

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Yarmouth to Cowes

Recommended Marine Conservation Zone

June 2018

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



A king scallop on Sabellaria © Crown Copyright

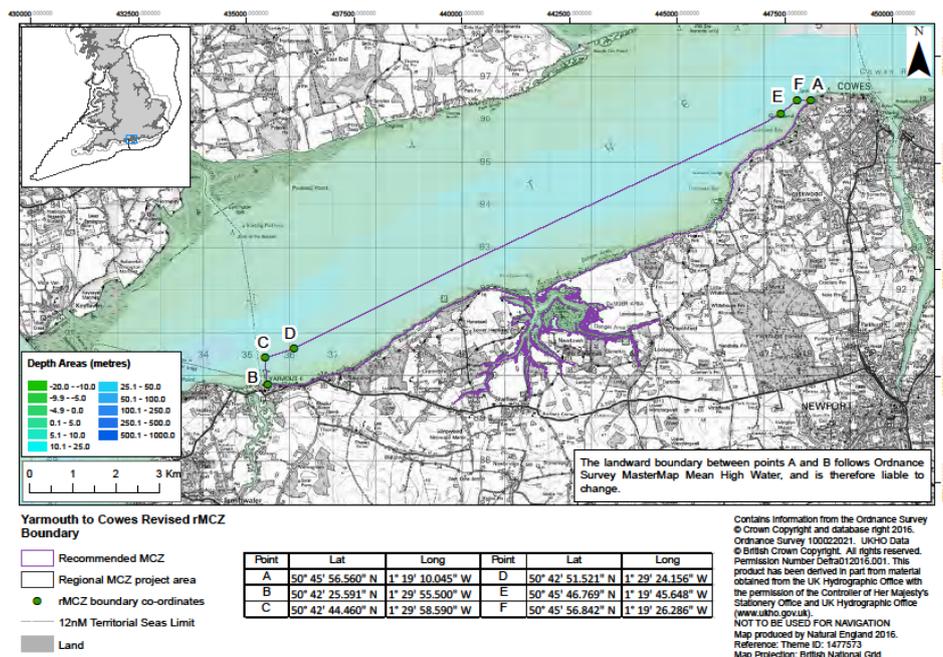
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Where is the site located?

Yarmouth to Cowes recommended Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) is an inshore site that covers an area of approximately 16 km². The site runs along the north-west coast of the Isle of Wight. The site stretches along the coast from Yarmouth Harbour in the west to the village of Gurnard in the east.

The proposed boundary has been changed from the original Regional Project recommendation to address local stakeholder concerns and socioeconomic impact. The original site included Yarmouth Harbour which is important for a range of activities including ferry links, fishing fleet traffic and recreational sailing. An additional smaller amendment is also proposed to remove Newtown Quay lagoon from the MCZ to avoid duplicate designation of features already protected through other designations (in this case a Special Area of Conservation).



Why is the site environmentally important?

The Yarmouth to Cowes MCZ contains a wide variety of habitats which support a number of ecologically important species and features. This includes one of the best examples of the habitat 'peat and clay exposures' in the region. The Bouldnor cliff geological feature, rising 8 metres above the surrounding seabed, was submerged 8,000 years ago and is not only inhabited by a variety of important species but is also an important archaeological site.

On the areas of outcropping clay in Thorness Bay the distinct boring holes of piddocks, a species of shellfish with a serrated shell, can be seen along with a thriving community of

plants and animals living under the boulders and on the rocky surfaces in the intertidal areas.

The once commercially important native oyster is found throughout the site. This important species is supported by the various habitats found within the site including many of the rock reef-like structures which run through from the intertidal zone into the deeper waters off the coast.

As well as rocky seabeds, the site also contains a multitude of soft sedimentary habitats. These habitats are favoured by animals who use the sediments to forage, scavenge, catch

prey and hide. Large swathes of the deeper areas of the site contain sediments made up of a mixture of muds, sands and gravels that support a wide variety of species including worms, bivalves, starfish, urchins and anemones.



Sea urchin on Subtidal coarse sediment ©
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The diversity of this site means that it is particularly important to the network of marine protected areas in England and the wider region.

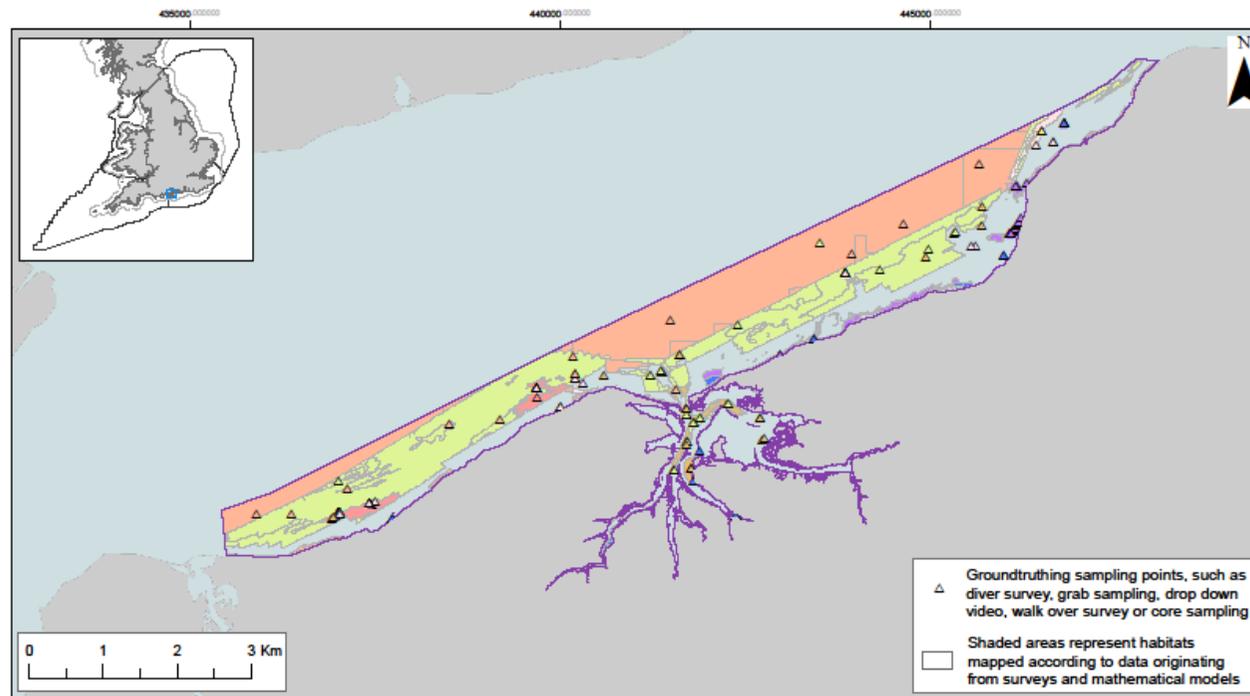
What would this site protect?

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
Bouldnor Cliff geological feature	Maintain in favourable condition
Estuarine rocky habitats	
Intertidal coarse sediment	
Intertidal under boulder communities	
Littoral chalk communities	
Low energy intertidal rock	
Moderate energy intertidal rock	
Subtidal coarse sediment	
High energy circalittoral rock	Recover to favourable condition
High energy infralittoral rock	
Moderate energy circalittoral rock	
Moderate energy infralittoral rock	
Native oyster (<i>Ostrea edulis</i>)	
Peat and clay exposures	
Sheltered muddy gravels	
Subtidal chalk	
Subtidal mixed sediments	
Subtidal 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](#).



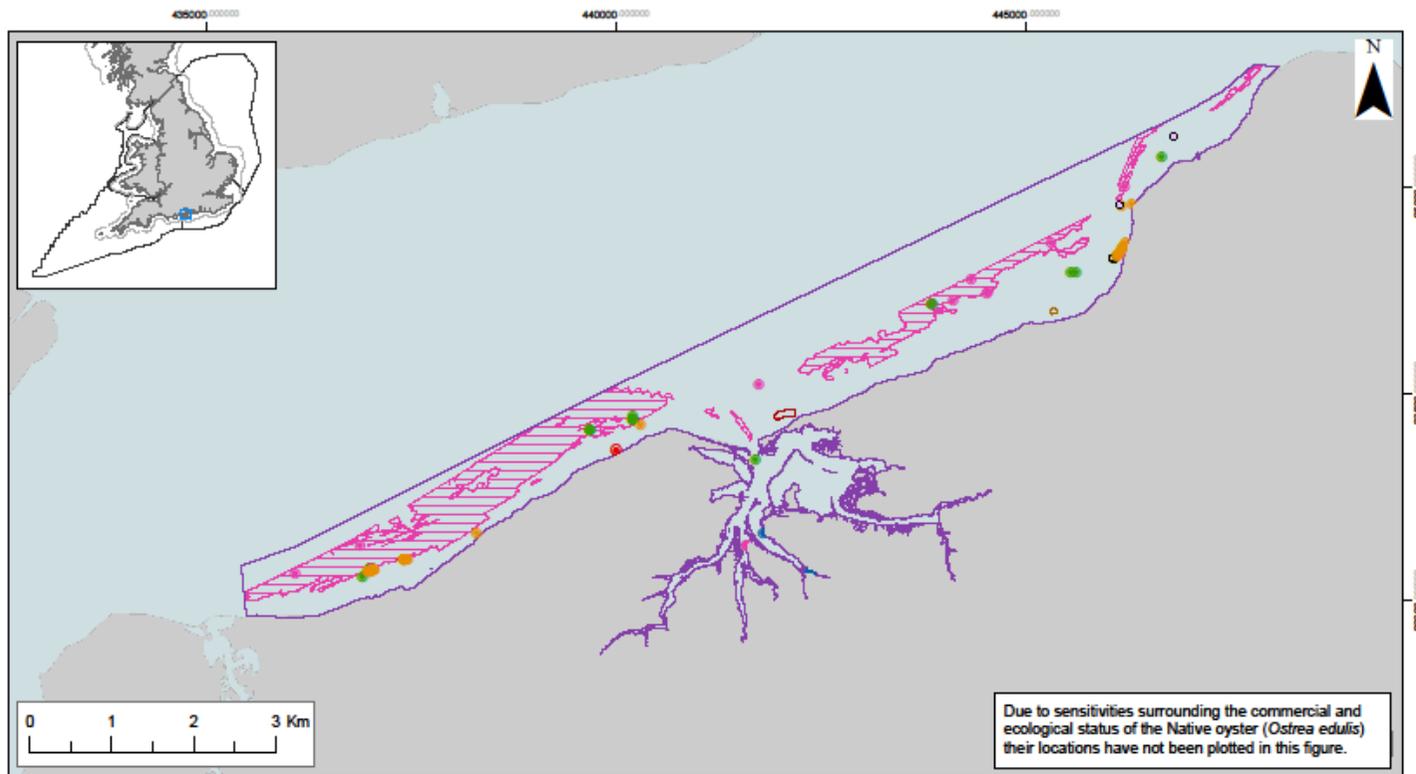
Yarmouth to Cowes rMCZ Broad Scale Habitats

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

Features recommended for designation

- Moderate energy intertidal rock (A1.2)
- Low energy intertidal rock (A1.3)
- Intertidal coarse sediment (A2.1)
- High energy infralittoral rock (A3.1)
- Moderate energy infralittoral rock (A3.2)
- High energy circalittoral rock (A4.1)
- Moderate energy circalittoral rock (A4.2)
- Subtidal coarse sediment (A5.1)
- Subtidal mud (A5.3)
- Subtidal mixed sediments (A5.4)

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 Natural England 2017.
 Reference: Theme ID:1477573
 Map Projection: British National Grid



**Yarmouth to Cowes rMCZ
Features of Conservation Importance**

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

Features recommended for designation

- Estuarine rocky habitats
- Littoral chalk communities
- Peat and clay exposures
- Sheltered muddy gravels
- Subtidal chalk
- Intertidal under boulder communities
- Littoral chalk communities
- Peat and clay exposures
- Sheltered muddy gravels
- Subtidal chalk

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Natural England 2017.
Reference: Theme ID:1477573
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)
Commercial Fishing UK	Bottom trawls, dredges, lines, nets, pots and traps.	£1,000
Ports and Harbours	Dredging and disposal	£13,000
Renewable Energy	Tidal energy project	£1,000
Best estimate total cost		£15,000

Commercial Fishing UK

The following gears are known to be used within the site:

- Bottom trawls and dredges
- Lines, nets, pots and traps

As the site is wholly within the 6 nautical mile limit it is only fished by UK vessels. Local and regional vessels use the site for trawling, lines, nets, pots and traps. In bad weather the site is fished by a number of vessels, particularly in the deeper areas when other areas become inaccessible.

Ports and harbours

Several licensed maintenance and navigational dredging areas are within 5 km of the site boundaries, including the entrance to Yarmouth Harbour, Port of Lympington and the shipping channel associated with Southampton Port. There is also one area licenced for the disposal of dredge material at Hurst Fort which is within 5 km of the boundaries of the MCZ. Environmental Impact Assessments for future licence applications are likely to incur additional costs.

Renewable Energy

The proposed site is adjacent to the Solent Energy tidal energy deployment site. A licence was granted in 2015 to test a tidal device for the generation of electricity. This expired in Sept 2016 without any work commencing and to date the applicant has not applied for an extension. Any new application would have to consider the effect of the project on the MCZ.

Which activities are not likely to be affected?

These activities are known to take place within and adjacent to 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:

- Aggregate extraction
- Archaeological heritage
- Cables
- Coastal development and flood and erosion risk management schemes
- Coastal infrastructure
- Oil, gas and carbon capture storage

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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