

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The Axe Estuary

Recommended Marine Conservation Zone

June 2018

Consultation on Sites Proposed for Designation in the Third Tranche of Marine Conservation Zones



Lower Axe Estuary © Georgina Evans

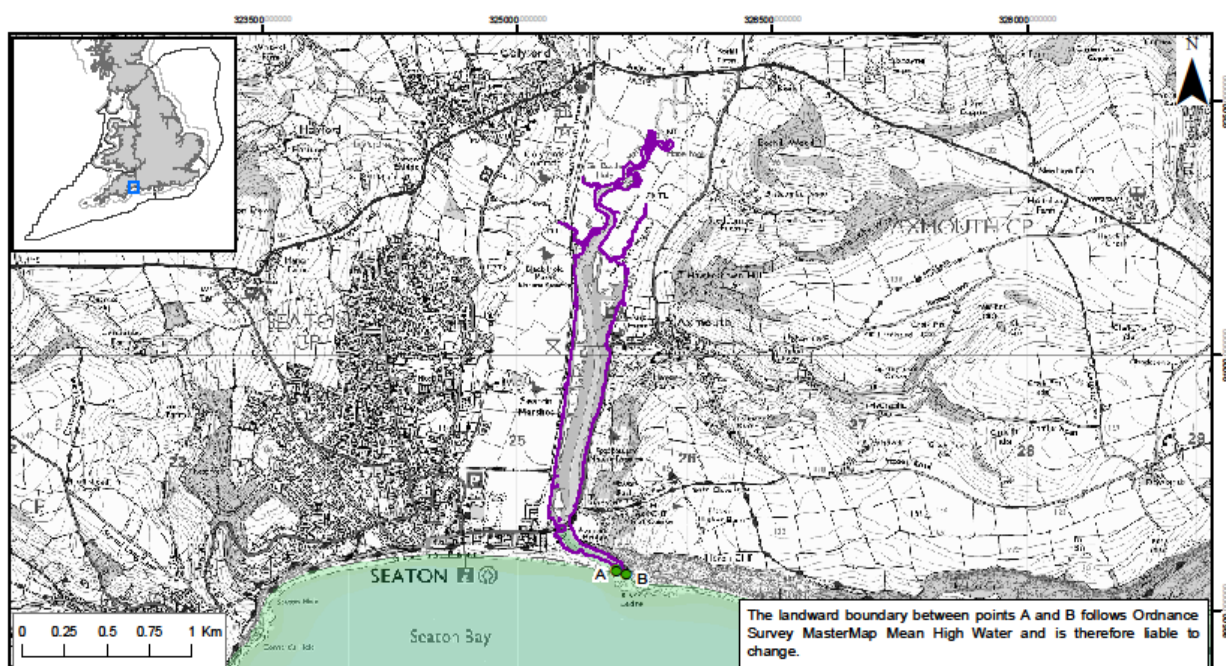
Contents

Where is the site located?.....	1
Why is the site environmentally important?.....	1
What would this site protect?	2
Where are the features located?.....	3
Which activities are likely to be affected?	5
Which activities are not likely to be affected?	5
Additional information	6

Where is the site located?

The Axe Estuary recommended Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) is an inshore site that covers an area of approximately 0.33 km². The site is located near the town of Seaton in Devon opening up into the English Channel. The site is constrained by the boundaries of the estuary and lies adjacent to the Seaton Wetlands, a series of local nature reserves.

The boundaries of the Axe Estuary MCZ have been modified slightly from the regional project proposal. The original boundary, which followed the mean high water line, has been extended to include the adjacent coastal saltmarshes and saline reedbeds.



Axe Estuary rMCZ Boundary

- Recommended MCZ
- Regional MCZ project area
- rMCZ boundary co-ordinates
- 12nM Territorial Seas Limit
- Land

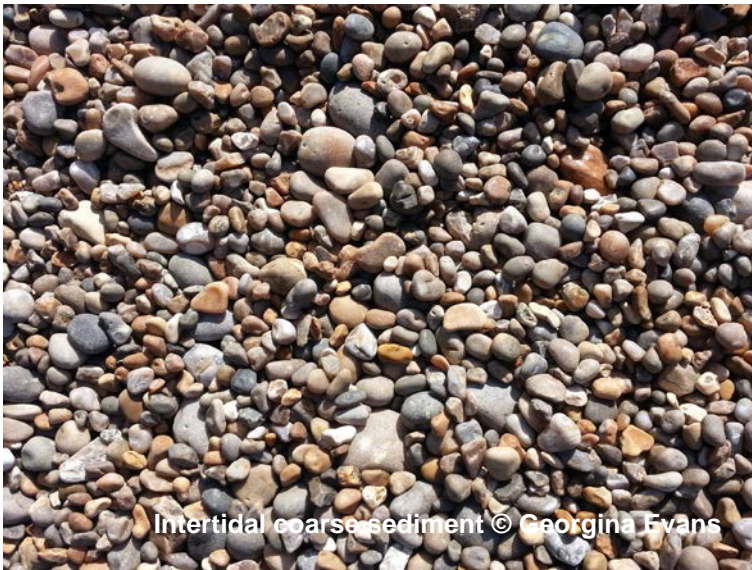
Point	Lat	Long
A	50° 42' 8.824" N	3° 3' 18.609" W
B	50° 42' 8.107" N	3° 3' 15.626" W

Depth Areas (metres)	
-20.0 - -10.0	25.1 - 50.0
-9.9 - -5.0	50.1 - 100.0
-4.9 - 0.0	100.1 - 250.0
0.1 - 5.0	250.1 - 500.0
5.1 - 10.0	500.1 - 1000.0
10.1 - 25.0	

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Why is the site environmentally important?

The Axe Estuary is an important link between the surrounding wetlands and the open sea. The areas of coastal saltmarshes, intertidal sediments and rocky habitats act as important nursery grounds for juvenile fish, including bass, and support habitats for sensitive species of birds, crustaceans and molluscs. The estuary is also home to the European eel.



Intertidal coarse sediment © Georgina Evans

As one of the most productive ecosystems in the world, with significant economic value, the coastal saltmarshes and saline reedbeds which border the site support a wide variety of species and features. They are important foraging grounds for wading birds and wildfowl, providing sheltered refuge at high tide. Specialised salt and flood tolerant flowering plants help to stabilise sediments and prevent erosion while an abundance of marine worms, crustaceans and tiny snails live within the damp sediment surrounding the vegetation.

Due to the highly dynamic nature of the site the areas of intertidal sediments, consisting of muds, coarse and mixed sediments, create a mosaic of different habitats supporting a wide variety of species including the commercially important cockle and the burrowing mudshrimp.

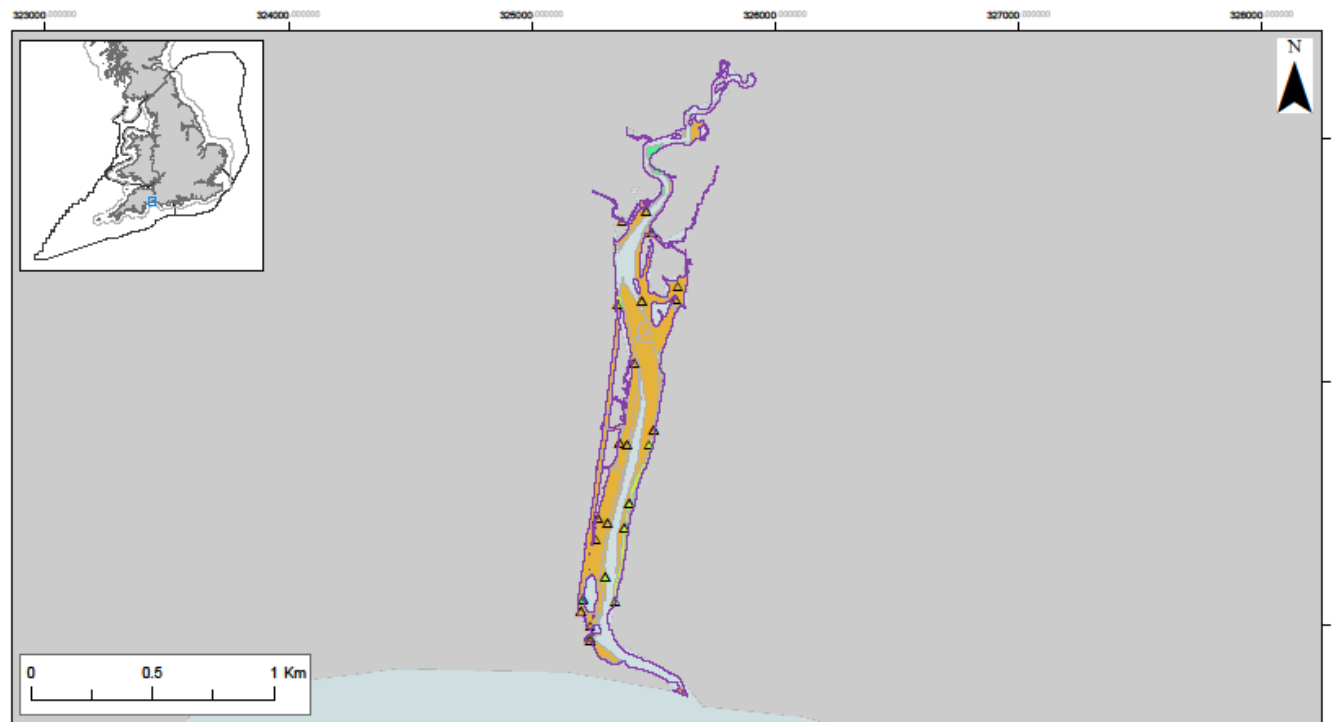
What would this site protect?

Designation would protect the following features. You can read more about the features this site protects and why they are important [here](#).

Feature	General Management Approach
Estuarine rocky habitats	Maintain in favourable condition
Intertidal coarse sediment	
Coastal saltmarshes and saline reedbeds	
Intertidal mixed sediments	
Intertidal mud	

Where are the features located?

The following maps show the location of the features to be protected within the site. A range of different types of surveys have been used to create these maps. More detailed information on the techniques used can be found [here](#).



Axe Estuary rMCZ Broad Scale Habitats

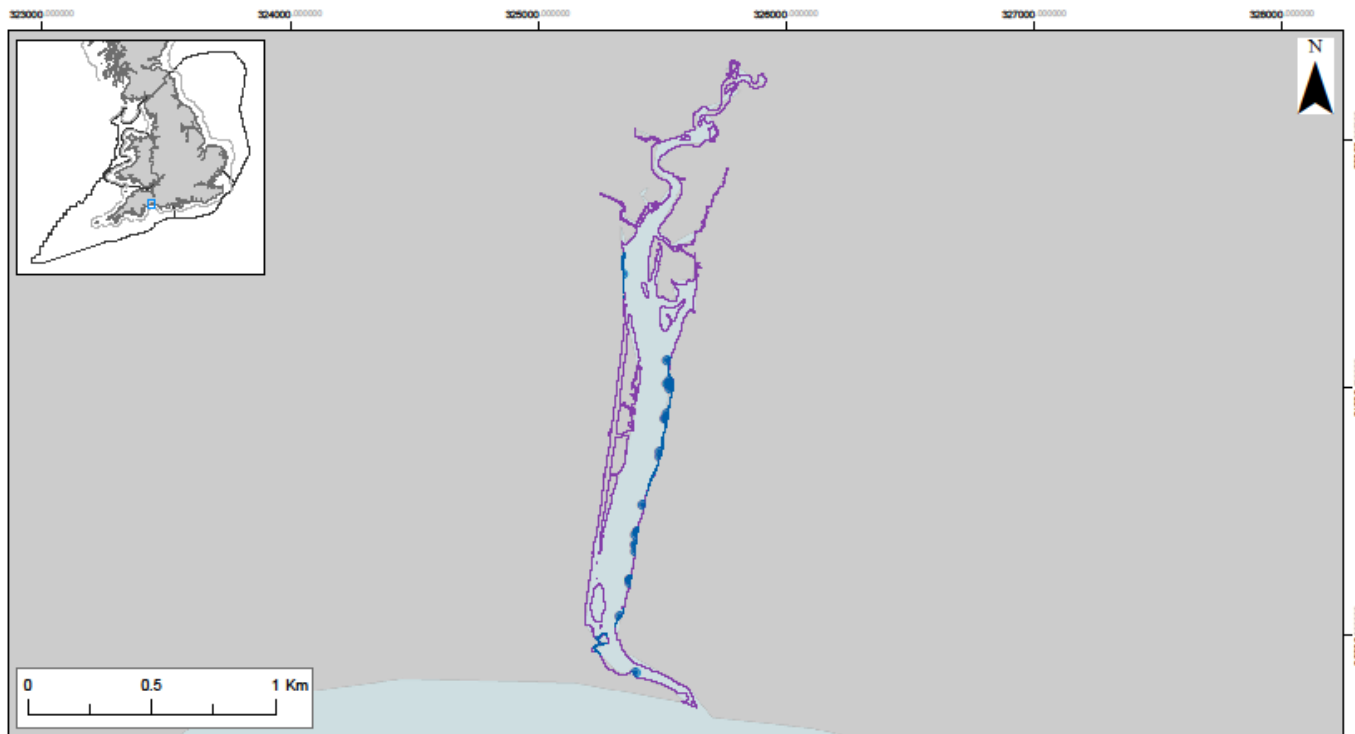
- Recommended MCZ
- Regional MCZ Project Area
- 12nM Territorial Seas Limit
- Sea
- Land

Features recommended for designation

- Intertidal coarse sediment (A2.1)
- Intertidal mud (A2.3)
- Intertidal mixed sediments (A2.4)
- Coastal saltmarshes and saline reedbeds (A2.5)

- △ Groundtruthing sampling points, such as diver survey, grab sampling, drop down video, walk over survey or core sampling
- Shaded areas represent habitats mapped according to data originating from surveys and mathematical models

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 Reference: Theme ID: 1477641
 Map Projection: British National Grid



**Axe Estuary rMCZ
Features of Conservation Importance**

- Recommended MCZ
- Regional MCZ Project Area
- 12nM Territorial Seas Limit
- Sea
- Land

Features recommended for designation

- Estuarine rocky habitats
- Estuarine rocky habitats

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 Reference: Theme ID:1477641
 Map Projection: British National Grid

Which activities are likely to be affected?

Management decisions are taken on a case by case basis by relevant regulators. If an activity is identified as requiring management this does not necessarily mean that it will need to be significantly restricted. Decisions will be based on the specifics of each case and any restrictions will depend on the sensitivity of the species, habitats or geological/geomorphological features to be protected to the activity taking place. More detail is available in the Impact Assessment.

Sectors and activities likely to be affected by designation		
Sector	Activity Affected	Best Cost Estimate (£) per year (rounded to nearest £100)
Ports and Harbours	Environmental Impact assessments for navigational dredging	£5,000
Best estimate total cost		£5,000

Ports and harbours

Two dredge maintenance areas are within the MCZ: one for the harbour entrance and the other for the harbour mouth. Dredging is undertaken between January and March each year. Any new applications will incur an additional environmental assessment cost to consider the possible effects of activities on the features designated within the site.

Which activities are not likely to be affected?

These activities are known to take place at this site but at their current levels of intensity the best available evidence indicates they are not likely to be damaging the features to be protected:

- Beach management
- Cables – power and telecommunication cables intersect the site
- Coastal development and flood and erosion risk management schemes
- Coastal Infrastructure
- Commercial shipping
- Recreational fishing

Additional information

To read the advice provided by Natural England, please visit

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6079955233931264>

To read the advice provided by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, please visit

<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-7119>

For further information, please contact Defra on

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