

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Offshore Overfalls

Recommended Marine Conservation Zone

January 2015

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

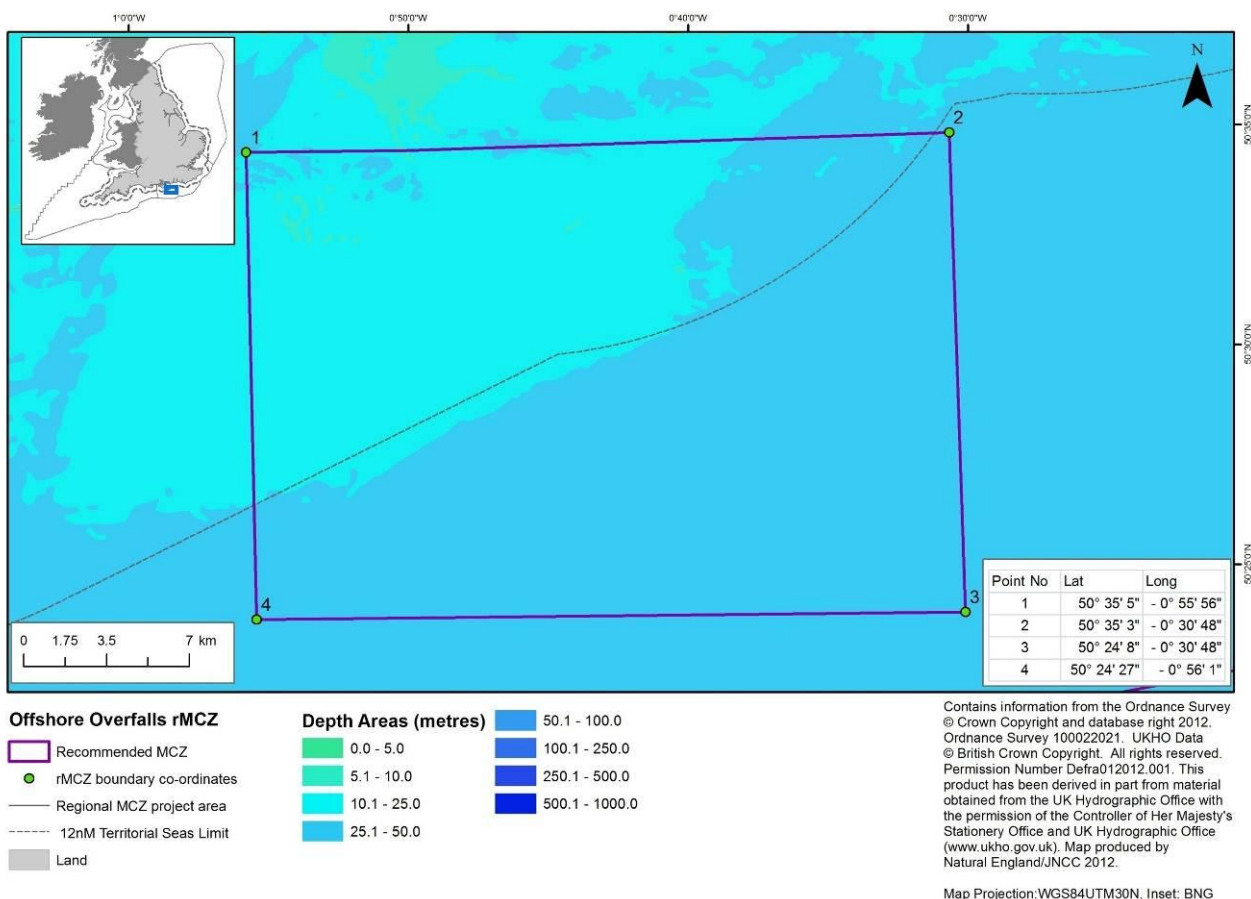


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Where the site is located

The recommended Marine Conservation Zone (rMCZ) lies approximately 18 km east of the southern part of the Isle of Wight and straddles the 12 nautical mile (nm) inshore-offshore boundary. The site measures 593 km² and covers depths between 1 to 35 metres. The main feature of this site is the 'Overfalls', an area in the north-west corner of the site.



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 includes areas of sandy seabed, which help to fill a network gap for subtidal sand. Sand seascapes may appear like deserts, but close inspection can reveal flat fish and sand eels camouflaged on the surface of the sand with worms and bivalves living within it.

The rMCZ also includes the second largest area of subtidal mixed sediment in the region. As mixed seabeds are so varied, they may support a wide range of animals, both on and in the sediment. Animals found here include worms, bivalves, starfish and urchins, anemones, sea fans and sea mats.

In the north west corner of the site is an area called the 'Overfalls' which has been highlighted as an area of high scientific value due to the unusual area of mixed sediment, sands and gravels that form sandwaves, which are important for a range of fish species such as bass, turbot and brill, cod, rays (specifically blonde rays), tope, brown crab and sandeels.

The site also protects the geological English Channel Outburst feature which was formed during at the end of the last glaciation by the collapse of either ice sheets or glaciers.

What this site would protect

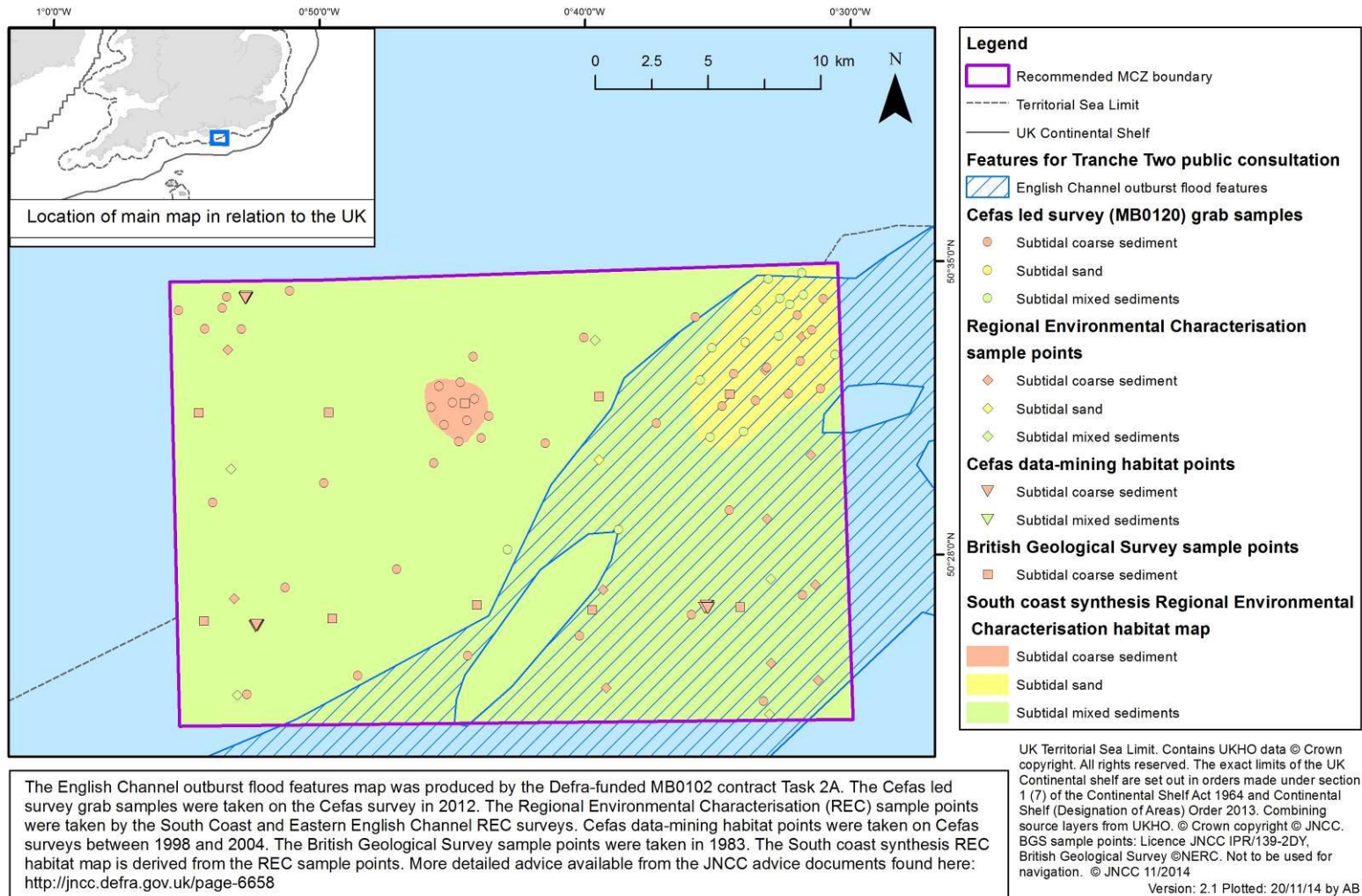
Designation would protect the following features. You can read more about the features this site protects and why they are important [here](#).

Feature	General management approach
Subtidal coarse sediments	Recover to favourable condition
Subtidal sand	
Subtidal mixed sediments	
English Channel outburst flood features 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. A range of different types of surveys have been used to create this map. More detailed information on the techniques used and the features themselves can be found [here](#).



Features that are not proposed for designation

The following features are not proposed for designation as there is currently insufficient supporting evidence. Inclusion of these features may be considered if scientific evidence becomes available:

- rossworm (*Spinulosa spinulosa*) reefs,
- native oyster (*Ostrea edulis*),
- undulate Ray (*Raja undulata*).

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
Ports, harbours and shipping	Disposal site	37,200
Aggregates	Future use of site	6,900
UK commercial fishing	Otter trawling, pots and traps, static gear.	4,900
Renewable energy	Tidal	700
Non-UK commercial fishing	Fleets from Belgium, Denmark, France and Germany.	Unquantified
Best estimate total cost		49,700

Ports, harbours and shipping

All future licence applications made in relation to port, harbour and commercial shipping activities will need to consider the possible effects of their activities on the features designated within the site.

Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) for future licence applications regarding use of the Nab Tower disposal site, which is within 5 km of the site, are likely to incur additional costs.

Aggregates

There are three aggregate dredging areas near the site. There may be additional costs incurred when carrying out EIAs for future licence applications.

UK commercial fishing

Both under and over 15 metre vessels operate in the site. Under 15 metre UK otter trawlers fish the south-east part of the site. The following gears are known to be used within the site:

- demersal towed gear such as beam trawls and scallop dredges,
- static gear such as set nets.

Management of static and towed gear may be required due to the sensitivity of the features recommended for protection.

Renewable energy - tidal

There is potential for future developments that generate electricity using the tidal energy resource in this rMCZ as it overlaps with the East of Isle of Wight Area of Potential.

All future licence applications would need to take into account the impact of the development on the features in the site. This may increase the cost of the licence application.

Non-UK commercial fishing

The eastern and southern parts of the rMCZ beyond 12 nm and within 6-12 nm are heavily fished by Belgian and French fleets who have historic fishing rights in this area. The following gears are known to be used within the site:

- Belgium - seasonal fishing (February to April) using bottom trawls,
- France - bottom trawls, dredges and static gears,
- Germany - mid-water otter trawls,
- Denmark - pelagic trawls.

Management of static and towed gear may be required due to the sensitivity of the features recommended for protection. It is unlikely that any management will be required for mid-water and pelagic gear fisheries.

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.

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:

- potential overlap with National Grid France – England Electricity Interconnector,
- transit of ships.

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 Joint Nature Conservation Committee, 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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