

Cancel Berwick Bank – Campaign Update and Q&A Event

On 16th February, the Scottish Seabird Centre (SSC) welcomed representatives from the RSPB, the National Trust for Scotland and local community members for an evening focused on the [Stop Berwick Bank campaign](#). Speakers shared insights into the Berwick Bank windfarm proposal and plans for the future of the campaign.

Opening the evening, Scottish Seabird Centre CEO Harry Huyton emphasised that offshore wind is essential in tackling the climate and nature crisis. It must, however, be delivered in harmony with nature.

We were delighted to welcome our speakers:

- Emily Burton, Conservation Manager at the Scottish Seabird Centre
- Ciaran Hatsell, Head Ranger at National Trust for Scotland
- Helen McLachlan Head of Marine Policy at RSPB

Presentations Highlights

We've included key points from each presentation below and the slides from the event can be viewed [online here](#).

Emily Burton, Conservation Manager at the Scottish Seabird Centre

- **Emily's presentation gave an overview of the Berwick Bank offshore wind development and why the Scottish Seabird Centre in partnership with RSPB Scotland, National Trust for Scotland, Scottish Wildlife Trust and Marine Conservation Society have been campaigning so strongly against it.** The Proposed Berwick Bank offshore wind development, in the outer Forth is predicted to be one of the deadliest offshore wind developments for birds in the world, with up to 4,104 seabirds killed each year.
- The outer Forth is a key foraging area for the internationally important seabird colonies along Scotland's East coast, including the Bass Rock gannetry, which is one of the largest colonies of Northern gannets on the planet
- Seabirds are already facing huge pressures with around 70% of seabird species in Scotland already in decline due to cumulative pressures including from climate change, unsustainable fishing practices, marine pollution, invasive species, and poorly sited marine developments.
- Seabirds are long-lived, most raise only 1 chick a year and they are slow to adapt to rapid environmental change. The size and location of Berwick Bank will not only cause direct mortality but also displace many birds from key foraging sites, potentially forcing them to journey even further in the search for food.

- **Ciaran Hatsell, Head Ranger for the Borders, St Abb's Head NNR and Grey Mare's Tail Nature Reserve**

Ciaran, Head Ranger at St Abbs Nature Reserve, delivered an inspirational and passionate presentation about St Abb's Head and the internationally important seabird colonies.

- As Head Ranger, Ciaran is closely involved in monitoring and data collection, helping track the health of seabird colonies and inform conservation efforts.
- The data show that seabird numbers at St Abb's Head have declined dramatically in recent years. These declines reflect the cumulative pressures seabirds face.
- Like Emily, Ciaran warned that Berwick Bank is projected to have an exceptionally high impact, especially on kittiwakes, a species already in steep decline.

Helen McLachlan, Head of Marine Policy at RSPB

In the final presentation, Helen outlined the wider pressures facing Scottish seabirds.

- Scotland's seas are increasingly crowded, with multiple existing, approved, and proposed offshore wind developments. These sit alongside busy shipping routes and fishing grounds. This makes it almost impossible for seabirds to avoid disturbance.
- The RSPB teams scrutinise offshore applications and work to reduce impacts, often reviewing vast numbers of complex cases. In this context, Berwick Bank stands out. RSPB experts consider it by far the most damaging proposal they have assessed.

Next steps for Berwick Bank and the Stop Berwick Bank Campaign

Berwick Bank was consented by the Scottish Government [last year](#), subject to the publication of a seabird compensation plan to offset impacts. The Scottish Seabird Centre and partners believe it is unlikely that any compensation plan could credibly address losses on this scale.

Part of the project has also been [awarded a UK Government Contract for Difference](#), covering about a third of the proposed site. While this is deeply concerning, consent does not automatically guarantee full construction.

There are still opportunities to influence what happens next. The Stop Berwick Bank petition is not closed and reached **12,850 signatures**. The Scottish Seabird Centre and partner organisations handed the petition directly to SSE on the 6th March. [You can watch our video here](#).

Further actions are planned in the lead-up to, and following, the Scottish Parliamentary elections.

Q&A Highlights

Is adaptation such as bladeless turbine being considered?

- Adaptation measures should be considered for offshore wind development site, in order to minimise impacts. There is no one-size-fit-all solution for seabird species. Different seabird species fly and feed in different ways, and so the ways in which they are impacted by adaptations to developments is also different. For example, something that lessons impacts on gannets, may not necessarily work for puffins. Therefore, careful research is needed identify what the best adaptations are.
- Due to the size and location of Berwick Bank, the proposed development would have such a high impact that we doubt any adaptations (unless significantly addressing size or location) would make much of a difference.

What are the mitigation measures proposed? Can they really work?

- SSE has proposed a range of compensation measures to address impacts on seabirds. These include actions at seabird colonies, fisheries-related measures such as predator control, reducing fishing activity near colonies, and removing marine litter. SSE has also committed to publishing a detailed seabird compensation plan, but this has not yet been made available.
- Unfortunately, we don't think compensating for this level of seabird fatalities is within the realms of the possible, so we believe it's unlikely that when the seabird compensation plan for Berwick Bank is finally produced that it will meet the bar.

How can community support SSC and voice against Berwick Bank?

The team deeply appreciate the support received so far. The SSC will share along with the summary notes of the event a few actions that people can take.

- A draft letter to your MSPs
- Questions you could ask to local candidates canvassing ahead of Scottish Parliament elections
- Social media posts you can use to tag your MSPs, First Minister or SSE, and share about this issue

What else can community members do?

While the SSC and partners will continue to voice against Berwick Bank, community-led initiatives and actions are key to drive change

- Bringing people together can go a long way. Actions may vary from engaging and raising awareness on this issue, contacting local MSPs, or organising grassroots level events and actions.

- Speakers encouraged individuals to speak up for our seabirds and raise awareness. It is very important that we all try to do everything we can, as organisations and individuals.

In the days following the gathering, community members created a Facebook group to raise awareness about Berwick Bank. **The group will run a Town Hall meeting in North Berwick on the 24th of March**, Paul McLennan MSP and RSPB will be in attendance.

- Check out the [“Forth Wildlife Defence” group HERE](#)
- Information about the [Town Hall meeting on 24th March is available HERE](#)