

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The Swale Estuary

Recommended Marine Conservation Zone

January 2015

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

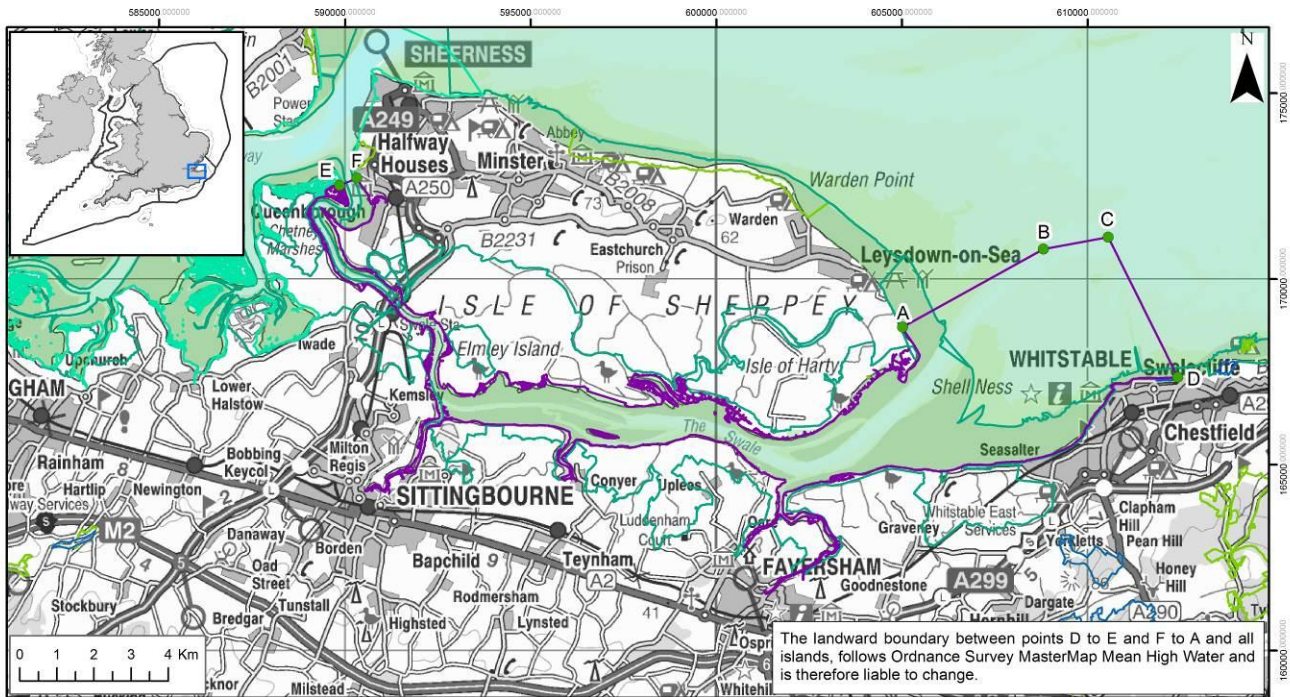


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Where the site is located

The recommended Marine Conservation Zones (rMCZ) is an inshore site measuring 51 km². It covers the Swale Estuary from the point at which it meets the Medway Estuary, south of the Isle of Sheppey, seawards to the end of The Street at Whitstable.



The landward boundary between points D to E and F to A and all islands, follows Ordnance Survey MasterMap Mean High Water and is therefore liable to change.

The Swale Estuary rMCZ Boundary

- Recommended MCZ
- Regional MCZ project area
- MCZ boundary co-ordinates
- 12nM Territorial Seas Limit
- Land
- MCZ
- SPAs
- SACs
- SSSIs

| Point | Lat | Long |
|-------|-------------------|------------------|
| A | 51° 22' 49.418" N | 0° 56' 41.200" E |
| B | 51° 23' 52.288" N | 1° 0' 1.683" E |
| C | 51° 24' 0.295" N | 1° 1' 32.280" E |
| D | 51° 21' 55.908" N | 1° 3' 1.261" E |
| E | 51° 25' 11.564" N | 0° 43' 45.081" E |
| F | 51° 25' 17.459" N | 0° 44' 9.694" E |

| Depth Areas (metres) | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| -20.0 - -10.0 | 25.1 - 50.0 |
| -9.9 - -5.0 | 50.1 - 100.0 |
| -4.9 - 0.0 | 100.1 - 250.0 |
| 0.1 - 5.0 | 250.1 - 500.0 |
| 5.1 - 10.0 | 500.1 - 1000.0 |
| 10.1 - 25.0 | |

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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 is considered to be highly biodiverse and protects a range of habitats and species including native oyster and smelt which help to fill network gaps.

The main channel of the Swale Estuary contains several important subtidal habitats, such as subtidal sand and mixed sediments. A range of animals live in these habitats, from flat fish and sand eels on the sandy seabed, to starfish and urchins, anemones, sea fans and sea mats in the mixed sediment.

Protecting these habitats will complement the protected areas in the shallower waters of the estuary, which are protected under different legislation as both a Site of Special Scientific Interest and as a Special Protection Area.

The site includes saltmarshes and grazing marshes that support breeding wildfowl, and provide feeding grounds for migratory species as they move to wintering grounds further south. The site contains some of the best examples of exposed London Clay, an example of unique and fragile peat and clay exposure which are irreplaceable, as they were formed millions of years ago from ancient lakebeds and forested peatland.

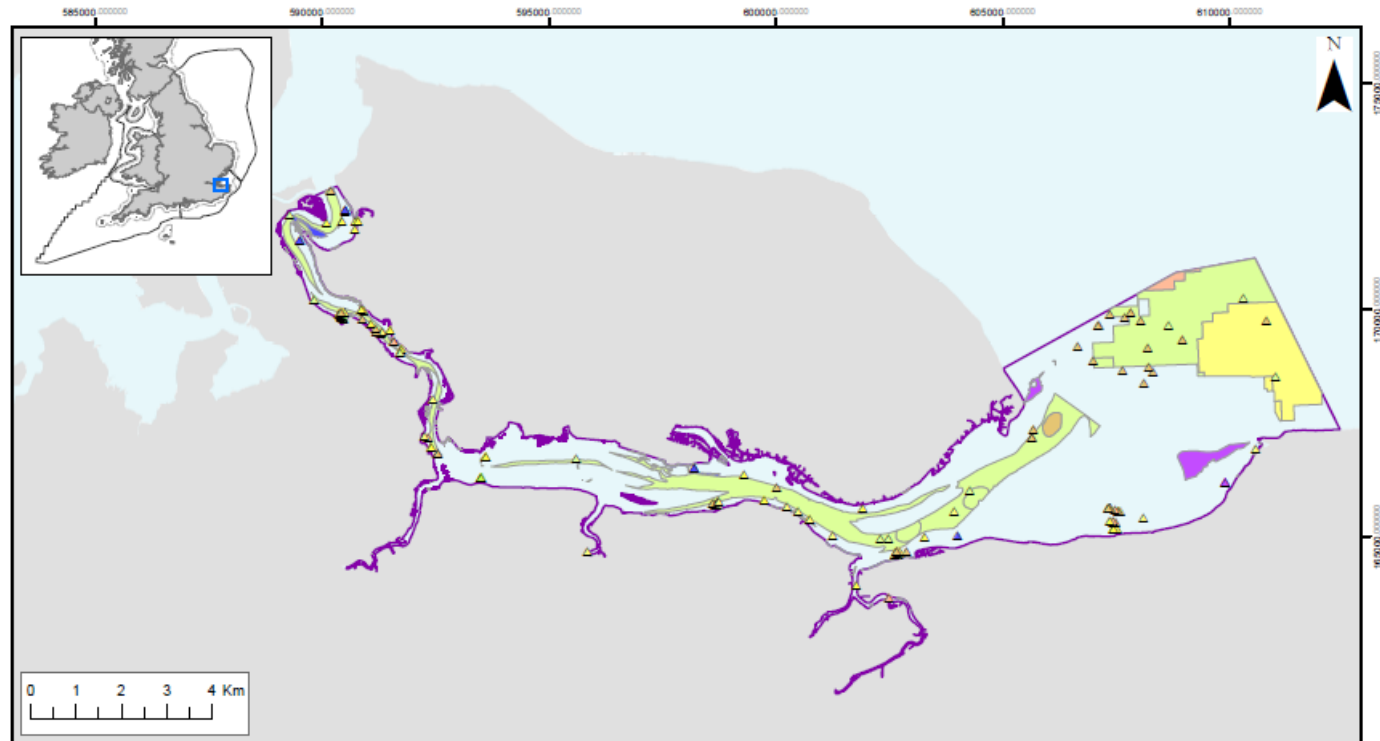
What this site would protect

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 |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Estuarine rocky habitats | Maintain at favourable condition |
| Low energy intertidal rock | |
| Moderate energy intertidal rock | |
| Intertidal sand and muddy sand | |
| Intertidal mixed sediments | |
| Intertidal coarse sediment | |
| Peat and clay exposures | |
| Subtidal sand | |
| Subtidal mud | |
| Subtidal mixed sediments | |
| Subtidal coarse sediment | |
| Native oyster (<i>Ostrea edulis</i>) | |
| Smelt (<i>Osmerus eperlanus</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](#).



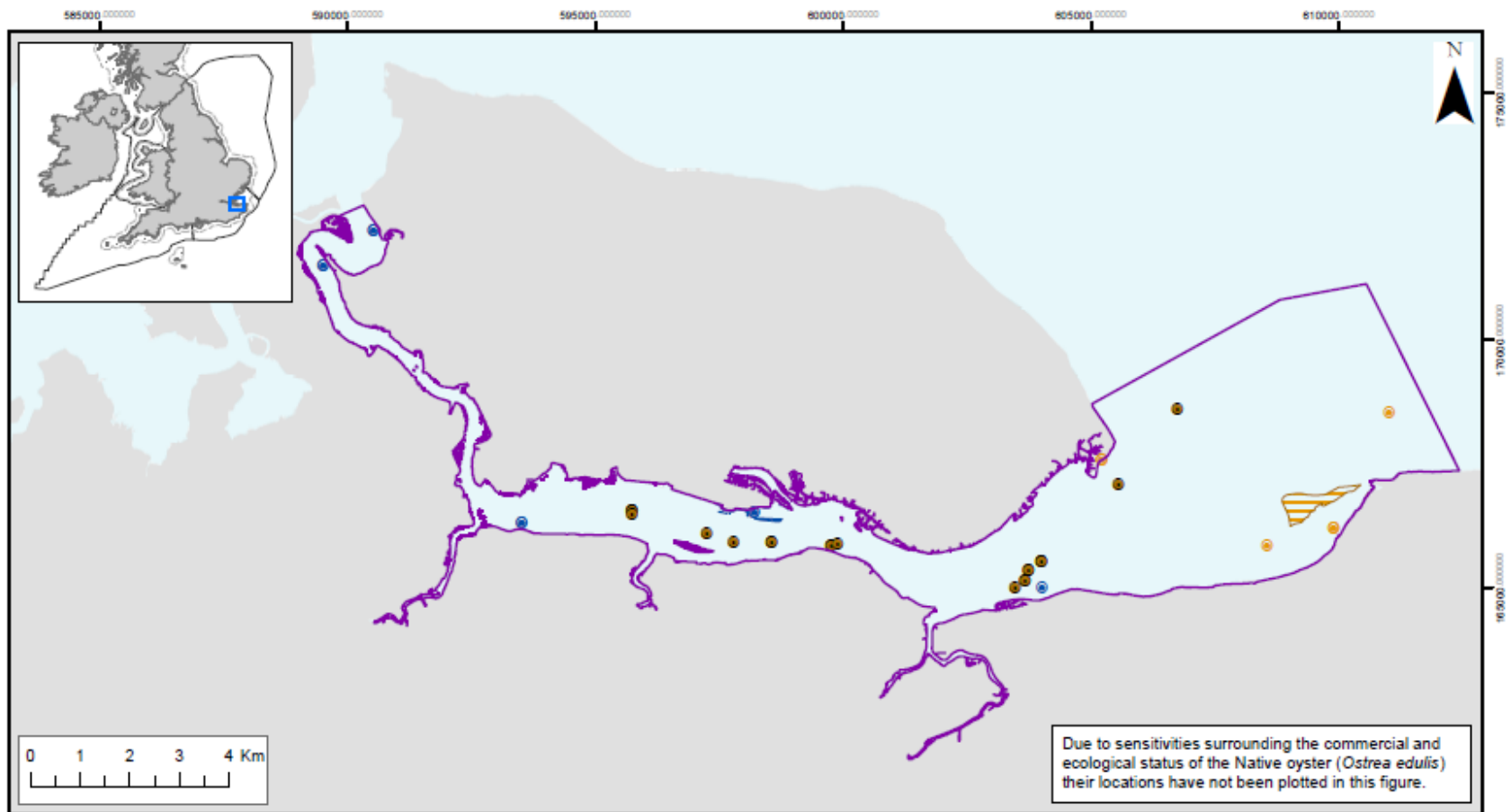
The Swale Estuary recommended MCZ Broad Scale Habitats

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

Features proposed for 2015 designation

- Moderate energy intertidal rock (A1.2)
- Low energy intertidal rock (A1.3)
- Intertidal coarse sediment (A2.1)
- Intertidal sand and muddy sand (A2.2)
- Intertidal mixed sediments (A2.4)
- Subtidal coarse sediment (A5.1)
- Subtidal sand (A5.2)
- Subtidal mud (A5.3)
- Subtidal mixed sediments (A5.4)
- Groundtruthing sampling points, such as diver survey, grab sampling, drop down video, walk over survey or core sampling
- Shaded areas represent habitats mapped according to data originating from surveys and mathematical models

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Natural England 2014.
Reference: Theme ID: 1477562
Map Projection: British National Grid



**The Swale Estuary recommended MCZ
Features of Conservation Importance**

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

Features proposed for 2015 designation

- Smelt (*Osmerus eperlanus*)
- Estuarine rocky habitats
- Peat and clay exposures
- Estuarine rocky habitats
- Peat and clay exposures

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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:

- blue mussel beds,
- low energy infralittoral rock,
- sheltered muddy gravels ,
- rossworm (*Sabellaria spinulosa*) reef,
- subtidal biogenic reefs.

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 | Dredging (maintenance and navigational), dredge disposal sites. | 3,700 |
| Archaeological heritage | Future investigations of site | Unquantified |
| Coastal development | Future development | Unquantified |
| Oil & gas | Future development | Unquantified |
| Best estimate total cost | | 3,700 |

Ports, harbours and shipping

All future licence applications for dredging and disposal of dredged material will need to take account of the features designated at the site. There will be additional costs when carrying out Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs).

The activities which we are aware take place and are likely to need to consider the potential effects on the designated features through an EIA are as follows:

- disposal of materials within a disposal site that is within 5 km of the site boundary,
- navigational dredging within 5 km of the site where an EIA will need to be completed every 3 years when the dredge areas marine licence is renewed.

Archaeological heritage

There have been 87 named and dated wrecks reported within this site and several other unidentified wrecks. These are made up of vessels, landing crafts and barges. Roman-age artefacts have also been found 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 licensed archaeological activity on the features designated at this site.

Coastal development

Current government policy rules out airport expansion in the South East of England for the life of this Parliament. There have been discussions around a possible Thames Estuary airport which have included a number of suggested locations. One of these is for a site that lies within 1 km of the site, and that straddles the land and sea on the Isle of Grain, which is the eastern end of the Hoo Peninsula. Proposed road and rail links and plans for a terminal fall within 1 km of the site. The site is not under active consideration currently, however, if a future government were to consider development of an airport on this site, there is likely to be an increase in the cost for carrying out an EIA as part of any licence application. Following designation, this will need to consider the effect of the activity on the features designated at this site.

Oil and gas

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 in this location, costs for the oil and gas sector have not been quantified at site level.

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:

- private oyster fisheries,
- commercial fisheries (all gear types),
- angling and boating,
- wildfowling,
- flood and coastal management,
- designated anchoring and transit of ships,
- three active telecommunication cables intersect with the site and one export power cable from the London Array,
- water pollution from activities on land (as this is managed under the Water Framework Directive).

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

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