

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The Needles

Recommended Marine Conservation Zone

January 2015

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



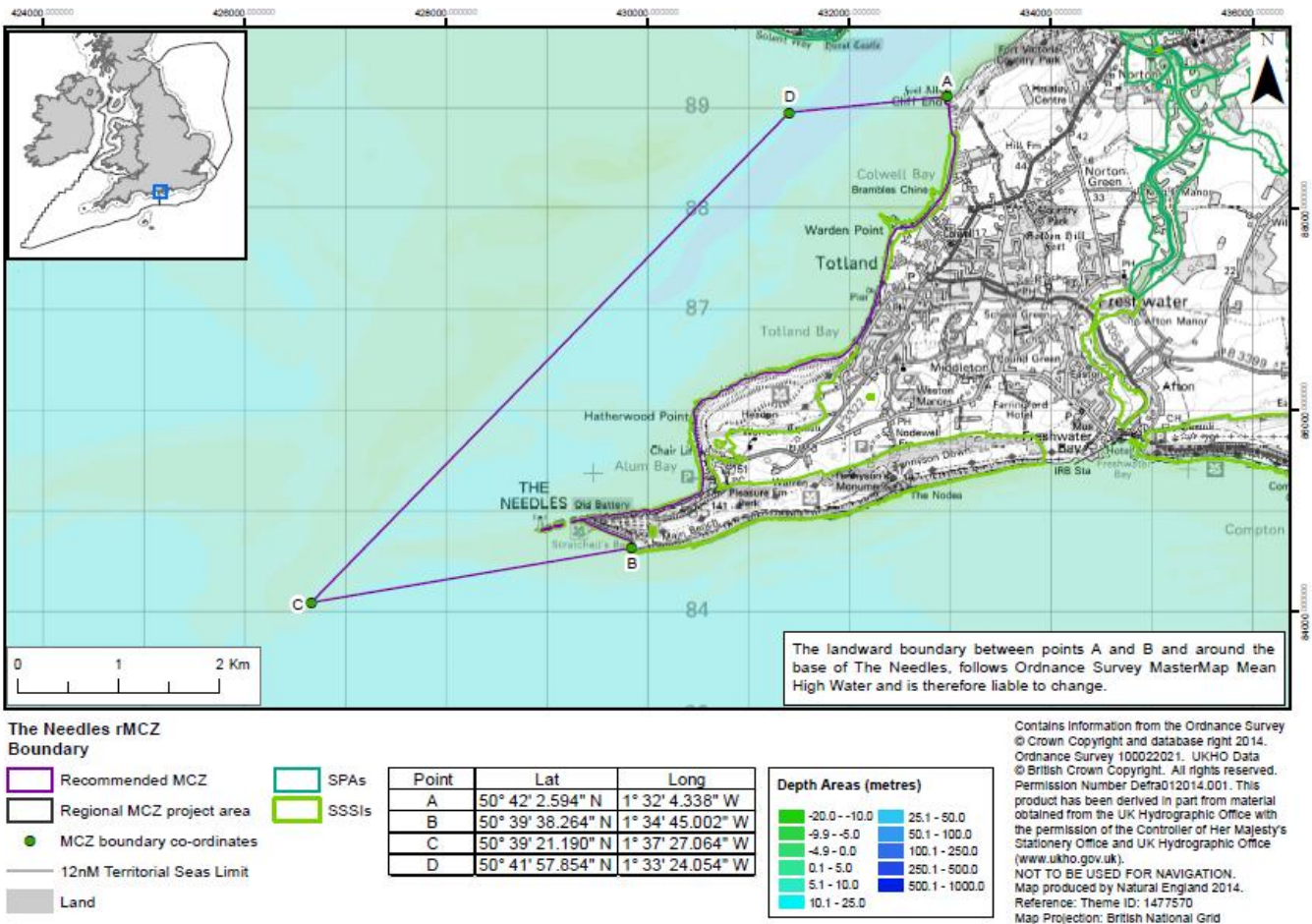
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Where the site is located

The Needles recommended Marine Conservation Zone (rMCZ) is an inshore site measuring 11 km². The site covers the stretch of Solent adjacent to the northwest side of the Isle of Wight, from opposite Hurst Point down to just south of the Needles.

The site is named after its most prominent landmark, The Needles – the chalk stacks at the most easterly point of the Isle of Wight.



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 has been recommended as an MCZ for a number of rare and fragile habitats including subtidal chalk, shallow water rock and soft sediments which support communities of algae, sponges, sea squirts and delicate anemones.

Seagrass beds in both Totland and Colwell Bays support species such as the colourful Sea Hare, a small marine mollusc. Rare and threatened species such as the fan shaped algae, commonly known as Peacock's Tail, can be found in the intertidal areas at Colwell Bay, and records of the tiny Stalked jellyfish have been found at Alum Bay.

The site is also important for the native oyster, a species which has declined in numbers across the UK in recent years.



Stalked Jellyfish (*Lucernariopsis campanulata*) © Paul Kay

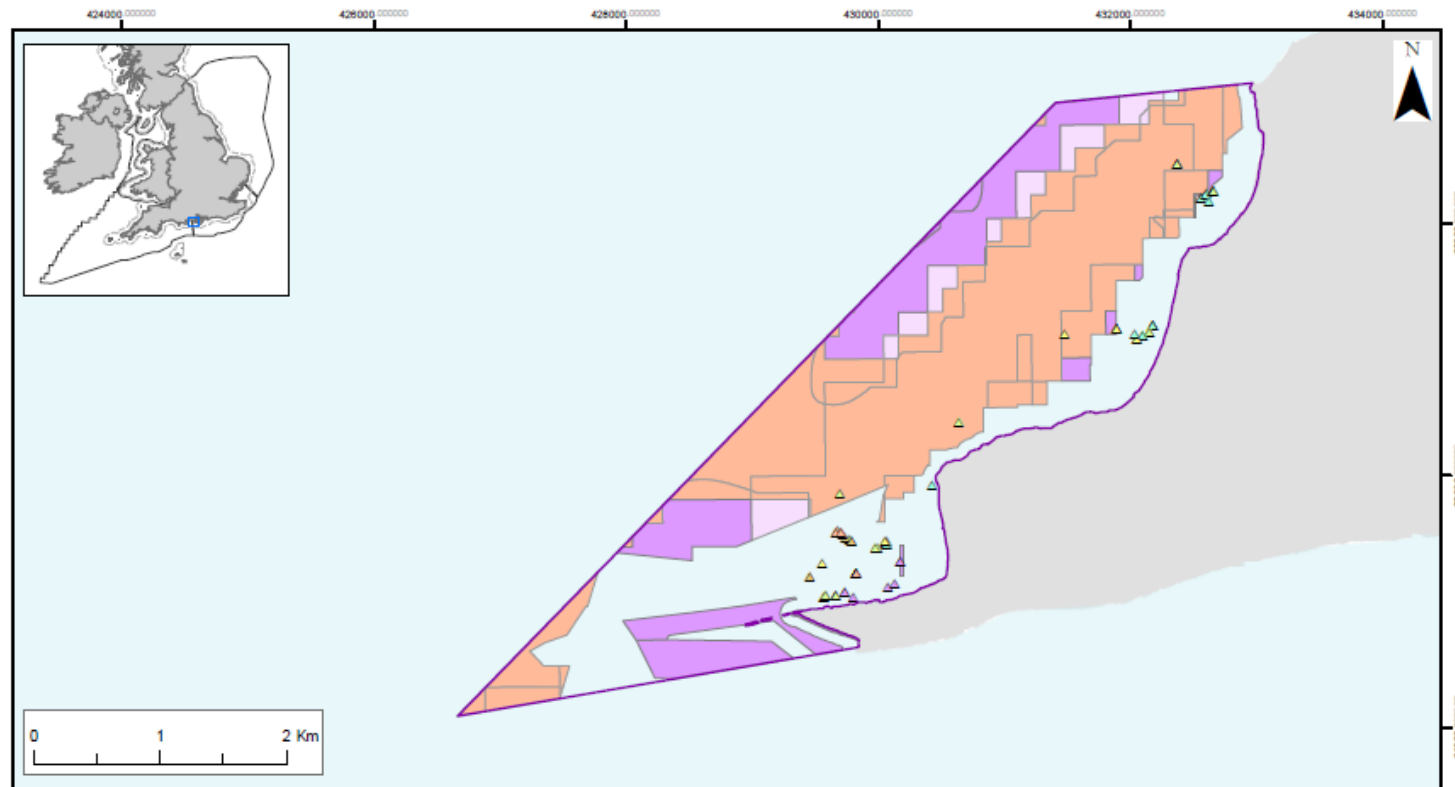
What this site would protect

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
Moderate energy intertidal rock	Maintain in favourable condition
Moderate energy infralittoral rock	
Moderate energy circalittoral rock	
Stalked jellyfish (<i>Lucernariopsis campanulata</i>)	
High energy infralittoral rock	Recover to favourable condition
Subtidal chalk	
Subtidal coarse sediment	
Subtidal mixed sediments	
Sheltered muddy gravels	
Subtidal sand	
Subtidal mud	
Subtidal macrophyte-dominated sediment	
Seagrass Beds	
Peacock's tail (<i>Padina pavonica</i>)	
Native oyster (<i>Ostrea edulis</i>)	

Where the features are located

The following maps show the location of the features to be protected. A range of different types of surveys have been used to create these maps. More detailed information on the techniques used and the features themselves can be found [here](#).



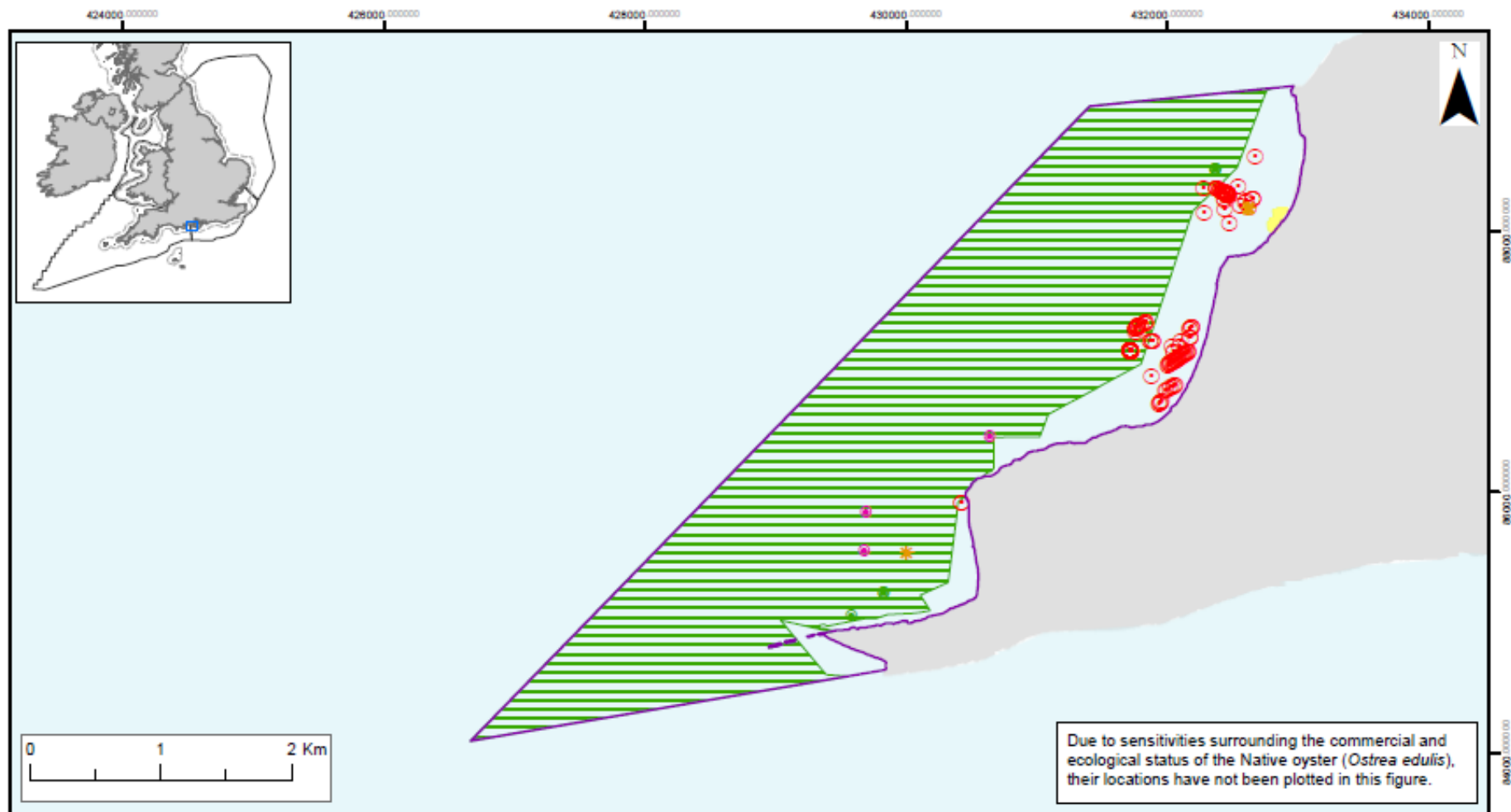
The Needles recommended MCZ Broad Scale Habitats

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

Features proposed for 2015 designation

- Moderate energy infralittoral rock (A3.2)
- Moderate energy circalittoral rock (A4.2)
- Subtidal coarse sediment (A5.1)
- Subtidal sand (A5.2)
- Subtidal mud (A5.3)
- Subtidal mixed sediments (A5.4)
- Subtidal macrophyte-dominated sediment (A5.5)
- Shaded areas represent habitats mapped according to data originating from surveys and mathematical models
- Groundtruthing sampling points, such as diver survey, grab sampling, drop down video, walk over survey or core sampling

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 Natural England 2014.
 Reference: Theme ID: 1477571
 Map Projection: British National Grid



**The Needles recommended MCZ
Features of Conservation Importance**

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

Features proposed for 2015 designation

- Stalked jellyfish (*Lucernariopsis campanulata*)
- Peacock's tail (*Padina pavonica*)
- Seagrass beds
- Sheltered muddy gravels
- Subtidal chalk
- Subtidal chalk

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Natural England 2014.
Reference: Theme ID: 1477571
Map Projection: British National Grid

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:

- tide-swept channels,
- intertidal coarse sediment,
- intertidal sand and muddy sand,
- intertidal mud,
- intertidal mixed sediments.



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	Port development, navigational dredge, disposal sites.	15,300
UK commercial fishing	Pots and traps, gill netting, long lining, tangle/trammel netting, trawling and oyster dredging.	900
National defence	Use of training site	Unquantified at site level
Archaeological heritage	Future investigations of site	Unquantified
Oil and gas related activities	Future development	Unquantified at site level
Best estimate total cost		16,200

Ports, harbours and shipping

The site is located close to Yarmouth Port. 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.

The activities which we are aware take place, and are likely to see additional costs incurred when carrying out Environmental Impact assessments (EIAs) for future licence applications, are as follows:

- navigational dredging within 5 km of the site,
- disposal of dredged material in a site that is within 1 km of the site. This is used by the ports of Yarmouth and Lymington,
- disposal of dredged material in two sites that are within 5 km of the site.
- The impact on features in the rMCZ will also need to be considered if there is any future port development.

UK commercial fishing

Fishing vessels operating in this area are mainly based at Keyhaven, Lymington, Yarmouth, Cowes, Mundeford and Portsmouth. The following gears are known to be used within the site:

- towed gear such as trawling and oyster dredging,
- cuttlefish trapping,
- potting for lobsters, crabs and whelks,
- static nets such as gill netting for bass and mullet and tangle/trammel netting for sole and plaice,
- static gear such as long lining for bass and mullet.

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

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.

Archaeological heritage

Wrecks of vessels of British, Dutch, Greek, Prussian, Portuguese, Swedish, Italian and French origin are recorded within the site. The Needles' designated wreck site has two wrecks (HMS *Assurance* and HMS *Pomone*) and is protected by a 75 metre exclusion zone. A German World War II aircraft wreck is also within the site.

There is likely to be an increase in the cost for carrying out EIAs 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.

Oil and gas

Some management may be required in the future. 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 this uncertainty about whether any development will take place, costs for the oil and gas sector have not been quantified at site level.

Recreational activity

The site provides anchorage refuge, a small number of permanent moorings in Totland Bay and ad hoc anchorage at Alum Bay. We have been unable to quantify these usages.

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:

- flood and coastal erosion risk management (coastal defence),
- transit of ships,
- one active telecommunication cable intersects the site,
- west of Isle of Wight export cable for wind energy project could run close to the site but is not expected to intersect it¹,
- renewables – tidal².

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 Natural England, please visit

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5803843768025088?category=6742552893980672>

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

¹ <http://www.navitusbaywindpark.co.uk/isle-wight>

² <http://perpetuustidal.com/ptec/planning-and-timeline/>



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