

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

## West of Walney

### Recommended Marine Conservation Zone

January 2015

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



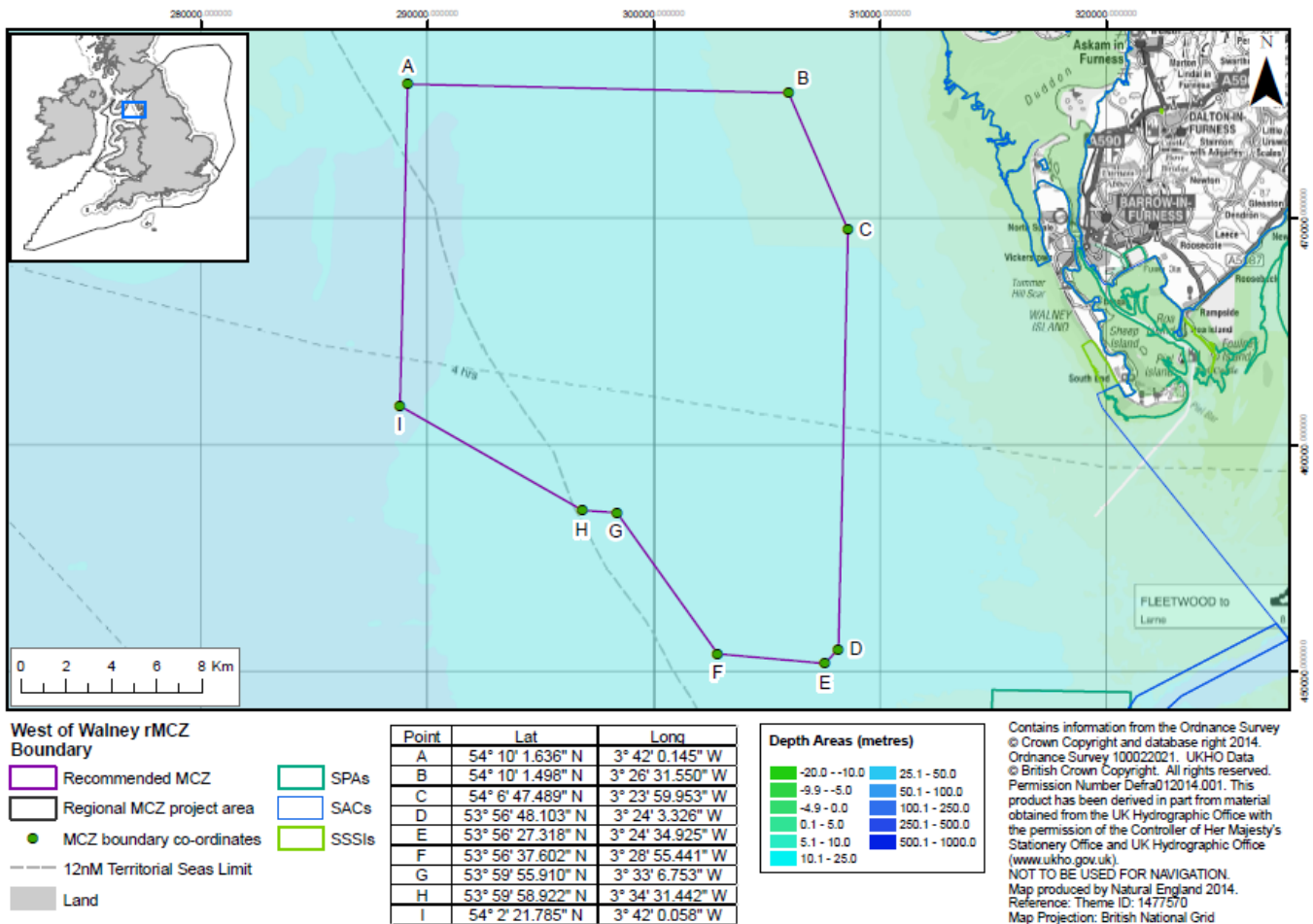
Sea pen and burrowing megafauna communities © Sue Scott JNCC

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# Where the site is located

The West of Walney recommended Marine Conservation Zone (rMCZ) is an Irish Sea site measuring 388 km<sup>2</sup>. The majority of the site is inshore, but a small section crosses the 12 nm (nautical mile) boundary. It is located west of Walney Island on the Cumbrian coast. The depth range of the site is 15–33 metres.



# How to comment on the consultation

You can comment on this proposal by responding to the [consultation](#) taking place between 30<sup>th</sup> January and 24<sup>th</sup> April 2015.

## Why the site is environmentally important

Features of particular interest within this site are subtidal mud, which is an important habitat for a number of species including worms, cockles, urchins and sea cucumbers. Burrowing anemones and brittlestars can also be found as well as luminous sea-pens which protrude from the surface of the mud. Mud habitat also supports creatures such as nephrops which live in shallow burrows below the sediment.

This site includes areas of sandy seabed. 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.

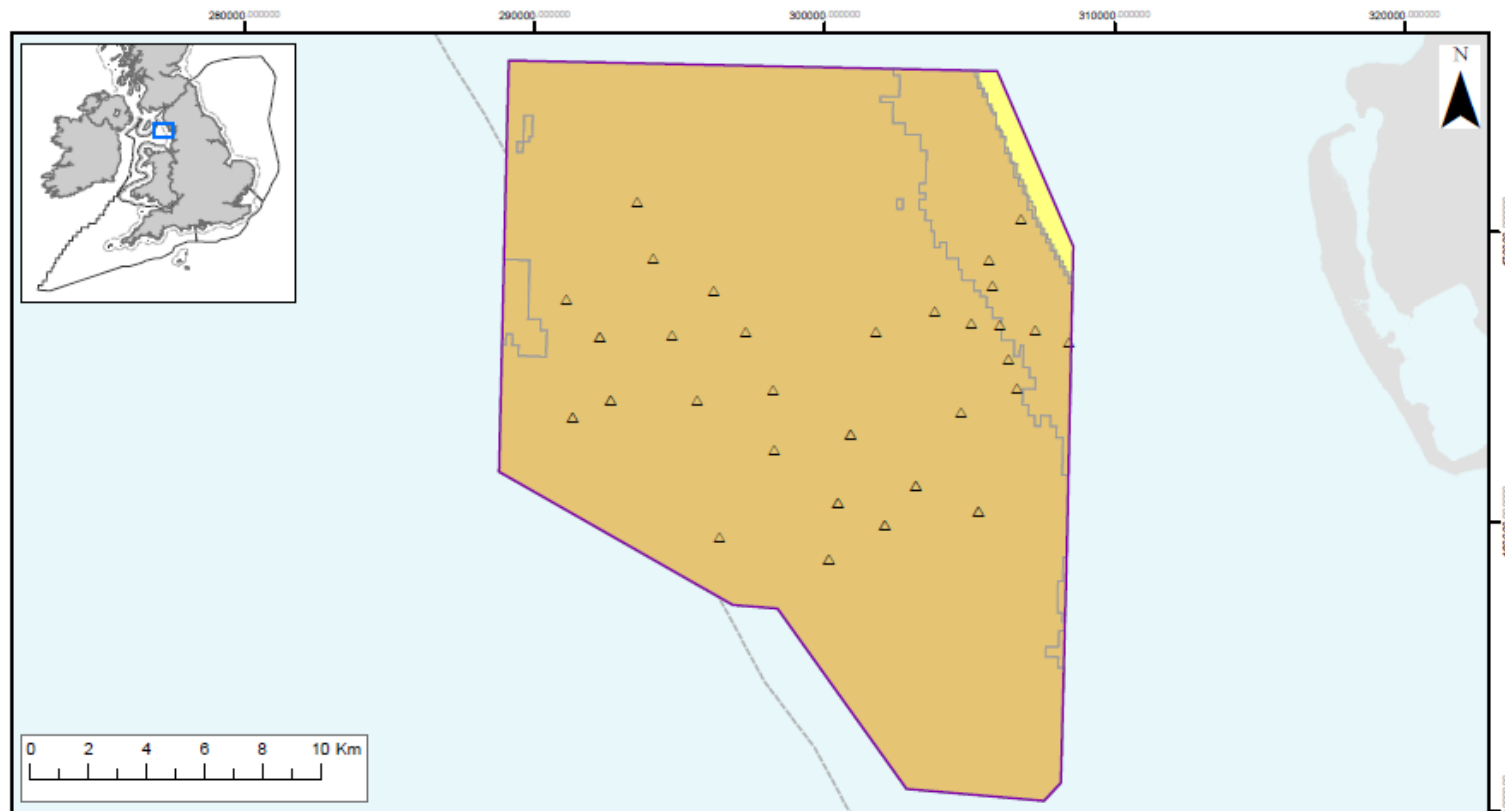
## What this site would protect

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 sand	Recover to favourable condition
Subtidal mud	
Mud habitats in deep water	
Sea-pen and burrowing megafauna communities	

## 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](#).



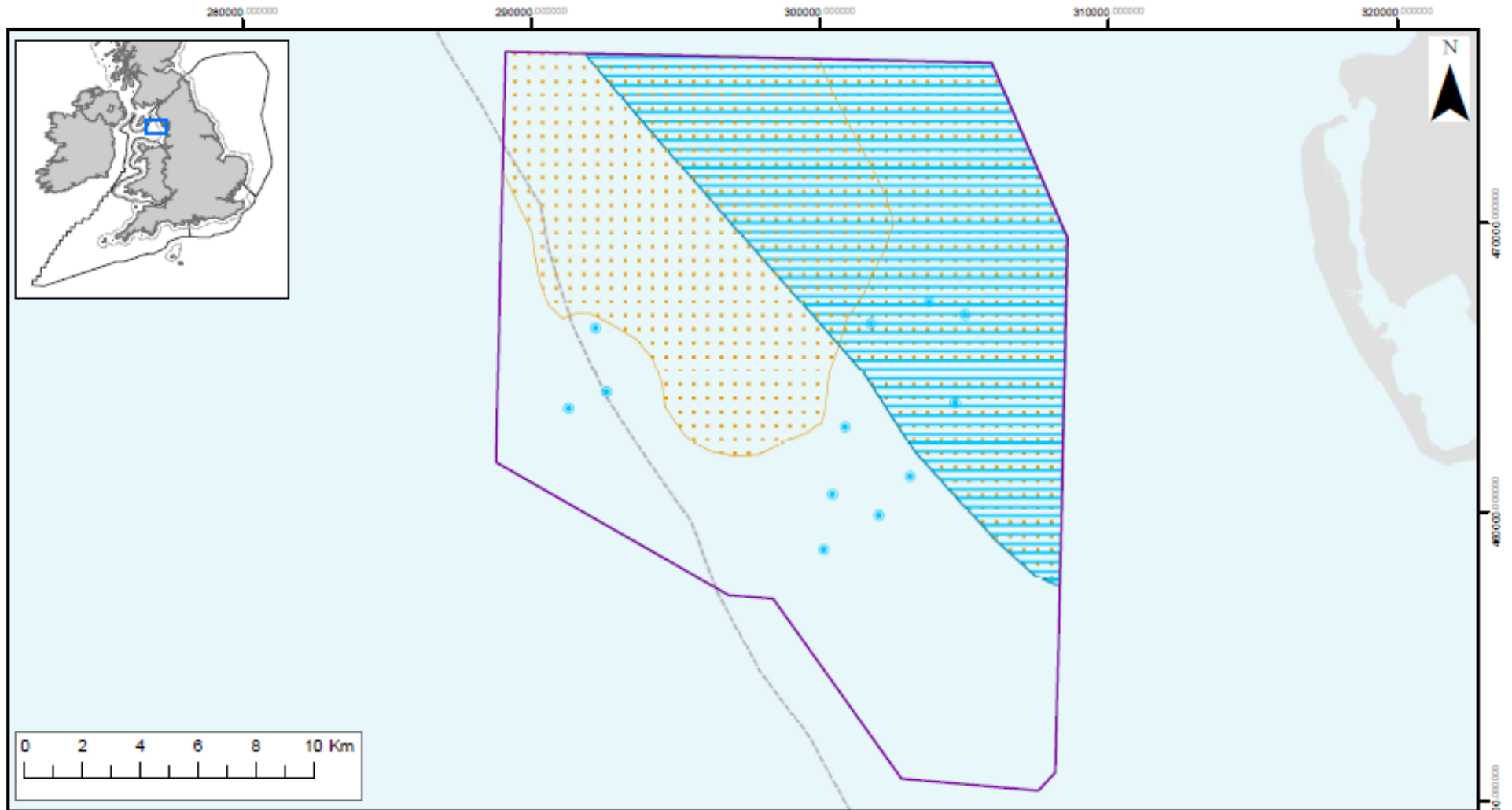
### West of Walney recommended MCZ Broad Scale Habitats

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

### Features proposed for 2015 designation

-  Subtidal sand (A5.2)
-  Subtidal mud (A5.3)
-  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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 Reference: Theme ID: 1477725  
 Map Projection: British National Grid



**West of Walney recommended MCZ  
Features of Conservation Importance**

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

**Features proposed for 2015 designation**

- Mud habitats in deep water
- Mud habitats in deep water
- Sea pens and burrowing megafauna

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 Reference: Theme ID: 1477725  
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## 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 impacted by designation		
Sector	Activity Affected	Best Cost Estimate (£) per year
UK commercial fishing	Bottom trawls, beam trawls, dredges, mid-water trawls, pots, traps and nets.	3,100
Non-UK commercial fishing	Fleets from Belgium, Denmark and the Republic of Ireland	Unquantified
Oil and gas	Future development	Unquantified at a site level
Archaeological heritage	Future site investigations	Unquantified
National defence	Use of training site	Unquantified
<b>Best estimate total cost</b>		<b>3,100</b>

## UK commercial fishing

The site is located on the edge of one of the major nephrops fishing grounds in the Irish Sea and is used by fishing vessels from Fleetwood, Barrow and Northern Ireland. The following gears are known to be used within the site:

- bottom trawls,
- beam trawls,
- mid-water trawls,
- drift nets, dredges,
- pots,
- traps and nets, including seine nets.

## Non-UK commercial fishing

The activities below take place within the site:

- Belgium - beam trawl,
- Denmark - pelagic trawl,
- Ireland - otter trawl.

## 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.

## Archaeological heritage

An unidentified aircraft, dating from the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century, is recorded in the site, as is the wreck of a British merchant steamer. There is likely to be an increase in the cost for carrying out Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) 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.



## 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 through additional planning during operations and training.

## Activities that are unlikely to be affected

West of Walney rMCZ has the potential to be a good example of how marine conservation can beneficially be co-located with an area of the sea used by offshore windfarms . There are existing windfarms on the site with more being constructed. The area of the features buried beneath the wind turbines and associated cables will be an insignificant proportion of the extent of the features across the site as a whole, so the presence of the windfarm infrastructure should not be detrimental to conservation of the features on the site. The windfarms will be developed and run considering the needs of the features on the surrounding seabed, although it is anticipated this will not require them to change their operations in any significant manner. Co-location with windfarms potentially offers a good solution from the perspective of considering conservation needs alongside the multiple uses of our marine resources. Fishing by bottom trawling is generally limited within windfarm developments and so selecting this area would limit the total area that might otherwise be closed to fishing.

Other 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:

- one active telecoms cable intersects the site, four export power cables and three gas and chemical pipelines,
- recreational activities,
- 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 Natural England, please visit

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

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