



Marine
Management
Organisation

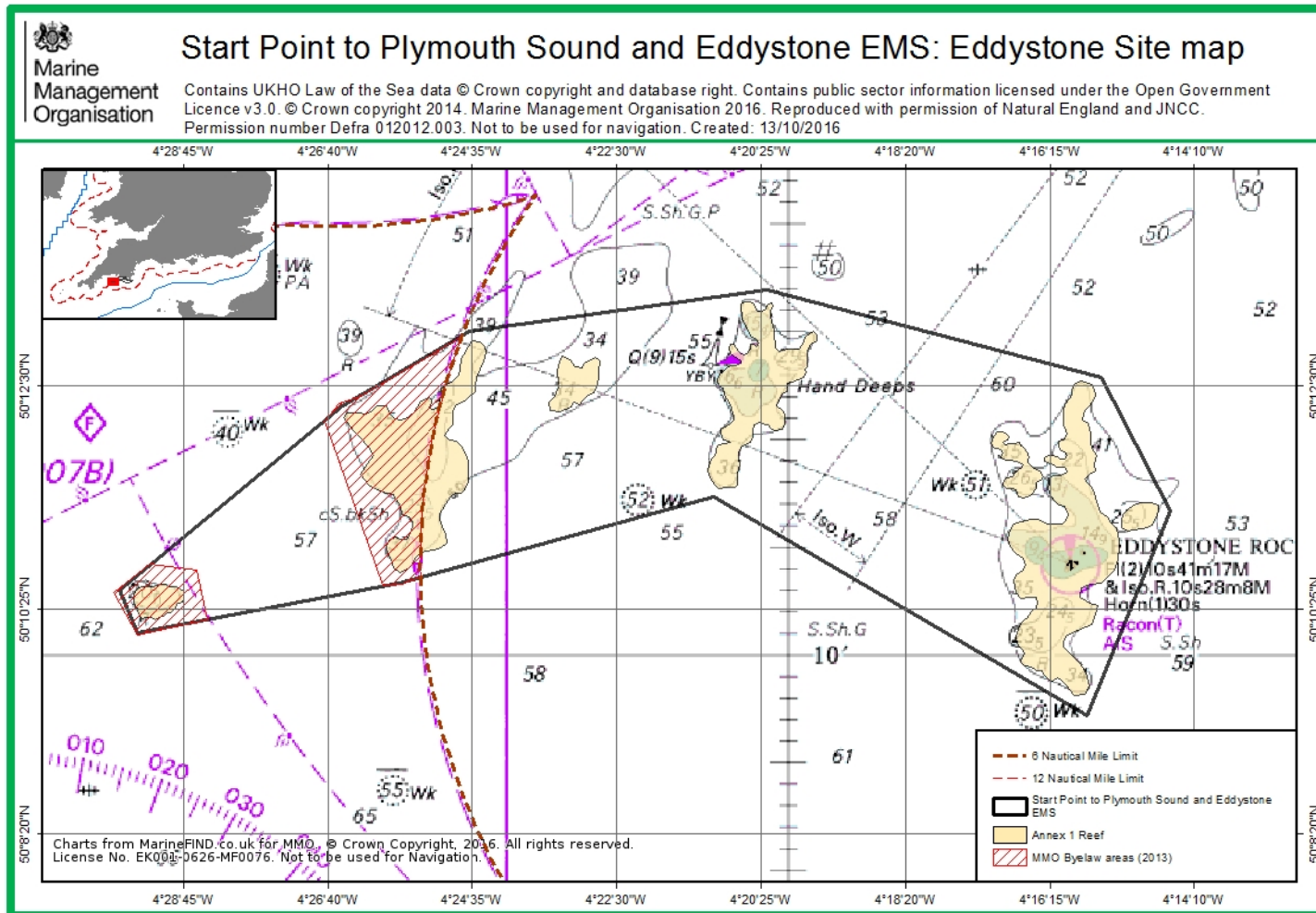
Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone European Marine Site (EMS): Executive Summary

October 2016



Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone European Marine Site (EMS)
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Figure 1: Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone EMS¹



¹ Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone is a Site of Community Importance (SCI). SCIs are sites that have been submitted to the European Commission, but not yet formally adopted. This site is described as an EMS to avoid confusion with stakeholders

1. Introduction

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is conducting marine protected area (MPA) assessments to ensure current and potential commercial fishing activities in MPAs in English inshore waters (0 to 12 nautical miles (nm)) are appropriately managed.

To ensure our findings and conclusions are robust and are based on the best available evidence, we are inviting you to review the executive summary along with the part assessment, if required, and submit any additional relevant evidence that could contribute to this assessments. Evidence will be used to inform management decisions.

All submitted evidence must follow our evidence guidance and be received before Monday 12 December 2016 (see [Approach and Process Overview](#) for more details).

2. Site location and features

The Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone EMS lies off the south coast of England, off the counties of Devon and Cornwall. The site boundary extends across three separate geographical areas where reef is present:

- The Eddystone reefs;
- Plymouth Sound to Bigbury Bay reefs; and
- West Rutts to Start Point reefs

The MMO assessment concerns the interaction of identified fishing gears with the Eddystone reefs portion of the reef between the 6 and 12 nautical mile (nm) limits.

The portion of the Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone EMS within the 6-12nm limit, lies within International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) rectangle² 29E5.

The site has been designated for reef (circalittoral rock, infralittoral rock). More information about the site, including the formal conservation advice package, is available on the Natural England [website](#).

Figure 1 shows the extent of reef within the Eddystone reefs portion of the site.

3. Summary of draft assessment findings

The main pressures identified to the feature from commercial fishing activities are:

Physical damage (abrasion) from potting (from the pots themselves, and the ropes connecting 'strings' of pots) and netting (from anchors used to set nets), in particular to slow growing epifauna such as Ross coral.

² ICES statistical rectangles are part of a widely used grid system for North Eastern Atlantic waters.

The MMO is currently conducting the assessment. Thus far the MMO has identified those fishing activities that do not occur within the site. The remaining gear/feature interactions have been screened for those that a likely significant effect cannot be ruled out.

The MMO is now assessing the remaining gear/feature interactions to understand whether there could be an adverse effect of site integrity from commercial fishing.

For further details on the assessment please contact:
conservation@marinemanagement.org.uk

4. Assessment process

Overview of assessment process

Site assessments include three phases:

1. Initial test – Is the activity is occurring? Is the activity already sufficiently regulated? Is any feasible interaction between the activity and designated feature?
2. Part A – Is the activity directly connected with or necessary for the management of the site? Is the activity likely to have a significant effect on the site?
3. Part B - Is the activity likely to cause an adverse effect on the integrity of the site?

MPA assessments include current and potential commercial fishing activities. To understand what the potential fishing activities are likely to be, we use historical fishing activity and expert opinion. Further information on potential activities is available on request.

Overview of gears being assessed

Table 1: Fishing gears being assessed for Start Point to Plymouth Sound and Eddystone EMS

Phase	Activities
1 - Initial assessment	All fishing gears from Part A, and: Beach seines/ring nets Fyke and stakenets Bait dragging Cuttle pots Fish traps Demersal drift nets Demersal longlines Commercial diving
2 – Part A	Pots/creels Gill nets Trammel nets Entangling nets
3 – Part B	Pots/creels Gill nets Trammel nets Entangling nets

5. Fishing activity information

Fisheries access

The boundaries of the site fully falls within the 12nm limit. French and Belgium vessels have access rights between the 6 and 12nm limits. Within 6nm, only UK vessels have fishing access rights.

Data sources - fishing activity

To determine the levels of fishing activity in this site, the following data sources will be used:

1. Vessel monitoring system (VMS) and fisheries landings data

This data incorporates two sources:

- a. location reports from vessels carrying the European Union mandated VMS (data available for vessels of 15m length and over); and

- b. landings data reported at ICES rectangle level from landings declarations and logbooks.

2. Sightings data

A number of sightings data sources and expert opinion will be included for non-VMS vessels:

- a. [Understanding the distribution and trends in inshore fishing activities and the link to coastal communities](#): A Defra commissioned project to better understand trends in inshore fisheries, including collating and analysing fisheries sightings data from 2010 to 2012.
- b. [FisherMap](#): 2012 Marine Conservation Zone Project Stakmap looking at commercial fishing for under 15m vessels with data collated by interviewing industry.
- c. Marine Management Organisation and Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) expert opinion on fishing activity: Our marine officers and inshore fisheries and conservation officers will provide information on fishing activity within MPAs. Information will include number and size of vessels fishing, target species, type and amount of fishing gear used and seasonal trends in activity. Confidence levels will be provided alongside expert opinion and estimates will also be provided where exact numbers are not known.

6. Ecological Information

The MMO will use a number of sources of information to understand the vulnerability⁴ of the feature to each fishing gear type. This will include looking at whether the feature is sensitive³ to each fishing gear type.

The main sources will be from Natural England conservation advice packages, peer reviewed papers and government reports.

Where appropriate, we have categorised sensitivity and fishing effort as 'high', 'medium' and 'low' based on secondary evidence if there is no peer reviewed evidence available. Sensitivity levels are based on Tillin *et al*, 2010³ and Gibb *et al*, 2014⁴ and overall vulnerability of features to gear intensities on Hall *et al*, 2008⁵.

7. Summary of evidence

Fishing activity

³ Tillin, H.M., Hull, S.C., Tyler-Walters, H. 2010 Development of a sensitivity Matrix (pressures-MCZ/MPA features). Report to the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs from ABPMer, Southampton and the Marine Life Information Network (MarLIN) Plymouth: Marine Biological Association of the UK. Defra Contract No. MB12 Task 3A, Report No. 22.

⁴ Gibb, N., Tillin, H., Pearce, B., Tyler-Walters, H. 2014. Assessing the sensitivity of *Sabellaria spinulosa* to pressures associated with marine activities. JNCC report No. 504.

⁵ Hall, K., Paramor, O.A.L., Robinson, L.A., Winrow-Giffin, A., Frid, C.L.J., Eno, N.C., Dornie, K.M., Sharp, R.A.M., Wyn, G.C., Ramsay, G.C. (2008). Mapping the sensitivity of benthic habitats to fishing in Welsh waters – development of a protocol; CCW (Policy Research) Report No: 8/12. 85pp

VMS data from 2009 to 2013 shows limited activity within the 6 and 12nm limits. Sightings data further confirms limited activity in this area and effort is categorised as low.

Sensitivity of the feature and vulnerability to gears

This will be assessed during Part B of the assessment.

Other activities occurring within the site

This will be assessed during Part B of the assessment.

8. Management options

Following the completion of the MPA assessment, one of the following management options will be adopted. However, if gaps in evidence come to light during the assessment process; precautionary decisions may need to be made.

Option 1: No management is required

Option 2: Monitor potting activity levels

Option 3: Reduce levels of potting within the site

Option 4: Prohibit potting

Any additional evidence submitted will be reviewed and may inform which potential management decision is adopted.

9. Next Steps

The MMO will now conduct Part B of the fishery assessment to ascertain whether commercial fishing causes an adverse effect on the integrity of this site.

The MMO will then finalise the assessments and share findings with Natural England who will offer [conservation advice](#).

If management measures are required, these will be subject to formal public consultation.

10. Additional Information

If you have evidence that you think MMO should be considering when writing the site assessment, please visit our [website](#).

Please read the '[Approach and Process Overview](#)' for how to submit evidence.

For further information please email conservation@marinemanagement.org.uk