Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Isles of Scilly Marine Conservation Zones

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

31 May 2019

Intertidal rock at Peninnis to Dry Ledge © Natural England

Overview

This site became a Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) in October 2013. This means that specific features within these areas are protected and, where necessary, regulators will manage marine activities. Five additional features were added to four sites in May 2019.

Where are these site?

The Isles of Scilly MCZs are a collection of inshore sites located around the Isles of Scilly, a group of islands located approximately 45 km south-west off the Cornish coast. The MCZs consist of 11 separate sites covering a total area of over 30 km^2. The 11 sites are:

- Bishop to Crim
- Bristows to the Stones
- Gilstone to Gorregan
- Hanjague to Deep Ledge
- Higher Town
- Lower Ridge to Innisvouls

- Men a Vaur to White Island
- Peninnis to Dry Ledge
- Plympton to Spanish Ledge
- Smith Sound Tide Swept Channel
- Tean

Why are these sites important?

MCZs, together with other types of marine protected areas, will form the UK contribution to an international network of protected 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.

Individual sites within the Isles of Scilly MCZs have each been designated to protect a specific set of features. The tables in the Annex list the features protected within the Isle of Scilly MCZs. You can find detailed information about each feature at http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-4527.

The Isles of Scilly MCZs span a broad range of physical conditions which support an exceptionally high diversity of habitats and species. The depth of the seabed varies considerably across the 11 areas extending from the mean high water mark to depths of up to 70 m in places. The shallow inshore waters are rich in seaweeds and the deeper water habitats are dominated by animal communities. Intertidal rocky habitats support diverse seaweeds, encrusting animals such as barnacles and sea squirts, as well as crabs and fish that use the space between rocks and boulders for shelter. Intertidal sediment habitats support specialised animal communities such as burrowing marine worms and shrimp-like sand hoppers. In deeper waters subtidal rocky habitats can support large colonies of sponges, sea-fans and anemones that collect their food from the passing currents.

The importance of the marine environment found here has been previously recognised through the designation of the Isles of Scilly Complex Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and 10 of the 11 sites lie within this designated area. The Isles of Scilly MCZs complement this existing SAC designation by offering protection to species and habitats that are not protected by the SAC.

Some of the sites also offer protection to the spiny lobster or crawfish, a large, brightly coloured crustacean that can grow up to 60 cm in length. The spiny lobster has small front claws, but is heavily armoured with strong spines to give protection from predators. They are typically found around the south and west coasts of the British Isles, as well as the warmer waters of the Canary Islands and Mediterranean. Once important commercially, the species now requires protection due to a declining population particularly in areas of south-west England.

These MCZs contain a range of rare and fragile animals including two species of stalked jellyfish, which spend their life attached to a host, usually seaweed or seagrass. These stalked jellyfish tend to be very small, rarely growing beyond a couple of centimetres in height. They use their stinging tentacles on the tips of eight webbed arms to feed and defend themselves.

Management of the sites

Now that these sites 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 is an existing legal framework that regulators use to manage fishing, coastal development, recreation and pollution. This also applies 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, including introducing voluntary measures, use of the existing planning and licensing framework, specific byelaws and orders. 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.

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	• 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	• Fisheries within British limits around the coast of England. • Licensable activities such as construction, alteration or improvement of works, dredging and disposal, other removals or deposits, incineration or the scuttling of vessels within England's marine area. • Section 36 (of the Electricity Act 1989) Consents and Safety Zones for offshore renewable energy installations producing up to 100MW. • Activities requiring a marine wildlife licence.
Environment Agency (EA) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency	• Fisheries for migratory and freshwater fish. • Coastal protection and flood management. • Water quality, including environmental permits for discharges from terrestrial sources.
Oil and Gas Authority https://www.ogauthority.co.uk/	• Licensing for exploration and exploitation of oil and gas reserves.
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-business-energy-and-industrial-strategy **Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment and Decommissioning (OPRED) – Part of BEIS**	• Oil and gas related activities • Renewable energy related activities • Environmental approvals and consents for offshore oil and gas related activities, Carbon Capture and Storage and Gas Unloading and Storage, and decommissioning activities.
Harbour Authorities and Local Planning Authorities	• Harbour authorities have management responsibilities for ports and coastal waters within their limits. • Local planning authorities manage activities at the coast. These include coastal recreation, public rights of way (including the English Coastal Path), tourism, economic regeneration, flood protection, and planning and development on coasts and estuaries, including aquaculture in the intertidal zone.
Department for Transport (DfT) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport	• Policy on environmental impacts associated with ports and shipping, including pollution from ships. • Policy on maritime safety including navigation safety.
Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) - An Executive Agency of the Department for Transport	• Vessel safety consents, including certification of seafarers and equipment.

https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/maritime-and-coastguard-agency	
Natural England (NE) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england	• Establishment and management of the English Coastal path. • Activities requiring consents and ascents within or adjacent to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). • Activities requiring wildlife licences for terrestrial and intertidal species.
The Planning Inspectorate https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/planning-inspectorate	• Activities requiring Development Consent Orders under the Planning Act 2008, regarded as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects

Further information

Read about government policy on MCZs at:
https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/marine-conservation-zone-designations-in-england

Read the advice provided by Natural England on MCZs at:
http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5703660445368320

Fragile sponge and anthozoan communities on subtidal rocky habitats © K Hiscock

Annex: Features

Additional features added to sites in May 2019 are denoted by asterisks

Bishop to Crim

Protected features	General management approach
Spiny lobster (*Palinurus elephas*)	Recover to favourable condition

Bristows to the Stones

Protected features	General management approach
Fragile sponge and anthozoan communities on subtidal rocky habitats	Recover to favourable condition
High energy circalittoral rock	
Moderate energy circalittoral rock*	
Pink sea-fan (*Eunicella verrucosa*)	
Subtidal coarse sediment*	
Spiny lobster (*Palinurus elephas*)	

Gilstone to Gorregan

Protected features	General management approach
High energy intertidal rock	Maintain in favourable condition
Moderate energy intertidal rock	
Spiny lobster (*Palinurus elephas*)	Recover to favourable condition

Hanjague to Deep Ledge

Protected features	General management approach
High energy intertidal rock	Maintain in favourable condition
Intertidal coarse sediment	
Moderate energy intertidal rock	
Intertidal underboulder communities	
Spiny lobster (*Palinurus elephas*)	Recover to favourable condition

Higher Town

Protected features	General management approach
Intertidal coarse sediment	Maintain in favourable condition
Intertidal sand and muddy sand	
Intertidal underboulder communities	
Low energy intertidal rock	
Moderate energy intertidal rock	
Stalked jellyfish (*Calvadosia cruxmelitensis*)*	
Stalked jellyfish (*Haliclystus* species)	

Lower Ridge to Innisvouls

Protected features	General management approach
Moderate energy intertidal rock	Maintain in favourable condition
Spiny lobster (*Palinurus elephas*)	Recover to favourable condition

Men a Vaur to White Island

Protected features	General management approach
Giant goby (*Gobius cobitis*)*	Maintain in favourable condition
High energy intertidal rock	
Intertidal coarse sediment	
Intertidal sand and muddy sand	
Intertidal underboulder communities	
Moderate energy intertidal rock	
Stalked jellyfish (*Calvadosia campanulata*)	
Spiny lobster (*Palinurus elephas*)	Recover to favourable condition

Peninnis to Dry Ledge

Protected features	General management approach
Intertidal coarse sediment	Maintain in favourable condition
Intertidal mixed sediments	
Intertidal sand and muddy sand	
Intertidal underboulder communities	
Low energy intertidal rock	
Moderate energy intertidal rock	
Stalked jellyfish (*Calvadosia cruxmelitensis*)*	
Stalked jellyfish (*Haliclystus* species)	
Spiny lobster (*Palinurus elephas*)	Recover to favourable condition

Plympton to Spanish Ledge

Protected features	General management approach
High energy intertidal rock	Maintain in favourable condition
Intertidal sand and muddy sand	
Intertidal underboulder communities	
Moderate energy intertidal rock	
Spiny lobster (*Palinurus elephas*)	Recover to favourable condition

Smith Sound Tide Swept Channel

Protected features	General management approach
High energy intertidal rock	Maintain in favourable condition
Moderate energy intertidal rock	
Spiny lobster (*Palinurus elephas*)	Recover to favourable condition

Tean

Protected features	General management approach
Intertidal coarse sediment	Maintain in favourable condition
Intertidal sand and muddy sand	
Intertidal underboulder communities	
Moderate energy intertidal rock	

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