

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Western Channel Site

Recommended Marine Conservation Zone

January 2015

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



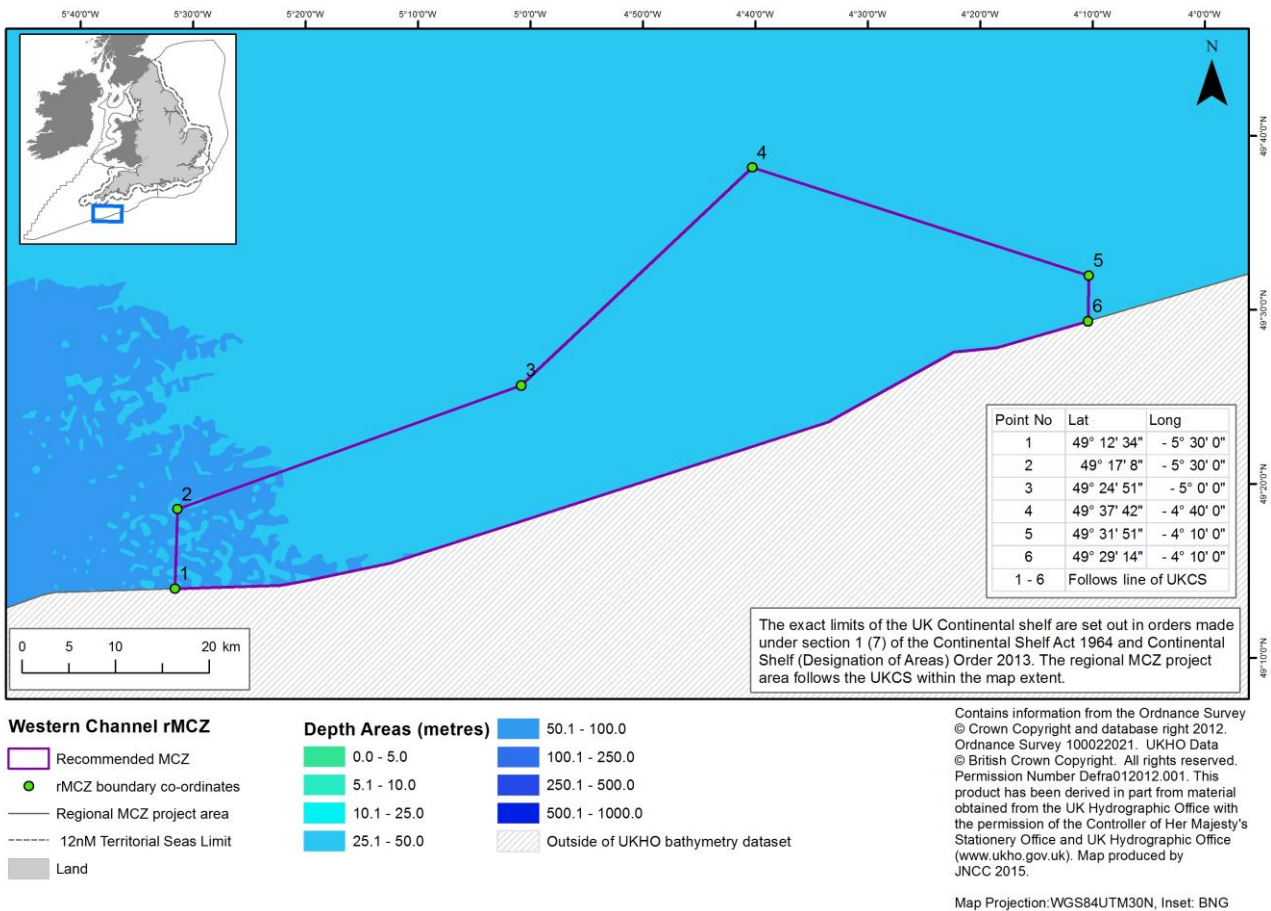
Burrowing sea anemone on undersea beds of coarse sand, gravel and shingle © Paul Kay

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Where is this site located

Western channel recommended Marine Conservation Zone (rMCZ) is a large offshore site south of Cornwall with an area of 1,614 km². The northern tip of the Western Channel rMCZ is located 54 km to the south-east of the Lizard Peninsula. The depth of the seabed within the site is mostly in the 50-100 metre range, with the western end of the site dipping below the 100 metre contour.



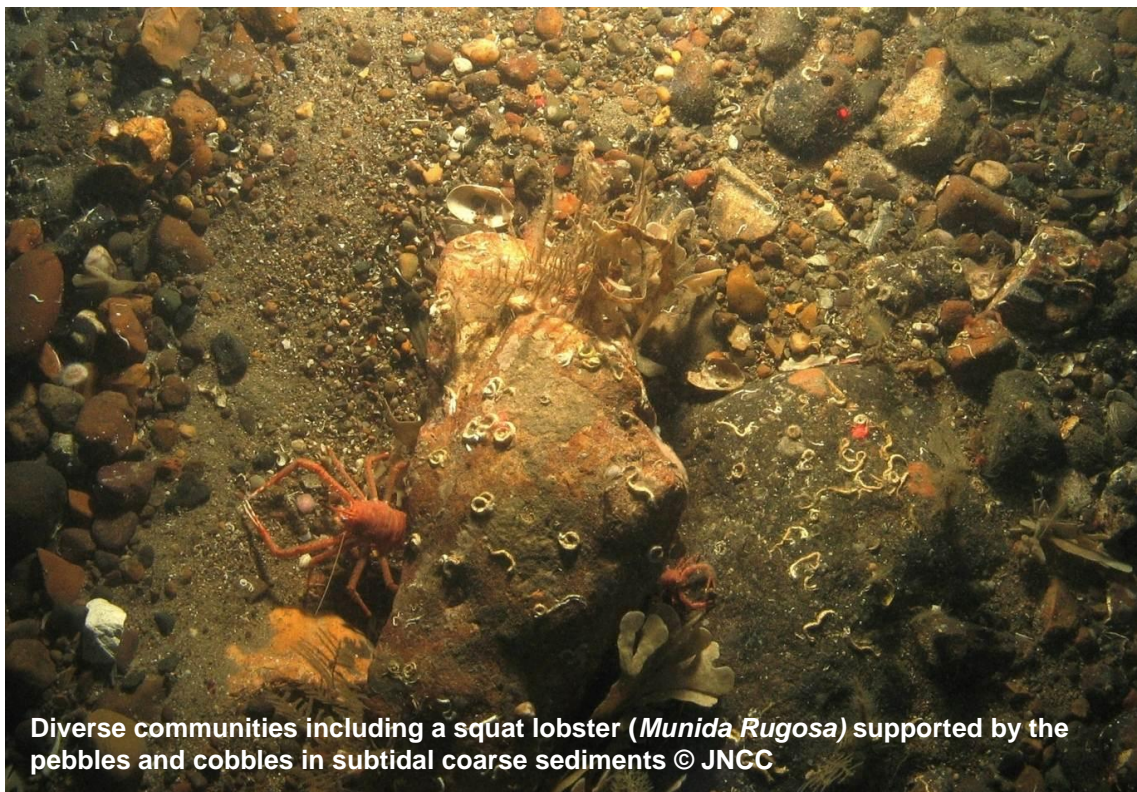
How to comment on the consultation

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

Western channel rMCZ is characterised by subtidal sand and coarse sediment habitats. The sediment habitats within the site support a range of species including burrowing anemones, segmented worms, sea urchins and hermit crabs. These can provide a source of food for fish and other predators. Subtidal sand habitats may appear desert like, but close inspection can reveal flat fish and sand eels camouflaged on the surface of the sand, and worms and bivalves living within it. The site overlaps an area of high species richness in the southern extent of the site and is located in an area containing a seasonal thermal front.

The site makes a significant contribution to the proportion of sediment habitats protected within the MPA network. The location of the site is also important to improve spatial connectivity between marine protect areas.



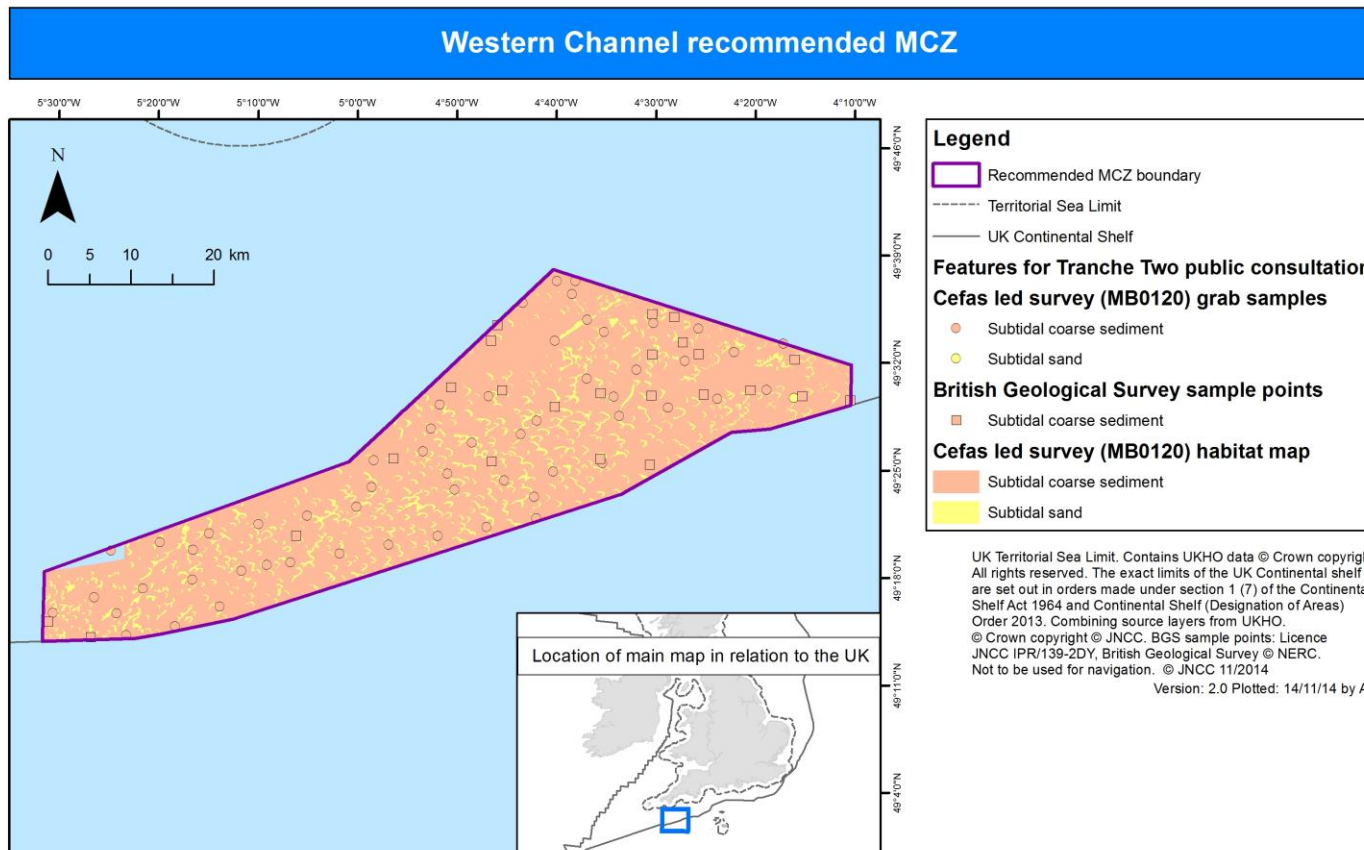
What this site would protect

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 sediment	Recover to favourable condition
Subtidal sand	

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](#).



The Cefas led survey habitat map was derived from acoustic data and grab samples taken on the Cefas 2012 survey. Note, Cefas habitat map does not cover entirety of site as acoustic data were not gathered for entire site area. A modelled map for this small section of unmapped area has not been displayed in order to avoid confusion. The British Geological Survey samples were taken in 1975 and 1977. More detailed advice available from the JNCC advice documents found here: <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-6658>

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:

- moderate energy circalittoral rock,
- subtidal mixed sediment.

Activities which 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, potting, netting, hooks and lines.	12,700
Non-UK commercial fishing	Vessels from France, Belgium, Netherlands and Spain	Unquantified
Cables	Future development	Unquantified at site level
National defence	Use of training site	Unquantified at site level
Best estimate total cost		12,700

UK commercial fishing

The site overlaps a productive fishing ground. For UK vessels bottom trawling is the main type of fishing in the rMCZ, with activity concentrated in the western part of the site.

There are low levels of potting and the site does not cover a regular potting ground. Netting and fishing with hooks and lines also occurs within the site, however it is not thought to cover a regular fishing ground for these gears.

There is some scallop dredge activity within the site and although activity is cyclical the site is not considered to be a regular scalloping ground.

Non-UK commercial fishing

The site contains non-UK commercial fishing activity with vessels from France, Belgium and the Netherlands operating within the site. High levels of non-UK activity is predominately by vessels from France using bottom trawls and dredge gears which are likely to be affected by the site. There is also some static gear activity also occurring within the site from non-UK vessels.

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.

Cables

There may be a future need to place further interconnectors and telecom cables within the site.

Costs to the cables sector associated with management of second tranche rMCZs are assessed on a regional scale, rather than individually for each site. This is because it is not certain where cables will be built in the future, and where management will be required. Where a new cable is laid in an MCZ, the impact on designated features would need to be considered as part of the licence application, which may entail an increased cost.

It is not anticipated that cables already in place will require any management measures applied following designation.

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.

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:

- existing interconnectors and telecom cables - three active cables intersect the site,
- commercial fishing - mid-water trawls,
- 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 JNCC, please visit

<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-6658>

For further information, please contact Defra on

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