



BY EMAIL ONLY

28 October 2020

Dear stakeholder,

Call for evidence on the MMO draft assessment of fishing impacts and potential management options for the South Dorset Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is seeking additional evidence and views on our draft assessment of the impacts of fishing on the conservation objectives of the South Dorset MCZ, and potential management options.

This letter provides a background to the MCZ and the role of the MMO, a brief summary of known fishing activity in the site, a range of potential management options being considered, supplementary information, and information on how to respond to the call for evidence and what to expect next.

Background

South Dorset MCZ was formally designated on 12 December 2013¹. Moderate energy circalittoral rock was added as a protected feature on 29 January 2016². High energy circalittoral rock was added as a protected feature on 31 May 2019³. The site has four designated features:

- Subtidal coarse sediment
- Subtidal chalk
- Moderate energy circalittoral rock
- High energy circalittoral rock

¹ Ministerial order 2013 No. 20. Available online at:
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukmo/2013/20/pdfs/ukmo_20130020_en.pdf

² Ministerial order 2016 No. 29. Available online at:
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukmo/2016/29/pdfs/ukmo_20160029_en.pdf

³ Ministerial order 2019 No. 37. Available online at:
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukmo/2019/37/pdfs/ukmo_20190037_en.pdf



A map showing South Dorset MCZ and the location of its features is provided at the end of this letter.

The conservation objectives set for the features of South Dorset MCZ are set out in the sites' designation order as:

- are maintained in favourable condition if they are already in favourable condition; and
- be brought into favourable condition if they are not already in favourable condition.

Natural England has stated that the general management approach for subtidal coarse sediment is to 'maintain in favourable condition' whilst the approach for the other site features is to 'recover to favourable condition'⁴.

Maritime boundaries

The South Dorset MCZ lies mostly within the 12 nautical mile limit with a small part extending further offshore.

Summary of fishing activity within the site

Initial analysis of vessel monitoring system (VMS) information indicates that the main fishing activities within the South Dorset MCZ are from trawling and dredging vessels, with a small number of midwater otter trawls, pots and Danish seine. Vessels which fish within the MCZ include those from the UK, Belgium, France, Ireland, Netherlands and Norway. French and UK vessels tend fish most within the MCZ.

Further analysis of fishing activity within the site is available in the draft South Dorset Marine Conservation Zone MMO Fisheries Assessment.

Draft MMO Assessment

The draft MMO assessment of fishing impacts at this site, taking into account advice from Natural England and the Matrix of fisheries gear types and European marine site protected features⁵, is that subtidal chalk, moderate energy circalittoral rock and high energy circalittoral rock are sensitive to the impacts of bottom towed fishing. For these features the conservation objectives will not be achieved due to its vulnerability to bottom towed fishing – irrespective of feature condition, level of pressure or background environmental conditions⁶. Coarse sediment is also sensitive to the impacts of bottom towed fishing but to a lesser degree.

⁴ The South Dorset MCZ: factsheet. Available online at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/805629/mcz-south-dorset-2019.pdf

⁵ www.gov.uk/government/publications/fisheries-in-european-marine-sites-matrix

⁶

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/310814/cefas_matrix_review.pdf



It is therefore MMO's current opinion that the conservation objectives for this feature may not be achieved due to its vulnerability to these activities.

Management of fishing activity may therefore be required to support the achievement of the conservation objectives for the MCZ.

The purpose of this call for evidence is to seek additional evidence and views to inform the draft assessment and the associated management options.

Management Options

The focus of this call for evidence is ensuring that the draft assessments are based on the best available evidence. The introduction of any management measures will be subject to a separate process, including appropriate levels of consultation.

Any management measures will be non-discriminatory, applying equally to vessels from the UK and from any other country with fishing access rights.

We are currently considering the following potential management options to further the site's conservation objectives:

Option 1: No fisheries restrictions. Introduce a monitoring and control plan within the site.

Option 2: Reduce/limit pressures. Due to the potential impacts of bottom towed gear on the features of the site, management would be introduced to reduce the risk of the conservation objectives not being achieved. This may be through a zoned management approach and/or limiting the activity/intensity of these activity types.

Option 3: Remove/avoid pressures (whole site prohibition). Demersal and semi-pelagic trawls, demersal seines and dredges will be prohibited in all areas of the site.

At this time, we do not believe that management option 1 is sufficient to meet the conservation objectives for the site due to the likely adverse effects from fishing with gears that are towed over the seabed.

Questions to consider

Please provide us with any information you feel could be relevant to inform our assessment and decision for management at this site. In particular we are interested in understanding the following:

- Do you have any additional information about the location, condition or sensitivity of the designated features?
- Do you have information about the level or nature of fishing activity within the site?
 - What fishing gears are commonly used?
 - How regularly are each of these gears used?
 - What is the approximate size of each of the gears being used?
 - What species do each of these gears target?



- What species are caught as bycatch by each of these gears?
- What are the other environmental effects of these gears?
- How would each of the proposed management options affect you? (Please provide evidence of this impact if possible)
- What other effects will each of the proposed management options have?
- With regard to management option 2, to achieve the conservation objectives of the site:
 - What proportion and/or which parts of the site should be subject to a prohibition of bottom towed gears? Where possible, please provide the evidence and/or rationale for your answer.
 - By what proportion do you think bottom towed gears should be reduced? Where possible, please provide the evidence and/or the rationale for your answer.

How we will consider new evidence

We always seek to use the best available evidence to inform our decisions.

The purpose of this call for evidence is to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to provide additional evidence to inform our assessment and, where necessary, development of management measures.

It is important that we understand the strengths and limitations of any evidence in order to understand how it can contribute to our decision making.

Any evidence received will be therefore be assessed in accordance with the MMO evidence quality assurance process⁷.

How to respond

Please respond no later than **15 December 2020**. You can respond by completing our online survey by visiting: <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/mmo/call-for-evidence-mmo-mpa-assessments>

If you are not able to access the above survey, you can respond via the details below. Due to the current COVID-19 situation we are asking all stakeholders to use email rather than post if possible.

By email: conservation@marinemanagement.org.uk

By telephone: 0300 123 1032

In writing:

South Dorset MCZ call for evidence

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/921894/q-a-evidenceprocess002.pdf



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Next steps

We will use the information received during this call for evidence, alongside other information (including analysis of academic literature, fishing logbooks, vessel monitoring system data), to update and finalise our assessment and develop formal fisheries management proposals for this site.

If we believe that management measures are required, we will identify the most appropriate way to implement these and take steps, including further consultation, accordingly.

More information on the MMO byelaw making process can be found at www.gov.uk/guidance/marine-conservation-byelaws

If you wish to be alerted once this consultation is launched, or if you have any further questions or queries, please email conservation@marinemanagement.org.uk or call the MMO helpline on: 0300 123 1032.

Yours faithfully,

MMO Marine Conservation Team

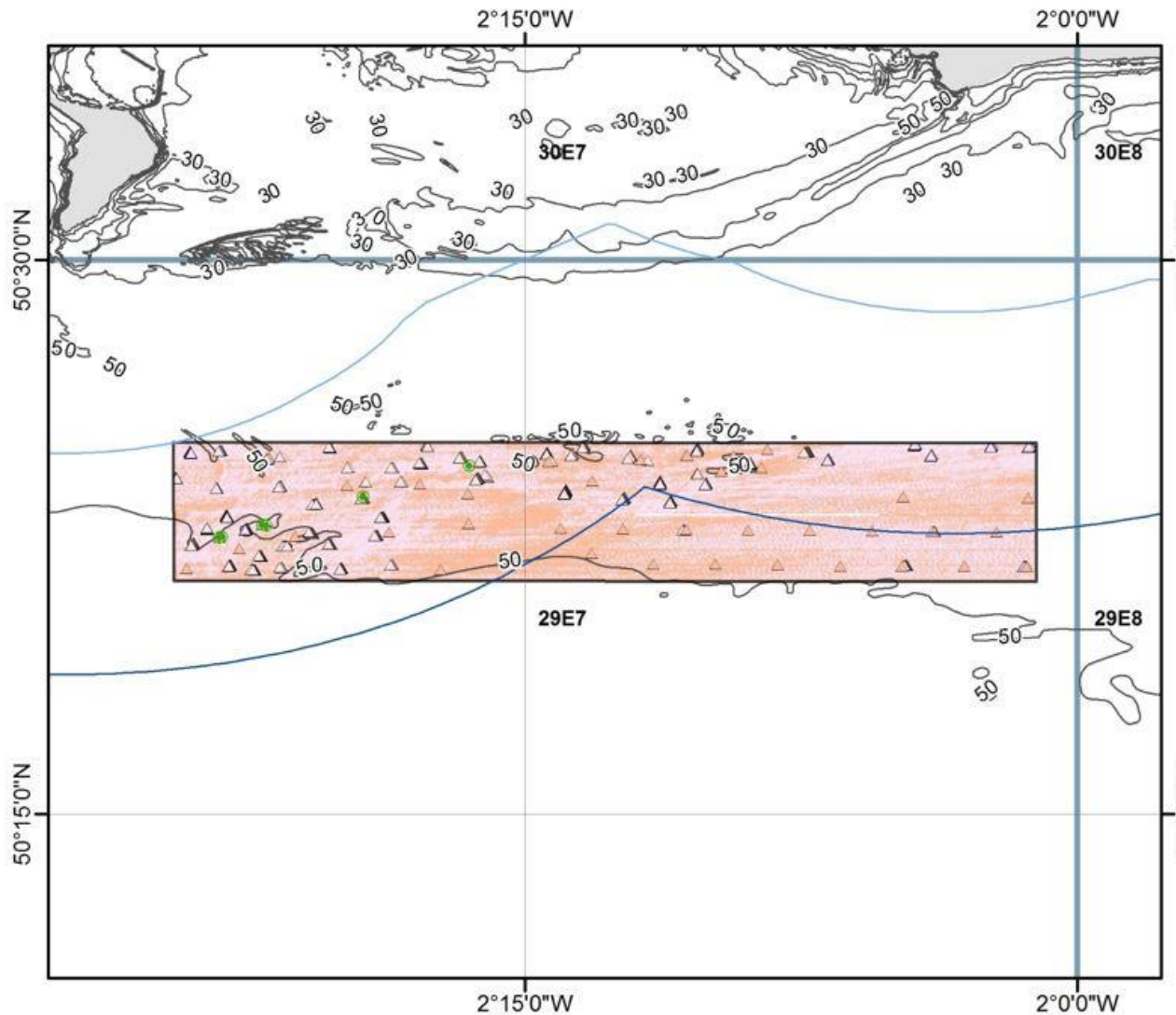




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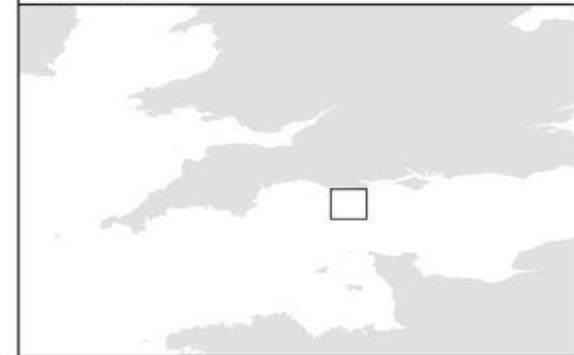
South Dorset Marine Conservation Zone

Designated features



- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Bathymetry Contours (m) (UKHO) — 6 Nautical Mile Limit (1983) (UKHO) — 12 Nautical Mile Limit (1983) (UKHO) □ South Dorset MCZ □ ICES Statistical Rectangles ● Habitat of Conservation Importance ● Subtidal chalk (HOCI 20) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Broadscale Habitat ■ High/moderate energy circalittoral rock (A4.1/A4.2) ■ Subtidal coarse sediment (A5.1) ▲ High energy circalittoral rock (A4.1) ▲ Moderate energy circalittoral rock (A4.2) ▲ Subtidal coarse sediment (A5.1) |
|--|---|
- *Benthic feature data clipped to MCZ

Date: 07/02/2020
 Coordinate System: GCS ETRS 1989
 Datum: ETRS 1989
 Units: Degree



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