

**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 Bird 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 will remain unaffected and in some circumstances they may actually improve or maintain the conservation interest.

### **How SACs are formally designated?**

The areas that qualify for designation (based on specific criteria and available scientific information) 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. 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. Once representations are taken into account the final list of areas of European environmental interest are published in the SBA Gazette. 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.

### **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.

### **What happens next and what you need to do**

We are currently consulting with stakeholders concerning the sites proposed for designation.

If you are content with the proposed designation then there is nothing further you need to do, although we would be pleased to register your support. If, however, you wish to make representations concerning the proposed designation you should complete a form (available at Area Office Akrotiri, Area Office Dhekelia and the relevant Community Councils) and return it to the relevant Area Office. Only arguments based on specific scientific grounds will be considered. If necessary, following receipt of representations, we may contact you directly for further clarifications.

Final decisions about the designation will be made only after the SBA Administration has have properly considered carefully any representations received.

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