

MMO Stage 2 Draft MPA Fisheries Assessment:

Annex I reef: Information sheet

Summary

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is assessing the impact of bottom towed fishing gear activity on rock and reef habitats, and certain related species in 13 marine protected areas (MPAs).

One of the habitats included is Annex I reef. This habitat may be vulnerable to damage from bottom towed fishing. The assessment presents the best available evidence to help determine whether the conservation objectives of MPAs containing this habitat are compatible with bottom towed gear fishing.

Annex I reef can be found within the following MPAs currently under assessment

- [Haig Fras Special Area of Conservation \(SAC\)](#)
- [Wight-Barfleur Reef SAC](#)
- [Haisborough, Hammond and Winterton SAC](#)
- [Land's End and Cape Bank SAC](#)
- [North Norfolk Sandbanks and Saturn Reef SAC](#)



Ross worms (left) and the tube structures they create (centre), which are home to many species including European lobster (*Homarus gammarus*), a commercially important species for UK fisheries (right) © 825580416 iStock and © Natural England/Georgina Roberts & Trudy Russell

What are Annex I reefs?

There are three types of Annex I reef: bedrock reef, stony reef and biogenic reef. Bedrock and stony reefs are formed by rock, whilst biogenic reefs are formed by animals, such as Ross worms. These worms create networks of tubes that stabilise the seafloor and create complex habitats. All three types of reef can support a variety of life, including sponges, fish, lobsters and crabs. These biodiversity hotspots support neighbouring commercial fisheries and provide opportunities for activities such as SCUBA diving and angling.

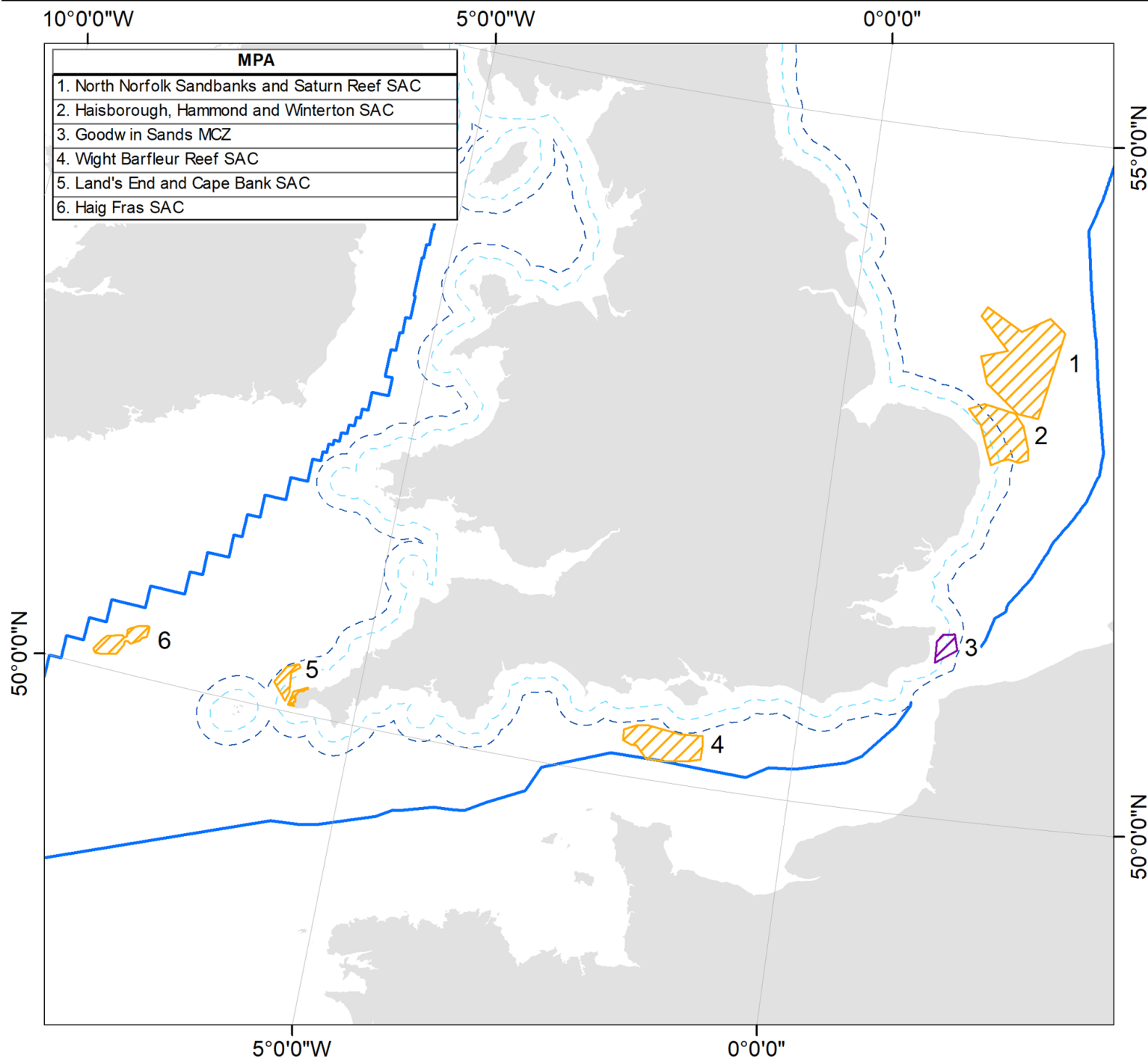
For more information on Annex I reef habitats please see [JNCC's website](#).






Impacts of bottom towed fishing activity

Bottom towed fishing activity can cause damage to the seafloor and associated habitats and species. Reef habitats can be fragmented and prevented from recovering. For Ross worm reefs this can result in complete disappearance. Such damage may reduce the reef's ability to support biodiversity and human activities such as commercial fisheries, recreational angling and SCUBA diving.



Stage 2 Marine Protected Areas containing Annex I reef



-  6 Nautical Mile Limit, 1983 baseline (UKHO)
-  12 Nautical Mile Limit, 1983 baseline (UKHO)
-  UK Exclusive Economic Zone (2013)
-  Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)
-  Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs)

