



Marine
Management
Organisation

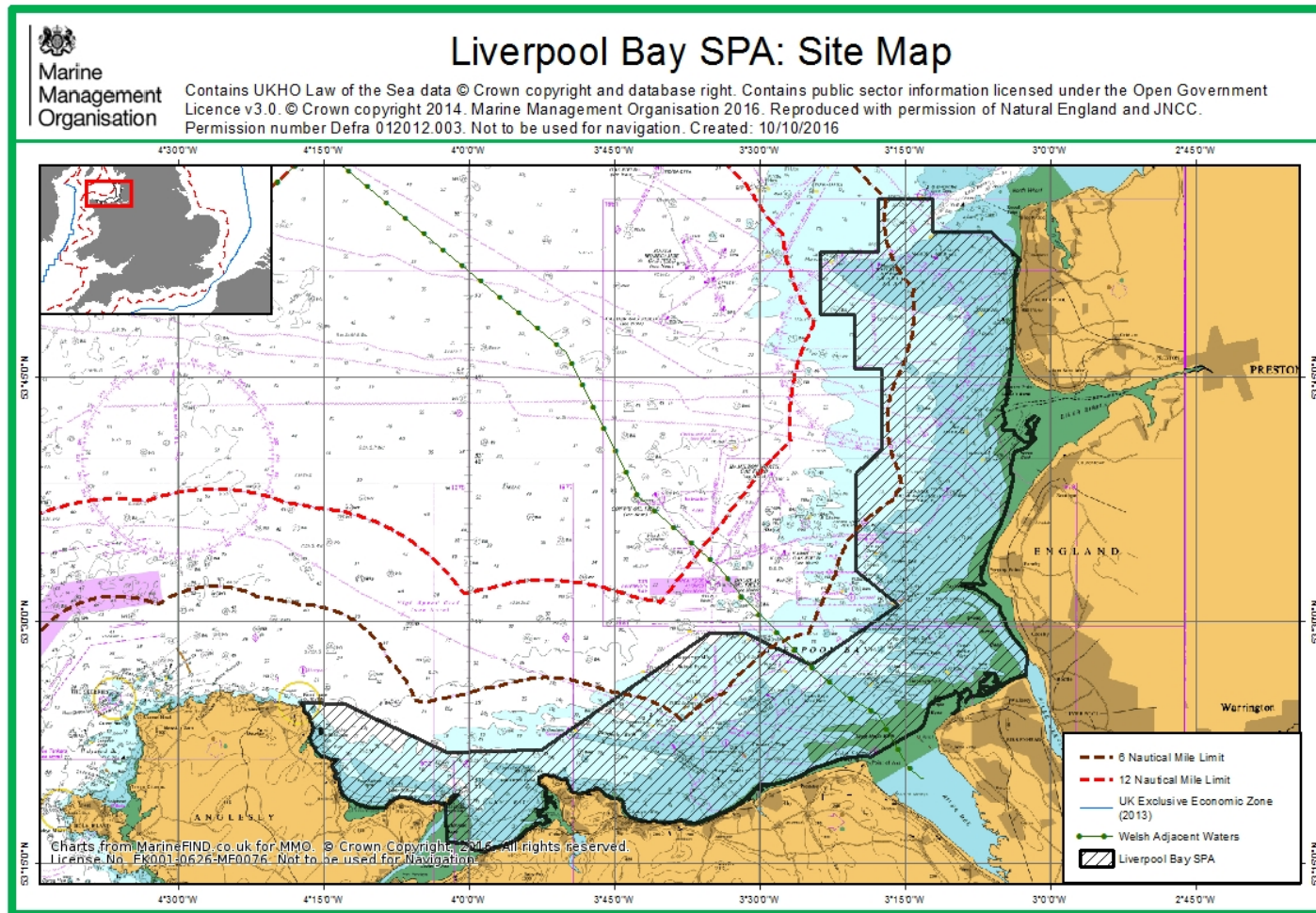
Liverpool Bay Special Protection Area (SPA): Executive Summary

January 2016



Common scoter and red throated diver: Liverpool Bay SPA
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Figure 1: Liverpool Bay Special Protection Area (SPA)



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 (see [Approach and Process Overview](#) for more details).

2. Site location and features

Liverpool Bay SPA is located in the south-eastern region of the northern part of the Irish Sea, bordering northwest England and north Wales, and running as a broad arc from Morecambe Bay to the east coast of Anglesey.

Liverpool Bay SPA is divided roughly equally between England and Wales at the border between English and Welsh territorial waters running north-westwards from the Dee Estuary. In England the SPA borders the county of Lancashire, the Unitary Authority area of Blackpool and the Metropolitan Districts Sefton and Wirral. The SPA comprises one area of 170,225 and is within the 0 to 12nm limit.

Within the English waters, this site lies within International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) rectangles¹35E6, 36E6 and 36E7.

This site has been designated for red throated divers, common scoters and waterbird assemblage. More information about the site, including the formal conservation advice package, is available from [Natural England](#).

The SPA assessment covers the interaction of identified fishing gears with red throated divers and common scoters within English waters from 0-12 nm limit.

Figure 1 shows the location of this site.

3. Summary of draft assessment findings

The main pressures to bird features and associated supporting habitats from commercial fishing activities are:

¹ ICES statistical rectangles are part of a widely used grid system for North Eastern Atlantic waters.

- physical damage of the supporting sandbank habitat from towed gears which could potentially reduce prey and foraging areas for features
- physical disturbance by fishing activity which could reduce available habitat for foraging of birds, and displacement of birds from feeding or resting grounds which subsequently can alter behaviour and time/energy budgets as a result of reacting to disturbance
- biological disturbance from fishing gears which could result in mortality of birds through entanglement and the extraction of food availability
- Non-physical disturbance from displacement of features from vessel traffic

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@marinemangement.org.uk

4. Assessment process

Site assessments include three phases:

1. Initial test – Is the fishing activity occurring? Is the activity already sufficiently regulated? Is there existing or potential 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 the Liverpool Bay SPA per feature/supporting habitat

Phase	Activities		
	Bird Feature	Subtidal sandbank	Water column

Phase	Activities		
1 - initial test	All fishing gears from Part A, and: Commercial Diving Bait dragging	All fishing gears from Part A, and: Commercial Diving Bait dragging	All fishing gears from Part A, and: Commercial Diving Bait dragging Electrofishing
2 – Part A	Drift nets (Pelagic) Mid-water trawl (single) Mid-water trawl (pair) Industrial trawls Purse seine Gill nets Trammels Entangling nets Towed (demersal/pelagic) Fish traps Drift nets (Demersal) Scallop dredging Mussel, clam and oyster dredging Pump scoop (cockles, clams) Tractor dredge Suction dredge (cockles) Hand working from a vessel Hand working from the land Crab tiling	Beam trawl (shrimp) Beam trawl (pulse/wing) Gill nets Trammels Entangling nets Multi-rig trawl Pair trawl Anchor seine Scottish/fly seine Suction dredge (cockles) Pump scoop (cockles, clams) Scallop dredging Fish traps Pots/creels (crustacea/gastropods) Cuttle pots Drift nets (Demersal) Beam Trawl (whitefish) Heavy Otter Trawl Light Otter Trawl Mussel, clam and oyster dredging	Pelagic fishing Traps Anchored nets/lines Demersal trawls

Phase	Activities		
3 – Part B	All fishing activities (for non-physical disturbance) and: Drift nets (Pelagic) Mid-water trawl (single) Mid-water trawl (pair) Industrial trawls Purse seine Gill nets Trammels Entangling Towed (demersal/pelagic) Fish traps Drift nets (Demersal) Scallop dredging Mussel, clam and oyster dredging Pump scoop (cockles, clams) Tractor dredge Suction dredge (cockles) Hand working from a vessel Hand working from the land Crab tiling	Beam trawl (shrimp) Beam trawl (pulse/wing) Gill nets Trammels Entangling nets Multi-rig trawl Pair trawl Anchor seine Scottish/fly seine Suction dredge (cockles) Pump scoop (cockles, clams) Scallop dredging Fish traps Pots/creels (crustacea/gastropods) Cuttle pots Drift nets (Demersal) Beam Trawl (whitefish) Heavy Otter Trawl Light Otter Trawl Mussel, clam and oyster dredging	Pelagic fishing Traps Anchored nets/lines Demersal trawls

5. Fishing activity information

Fisheries access

The site extends across three regulatory jurisdictions North Western Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) 0 to 6nm, Marine Management Organisation (MMO) 6 to 12nm and extends into Welsh waters. Ireland and France have fisheries access rights between the 6 to 12nm limits.

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:

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

- [Understanding the distribution and trends in inshore fishing activities and the link to coastal communities](#): Defra commissioned a project to better understand trends in inshore fisheries, including collating and analysing fisheries sightings data from 2010 to 2012.
- [FisherMap data](#): 2012 Marine Conservation Zone Project Stakmap looking at commercial fishing for under 15m vessels with data collated by interviewing industry.
- MMO and Inshore IFCA expert opinion on fishing activity: MMO marine officers and IFCA 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 were 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*, 2010² and Gibb *et al*, 2014³ and overall vulnerability of features to gear intensities on Hall *et al*, 2008⁴.

7. Summary of evidence

Fishing activity

VMS data from 2009 to 2013 shows activity throughout the site within the 6 to 12nm limits. Sightings data 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: Introduce a monitoring and control plan within the site to monitor current and potential activities

Option 3: Reduce or limit pressures on the bird features and supporting habitats

Option 4: Prohibit fishing activities within the site

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](#).

² 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.

³ 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.

⁴ Hall, K., Paramor, O.A.L., Robinson, L.A., Winrow-Giffin, A., Frid, C.L.J., Eno, N.C., Dernie, 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

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

10. Consultation and evidence

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