



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 Canyons 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 Canyons Marine Conservation Zone (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

The Canyons MCZ was formally designated on 21 November 2013¹ with two new features: coral gardens and sea pen and burrowing megafauna communities; being added on 31 May 2019². Following this amendment, the site has four designated features:

- Sea-pen and burrowing megafauna communities
- Coral gardens
- Cold-water coral reefs
- Deep-sea bed

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

¹ Ministerial order 2013 No. 4. Available online at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukmo/2013/4/created>

² Ministerial order 2019 No. 7. Available online at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukmo/2019/7/created>



The conservation objectives for The Canyons MCZ are set out in the designation order as:

The habitats, so far as:

- already in favourable condition, remain in such condition; and
- not already in favourable condition, be brought into such condition, and remain in such condition.

The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) advises a general management approach of 'maintain in favourable condition' for the sea-pen and burrowing megafauna communities feature, and 'recover to favourable condition' for the remaining features of The Canyons MCZ³.

Maritime boundaries

The Canyons MCZ lies offshore between the 12 and 200 nautical mile (nm) limit. The site shares its northern boundary and a portion of its western boundary with the 200 nm limit.

Summary of fishing activity within the site

Initial analysis of vessel monitoring system (VMS) information indicates that the main fishing activities within The Canyons MCZ are from bottom towed gear and demersal long lines, including bottom otter trawls, Danish seines, anchored nets and set longlines. Vessels which fish most frequently within the MCZ include those from the UK, France, Spain, Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands.

Further analysis of fishing activity within the site is available in draft The Canyons MCZ MMO Fisheries Assessment.

Draft MMO assessment

The draft MMO assessment of fishing impacts at this site, taking into account advice from JNCC and scientific literature, is that coral gardens, cold water coral reefs and sea-pen and burrowing megafauna communities and deep-sea bed are sensitive to the impacts of demersal fishing activities including demersal trawls, demersal seines and anchored nets and lines. For these features, the conservation objectives are unlikely to be achieved due to their vulnerability to the demersal fishing activities occurring.

It is therefore MMO's current opinion that the conservation objectives for these features 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.

³ The Canyons MCZ: factsheet. Available online at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/805607/mcz-the-canyons-2019.pdf



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 demersal trawls, demersal seines and anchored nets/lines 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 trawls, demersal seines and dredges, traps and anchored nets/lines will be prohibited in all areas of the site.

At this time, we do not believe that management option 1 is sufficient to protect The Canyons MCZ due to likely adverse effects from fishing with gears that interact with 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 feature and/or its sub 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 demersal trawls, demersal seines and/or anchored nets/lines? Where possible, please provide the evidence and/or rationale for your answer.
- By what proportion do you think demersal trawls, demersal seines and/or anchored nets/lines 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 process⁴.

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:

The Canyons MCZ call for evidence
Marine Conservation Team
Marine Management Organisation
Lancaster House
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE4 7YH

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



Next steps

We will use the information received during this call for evidence, alongside other information (including analysis of academic literature, fishing logbook, 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,

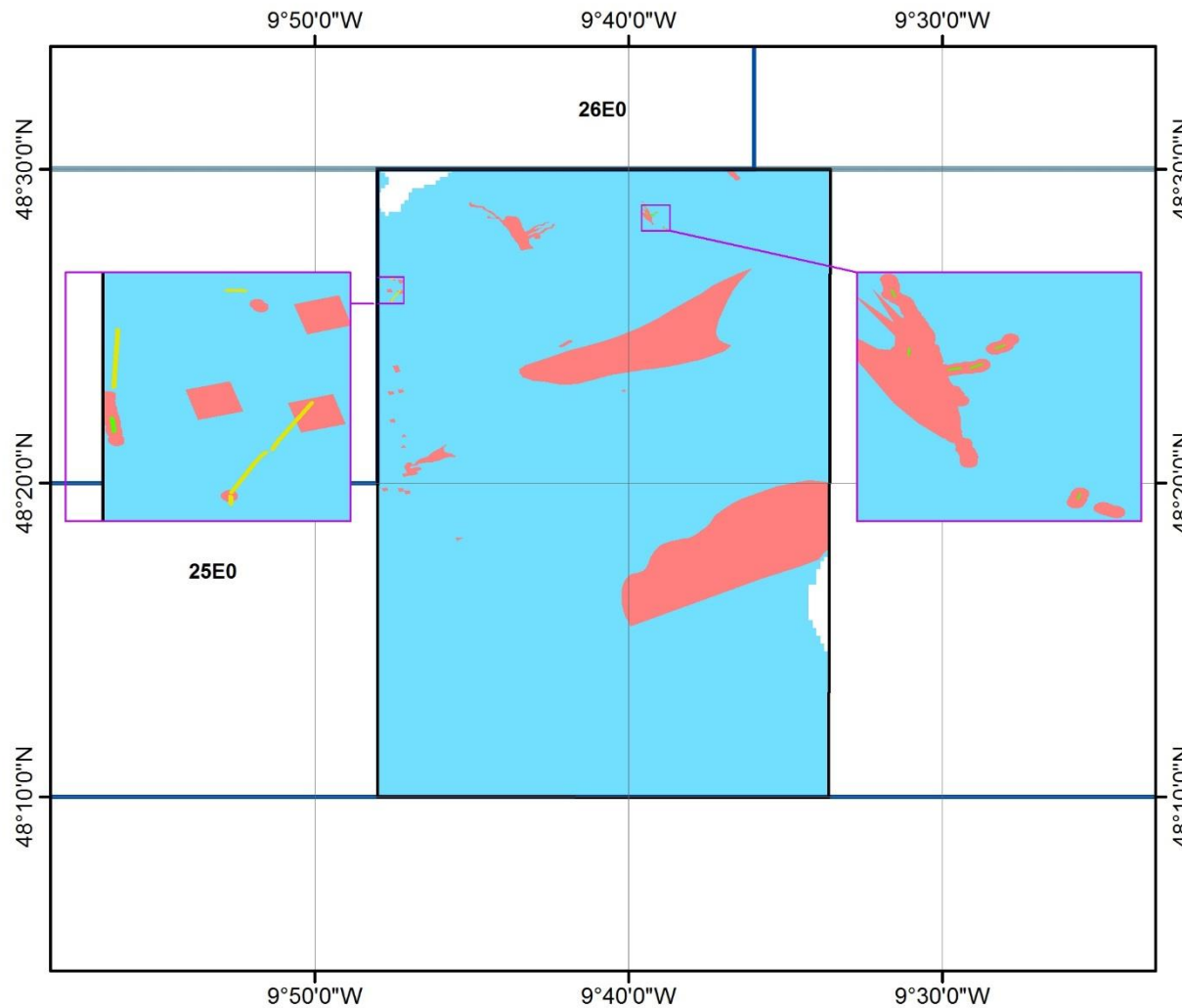
MMO Marine Conservation Team





Marine
Management
Organisation

The Canyons Marine Conservation Zone Designated Features



- UK EEZ
- ICES Statistical Rectangles
- The Canyons MCZ
- Area to be managed as coral reef
- A6: Deep-sea bed

Designated Features

- Sea-pen and burrowing megafauna communities with 10 metre margin
- Coral gardens with 4 metre margin

Date: 26/10/2020
Coordinate System: GCS ETRS 1989
Datum: ETRS 1989
Units: Degree



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