

Whitsand and Looe Bay Marine Conservation Zone

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

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Rocky habitats at Hannafore and Looe Island © Natural England

Overview

This site became a Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) in November 2013. This means that specific features within this area are protected and, where necessary, regulators will manage marine activities. Four additional features were added to the site in May 2019: giant goby (*Gobius cobitis*), moderate energy circalittoral rock and two species of stalked jellyfish (*Calvadosia campanulata* and *Calvadosia cruxmelitensis*).

Where is the site?

Whitsand and Looe Bay MCZ is an inshore site that covers 52 km² and is located off the south coast of Cornwall.

Why is the site 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.

This MCZ protects nine habitats and their associated species as well as offering specific protection to seven species of conservation importance. The sediment supports populations of bivalve molluscs and marine worms and provides a habitat for commercially important fish and shellfish, while the site's intertidal rocky habitats are characterised by animals such as sponges, sea squirts and the rare giant goby, a fish which lives in rockpools. The intertidal rocky habitats at Hannafore and on Looe Island are particularly special, supporting a high diversity of seaweeds and invertebrates. These rocky habitats also support commercially important crustacean species, such as the common lobster and crab.

The ocean quahog, a bivalve mollusc which is known to live for over 400 years has been recorded within sediment habitats in the site. Within the shallower part of the site the seagrass beds are likely to provide a nursery ground for ecologically and commercially important species such as cuttlefish.

Further out to sea there are shipwrecks and small areas of subtidal rocky reef that support pink sea-fans and rare sea-fan anemones. The pink sea-fan is an extremely slow-growing soft coral which attaches to hard substrates such as subtidal rocky reefs and wrecks. Many species can be found living on or around the pink sea-fan structures including the sea-fan anemone, which is also protected within this site.

The sea-fan anemone only reaches around 1 cm in diameter. Its disc-like body is fringed by up to 80 short tentacles that are pink, orange or red in colour and usually streaked or splashed with white. The sea-fan anemone does not usually attach directly to the seabed but instead lives with its base wrapped around a host organism, usually a pink sea-fan. Both the pink sea-fan and the sea-fan anemone are particularly vulnerable to damage.

Stalked jellyfish are also present within the site. These animals are very small and typically spend their life attached to either seaweed or seagrass. They use the stinging tentacles on the tips of their eight webbed arms to kill or paralyse prey and for defence.

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

Protected features	General management approach
Giant goby (<i>Gobius cobitis</i>)	Maintain in favourable condition
High energy intertidal rock	
Intertidal coarse sediment	
Intertidal sand and muddy sand	
Low energy intertidal rock	
Moderate energy intertidal rock	
Ocean quahog (<i>Arctica islandica</i>)	
Seagrass beds	
Stalked jellyfish (<i>Calvadosia campanulata</i>)	Recover to a favourable condition
Stalked jellyfish (<i>Calvadosia cruxmelitensis</i>)	
Stalked jellyfish (<i>Haliclystus</i> species.)	
Subtidal coarse sediment	
Subtidal sand	
Moderate energy circalittoral rock	
Pink sea-fan (<i>Eunicella verrucosa</i>)	
Sea-fan anemone (<i>Amphianthus dohrnii</i>)	

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 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	<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 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oil and gas related activities • Renewable energy related activities
Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment and Decommissioning (OPRED) – Part of BEIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental approvals and consents for offshore oil and gas related activities, Carbon Capture and Storage and Gas Unloading and Storage, and decommissioning activities.

<p>Harbour Authorities and Local Planning Authorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p>Department for Transport (DfT) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy on environmental impacts associated with ports and shipping, including pollution from ships. • Policy on maritime safety including navigation safety.
<p>Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) - An Executive Agency of the Department for Transport https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/maritime-and-coastguard-agency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vessel safety consents, including certification of seafarers and equipment.
<p>Natural England (NE) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment and management of the English Coastal path. • Activities requiring consents and ascents within or adjacent to Sites of Special Scientific Interest
<p>The Planning Inspectorate https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/planning-inspectorate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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>



Moderate energy intertidal rock © Paul Naylor, The Wildlife Trust



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to defra.helpline@defra.gov.uk