



Marine
Management
Organisation

MMO Call for Evidence on Stage 2 Draft MPA Fisheries Assessment: Background

May 2022



...ambitious for our seas and coasts

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Introduction

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is seeking additional evidence and views on our draft Marine protected area fisheries assessment of the impacts of fishing using bottom towed gear on certain designated features of 13 marine protected areas (MPAs).

This document provides a background to the MPAs and the role of MMO, the draft MPA fisheries assessment, supplementary information, and information on how to respond to the call for evidence and what to expect next.

Background

MMO manages activities in the 230,000 square kilometres of seas around England. We are responsible for assessing the impacts of fishing on designated features of MPAs and, if required, developing byelaws or other management measures to further MPA conservation objectives.

Following EU Exit, the UK is now an independent coastal state. In January 2021, MMO received new byelaw-making powers through the Fisheries Act 2020 to manage fishing throughout English waters for the purpose of conserving marine flora, fauna and habitats. This means we can now manage fishing in English offshore MPAs. On 13 April 2022 we announced the creation of byelaws to manage fishing in four offshore MPAs (Dogger Bank Special Area of Conservation (SAC), South Dorset Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), The Canyons MCZ and Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge SAC)¹. These first four byelaws make up the first of three stages of MMO delivery to meet the Government’s ambition to ensure that suitable management is in place for all fishing in offshore English MPAs by the end of 2024.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-uses-brexit-freedoms-to-protect-our-seas>

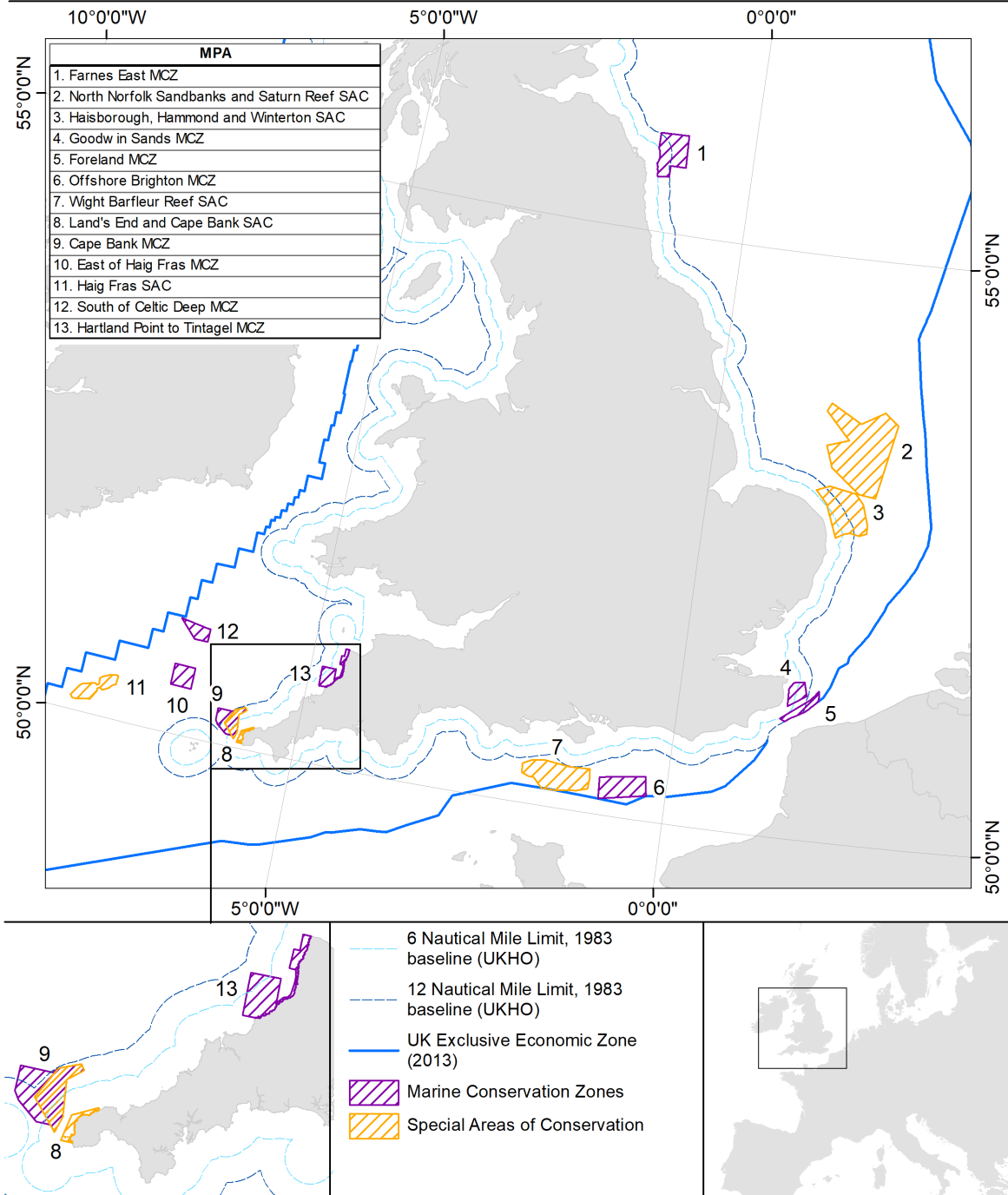
As part of Stage 2 of this work we have created a draft assessment of the impacts of fishing using bottom towed gears on rock, and rocky and biogenic reef features in 13 MPAs. These features were chosen for Stage 2 as they are some of the most sensitive to the impacts of bottom towed gears. The sites and designated features considered in the draft MPA fisheries assessment are set out in Table 1 and the locations of these MPAs in English waters displayed in Figure 1.

Table 1: MPAs and designated features included as part of Stage 2

Marine Protected Area	Feature(s)
Cape Bank Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)	Moderate energy circalittoral rock
East of Haig Fras MCZ	High energy circalittoral rock, Moderate energy circalittoral rock
Farnes East MCZ	Moderate energy circalittoral rock
Foreland MCZ	High energy circalittoral rock, Moderate energy circalittoral rock
Haig Fras Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Annex I Reef
Goodwin Sands MCZ	Moderate energy circalittoral rock, Annex I Reef
Haisborough, Hammond and Winterton SAC	Annex I Reef
Hartland Point to Tintagel MCZ	High energy circalittoral rock, Moderate energy circalittoral rock, Fragile sponge and anthozoan communities on subtidal rocky habitats, Pink sea-fan (<i>Eunicella verrucosa</i>)
Land's End and Cape Bank SAC	Annex I Reef
North Norfolk Sandbanks and Saturn Reef SAC	Annex I Reef
Offshore Brighton MCZ	High energy circalittoral rock
South of Celtic Deep MCZ	Moderate energy circalittoral rock
Wight-Barfleur Reef SAC	Annex I Reef



Stage 2 Marine Protected Areas



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Not to be used for navigation.
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Figure 1: MPAs included in the Stage 2 draft MPA Fisheries assessment

The conservation objectives (Table 1) are that the features:

1. are maintained in favourable condition if they are already in favourable condition; or
2. are brought into (and remain in) favourable condition if they are not already in favourable condition.

The designated features assessed include both habitats (e.g., circalittoral rock, Annex I reef and fragile sponge and anthozoan communities) and species (e.g., pink sea-fan). Habitat features include the communities and species supported by those habitats. The conservation objectives for these features can be achieved by maintaining or restoring, subject to natural change:

- The extent and distribution of the qualifying habitats in the site.
- The structure and function (including biological communities) of the qualifying habitats in the site.
- The supporting processes on which the qualifying habitats rely.
- The supporting processes on which qualifying habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely.
- The populations of the qualifying species.
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

Stage 3 of MMO delivery to meet the 2024 government ambition will cover all remaining fishing activities within MPAs not already assessed in Stages 1 and 2. This includes the 33 MPAs offshore of 6 nautical miles which have not been assessed during Stages 1 or 2, alongside any fishing in the 13 Stage 2 MPAs not assessed during this Stage. Please see Annex I for further details.

Draft MPA Fisheries Assessment

The creation of the draft MPA fisheries assessment for the 13 sites mentioned above has involved the following steps:

- Conducting a literature review to gather evidence of the impacts of bottom-towed gear on selected features (reef and rock).
- Analysing the best available evidence to determine the resilience and recoverability of these features to the impacts of bottom towed gears on the selected features.
- Using fishing activity data to understand the level of activity in each of the sites.
- Seeking input and advice from the statutory nature conservation bodies (SNCBs) and inshore fisheries and conservation authorities (IFCAs) on the draft MPA fisheries assessment.

The purpose of this call for evidence is to seek additional evidence and views to inform the draft MPA fisheries assessment.

Management Options

The focus of this call for evidence is to ensure the draft MPA fisheries assessment is based on the best available evidence. Before the final decision on management measures to be adopted and any byelaws there will be a formal consultation in 2023.

We are considering the following high-level management options to further the Stage 2 MPAs' conservation objectives:

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

Option 2. No statutory restrictions. Introduce a voluntary agreement.

Option 3. Reduction of pressures associated with bottom towed fishing gear(s) of concern, through zoned management (partial site prohibition of these gears over areas of highly sensitive designated features).

Option 4. Removal of pressures associated with bottom towed fishing gear(s) of concern through a whole site prohibition of these gears.

Specific management areas will be developed based on additional evidence received and stakeholder feedback, ahead of formal consultation on any measures. Any management measures will apply equally to all fishing vessels, regardless of nationality.

Questions to consider

When reviewing the draft MPA fisheries assessment, please provide us with any information you feel could be relevant to inform our assessment and decision for future management at this site. We are interested in understanding the following:

- Do you have any additional information about the location, condition or sensitivity of the designated features assessed?
- Do you have information about the level or nature of fishing activity within the site?

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 draft MPA fisheries assessment and development of future management options.

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

Any evidence received will therefore be assessed in accordance with MMO evidence quality assurance process².

²https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/921894/qa-evidenceprocess002.pdf

Any habitat or species feature evidence submitted during the call for evidence may be shared with Natural England or Joint Nature Conservation Committee for potential inclusion in MPA feature mapping. Please note data submitted may not be included in updated maps. This will be dependent on the quality of the data submitted compared with that which is already present. For any data submitted please include sufficient details of the evidence collection including date, location, surveyor, methodology etc.

How to respond

Please respond no later than **10 July 2022**. You can respond by completing our online survey by visiting: <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/mmo/call-for-evidence-stage-2>

If you are not able to access the above survey, you can respond via the details below. 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:

Stage 2 MPA Fisheries Assessment Call for Evidence
Marine Conservation Team
Marine Management Organisation
Lancaster House
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE4 7YH

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 consider fisheries management proposals for Stage 2.

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

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

If you have any further questions or queries, please email conservation@marinemanagement.org.uk or call MMO helpline on 0300 123 1032.

Glossary

Bottom towed gear - A range of fishing gear types designed to take or disturb species living on or near the bottom of the seabed. Forms of bottom towed gear include bottom and semi-pelagic trawls, dredges and seines.

Conservation objectives – Conservation objectives are set for each designated feature of an MPA, to either maintain or restore a designated feature of the protected site.

Designated features – Habitats or species within an MPA which have been designated as protected features.

IFCA – Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority. IFCAs are responsible for fisheries management from 0 to 6 nautical miles (nm). There are 10 IFCAs in England, each one funded by local authorities.

JNCC – Joint Nature Conservation Committee. A public body that advises the government on UK and international nature conservation. This includes aspects related to the marine environment from 12 nm to 200 nm.

MCZ – Marine conservation zone. Marine conservation zones are a type of MPA in English, Welsh and Northern Irish waters designated under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (for England and Wales) or the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 (for Northern Ireland).

MMO – The Marine Management Organisation. MMO is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs and is the manager and independent regulator of England's seas.

MPA – Marine protected area. Marine protected areas are protected sites with a marine element, this includes special areas of conservation (SAC), special protection areas (SPA) and marine conservation zones (MCZ).

MPA fisheries assessment – MMO assessment of the impacts of fishing on an MCZ, or European marine site (SAC or SPA).

Natural England - Government advisor for the environment in England. This includes aspects of the marine environment of 0 to 12 nm.

SAC – Special area of conservation. Special areas of conservation are MPAs put in place to protect habitats and species listed in Annexes I and II of Council Directive 92/43/EEC (the Habitats Directive).

SNCB - Statutory nature conservation body. A collective term for Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), Natural England (NE), Northern Ireland's Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside (which generally works through the Northern Ireland Environment Agency) and NatureScot. These organisations have a statutory responsibility to provide conservation advice for MPAs and report on the condition of protected features.

SPA – Special protection area. Special protection areas are MPAs put into place to protect threatened bird species, designated under the Birds Directive.

Supporting processes – used to describe the natural processes that support the feature. These include hydrodynamic regime, water and sediment quality and supporting habitats³.

Annex 1 – MMO MPA Fisheries Assessment

Stage 1 sites (blue) - these sites have been assessed and undergone public consultation.

Stage 2 sites (orange): these sites include highly sensitive designated features to gear interactions. These are the sites which are covered by this call for evidence.

Stage 3 sites: these sites include all remaining MPAs listed below, and designated feature to gear interactions not already assessed within the remaining Stage 2 sites. Sites will be assessed, and management options identified no later than end of 2024.

Inshore (6-12 nm from coast)	Straddling 12 nm limit (6-200 nm)	Offshore (12-200 nm)
<p>1. Land's End and Cape Bank SAC</p> <p>2. Foreland MCZ</p> <p>3. Hartland Point to Tintagel MCZ</p> <p>4. Goodwin Sands MCZ</p> <p>5. Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone SAC</p> <p>6. Fylde MCZ</p> <p>7. Shell Flat and Lune Deep SAC</p> <p>8. Albert Field MCZ</p> <p>9. North West of Lundy MCZ</p> <p>10. Margate and Long Sands SAC</p>	<p>11. Inner Dowsing, Race Bank, and North Ridge SAC</p> <p>12. South Dorset MCZ</p> <p>13. Haisborough, Hammond and Winterton SAC</p> <p>14. Cape Bank MCZ</p> <p>15. Farnes East MCZ</p> <p>16. Outer Thames Estuary SPA</p> <p>17. Liverpool Bay SPA</p> <p>18. Holderness Offshore MCZ</p> <p>19. Orford Inshore MCZ</p> <p>20. Kentish Knock (East) MCZ</p> <p>21. Inner Bank MCZ</p> <p>22. Offshore Overfalls MCZ</p> <p>23. East of Start Point MCZ</p> <p>24. South West Approaches to Bristol Channel MCZ</p> <p>25. West of Walney MCZ</p> <p>26. Greater Wash SPA</p> <p>27. Southern North Sea SAC</p> <p>28. Bristol Channel Approaches SAC</p> <p>29. South of the Isles of Scilly MCZ</p>	<p>30. Dogger Bank SAC</p> <p>31. The Canyons MCZ</p> <p>32. North Norfolk Sandbanks and Saturn Reef SAC</p> <p>33. Offshore Brighton MCZ</p> <p>34. Wight-Barfleur Reef SAC</p> <p>35. Haig Fras SAC</p> <p>36. East of Haig Fras MCZ</p> <p>37. South of Celtic Deep MCZ</p> <p>38. North East of Farnes Deep MCZ</p> <p>39. Fulmar MCZ</p> <p>40. South West Deeps (East) MCZ</p> <p>41. South West Deeps (West) MCZ</p> <p>42. North West of Jones Bank MCZ</p> <p>43. Greater Haig Fras MCZ</p> <p>44. Swallow Sand MCZ</p> <p>45. West of Copeland MCZ</p> <p>46. Markham's Triangle MCZ</p> <p>47. Bassurelle Sandbank SAC</p> <p>48. West of Wight-Barfleur MCZ</p> <p>49. Western Channel MCZ</p> <p>50. North East of Haig Fras MCZ</p>

³ <https://data.jncc.gov.uk/data/c965d0a4-917d-48bd-b2cb-6549fa24455d/JNCC-ConservationAdvice-GlossaryOfTerms-2018.pdf>