MMO Stage 2 Draft MPA Fisheries Assessment:

Moderate/High Energy Circalittoral Rock: Information sheet

<u>Summary</u>

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 moderate and high energy circalittoral rock. 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 these habitats are compatible with bottom towed gear fishing.

Circalittoral rock can be found within the following MPAs currently under assessment:

- Cape Bank Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) Hartland Point to Tintagel MCZ
- East of Haig Fras MCZ

Offshore Brighton MCZ

- <u>Farnes East MCZ</u>
- Foreland MCZ

- South of Celtic Deep MCZ
- <u>Goodwin Sands MCZ</u>



Moderate energy circalittoral rock (left), sponge communities on circalittoral reef (centre) and pink sea fan (right) © Natural England/Angela Gall & Ross Bullimore

What is moderate/high energy circalittoral rock?

The circalittoral zone is a subtidal area (seabed always covered by water). Moderate and high energy circalittoral rock are important rocky habitats which provide important surfaces for species to attach to (including <u>pink sea fans</u>, <u>Ross worm reefs</u> and sponges) which in turn create habitas for a range of species. These habitats therefore support the wider food chain, including commercial fish stocks, and provide opportunities for activities such as SCUBA diving and angling.

For more information about circalittoral rock habitats please see the JNCC website

Impacts of bottom towed fishing activity

Bottom towed fishing activity can damage and remove species attached to/associated with circalittoral rock. These habitats can be fragmented and prevented from recovering. Such damage may reduce the reef's ability to support biodiversity and human activities such as commercial fisheries, recreational angling and SCUBA diving.

Marine Management Organisation

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Stage 2 Marine Protected Areas containing High and or Moderate energy circalittoral rock



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