



BY EMAIL ONLY

1 February 2021

Dear stakeholder,

## **Formal consultation on a draft MMO byelaw for the Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge Special Area of Conservation (SAC)**

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is seeking views on a draft byelaw to manage fishing in the Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge SAC.

This letter provides a background to the SAC and the role of the MMO, a brief summary of known fishing activity in the site, the proposed management measure, supplementary information, and information on how to respond to the formal consultation and what to expect next.

### **Background**

Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge SAC was formally designated in September 2017. The site has two designated features:

- Reefs; and
- Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time.

A map showing the Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge SAC and the location of the features is provided at the end of this letter.

The conservation objectives for the Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge SAC are set out in the Natural England and Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) conservation advice and are to ensure that, subject to natural change, the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its qualifying features, by maintaining or restoring:

- the extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of the qualifying species



- the structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats
- the structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying species
- the supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely
- the populations of each of the qualifying species
- the distribution of qualifying species within the site

## Maritime boundaries

The Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge SAC straddles both the 6 and 12 nautical mile (nm) boundaries, and therefore falls under two different administrative areas: the District of the Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (Eastern IFCA; 0 – 6 nm) and the area offshore of 6 nm, where MMO leads on the assessment and management of fishing. The assessment is for the portion of the site offshore of 6 nm only. Eastern IFCA will continue to assess and manage fishing activities in the area inshore of 6 nm.

## MMO duties and powers

The MMO has duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 to ensure that the SAC is protected from damaging activities.

The MMO has powers under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 to introduce byelaws to manage fishing for the conservation of marine flora, fauna or habitats<sup>1</sup>.

## Summary of fishing activity within the site

Analysis of fishing activity data, including vessel monitoring system (VMS) information indicates that fishing activity of vessels over 12 meters throughout the site is mostly potting (including whelk as well as crab and lobster pots), demersal trawling, dredging and anchored nets/lines are also used in the site. The vast majority of vessels operating within Inner Dowsing, North Ridge and Race Bank SAC are UK vessels. However, there are a small number of French vessels known to fish within the SAC outside of 12nm.

The conclusion of the MMO assessment is that bottom towed fishing over the sandbank and biogenic reef features of this site, and static gear fishing over the biogenic reef features is not compatible with the site achieving its conservation objectives.

<sup>1</sup> Sections 129A and 129B of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009



## MMO assessment

The MMO assessment of fishing impacts at this site (Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge Special Area of Conservation Marine Management Organisation (MMO) Fisheries Assessment) taking into account advice from Natural England and JNCC, concluded that bottom towed fishing (demersal trawl, demersal seine and dredging) on the sandbank and biogenic reef features, and static gear fishing on the reef features may result in adverse effect on site integrity.

## Proposed management

The proposed management in the draft byelaw is prohibition of bottom towed fishing over the sandbank and biogenic reef features of the site, and prohibition of static gear fishing over the biogenic reef features.

This management measure will apply equally to fishing vessels from the UK and from any other country with fishing access rights.

## Documents

All supporting documentation including the draft byelaw, associated regulatory triage assessment, the site's fisheries assessment and all relevant maps can be found [here](#) or via the link within the cover email.

## Questions to consider

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

- Do you have 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?
  - o What fishing gears are commonly used?
  - o How regularly are each of these gears used?
  - o What is the approximate size of each of the gears being used?
  - o What species do each of these gears target?
  - o What species are caught as bycatch by each of these gears?
  - o What are the other environmental effects of these gears?
- How will the proposed management option affect you? (Please provide evidence of this impact if possible)
- What other effects will the proposed management option have?

## How to respond

Please respond no later than **28 March 2021**. You can respond by completing our online survey by visiting: <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/mmo/formal-consultation-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.

Copies of the byelaw may also be inspected at any MMO office. Due to the current COVID-19 situation, please contact MMO using the details below if you wish to inspect a copy of the draft byelaw at an MMO office.

By email: [conservation@marinemanagement.org.uk](mailto:conservation@marinemanagement.org.uk)

By telephone: 0300 123 1032

In writing:

Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge SAC formal consultation  
Marine Conservation Team  
Marine Management Organisation  
Lancaster House  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE4 7YH

## Next steps

We will use the information received during this formal consultation period, alongside other information (including analysis of academic literature, fishing logbook, vessel monitoring system data), to make a decision on the most appropriate fisheries management measure for Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge SAC.

More information on the MMO byelaw making process can be found at [www.gov.uk/guidance/marine-conservation-byelaws](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/marine-conservation-byelaws)

If you have any further questions or queries, please email [conservation@marinemanagement.org.uk](mailto:conservation@marinemanagement.org.uk) or call the MMO helpline on: 0300 123 1032.

Yours faithfully,

Rachel-Louisa Joyce  
Marine Conservation Manager  
Marine Conservation Team  
Marine Management Organisation

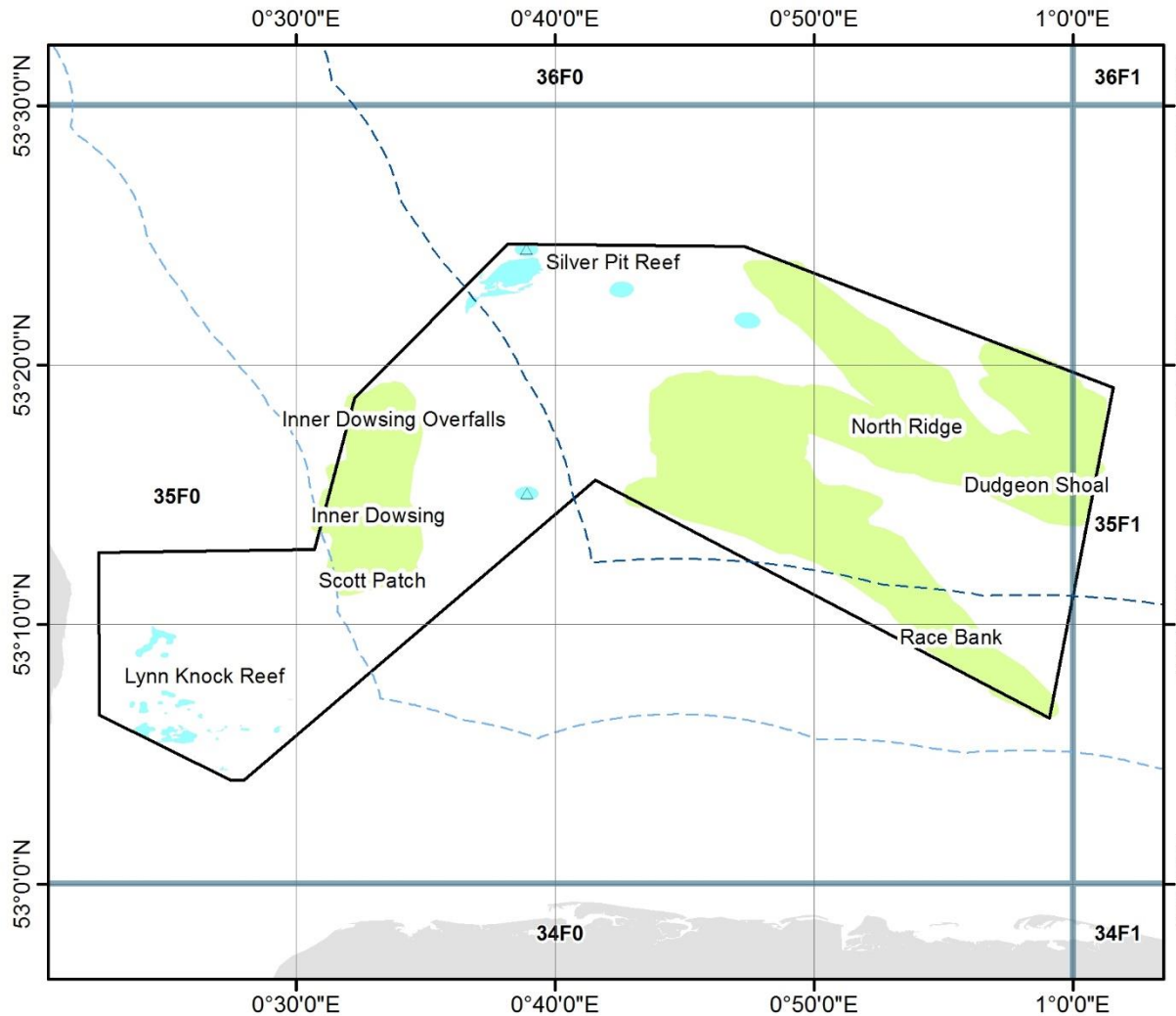






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# Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge Special Area of Conservation Designated Features



- 12 Nautical Mile Limit (1983) (UKHO)
- 6 Nautical Mile Limit (1983) (UKHO)
- ICES Statistical Rectangles
- Inner Dowsing Race Bank and North Ridge SAC
- Designated Features
- Annex 1 Sabellaria Reef
- Area to be managed as Annex 1 Sabellaria Reef
- Annex 1 Sandbank

Date: 12/01/2021  
Coordinate System: GCS ETRS 1989  
Datum: ETRS 1989  
Units: Degree

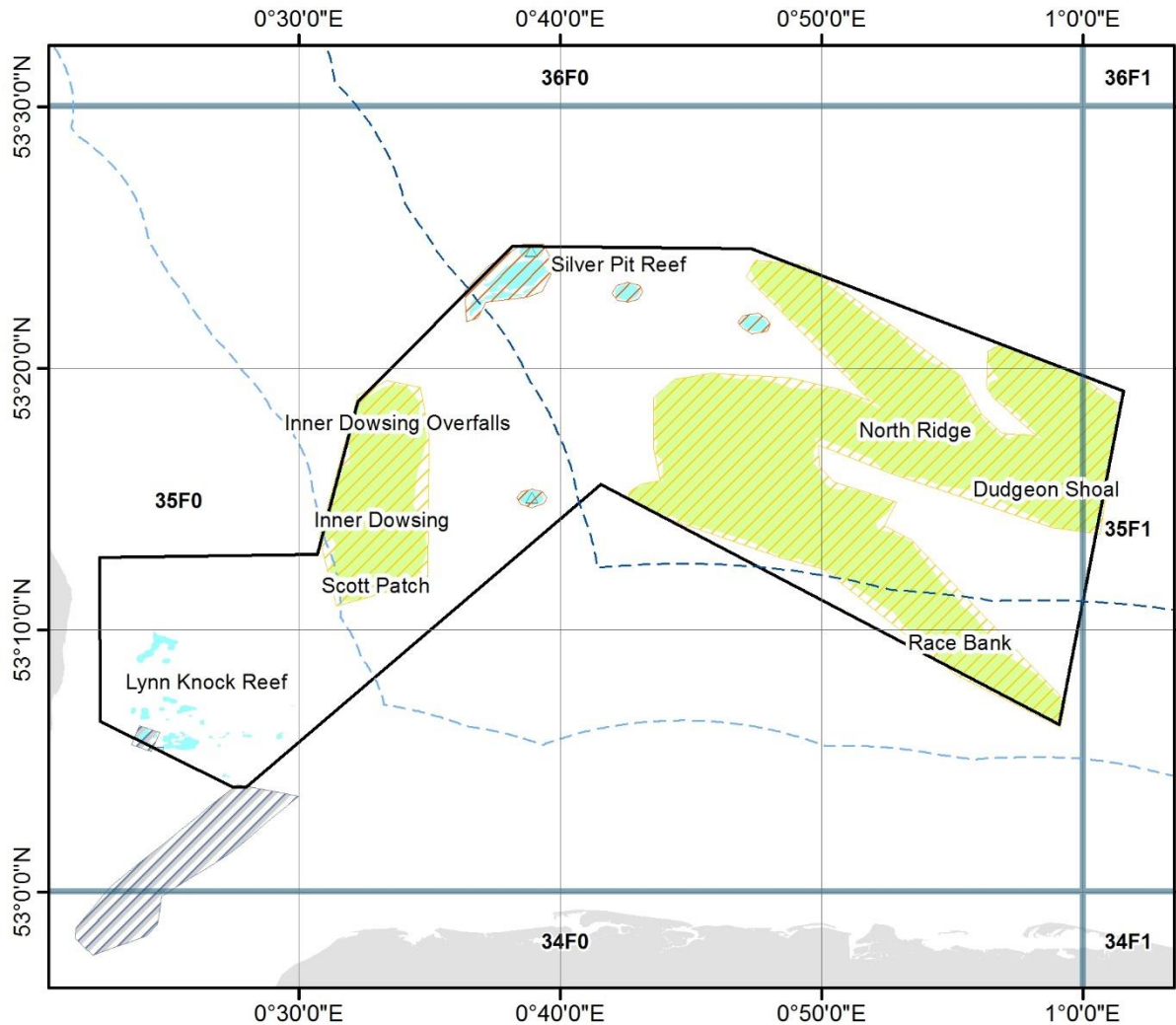


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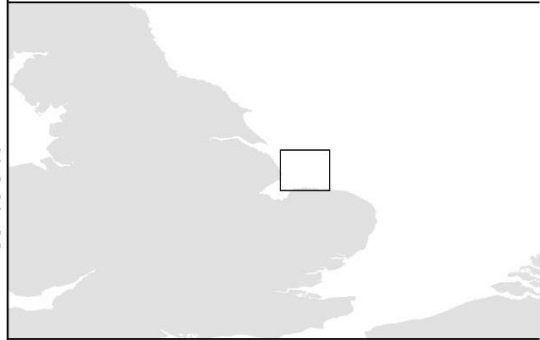
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# Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge Special Area of Conservation (Specified Areas) Prohibited Fishing Gears Byelaw 2021



- 12 Nautical Mile Limit (1983) (UKHO)
- 6 Nautical Mile Limit (1983) (UKHO)
- ICES Statistical Rectangles
- Inner Dowsing Race Bank and North Ridge SAC
- Designated Features Annex 1 Sabellaria Reef
- Area to be managed as Annex 1 Sabellaria Reef
- Annex 1 Sandbank
- Eastern IFCA MPA Byelaw 2018
- Proposed closure to bottom towed gear
- Proposed closure to bottom towed gear and static gear

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Units: Degree



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