

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

## Dart Estuary

### Recommended Marine Conservation Zone

June 2018

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



Oyster trestles in the Dart Estuary © Crown Copyright

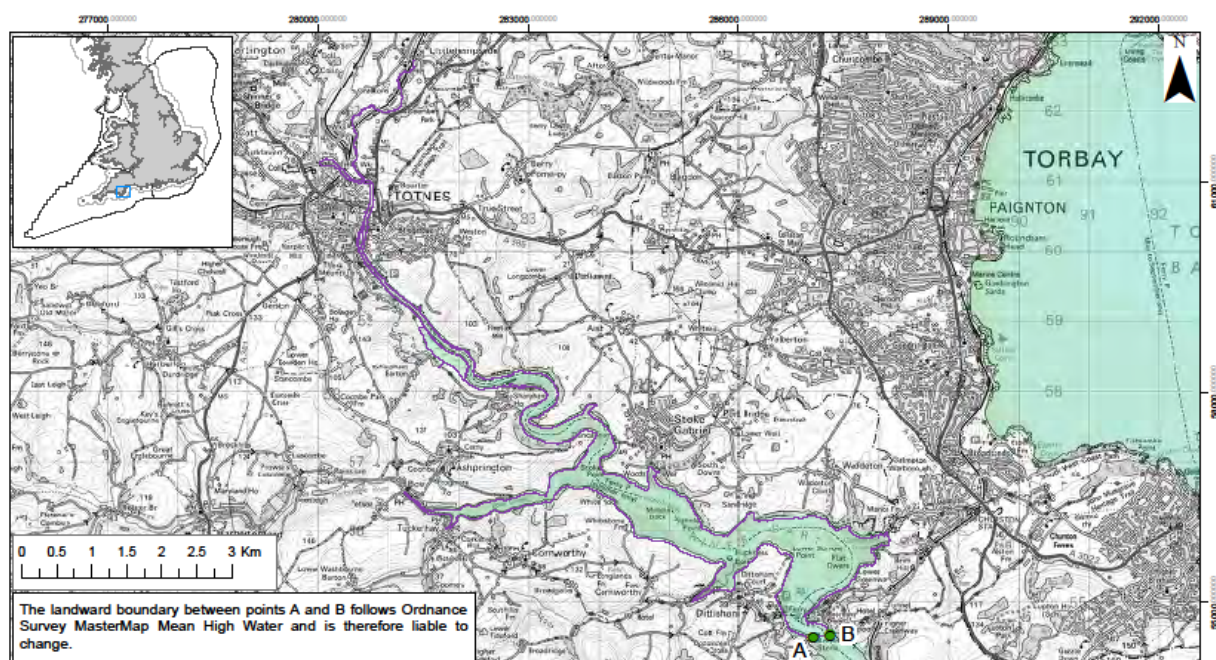
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## Where is the site located?

The Dart Estuary recommended Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) is an inshore site that covers an area of approximately 5 km<sup>2</sup>. The site is located in south Devon and encompasses the upper part of the Dart estuary down to Anchor Stone, south of Dittersham.

The original boundary, which followed the mean high water line, has been extended to include the adjacent areas of coastal saltmarshes and saline reedbeds that lie above the mean high water line.



Dart Estuary rMCZ Boundary

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

Point	Lat	Long
A	50° 22' 46.282" N	3° 35' 22.803" W
B	50° 22' 47.325" N	3° 35' 10.635" W

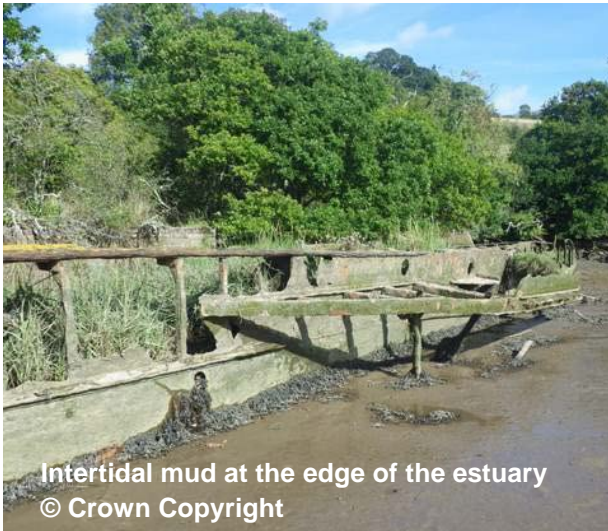
Depth Areas (metres)	
-20.0 - -10.0	25.1 - 50.0
-9.9 - -5.0	50.1 - 100.0
-4.9 - 0.0	100.1 - 250.0
0.1 - 5.0	250.1 - 500.0
5.1 - 10.0	500.1 - 1000.0
10.1 - 25.0	

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 Map produced by Natural England 2016.  
 Reference: Theme ID: 1477645  
 Map Projection: British National Grid

## Why is the site environmentally important?

The site supports a diverse array of habitats and species, including a number of rare species. Estuaries are important contributors to a healthy environment and have an important role as a nursery ground for juvenile fish. Large areas of the site consist of intertidal mud, which is a highly productive habitat and provides feeding and resting grounds for wading and migratory birds. This is also an important habitat for the tentacled lagoon worm (*Alkmaria romijni*). This small worm is scarce throughout the UK and lives

within a tube made of mud in sheltered lagoons and estuaries. They are particularly vulnerable to changes to their habitat.



Intertidal mud at the edge of the estuary  
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The north of the site contains areas of coastal saltmarshes and reedbeds. These provide a refuge for wading birds during high tide and storms and are home to a wide variety of worms, molluscs and crustaceans living in the damp environment between the vegetation.

Estuarine rocky habitats form in flooded river valleys or rias, such as the Dart, and provide a hard surface for animals and plants to attach to in areas dominated by sandy and muddy environments. The plant species that attach themselves to the rocks form foraging areas for crustaceans and birds at low tide as

well as foraging areas and a refuge for juvenile fish at high tide.

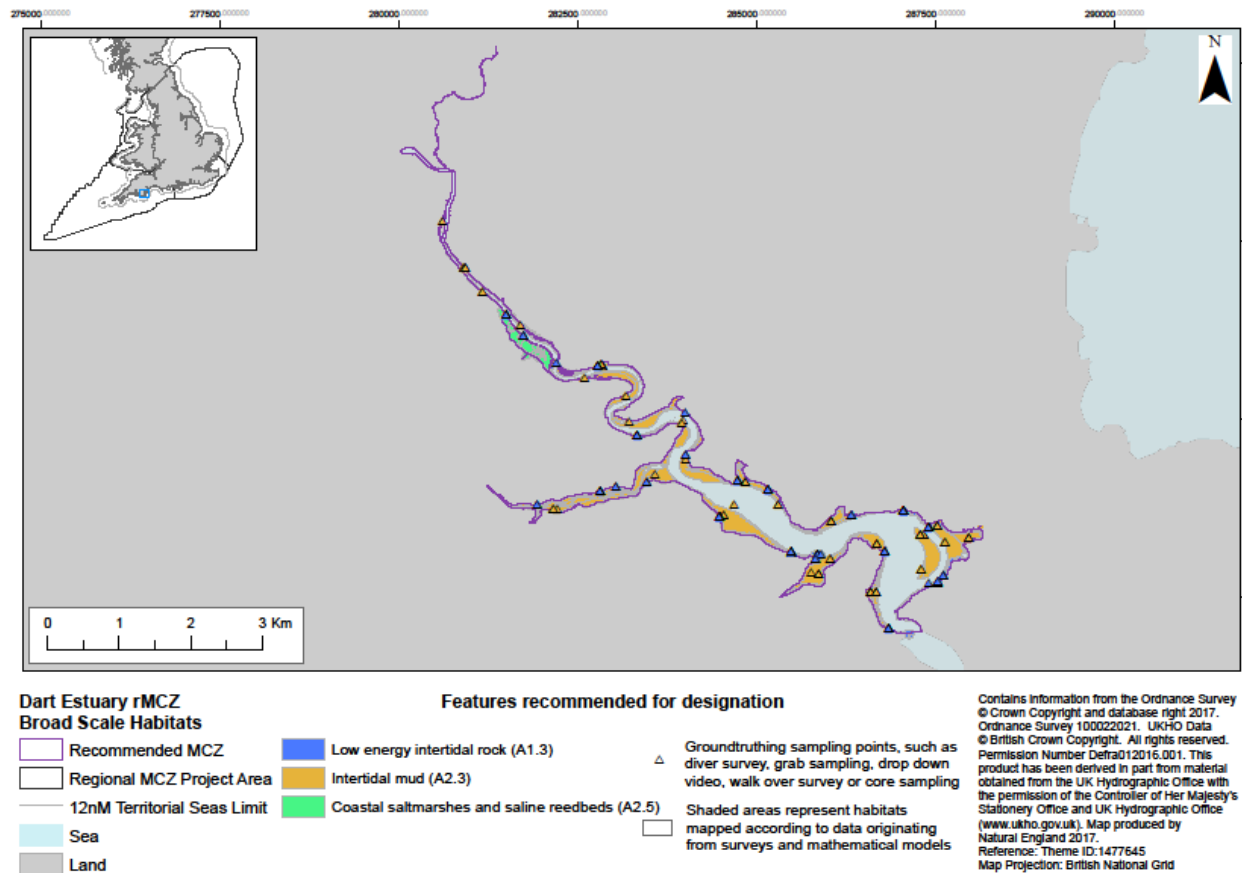
## What would this site protect?

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
Tentacled lagoon-worm ( <i>Alkmaria romijni</i> )	Maintain in favourable condition
Coastal saltmarshes and saline reedbeds	
Intertidal mud	Recover to favourable condition
Low energy intertidal rock	
Estuarine rocky habitats	

## Where are the features located?

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



## 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
Aquaculture	Pacific oyster aquaculture	Unquantified
<b>Best estimate total cost</b>		<b>Unquantified</b>

### Aquaculture

The Dart Estuary is home to several aquaculture businesses cultivating mussels and Pacific oysters. These currently operate under a local fishery order regulated by the Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority. A number of feral Pacific oysters have been found within the estuary particularly on the hard surfaces of the estuarine rocky habitats.

There are likely to be costs to the aquaculture sector associated with the monitoring and management of feral Pacific oysters in the estuary. These have not yet been quantified due to uncertainty around the specific management that might be required.

## 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 currently intersect the site
- Coastal development and flood and erosion risk management schemes
- Coastal infrastructure
- Commercial shipping

- Ports and harbours
- Recreation

## 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>

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