

**Site Name: Hovland Mound Province SAC**

**Site Code: 002328**

In the north-east Atlantic, major sedimentary mound areas exist that are several million years old. These carbonate mounds form isolated or clustered seabed elevations that may measure up to 350 m high and, in Ireland, significant clusters have been documented fringing the upper slopes of the Rockall Trough and Porcupine Seabight. Almost all host coral reef patches. The Hovland Mound Province is located at the northern edge of the Porcupine Seabight, approximately 130 km west of the Blasket Islands off the Co. Kerry coastline.

The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (\* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):

[1170] Reefs
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In the Hovland Mound Province some 25-40 carbonate mounds are located at depths of between 400 and 1,000 m. They frequently have a depression at their base and range in height from 100 to 300 m (average 200 m). The bases of the mounds have a mean width of 1300 m, the upper flanks are steepest and the tops are flat. The highest mounds tend to occur in water depths of approximately 700 m. The mounds may be complexes amalgamating smaller mounds and the largest of these in this Province is the Propeller Mound.

The designated site is, at its maximum, approximately 50 km long and 38 km wide, and covers an area of 1,086 km<sup>2</sup>. Patch reefs with the corals *Lophelia pertusa* and *Madrepora oculata* generally occur below the mound summit on the steep flanks where they form a rim around the mound, although they have been found on the summit of at least one mound. The coral distribution appears to be more abundant on flanks that face a depression at the base of the mound. Other corals such as *Desmophyllum cristagalli*, *Flabellum macandrewi*, *Stylaster gemmascens* and *Stenocyathus vermiformes* are also present. Echinoids, holothurians, sea pens, caridean and thalassinean shrimps, and fish are commonly observed from remotely operated vehicles. Bryozoa, porifera, hydroids, octocorals, ascideans, serpulids, zoanthids, crinoids and bivalves have been recorded from infaunal surveys.