

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Mid St. George's Channel

**Candidate Marine Conservation Zone not
proposed for designation in the second tranche**

January 2015

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

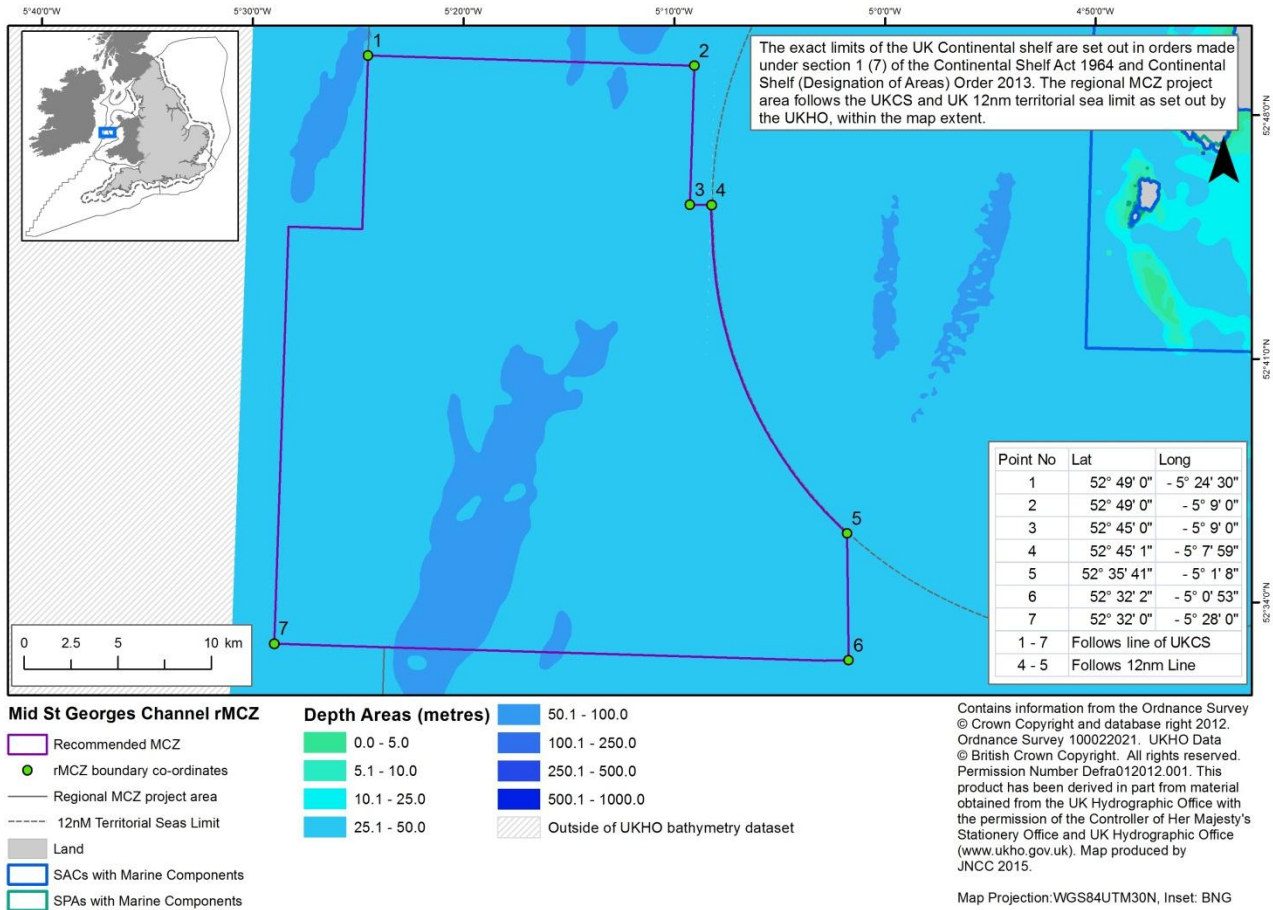
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Where this site is located

Mid St. George’s Channel candidate Marine Conservation Zone (cMCZ) is located in offshore waters in the Irish Sea, 23 km from the coast of Wales.

It is situated between Irish offshore waters to the west and Welsh territorial waters to the east. The depth of the site ranges from 60 – 125 metres.



Why this site was identified as a candidate for the second tranche

The site was recommended to fills gaps in the network for circalittoral rock and subtidal sand. Several large areas of highly mobile sand provide habitats to a variety of species including the white catworm (a thin, segmented worm) and small crustaceans. Subtidal coarse sediment can also be found within the site with a variety of animals and plants living within and on top of the sediment.

Features considered for designation

The features considered for designation in this site were:

- moderate energy circalittoral rock,
- subtidal sand,
- subtidal mixed sediments,
- subtidal coarse sediment,
- subtidal biogenic reefs.

Effects of designation

If the cMCZ was to be designated in its current form, the following activities would be likely to be affected by management. This information would be updated if a revised site proposal is recommended for designation at a later date.

Sector	Best Cost Estimate (£) per year	Details
UK commercial fishing	300	There are a small number of vessels known to fish within the area. Of these fishing vessels the following gear types are in use; dredges, bottom and mid-water trawls, pots and traps, hooks and lines, and nets.
Non-UK commercial fishing	Unquantified	Non-UK fishing vessels using mobile gear, pots and traps, beam trawls and dredges operate within the area. The majority of the activity in the area is from France and the Republic of Ireland, with vessels from Belgium and Spain also using the site.
Oil and gas	Unquantified	This cMCZ overlaps with an area that has potential for future oil and gas exploration and production. If the site were developed for oil and gas extraction, developers would need to take into account the impact of the development on the features in the site. This would increase the cost of the licence application. As a result of uncertainty about whether any development will take place, costs for the oil and gas sector have not been quantified at site level.
National defence	Unquantified	The Ministry of Defence is known to make use of the site for training activities. We would expect this activity to be able to continue. Activity which is harmful to features can be avoided though additional planning during operations and training.
Best estimate total cost	300	

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 identified at their current levels of intensity:

- recreational activities,
- transit of ships.

Why this candidate site is not being proposed for designation in the second tranche

Defra is responsible for designating cMCZs in offshore waters adjacent to Wales. Five sites which were proposed as candidates for the second tranche are in these waters. This includes Mid St. Georges Channel.

Since this site was identified by the regional projects as a cMCZ, the Silk Commission, which was an independent commission established to review what powers should be devolved to Wales, recommended that offshore waters adjacent to Wales should be the responsibility of the Welsh Government. The UK Government has not yet responded to these recommendations but, given this is currently under consideration, we do not consider it appropriate to take forward sites in offshore waters adjacent to Wales at this time.

Further consideration

The UK Government response to the Silk Commission's second report will confirm if responsibility for these waters will transfer to the Welsh government. Following this response, sites will either be considered by the Welsh Government, which has an ongoing programme to designate MCZs, or will remain with the UK Government for consideration as part of the third tranche.

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

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



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

mcz@defra.gsi.gov.uk

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