

Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Marine Conservation Zone

This document sets out why this site is important, the features protected and general management information.

17 January 2016



Overview

This site becomes a Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) in January 2016. This means that specific features within this area are protected and, where necessary, regulators will manage marine activities.

Where is the site

Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) is an inshore site 200 metres off the North Norfolk Coast. It begins just west of Weybourne and ends at Happisborough, extending around 10 km out to sea and covering an area of 321 km².

Why it's important

MCZs, together with other types of marine protected areas, will form the UK contribution to an international network of sites in the north east Atlantic. The network will help to deliver the government's vision of clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas. MCZs protect typical, rare or declining habitats and species found in our seas.

The site protects seaweed-dominated infralittoral rock, which does not yet receive enough protection in this region. These rocks in shallow water are an important habitat, providing a home for a variety of small creatures which shelter and feed amongst seaweeds.

Within a wider area that is predominantly sandy, the chalk beds provide stable surfaces for seaweeds and static animals to settle on and grow. The beds are nursery areas for juvenile species as well as being important in the food chain for animals such as the fish, tompot blenny and the small-spotted catshark. The chalk beds are home to lobsters and crabs which settle within the crevices and holes. The area supports the small-scale crab and lobster fishery vital to the character and economy of the area. Other common species include sea squirts, hermit crabs and pipefish, a relative of the seahorse.

The site has a maximum depth of about 20 metres and some of its unique features are visible in the shallows with a mask and snorkel in favourable conditions.

Designation of this site as a Marine Conservation Zone protects the following features. You can find detailed explanations of each feature at <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-4527>.

Protected features	General management approach
Moderate energy infralittoral rock	Maintain in favourable condition
High energy infralittoral rock	Maintain in favourable condition
Moderate energy circalittoral rock	Maintain in favourable condition
High energy circalittoral rock	Maintain in favourable condition
Subtidal chalk	Maintain in favourable condition
Subtidal coarse sediment	Maintain in favourable condition
Subtidal mixed sediments	Maintain in favourable condition
Subtidal sand	Maintain in favourable condition
Peat and clay exposures	Maintain in favourable condition
North Norfolk Coast (subtidal) ¹	Maintain in favourable condition



¹ Geological feature

Management of the site

Now that this site has been designated, some activities may need additional management. Activities and the management measures used to regulate them may need to change if new evidence becomes available.

Most marine activity is already regulated by the relevant regulatory bodies. There are existing byelaws, national laws and European Regulations which regulators use to manage fishing, coastal development, recreation and pollution. These also apply in MCZs.

Regulators will manage each site according to the features and activities in, or near, a specific area. Management measures will be implemented at sites most at risk of damage first, regulating only those activities which have a detrimental impact on the designated features. Any management measures that are required for MCZs will be applied on a case-by-case basis.

Management in MCZs can take several different forms, from using existing licensing framework, specific byelaws and orders or an EU Regulation for a site. There has to be public consultation on permanent byelaws and orders. For activities that already need a marine licence, regulators consider the MCZ in their decision as soon as the site is consulted on. Find out more about marine licensing in MCZs at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/marine-conservation-zones-mczs-and-marine-licensing>.



Survey image from Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ, showing a brown crab (*Cancer pagurus*), a sunstar (*Crossaster papposus*), an anemone (*Actiniaria* sp.) and *Flustra* sp on circalittoral rock and coarse sediment © Crown copyright

Regulators

This table lists the authorities responsible for MCZs and the activities they manage.

Lead regulator	What it manages
Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) http://www.association-ifca.org.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fisheries in the inshore area (0-6 nautical miles (nm)) including commercial fisheries and recreational sea angling
Marine Management Organisation (MMO) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/marine-management-organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fisheries in the 6-12nm area • Fisheries: enforcement of national and EU legislation • Licensable activities such as dredging and disposal of dredged material, removal of gravel below mean high water springs, subsea cables (up to 12nm), construction (including renewables below 100MW generating capacity, ports and coastal protection) • Harbour Orders and Harbour Empowerment Orders • Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 and safety zones for offshore renewable energy installations consents • Enforcement of licensable activity and other consents (including deemed marine licences) • Development of marine plans • Activities requiring a wildlife licence
Environment Agency (EA) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fisheries for migratory and freshwater fish • Coastal protection and flood management • Water quality • Permitted discharges from terrestrial sources
Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-energy-climate-change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oil and gas related activities • Renewable energy related activities
Harbour Authorities and local planning authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harbour authorities have management responsibilities for the port and coastal waters within their jurisdiction • Local authorities manage activities at the coast. These include coastal recreation, tourism, economic regeneration, flood protection and planning on coasts and estuaries. For further information contact your local authority or IFCA
Department for Transport (DfT) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ports, shipping, harbours, ship pollution and offshore safety
Natural England (NE) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public access

Further information

Read about government policy on MCZs at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/marine-environment>

See Natural England's advice on MCZs at:

<http://nepubprod.appspot.com/publication/4594304593952768>



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

mcz@defra.gsi.gov.uk

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