

GUIDANCE ON WHEN TO APPLY FOR A REGULATED ACTIVITY PERMIT (RAP)

Under GSGSSI legislation, activities which have the potential to cause environmental harm or impact are prohibited. The Regulated Activity Permit process (RAP) is a mechanism to enable such activities to be carried out under some circumstances, but which allows the Government to gain oversight of these activities and to work with proponents to ensure that risks to the environment are mitigated.

The key pieces of legislation which prohibit certain activities without a permit are: [Wildlife and Protected Areas Ordinance \(2011\)](#) and its subsidiary legislation the [Specially Protected Area Order \(2022\)](#), [\(draft\) Specially Protected Area Regulations \(2023\)](#) and [Marine Protected Areas Order \(2013\)](#). Please refer to this legislation for comprehensive details of what activities are prohibited. Complete details of all SGSSI laws can be found at www.laws.gov.gs

If your activities include : **collection of samples of any kind, animal handling, installation of equipment, the use of drones, close approach to wildlife (such as for certain types of media filming or monitoring), overnight stays in tents, construction, maintenance and environmental management work**; these are likely to involve activities which are prohibited and could require a RAP before commencing.

A tiered system of RAP application is in operation depending on the complexity of your project. This will ensure that environmental assessments are scalable and commensurate with the potential impacts of activities. Application procedures and details of RAP categories are published annually on the [GSGSSI website](#).

The information below is intended to provide context and guidance on some the activities which are prohibited under the Wildlife and Protected Areas Ordinance and its subsidiary legislation and would therefore require a RAP. This information is not intended to be exhaustive and if in any doubt the GSGSSI should be consulted and engaged as early as possible in the planning stages for an activity.

TERRESTRIAL ACTIVITIES

Sustainable tourism is an important element of the South Georgia Terrestrial Protected Area. If carried out in line with agreed wildlife interaction guidelines and in accordance with visitor site management plans, sustainable tourism, or recreational activities carried out by personnel based on South Georgia are unlikely to require a RAP.

Disturbance of wildlife

Deliberate or reckless disturbance of, or interference with native wild birds or mammals is an offence. Such animals may display behavioural cues that they are being disturbed, or may have a physiological response which is not apparent at the time, but which may have long

term negative cumulative impacts on individuals or populations as a whole. Individuals should be aware of the appropriate behavioural cues for wildlife likely to be present in the areas they are visiting / working. Some information on behavioural cues to be aware of can be found [here](#).

Even if being vigilant for behavioural cues, it is recommended to maintain appropriate separation distance from wildlife as below.

Maximum suggested approach distance for wildlife on land is 5m

Some species and life stages are known to be more sensitive and in the following cases (table A1), the maximum suggested approach distance is extended

Table 1 – maximum suggested approach distances

Taxa	Life stage	Maximum suggested approach distance
Antarctic fur seal	Adult male (breeding)	15m
Elephant seal	Jousting	25m
Albatross (all species)	Nesting*	10m
	Displaying	25m
Southern giant Petrels	Nesting	25m

NOTE: these distances refer to an individual actively approaching wildlife. If a wild bird or mammal initiates an approach to a distance of less than this, it is unlikely to be considered disturbance. When in areas with abundant fur seals, greater separation may be required for safety, especially during the breeding season.

If adhering to these maximum approach distances, it is unlikely an individual will cause disturbance. However, as there may be individual variation in behavioural response, even if adhering to the maximum approach distance and an animal reacts negatively, individuals should move away.

If when planning of an activity within SG or SSI TPA, if it is intended to approach wild birds or mammals closer than 5 m or the recommended maximum approach in Table 1, a RAP should be sought prior to the activity commencing.

Visitor landings and day-to-day activities where individuals follow the Wildlife Code of Conduct and therefore do not intend to cause disturbance by breaching approach distances do not require a RAP. The onus is on each individual to ensure their action does not intentionally or recklessly cause disturbance.

Disposal of waste

Waste is any substance or object which the holder intends or is required to discarded, this includes any man-made materials or natural materials. It is the Government's expectation that all waste associated with an activity should be removed from the Territory by those responsible for its arrival. Waste which is being temporarily stored prior to removal should be done so in a manner which does not pose a hazard to the environment.

A RAP is required if the intention is to dispose of waste on South Georgia or the South Sandwich Islands land by burial, landfill or incineration.

NOTE: Disposal of waste in the marine environment is controlled under the [International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships](#) (MARPOL) and the [Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter](#) (London Convention)

Erection of structures or installations

Structures and installations have the potential to cause damage to habitats, wildlife entanglement, block transit routes or be a hazard for bird strike.

Activities that involve erection of a structure or installation that is affixed to the ground, via pegs, bolts or other fastenings require a RAP. This includes erecting of tents or installation of equipment such as antenna or monitoring devices. It does not include use of tripods or other equipment which is not affixed to the ground.

A permit is not required for the erecting of structures for the purpose of emergency shelter in the event of a *force majeure*

Use of aircraft

Noise from aircraft operations may disturb wildlife and incorrect or unsafe operation leading to loss of equipment may cause hazardous materials to enter the environment.

A RAP is required to operate an unmanned aircraft (including drones) at an altitude of less than 400 feet above ground level over the land mass of SG and SSI. A RAP is required to operate an aircraft in a manner that disturbs a concentration of wild birds or mammals anywhere in SGSSI, including the maritime zone. If operating an unmanned aircraft, the [standing conditions for operation of unmanned aerial vehicles/drones](#) should be followed unless specific mitigation measures to reduce the likelihood of environmental impact have been agreed with GSGSSI.

The circumstances in which a RAP would be issued for the use of helicopters is extremely limited and outlined in the [Permitting the use of Helicopters for Civilian Purposed Policy](#)

NOTE: Operation of both manned and unmanned aircraft over land or within 12nm of land also requires permission under the [Air Navigation \(Overseas territories\) Order 2013](#). The competent authority for issuing permits for South Georgia & the South Sandwich Island under this legislation is Air Safety Support International. Please direct queries to enquiries@airsafety.aero

Entry to the South Sandwich Islands

The Specially Protected Areas Order 2022 prohibits entry to the South Sandwich Islands except for under Special Circumstances. Details of what constitutes special circumstances can be found in the [Issue of permits to enter the South Sandwich Islands](#) policy.

MARINE ACTIVITIES

Fishing is primarily regulated under [Fisheries \(Conservation and Management\) Ordinance 2000](#). [In addition the prohibitions under the Wildlife and Protected Areas Ordinance \(2011\) apply to the maritime zone, however](#) activities involved in the lawful operation of a vessel including anchoring, use of small boats etc are unlikely to require a RAP.

In addition to the necessary permissions issued by GSGSSI, any application involving Marine Scientific Research (MSR) which is to be undertaken on non-UK flagged vessels must also apply for approval through the UK Government's, FCDO Article 246 approvals process. The necessary guidance is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/marine-science-research-msr-guidance/marine-science-research-msr-guidance>

Work in benthic closed areas

Commercial fishing using fishing gear which comes into contact with the seabed is prohibited within Benthic Closed Areas. No specific permit is required for entry into a Benthic Closed Area but if undertaking research or sample collection of any kind, a RAP may be required with specific provision for operation in this area.

Marine noise

The Wildlife and Protected Areas Ordinance makes a range of provisions to protect marine mammals. Activities including use of active acoustics outside those used for normal navigation or in licenced fisheries or any geophysical marine survey have the potential to cause significant disturbance to marine mammals and so a RAP should be applied for to assess the likely impact and proposed mitigation measures.