



Marine
Management
Organisation

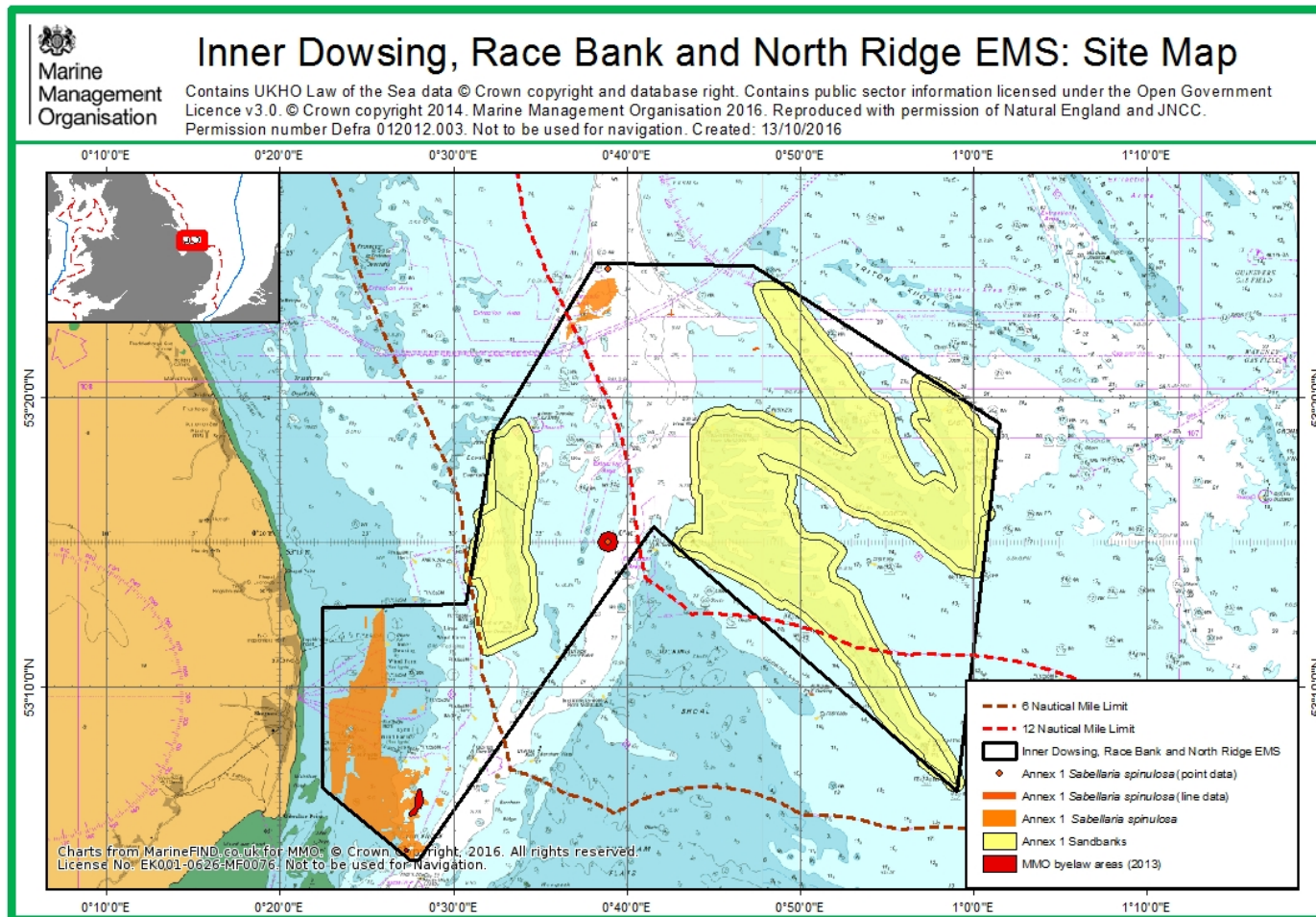
Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge European Marine Site (EMS): Executive Summary

October 2016



Sandy sediments in Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge European Marine Site (EMS)
Copyright: Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Figure 1: Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge EMS¹



¹ Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge is a Site of Community importance (SCIs). SCIs are sites that have been adopted by the European Commission but not yet formally designated as SACs by the UK Government. 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

Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge EMS is located off the south Lincolnshire coast. It is in the vicinity of Skegness, extending eastwards and north from Burnham Flats on the north Norfolk coast, occupying The Wash. The MMO assessment is concerned with the area of the site within 12 nm.

The site lies within International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) rectangles² 35F0 and 35F1.

The site has been designated for reef (*Sabellaria spinulosa*) and sandbanks (subtidal sand, subtidal mixed sediments and subtidal coarse sediments). More information about the site, including the formal conservation advice package, is available on the Natural England [website](#).

Figure 1 shows the extent of the reef and sandbank features within the Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge EMS.

3. Summary of draft assessment findings

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

- physical damage (abrasion) from potting, nets and lines, to *S. spinulosa* (Ross worm), including the pots themselves, ropes connecting 'strings' of pots and anchors used to set nets/lines; and,
- physical damage from towed gears to the sandbanks in particular to the mixed sediments which are more sensitive to disturbance than subtidal sandbanks.

Evidence indicates that the levels of fishing observed over the most recent five years for which data are available (2009 to 2013) **have not** caused an adverse effect on

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

the integrity of the site. For further details on this conclusion please see the full MPA assessment.

Our draft management plan therefore includes the provision to monitor current and potential potting and towed gear activities within the site.

Receipt of significant new information about current and potential activities or features at this site will initiate a review of the assessment.

4. Assessment process

Site assessments include three phases:

1. Initial test – Is the 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 fishing activities. To understand what the potential fishing activities are likely to be, the MMO use historical fishing activity and expert opinion.

Overview of activities being assessed

Table 1: Fishing gears being assessed for the Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge EMS

| Phase | Feature/ Activities | |
|-----------------|--|--|
| | Reef | Sandbanks |
| 1. Initial Test | All fishing gears from Part A and: Pair trawl Anchor seine Scottish/fly seine Cuttle pots Fish traps Beach seine/ring nets Shrimp push nets Fyke and stake nets Handworking (vessel/ land access) Crab tiling Digging with forks Bait dragging Heavy otter trawl Pump scoop (cockles, clams) Suction (cockles) Commercial diving | All fishing gears from Part A and: Pair trawl Anchor seine Scottish/fly seine Cuttle pots Fish traps Beach seine/ring nets Shrimp push nets Fyke and stake nets Handworking (vessel/ land access) Crab tiling Digging with forks Bait dragging Heavy otter trawl Pump scoop (cockles, clams) Suction (cockles) Commercial diving |
| 2. Part A | Pots/creels (crustacean/gastropods) Gill nets Trammels Entangling Drift nets (demersal) Longlines (demersal) | Beam trawl (whitefish) Beam trawl (shrimp) Beam trawl (pulse) Multi rig trawl Light otter trawl Scallop dredge Seed mussel dredge Pots/creels (crustacean/gastropods) Gill nets Trammel nets Entangling nets Drift nets (demersal) |

| Phase | Feature/ Activities | |
|-----------|---|---|
| 3. Part B | Pots/creels (crustacean/gastropods) Gill nets Trammels Entangling Drift nets (demersal) Longlines (demersal) | Beam trawl (whitefish) Beam trawl (shrimp) Beam trawl (pulse) Multi rig trawl Light otter trawl Scallop dredge Seed mussel dredge Pots/creels (crustacean/gastropods) Gill nets Trammel nets Entangling nets Drift nets (demersal) |

5. Fishing activity information

Fisheries access

Within the 12nm limit, only UK vessels operate as other Member States cannot legally fish within the 12nm limit. Any fisheries measures for features outside of 12nm will be implemented through the Common Fisheries Policy which is led by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

Data sources - fishing activity

To determine the levels of fishing activity in this site, the following data sources have been 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 have been included for non-VMS vessels:

1. [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.
2. [FisherMap](#): 2012 Marine Conservation Zone Project Stakmap looking at commercial fishing for under 15m vessels with data collated by interviewing industry.
3. MMO and Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) expert opinion on fishing activity: MMO marine officers and IFCA officers provided information on fishing activity within MPAs. Information included number and size of vessels fishing, target species, type and amount of fishing gear used and seasonal trends in activity. Confidence levels were provided alongside expert opinion and estimates were given where exact numbers were not known.
4. Industry engagement: MMO presented at a workshop hosted by Eastern IFCA in order to identify shrimp fishing grounds in The Wash and Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge EMS. The aim of the workshop was to identify whether the shrimp fishing industry target the sandbank features within this site.

6. Ecological information

The MMO has used a number of sources of information to understand the vulnerability⁴ of the feature to each fishing gear type. This included looking at whether features are sensitive³ to each fishing gear type.

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

Where appropriate, MMO has 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

VMS data from 2009 to 2013 shows limited fishing activity on the sandbanks and some activity on and around the reef areas within the 6nm limits. Sightings data

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.

indicates that the non VMS activity for bottom towed gears on the sandbanks and potting on the reef is low.

Sensitivity of reef and vulnerability to gears

The main pressure from static gears on reef is physical damage. Sensitivity of this reef feature ranges from low to moderate depending on the specific pressure that is being assessed. Empirical evidence indicates that *S. spinulosa* has low sensitivity at low – moderate levels of fishing and moderate sensitivity at high static gear effort⁶. Considering that the level of fishing effort is low, the MMO is content that the risk of exposing this feature to an interaction with a gear type where a significant impact could occur is not likely, and the overall vulnerability of this feature is low.

Sensitivity of sandbanks and vulnerability to gears

The main pressure from bottom towed gears on sandbank is physical damage. Subtidal sandbanks are highly mobile sediments and contain organisms that are naturally adapted to physical disturbance compared to subtidal mixed sediments that are more stable and if disturbed or continually disturbed take longer to recover.

Considering that the level of fishing effort is low, the MMO is content that the risk of exposing this feature to an interaction with a gear type where a significant impact could occur is not likely, and the overall vulnerability of this feature is low-moderate (moderate for the Subtidal mixed sediments within the site only).

Other activities occurring within the site

Other activities occurring in the site in-combination with fishing activities were also considered in the assessment. These include other infrastructure projects such as windfarms, aggregate dredging, ports, harbours and recreational activities. These include infrastructure projects such as windfarms, aggregate dredging, ports, harbours and recreational activities. .

8. Management options

Following the completion of the MPA assessment, one of the following management options will be adopted. The MMO intend to adopt Option 1. If there are gaps in evidence, precautionary decisions may need to be made.

Option 1: No additional management is required

Option 2: Introduce a monitoring and control plan within the site to monitor current and potential potting and towed gear activities

Option 3: Reduce or limit levels of potting/towed gears within the site

⁶ 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.

Option 4: Prohibit potting and towed gears on features within the site

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

9. Next steps

Any additional evidence submitted will need to be validated. This will help determine the confidence score in the evidence and determine if it can be used as part of the site assessment process.

We will then finalise the assessments and share findings with Natural England who will provide conservation advice⁷.

10. Additional Information

To respond to the consultation, please visit our [website](#).

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

For further information please contact: conservation@marinemanagement.org.uk

⁷ Habitats Directive:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/82706/habitats-simplify-guide-draft-20121211.pdf