

South Rigg Marine Conservation Zone

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

31 May 2019



Subtidal sand © JNCC

Overview

This site became a Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) in May 2019. This means that specific features within this area are protected and, where necessary, regulators will manage marine activities.

Where is the site?

South Rigg MCZ is an offshore site that covers an area of 143 km². The site is located in the west of the Irish Sea region, approximately 23 km west of the Isle of Man. Depths within the site range between 50 and 150 metres.

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 and declining habitats and species found in our seas.

South Rigg MCZ includes a variety of habitats from finer sediments to rocky habitats and supports a wide range of species. Subtidal sediment provides a home for species such as bristle worms, anemones, starfish, urchins, burrowing anemones, clams and cockles. The rocky habitats within the site support a range of species, including sponges, anemones, squat lobster, brittle star species and a soft coral known as dead man's fingers.

The mud within the site is characterised by mounds and burrows formed by burrowing species such as mud shrimp and Norway lobsters. These burrows can provide protection for a variety of worms and small bivalve molluscs

Designation of this site as a Marine Conservation Zone protects the following features. You can find detailed information about each of the protected features on the [JNCC website](#).

| Protected features | General management approach |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Moderate energy circalittoral rock | Maintain in favourable condition |
| Subtidal mixed sediments | |
| Sea-pen & burrowing megafauna communities | Recover to favourable condition |
| Subtidal coarse sediment | |
| Subtidal mud | |
| Subtidal sand | |

Management of the site

The General Management Approach for four of the protected features of this site is to 'Recover to favourable condition' and for the remaining two is to 'Maintain in favourable condition'. To ensure that the site achieves its conservation objectives 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 (see section below). There is an existing legal framework that regulators use to manage fishing, offshore industry, 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. |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-business-energy-and-industrial-strategy</p> <p>Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment and Decommissioning (OPRED) – Part of BEIS</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. |
| <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 (SSSIs). • Activities requiring wildlife licences for terrestrial and intertidal species. |
| <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 |

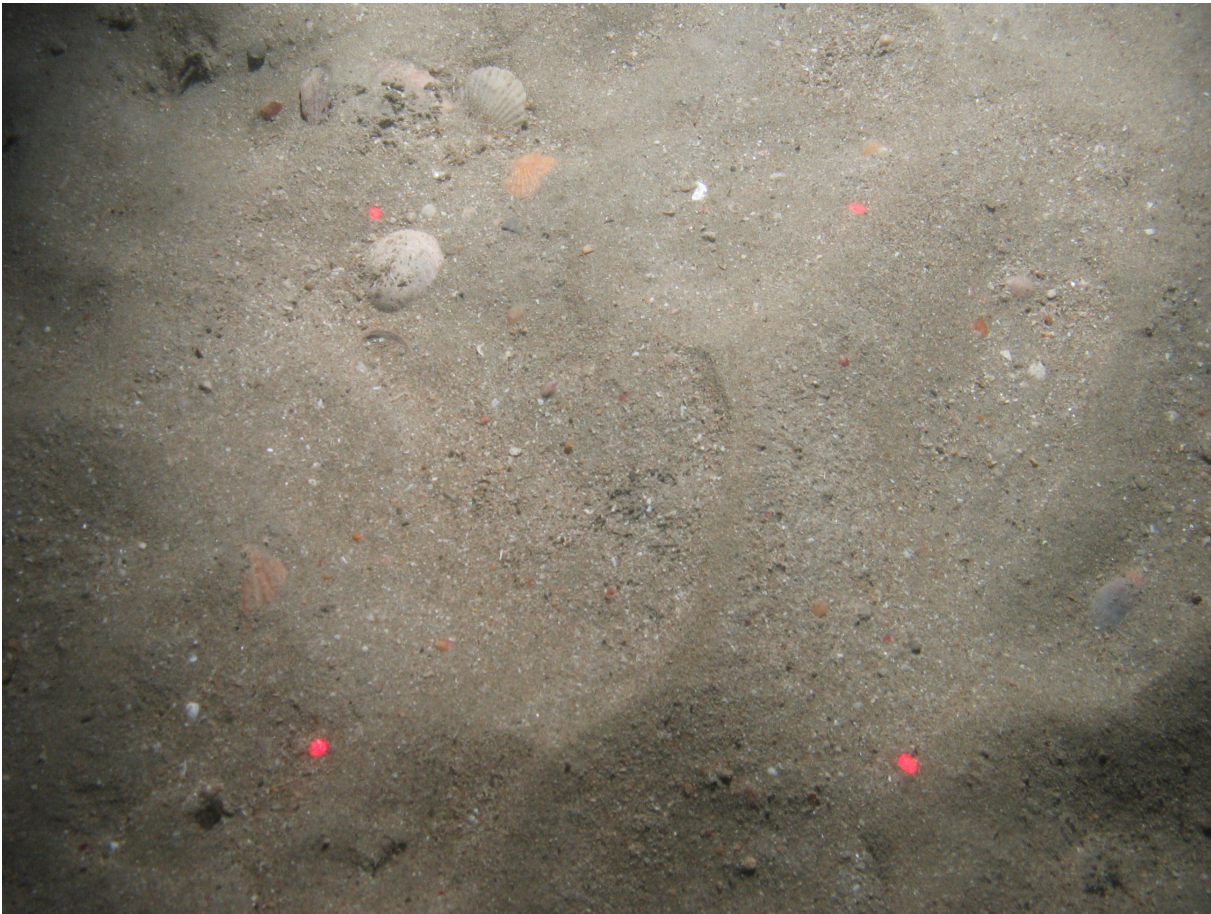
Further information

Read about government policy on MCZs at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/marine-conservation-zone-designations-in-england>

Read the scientific advice provided by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee on MCZs at:

<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-7119>



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