



BY EMAIL ONLY

9 June 2025

Dear stakeholder,

**Formal consultation on proposed measures to manage fishing activity in 42 English offshore marine protected areas (MPAs) - Stage 3**

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is seeking views on assessments of the impacts of fishing in 43 MPAs, and proposed management measures for 42 MPAs, as well as a draft regulatory impact assessment (de minimis assessment). These 43 MPAs include the 13 MPAs considered as part of Stage 2. During Stage 2 only bottom towed gear and reef features were considered, so the other gear types and features are considered for these 13 MPAs as part of Stage 3.

To implement the required management measures, the MMO is proposing to make four regional byelaws, based on ICES areas. The byelaws also incorporate all existing MMO MPA fisheries measures for consistency and ease of compliance, and as such will cover 47 MPAs in total. The byelaws will not include any MMO HPMA fisheries measures. The proposed byelaws are:

- The North Sea Marine Protected Areas Fishing Gear Byelaw 2024;
- The Eastern Channel Marine Protected Areas Fishing Gear Byelaw 2024;
- The Western Channel and Southwest Marine Protected Areas Fishing Gear Byelaw 2024; and
- The Irish Sea Marine Protected Areas Fishing Gear Byelaw 2024.

In addition, minor updates are being made to some MPAs where bottom towed gear management was introduced as part of Stage 2. The management boundaries of four MPAs are being updated to make small amendments to their buffers: Lands End and Cape Bank, Cape Bank, Wight Barfleur Reef, and East of Haig Fras. The management of Start Point to Plymouth Sound & Eddystone MPA has also been updated to match new feature data. For Haig Fras MPA, no new management is being introduced beyond the Stage 2 byelaw.



The table below outlines which MPAs fall within the separate regional byelaws.

**Table 1: The proposed byelaws for Stage 3 and their associated MPAs.**

North Sea	Eastern Channel	Western Channel and Southwest	Irish Sea
Farnes East	Albert Field	Bristows to the Stones	Fylde
Foreland	Bassurelle Sandbank	Cape Bank	Shell Flat and Lune Deep
Fulmar	Inner Bank	East of Haig Fras	West of Walney
Goodwin Sands	Beachy Head East	East of Start Point	West of Copeland
Haisborough, Hammond and Winterton	Offshore Brighton	Greater Haig Fras	
Holderness Offshore	Offshore Overfalls	Hartland Point to Tintagel	
Kentish Knock East	Wight-Barfleur Reef	Lands End and Cape Bank	
Markhams Triangle		North-East of Haig Fras	
North Norfolk Sandbanks and Saturn Reef		North-West of Jones Bank	
Orford Inshore		North West of Lundy	
Margate and Long Sands		Skerries Bank and Surrounds	
Swallow Sand		South of Celtic Deep	
		South of the Isles of Scilly	
		South-West Approaches to Bristol Channel	
		South-West Deeps (East)	
		South-West Deeps (West)	



North Sea	Eastern Channel	Western Channel and Southwest	Irish Sea
		<p>Start Point to Plymouth Sound &amp; Eddystone</p> <p>Western Channel</p> <p>West of Wight-Barfleur</p>	

Formal consultation on the proposed byelaws will run from **9 June 2025 to 29 September 2025**.

This consultation is part of Stage 3 of our work to manage fishing in MPAs in England's seas offshore of 6 nm. Maps showing the 43 MPAs and the four proposed byelaws are provided at the end of this letter.

This letter provides a background to the proposed management measures and information on how to respond to the formal consultation and what to expect next.

All documents referred to below can be found [here](#).



## Background

In Stage 3, MMO is assessing and managing the impacts of fishing on all remaining seabed features (habitats and species) in 43 MPAs. The [Stage 3 Consultation document](#) summarises the background, rationale and proposals for Stage 3 MPAs, and describes in further detail the steps taken ahead of this formal consultation.

The conservation objectives for Stage 3 MPAs 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 considered in Stage 3 include both habitats (e.g., sandbanks, subtidal sediments, rock and reef features) and species (e.g., pink sea fan, fan mussel). Habitat features include the communities and species supported by those habitats.

The specific conservation objectives relevant to the features in each site are detailed in the Stage 3 MPA fisheries assessments.

The proposed byelaws have been developed using the best available scientific advice and evidence and follow detailed assessments of the impacts of fishing on all seabed features designated in each MPA.

## MMO assessment

MMO conducted 43 site assessments to assess the interactions between fishing gears and all remaining seabed features in each MPA, concluding that in order to further the conservation objectives of the sites, the use of bottom towed, bottom set nets and lines, and traps should be prohibited in specified areas.

## Proposed management

The proposed management measures are displayed in four draft byelaws, based on ICES areas, each containing MPAs with different prohibitions. These are displayed in Table 2, Table 3, Table 4, and Table 5 in the Annex. These management measures 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 byelaws, impact assessment, decision document, the Stage 3 MPA fisheries assessments, the Stage 3 Consultation document, the Stage 3 Methodology document and all relevant maps can be found [here](#).





## Questions to consider

Please provide us with any information you feel could be relevant to inform our assessments and decisions for management in the sites. This could be in the form of:

- a general response to Stage 3 management decisions; or
- a general response to a specific region; or
- a general response to a specific site; or
- a response specifically to our structured questions for a specific site.

We have provided some recommended questions you may wish to address in your response:

1. Do you have any additional information about the location, condition, or sensitivity of the designated features?
2. Do you have information on the type, location, frequency, or intensity of fishing activity within the MPAs?
3. Do you agree or disagree with the proposed management measures? Do you have any suggestions for other management measures?
4. How would the proposed management measures affect you? Or those you represent?
5. What impacts, if any, do you anticipate the proposed management measures will have on UK fishing vessels, operators, or supply chains?
6. What impacts, if any, do you anticipate the proposed management measures will have on non-UK fishing vessels, operators, or supply chains (including those from the EU)?
7. What other impacts could the proposed management measures have? For example, on fishers, the wider fishing community, coastal communities, employment, upstream and downstream supply chains, people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, fish stocks, the marine environment.

## How to respond

Please respond no later than **11:59pm 29 September 2025**. You can respond by completing our online survey by visiting: <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/mmo/stage-3-formal-consultation/>

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

Copies of the byelaw may also be inspected at any MMO office.

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

By telephone: 0300 123 1032

In writing:

Stage 3 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, alongside other information (including analysis of academic literature, fishing logbooks, vessel monitoring system data), to update and finalise our assessment and fisheries management measures for these sites.

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@marinemangement.org.uk](mailto:conservation@marinemangement.org.uk) or call the MMO helpline on: 0300 123 1032.

Yours faithfully,

Nicholas Greenwood



Head of Marine Protection and Operational Services

Marine Conservation Team  
Marine Management Organisation



## Annex

**Table 2. Assessment conclusions and proposed management for Stage 3 MPAs within the Irish Sea region.**

MPA	Proposed Management
Fylde	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MPA.
Shell Flat and Lune Deep	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the Shell Flat portion of the MPA.
West of Copeland	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MPA.
West of Walney	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MPA.

**Table 3. Assessment conclusions and proposed management for Stage 3 MPAs within the North Sea region.**

MPA	Proposed Management
Farnes East	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MPA.
Foreland	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MPA.
Fulmar	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MPA.
Goodwin Sands	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MMO portion of the MPA, prohibition of traps and bottom-set nets and lines across the Ross worm reefs in the MMO portion of the MPA.
Haisborough, Hammond and Winterton	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MMO portion of the MPA, prohibition of traps across the Ross worm reefs in the MMO portion of the MPA.
Holderness Offshore	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MPA.
Kentish Knock (East)	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MPA.
Margate and Long Sands	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MMO portion of the MPA.
Markham's Triangle	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MPA.
North Norfolk Sandbanks and Saturn Reef	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MPA, prohibition of traps over the site's Ross worm reefs.
Orford Inshore	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MPA.



MPA	Proposed Management
Swallow Sand	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the MPA except in the far north west corner where no designated features are present.

**Table 4. Assessment conclusions and proposed management for Stage 3 MPAs within the Eastern Channel region.**

MPA	Proposed Management
Albert Field	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MPA.
Bassurelle Sandbank	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MPA.
Beachy Head East	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the MMO portion of the MPA, except the far southeast portion of the site.
Inner Bank	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MPA.
Offshore Brighton	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the MPA except the south west portion which overlaps the Dolphin Head Highly Protected Marine Area.
Offshore Overfalls	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MPA.
Wight-Barfleur Reef	A minor change to the boundaries of the existing prohibition of bottom towed fishing gear across the whole of the site.

**Table 5. Assessment conclusions and proposed management for Stage 3 MPAs within the Western Channel and Southwest region.**

MPA	Proposed Management
Bristows to the Stones	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MMO portion of the MPA.
Cape Bank	A minor change to the boundaries of the existing prohibition of bottom towed fishing gear across the whole of the MMO portion of the site <sup>1</sup> .
East of Haig Fras	A minor change to the boundaries of the existing prohibition of bottom towed fishing gear across the whole of the site <sup>1</sup> .
East of Start Point	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MPA.
Greater Haig Fras	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MPA.
Haig Fras	Existing prohibition of bottom towed fishing gear across the whole of the MPA. No updates from Stage 2 <sup>1</sup> , but covered by Greater Haig Fras MCZ.

<sup>1</sup> Marine Protected Areas Bottom Towed Fishing Gear Byelaw 2023 - [www.gov.uk/government/publications/marine-protected-areas-bottom-towed-fishing-gear-byelaw-2023](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/marine-protected-areas-bottom-towed-fishing-gear-byelaw-2023)





MPA	Proposed Management
Hartland Point to Tintagel	Prohibition of traps and bottom-set nets and lines across the whole of the MMO portion of the site and inclusion of the existing prohibition of bottom towed fishing gear across the whole of the MMO portion of the MPA <sup>1</sup> .
Land's End and Cape Bank	A minor change to the boundaries of the existing prohibition of bottom towed fishing gear across the whole of the MMO portion of the site <sup>1</sup> .
North East of Haig Fras	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MPA.
North West of Lundy	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MPA.
North West of Jones Bank	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MPA.
Skerries Bank and Surrounds	Prohibition of bottom towed gear and the removal of spiny lobster across the whole of the MMO portion of the MPA.
South of Celtic Deep	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MPA.
South of the Isles of Scilly	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MPA.
South West Approaches to Bristol Channel	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MPA.
South West Deeps (East)	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MPA and bottom-set nets and lines prohibited over the deep-sea bed feature.
South West Deeps (West)	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MPA.
Start Point to Plymouth Sound & Eddystone	A minor change to the boundaries of the existing prohibition of bottom towed fishing gear across the whole of the MMO portion of the site.
West of Wight-Barfleur	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MPA.
Western Channel	Prohibition of bottom towed gear across the whole of the MPA.

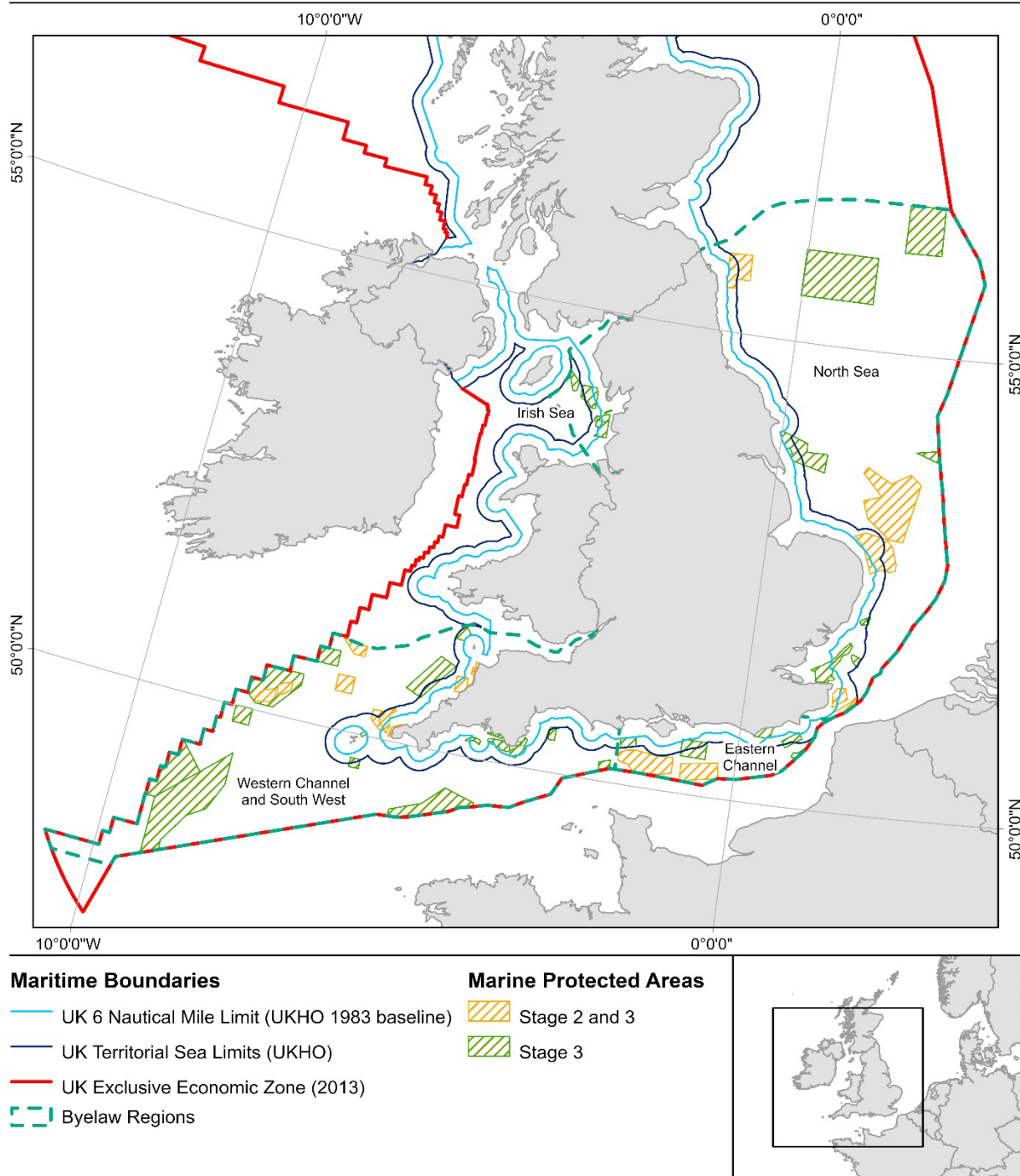




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# Stage 3 Marine Protected Areas

Overview of site locations and byelaw regions



Date of Publication: 17/09/2024  
Datum: ETRS 1989  
Projection: Lambert Azimuthal Equal Area  
MMO Reference: 10786

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**Figure 1: Map of all Stage 3 MPAs and the location of the four byelaw regions.**



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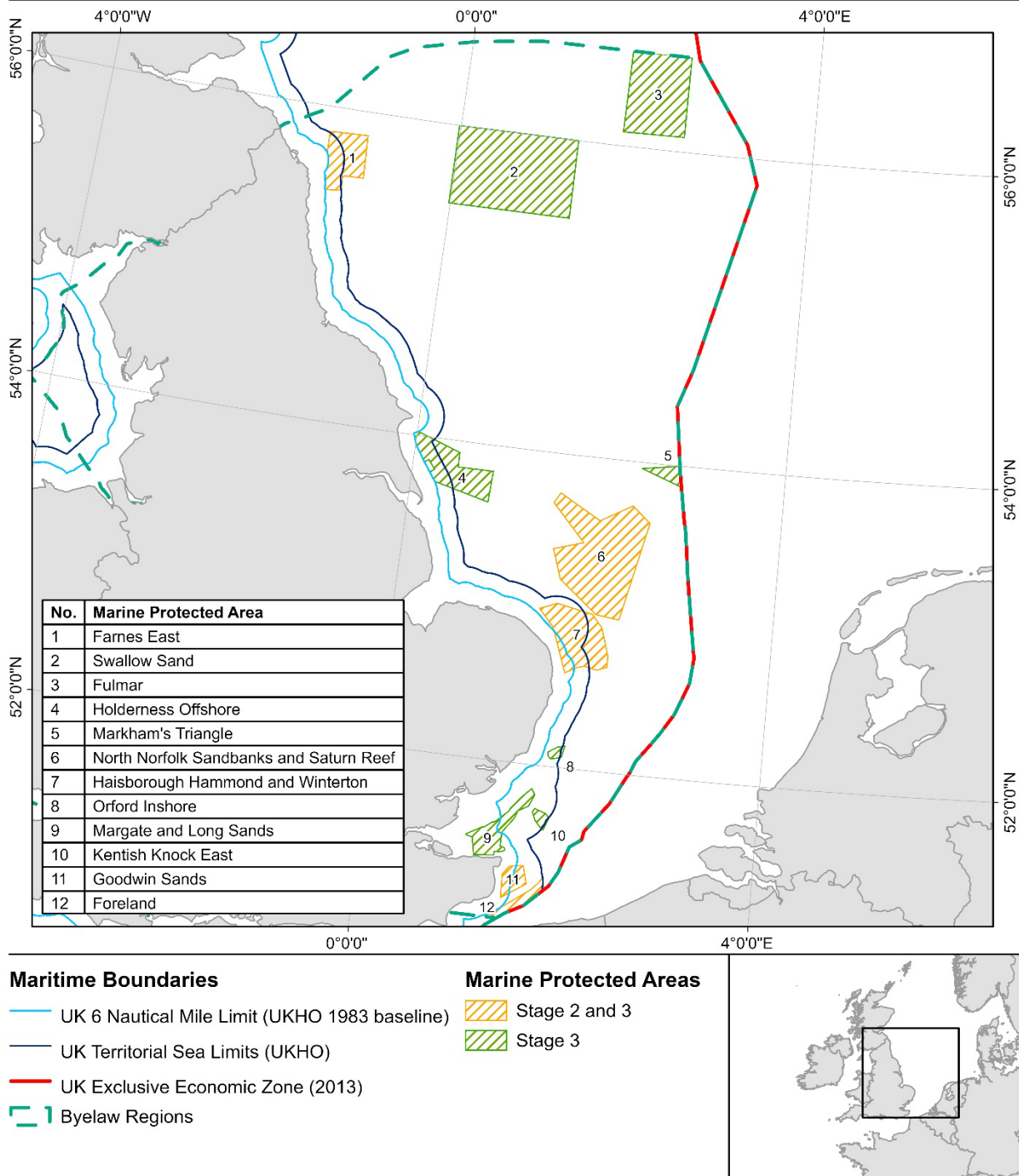




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# Stage 3 Marine Protected Areas

## MMO North Sea Byelaw Consultation



Date of Publication: 17/09/2024  
Datum: ETRS 1989  
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**Figure 2: Map of the MPAs within the proposed Stage 3 North Sea byelaw.**



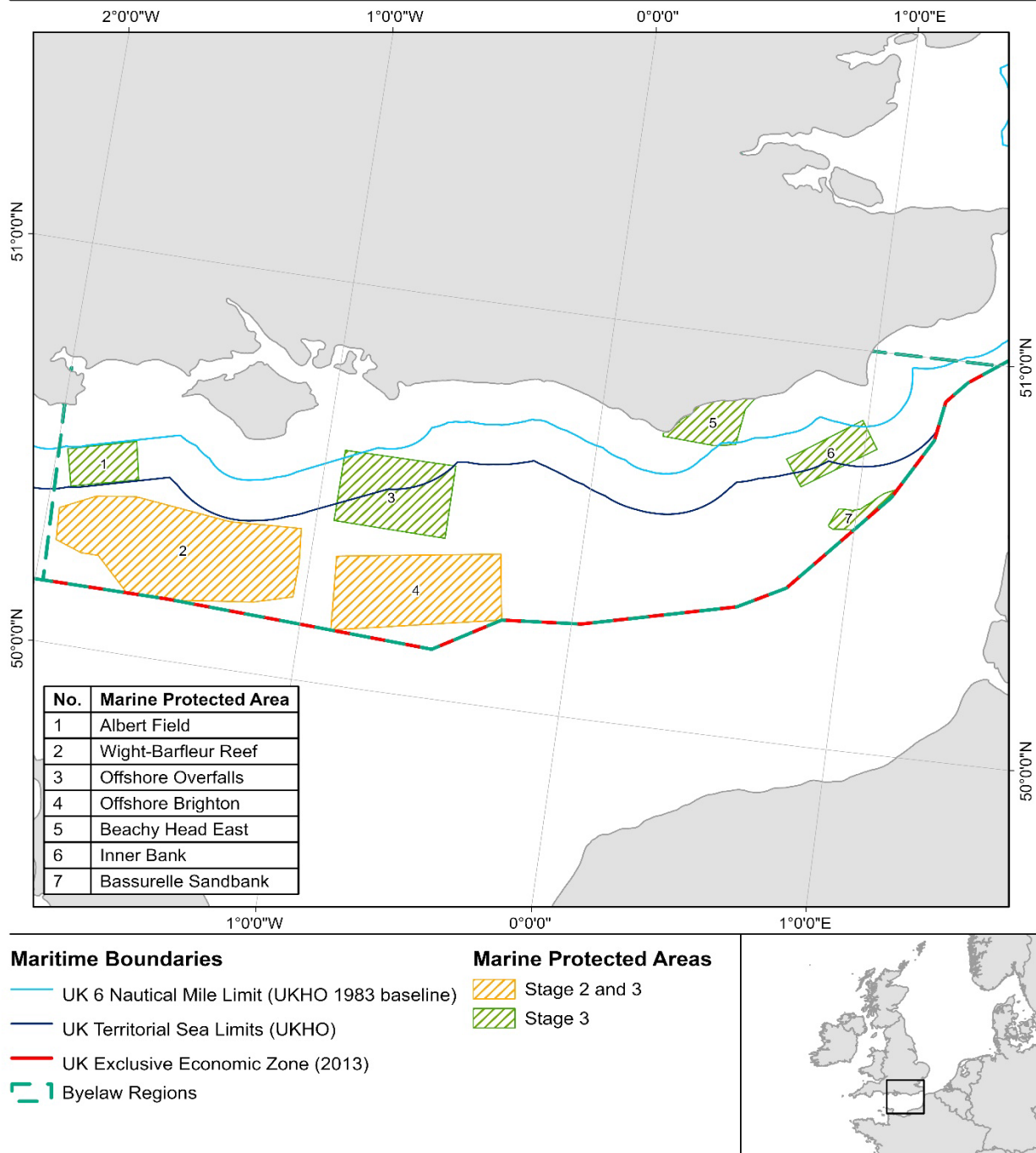




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# Stage 3 Marine Protected Areas

## MMO Eastern Channel Byelaw Consultation



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**Figure 3: Map of the MPAs within the proposed East Channel byelaw.**



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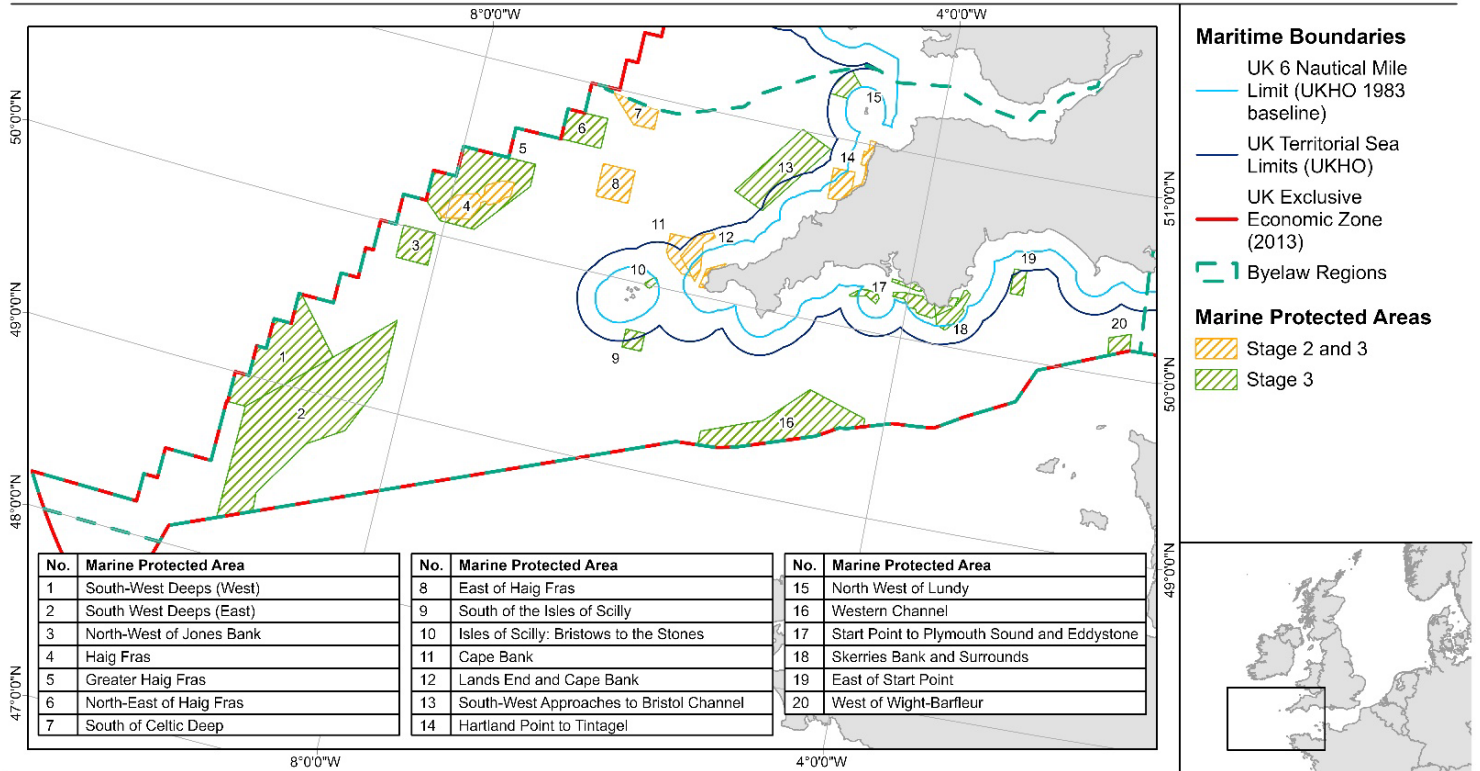
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# Stage 3 Marine Protected Areas

MMO Western Channel and South West Byelaw Consultation



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**Figure 4: Map of the MPAs within the proposed Stage 3 Western Channel and Celtic Sea byelaw.**

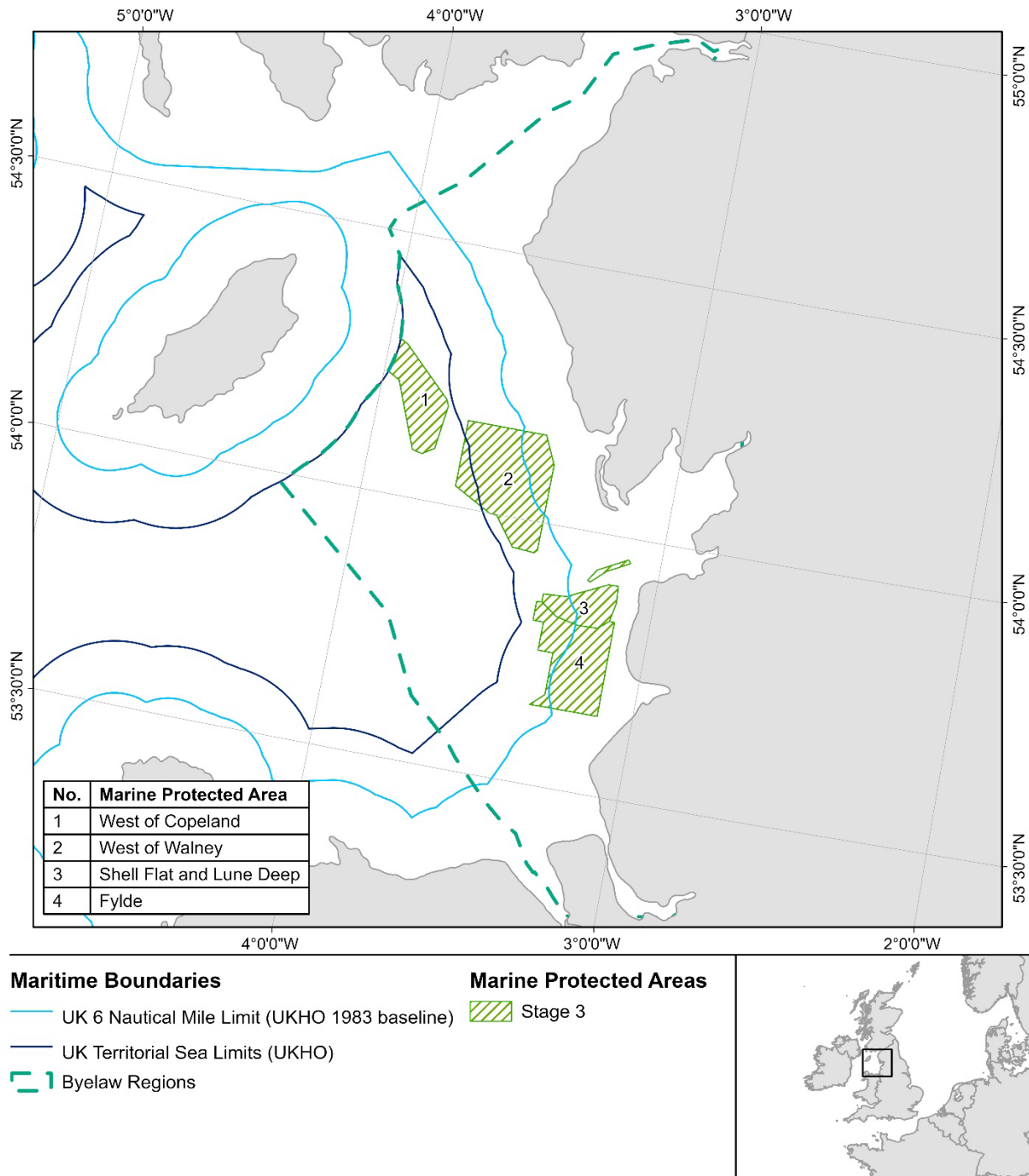




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# Stage 3 Marine Protected Areas

## MMO Irish Sea Byelaw Consultation



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**Figure 5: Map of the MPAs within the proposed Stage 3 Irish Sea byelaw.**

