

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

North St. George's Channel

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

January 2015

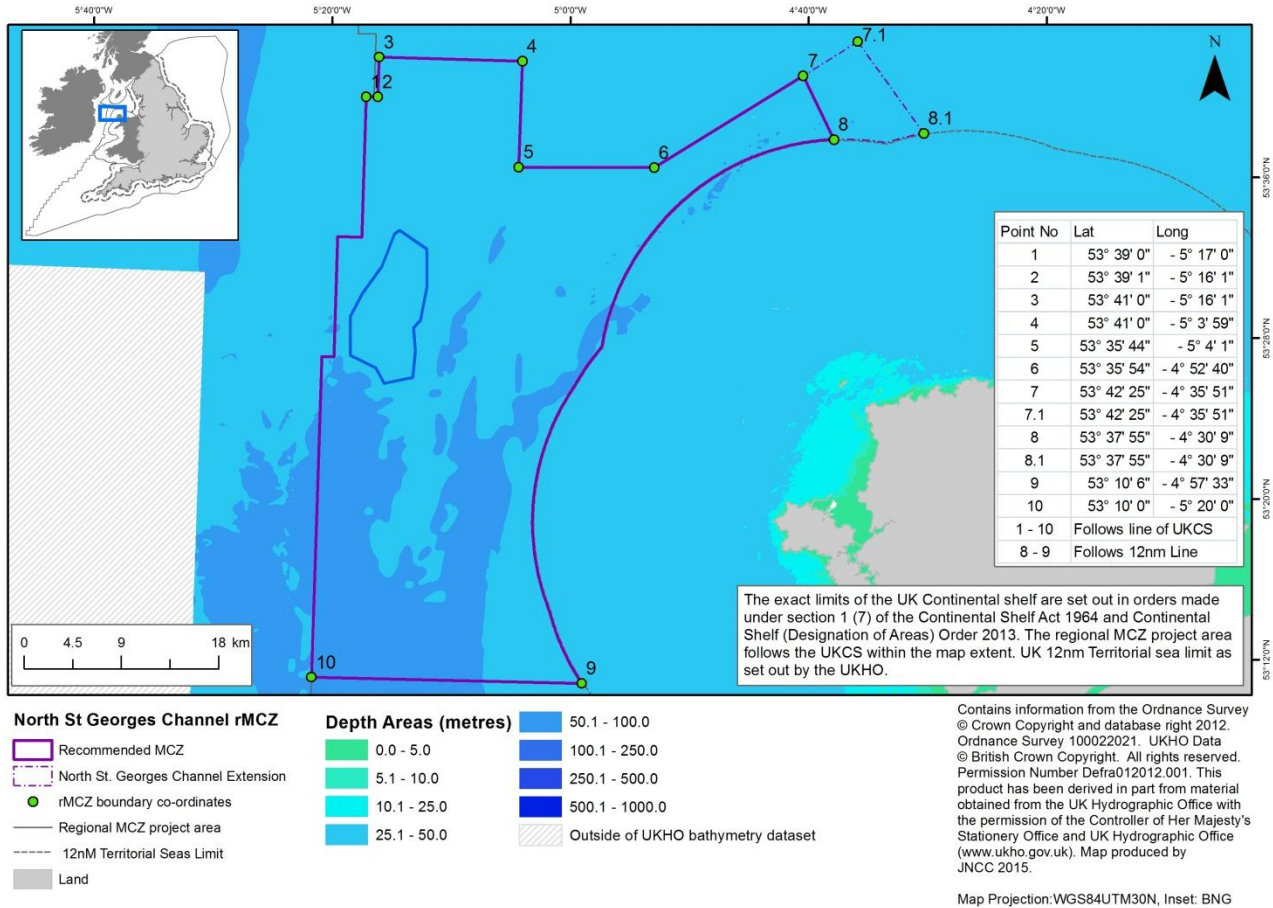
**Consultation on Sites Proposed for Designation in the Second Tranche
of Marine Conservation Zones**

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Where this site is located

North St. George's Channel candidate MCZ (cMCZ) is a large zone in the mid-Irish Sea located approximately 23 km northwest from the coast of Anglesey in north Wales. The depth of the area ranges from 40 to 170 metres.



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

The site was recommended to fill in the network for circalittoral rock and subtidal mixed sediment. Most of the seabed is made up of a mixture of sediments which supports a range of filter feeding animals such as barnacles and soft corals. Sponges, tube worms and anemones are also found within the site.

Features considered for designation

The features considered for designation in this site were:

- moderate energy circalittoral rock,
- high energy circalittoral rock,
- subtidal mud,
- subtidal sand,
- subtidal coarse sediment,
- subtidal mixed sediment,
- subtidal biogenic reefs,
- horse mussel (*Modiolus modiolus*) beds,
- drumlins.

Effects of designation

If the cMCZ was to be designated in its current form, the following activities would likely be affected by management. This information will 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	1,500	There are a small number of fishing vessels known to operate in this area using dredges, bottom trawls and pots and traps. The following gear types are also in use; hooks and lines, and nets.
Non-UK commercial fishing	Unquantified	The majority of Non-UK commercial fishing in this area is by fleets from the Republic of Ireland using bottom abrading gear and seine nets. Fleets from France, Belgium and the Netherlands also fish in the area.
Oil and gas	Unquantified at a site level	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 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	1,500	

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,
- three active telecommunication and one interconnectors power cable intersect with the site. Potential intersect with Green Wire (Northern route) interconnector.

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

Defra is responsible for designating cMCZs in the offshore waters adjacent to Wales. Five sites which were proposed as candidates for the second tranche are in these waters. This includes North 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 the Welsh government, 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 the 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

PB 14285