

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Otter Estuary

Recommended Marine Conservation Zone

June 2018

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

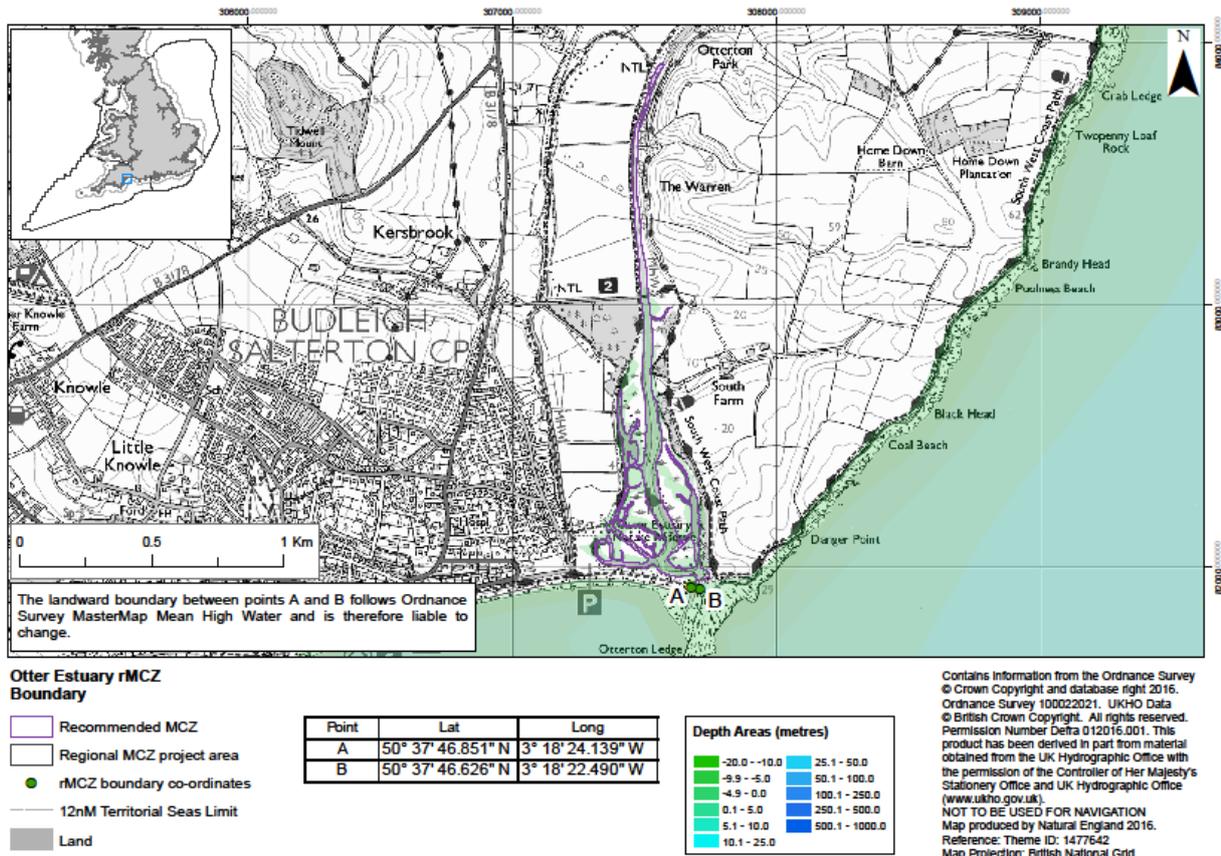


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Where is the site located?

The Otter Estuary recommended Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) is an inshore site that covers an area of approximately 0.11 km². The estuary opens into the eastern Channel on the south coast of Devon by the town of Budleigh Salterton. The site extends from the mouth of the river up to the aqueduct near East Budleigh.



Why is the site environmentally important?

The Otter Estuary is a small but important system supporting a number of habitats and wildlife. The mouth of the estuary is almost completely covered by a shingle bank of intertidal coarse sediment extending from the west coast of the river. The sheltered areas behind the bank have created the perfect environment for the formation of highly productive intertidal mudflats and saltmarshes.

The saltmarshes within the site are important foraging grounds for wading birds and wildfowl, and provide a sheltered refuge at high tide. The Otter Estuary is one of the most extensive saltmarsh networks in Devon and is home to many species of specialised salt and flood-tolerant flowering plants, as well as an abundance of worms, crustaceans and tiny snails.



Otter Estuary at high tide © Environment Agency

The intertidal muds are a highly productive habitat and support a wide range of species including ragworm, mudshrimps and the commercially important cockle. At low tide these areas form vital feeding grounds for wading and migratory birds while at high tide, flatfish and others migrate to these areas to forage for food.

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
Coastal saltmarshes and saline reedbeds	Maintain in favourable condition
Intertidal coarse sediment	
Intertidal mud	

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](#).



Otter 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)
- 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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 (www.ukho.gov.uk). Map produced by
 Natural England 2016.
 Reference: Theme ID: 1477642
 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.

There is a very low level of human activity within the Otter Estuary and no activities currently taking place are likely to be impacted by the designation of 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
- Coastal development and flood and erosion risk management schemes
- Coastal infrastructure
- Fishing
- 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>

For further information, please contact Defra on

- 03459 33 55 77 (UK only)
- +44 20 7238 6951 (from outside the UK)
- defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk



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