order made under the Protection and Management of Nature and Wildlife Ordinance. The Order was made on 30 December 2015.

How are SACs protected?

In addition to the general protection of SACs provided under the Protection and Management of Nature and Wildlife Ordinance, SACs are managed and protected through legal measures for the protection and conservation of habitats both within the designated site and its surrounding area.

Where to find out more

If you wish to find out more about Special areas of Conservation then you can refer to:

- http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/index_en.htm
- <http://www.moa.gov.cy/moa/environment/environment.nsf/All/C616AEA921159FBAC22578010040DBF9?OpenDocument>