



The Canyons Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) proposed MMO byelaw: Information sheet

Summary

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is proposing a byelaw to protect fragile habitats and the species that rely on them in The Canyons MCZ. The proposed byelaw will prohibit bottom towed fishing and the use of anchored nets and lines over sensitive habitats within the MCZ.

The Canyons MCZ is one of 40 sites in English offshore waters that contribute to the UK Blue Belt of protected areas. It is located over 300 km from Land's End at the far south-western tip of UK waters where the continental shelf gives way to much deeper seabed, and covers 661 km².

Why these management measures matter

The Canyons MCZ is home to the only known example of cold-water coral reefs and coral gardens in English waters, as well as biologically diverse communities of sea-pens and burrowing species such as anemones and squat lobsters. Cold-water corals can live for thousands of years and are extremely slow growing, at a rate of about 6 mm a year. This slow growth, combined with their brittle skeletons, means the coral reefs are particularly sensitive to damage from certain types of fishing. The coral reefs provide three-dimensional complexity to deep water environments, providing other species with shelter from predators, as well as feeding, spawning and nursery grounds that may enhance the survival of commercially important fish such as Hake.



Cold-water corals (left © NOC) squat lobster (centre © 863565760 iStock) sea-pens and burrowing megafauna (right © 2007 Defra, JNCC, Marine Institute, BGS and UoP)

Effects of these management measures

The proposed measures will protect these unique and fragile habitats and provide a safe haven for juvenile fish to grow, which may contribute to commercial fish stocks in neighbouring areas.

We have estimated that these measures will have a financial impact to UK fishers who fish in the area using bottom towed or static fishing gears of approximately £11,101 per year. The MMO is taking a proportionate management approach to protect and enhance our marine ecosystems and secure a more sustainable future for coastal communities, the fishing industry and future generations.

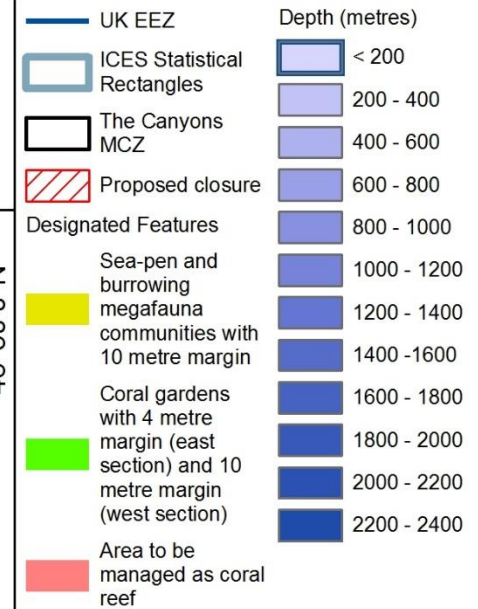
For more information about The Canyons MCZ and its designated habitats and species please see the map overleaf, [The Canyons MCZ factsheet](#) and the [JNCC Site Information Centre](#).





Marine Management Organisation

The Canyons Marine Conservation Zone (Specified Area) Prohibited Fishing Gears Byelaw 2021



Date: 25/01/2021
 Coordinate System: GCS WGS 1984
 Datum: WGS 1984
 Units: Degree



Not to be used for navigation.
 Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v 3.0. © Crown copyright and database right 2020, Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2016, Marine Management Organisation data © Crown copyright and database right 2020, NOAA 2019 data © and SOEST 2019 data, UK Hydrographic Office data © Crown copyright and database right 2020. ICES Statistical Rectangles dataset 2015. ICES, Copenhagen.

