

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Greater Haig Fras

Recommended Marine Conservation Zone

January 2015

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



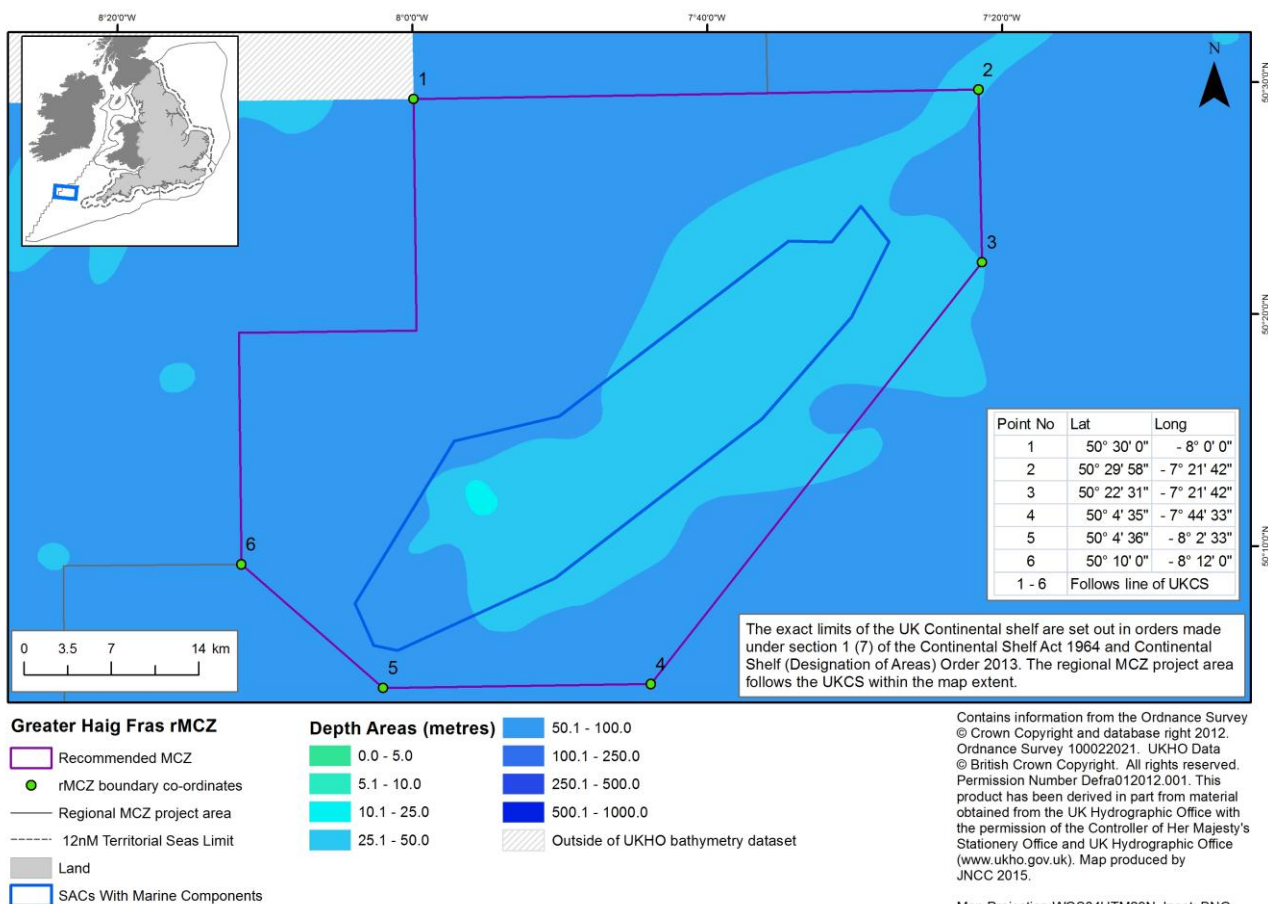
Sea pen and burrowing megafauna communities © Sue Scott JNCC

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Where the site is located

Greater Haig Fras recommended Marine Conservation Zone (rMCZ) is a large offshore site west of Cornwall with an area of 2,041 km². The western boundary of the rMCZ is aligned with the UK Continental Shelf Limit. The site encompasses the geological feature Haig Fras rock complex and Haig Fras candidate Special Area of Conservation, with surrounding areas of sediment. The easternmost boundary of the site is approximately 120 km west of Land's End.



How to comment on the consultation

You can comment on this proposal by responding to the [consultation](#) taking place between 30th January and 24th April 2015.

Why the site is environmentally important

This site makes a significant contribution towards achieving the network adequacy targets for several subtidal sediment features which are not well protected in the region, as well as additional protection for the geological feature, the Haig Fras rock complex, which is the only substantial area of rocky reef in the Celtic Sea beyond the coastal margin. This site is proposed for deep water sediment habitats that protect a range of different marine life, from burrowing worms, shrimps and mussels to crabs, fish and starfish scavenging on the seabed surface. The mud habitats within the site are an important habitat for a number of species including cockles, urchins and sea cucumbers. Burrowing anemones and brittlestars can also be found as well as luminous sea-pens which protrude from the surface of the mud.

Recent data has also identified fan mussel species within the site, which is a large triangular mussel that can grow to up to 50 cm long, making them one of the largest shells found in British waters. They are currently unprotected in the region, are also sensitive to disturbance and are considered one of the most endangered animals of its kind in UK waters.

What this site would protect

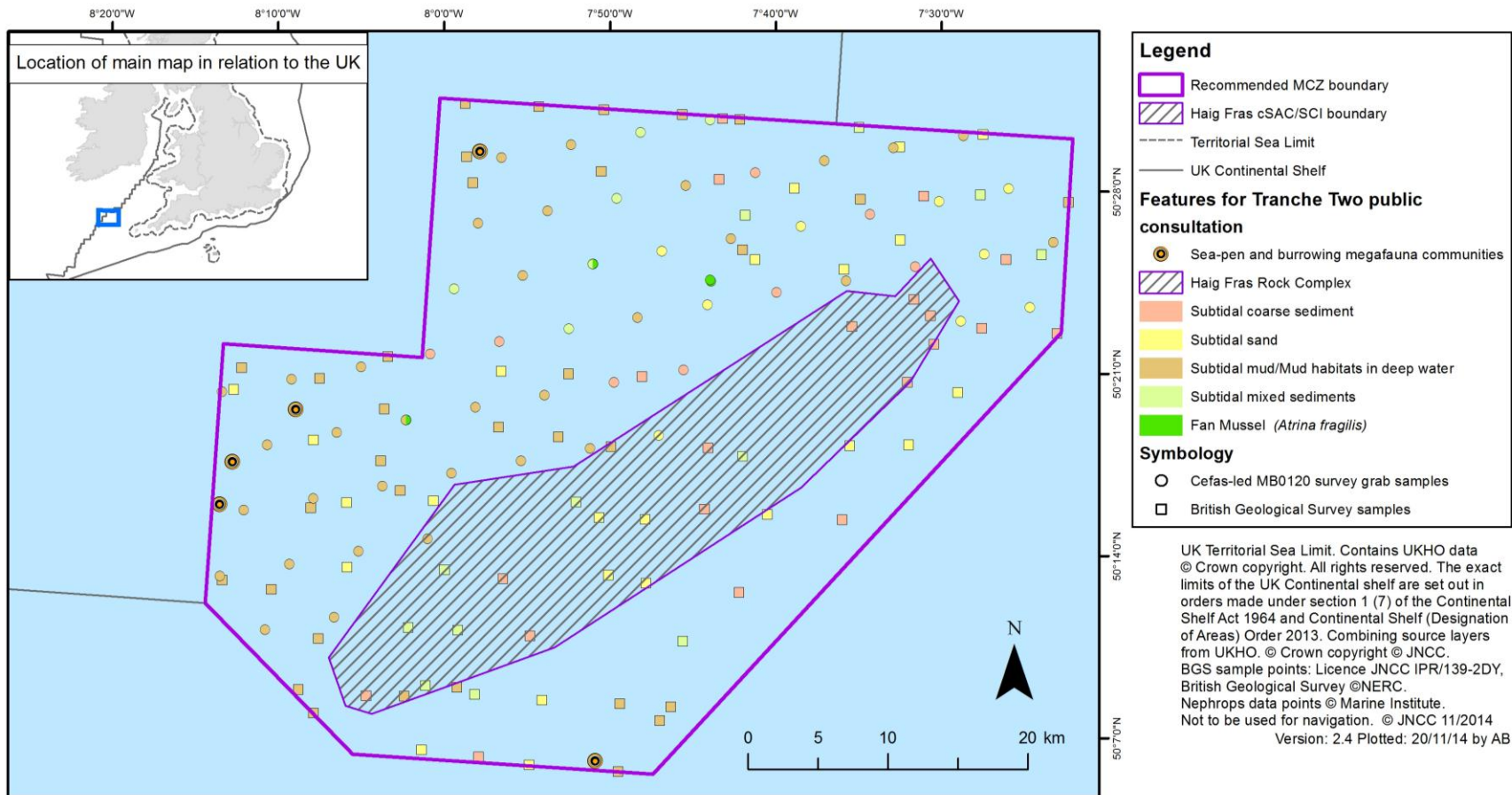
Designation would protect the following features. You can read more about the features this site protects and why they are important [here](#).

Feature	General management approach
Subtidal coarse sediments	Recover to favourable condition
Subtidal mixed sediments	
Subtidal sand	
Subtidal mud	
Mud habitats in deep water	
Fan mussel (<i>Atrina fragilis</i>)	
Sea-pen and burrowing megafauna communities	
Haig Fras rock complex ¹	Maintain at favourable condition

¹ Geological feature

Where the features are located

The following map shows the location of the features to be protected. More detailed information on the techniques used and the features themselves can be found [here](#).



A range of different types of surveys have been used to create these maps. Maps reflect the data used to inform the presence and extent of features within the site, and new survey data has been collected to improve understanding of habitats within the site. It is not currently possible to provide mapped extent of features as historical modelled extent maps do not reflect the new survey data, habitat maps will be updated following further analysis of recent survey data.

Sea-pen and burrowing megafauna communities data points were taken by the Marine Institute Nephrops surveys in 2012 and 2013. The Cefas led survey grab samples were taken during the Cefas survey in 2012. British Geological Survey samples were taken in 1974, 1975 and 1977. The presence and extent of the Haig Fras Rock Complex is supported by the full coverage of acoustic data and visual verification from video and still images, and is identical to the extent of Haig Fras cSAC/SCI. Fan mussel samples were taken during the Cefas survey in 2012. Only a modelled habitat map exists for this site and due to new data gathered in 2012 that conflict with this map, it is not displayed here to avoid confusion over habitat extents. More detailed advice available from the JNCC advice documents found here: <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-6658>

Features that are not proposed for designation

Moderate energy circalittoral rock is not proposed for designation within the recommended rMCZ as this feature is protected through the Haig Fras candidate Special Area of Conservation.

Activities that are likely to be affected

Management decisions are taken on a case by case basis by relevant regulators. Management will not automatically mean that economic and recreational activities will be restricted, decisions will be based on the specifics of each case. Restrictions on an activity will depend on the sensitivity of species, habitats and geological/geomorphological features (for which a site is designated) to the activities taking place in that area. More detail is available in the [Impact Assessment](#).

Sectors or activities likely affected by designation		
Sector	Activity Affected	Best Cost Estimate (£) per year
UK commercial fishing	Bottom trawls, dredges, nets, pots, lines.	5,500
Non-UK commercial fishing	Vessels from France, Ireland and Spain	Unquantified
Archaeological heritage	Future investigations of site	Unquantified
National defence	Use of training site	Unquantified at a site level
Best estimate total cost		5,500

UK commercial fishing

A number of commercial fishing restrictions already exist in the site.

UK trawlers are active in the wider area around the site, typically beam trawlers of between 20 and 35 metres in length. However, fishing effort in the site is thought to be low.

UK net, hook and line fishing vessels active in the area around the site are typically of between 15 and 20 metres in length and primarily use gill nets to target hake and pollack. Some vessels use both gill nets and trammel nets, using the latter to target turbot and monkfish. Netting occurs throughout the site, but is concentrated in two areas, one in the far west of the site along the shelf break, the other in the south-east of the site following the area of circalittoral rock.

It is likely that a range of gear types will be affected by management including bottom trawls, dredges and static gear.

Non-UK commercial fishing

Fishing in the site is dominated by French otter trawling and is also used by a number of other non-UK commercial fishing fleets. These include:

- France - bottom trawls / dredges, static gear,
- Republic of Ireland - bottom trawls, static gear, mid water trawl,
- Spain - bottom trawl.

It is likely that a range of gear types will be affected by management including bottom trawls, dredges and static gear.

Although impacts outside the UK are not quantified as part of the impact assessment, the implications of designation on non-UK commercial fishing vessels are considered in deciding which sites to designate.

Archaeological heritage

The fishing industry has reported 34 unidentified objects that have caused obstruction to fishing gear in this site which may represent features of archaeological interest.

There is likely to be an increase in the cost for carrying out Environmental Impact Assessments for future licence applications within this site. Following designation, these will need to consider the effect of the activity on the features designated at this site.

National defence

The Ministry of Defence is known to make use of the site for training activities.

We expect this activity to be able to continue. Activity which is harmful to features can be avoided though additional planning during operations and training.

Activities that are unlikely to be affected

These activities are known to take place at this site but are not likely to be damaging to the features proposed for designation at their current levels of intensity:

- commercial fisheries - mid water trawls,
- cables - existing interconnectors and telecom cables,
- transit of ships.



Diverse communities including a squat lobster (*Munida Rugosa*) supported by the pebbles and cobbles in subtidal coarse sediments © JNCC

Additional Information

To read the full consultation document, or respond to the consultation, please visit

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/marine/tranche2mczs>

To read the advice provided by JNCC, please visit

<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-6658>

For further information, please contact Defra on

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