**Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

# Solway Firth

## Recommended Marine Conservation Zone

### June 2018

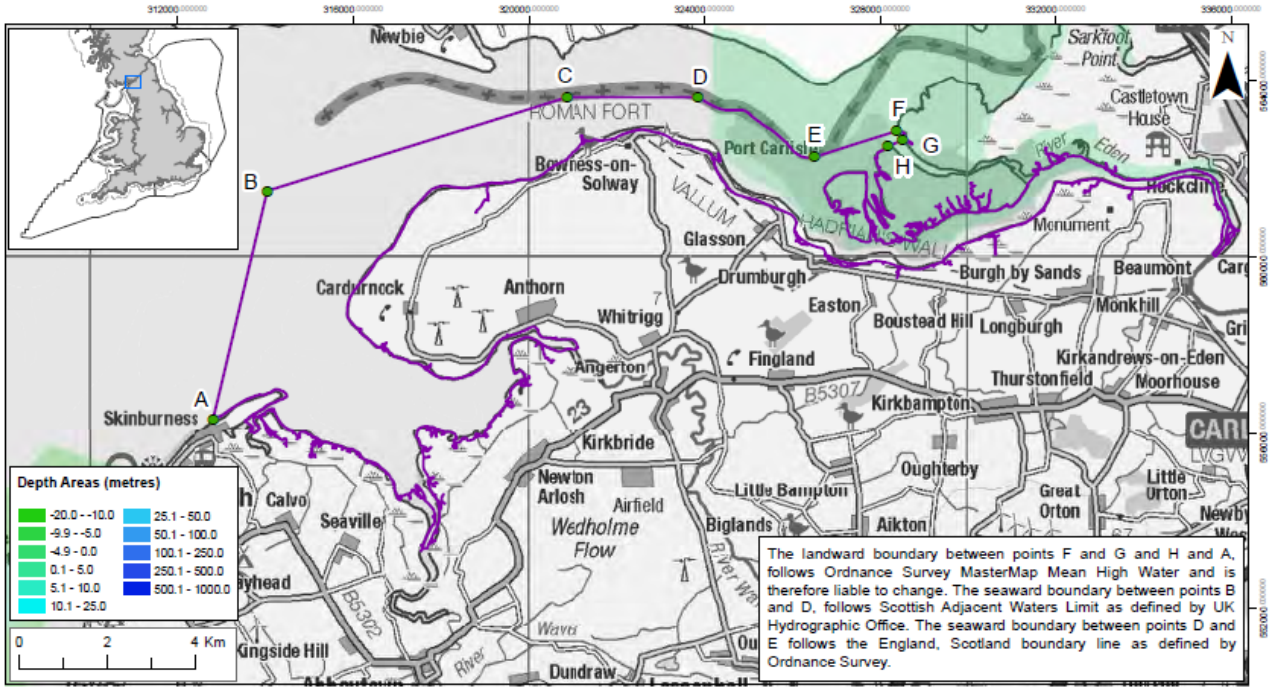
### Consultation on Sites Proposed for Designation in the Third Tranche of Marine Conservation Zones

Smelt © Jack Perks

## Contents

# Where is the site located?

The Solway Firth recommended Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) is an inshore site that covers an area of approximately 45 km². It is located in the Solway Firth estuary, Cumbria, in the far north-eastern Irish Sea.




**Solway Firth rMCZ Boundary**

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

| Point | Lat | Long | Point | Lat | Long |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 54° 53' 37.803" N | 3° 21' 39.916" W | E | 54° 56' 58.726" N | 3° 8' 56.472" W |
| B | 54° 56' 26.640" N | 3° 20' 36.321" W | F | 54° 57' 18.885" N | 3° 7' 12.027" W |
| C | 54° 57' 39.499" N | 3° 14' 14.934" W | G | 54° 57' 11.964" N | 3° 7' 4.229" W |
| D | 54° 57' 41.307" N | 3° 11' 27.086" W | H | 54° 57' 7.530" N | 3° 7' 23.018" W |

# Why is the site environmentally important?

Smelt (*Osmerus eperlanus*) were once widespread in estuaries in the UK but have declined considerably over the past 200 years. They are known to congregate in large shoals in lower estuaries and migrate into freshwater where they spawn in spring. Estuaries such as the Solway Firth therefore provide critical habitats required to complete smelt lifecycles, including for feeding and post-larval development. Due to the decline of the Solway smelt population, the large shoals and migrations of fish are now believed to be significantly smaller than they were in the past. Given the dependence on estuaries and the anthropogenic pressures smelt may encounter within estuaries during their migration, they are considered suitable candidates for protection within MCZs. An MCZ would also help focus further research to get a better understanding of the use of the estuary by smelt.

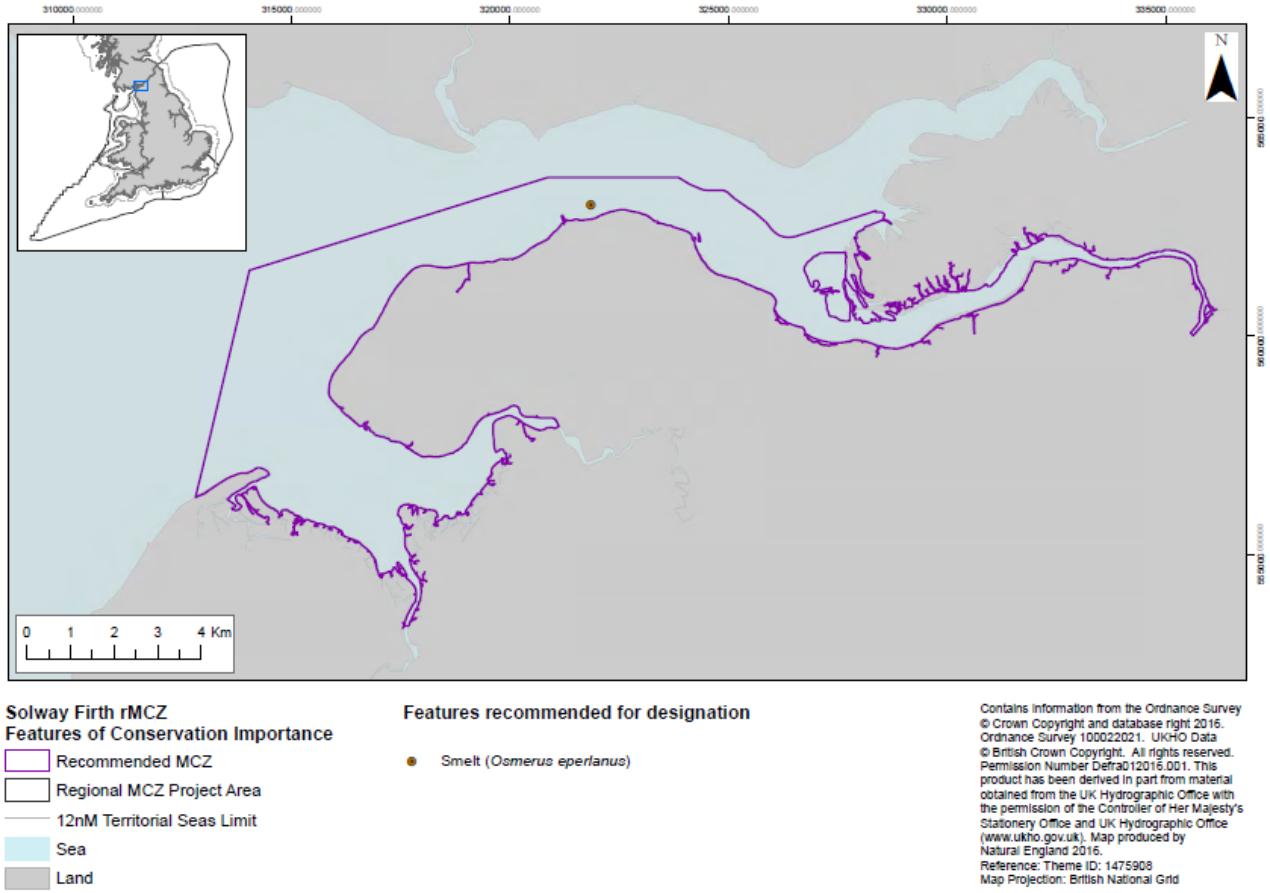
# What would this site protect?

Designation would protect the following feature. You can read more about the feature this site protects and why it is important here.

| Feature | General Management Approach |
|---|---|
| Smelt (*Osmerus eperlanus)* | Recover to favourable condition |

# Where are the features located?

The following map shows the location of the feature 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** (rounded to nearest £100) |
| Ports and harbours | Disposal site | £2,000 |
| **Best estimate total cost** | | **£2,000** |

## Ports and harbours

This site is located close to disposal site IS251. All future licence applications made in relation to this disposal site will need to consider the possible effects of the activity on the feature designated within the site. Environmental Impact Assessments for future licence applications to use the disposal site are likely to incur additional costs.

# 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:

- Archaeological heritage
- Commercial fishing
- Flood and coastal erosion risk management activities
- 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

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