Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Allonby Bay Marine Conservation Zone

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

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Honeycomb worm (*Sabellaria alveolata*) reefs © Paul Kay

Overview

This site becomes a Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) in January 2016. This means that specific features within this area are protected and, where necessary, regulators will manage marine activities.

Where is the site

Allonby Bay MCZ is an inshore site on the English side of the Solway Firth. It stretches around 9 km from Dubmill Point in the north to just north of Maryport in the south. The site covers about 40km^2.

Why it's 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 stretch of coast protects a diverse range of marine habitats and the species they support. In particular, there are large areas of important living reefs, formed by the honeycomb worm and blue mussel beds. The honeycomb worm reefs here are extensive. These reefs are formed from the closely-packed sand tubes constructed by honeycomb worms. The reef structures look like honeycomb and can be tens of metres wide and up to a metre tall. The local conditions of this site make it an ideal place for these worms, which need rock to build on as well as sand to construct the tubes that form the reef. The reefs, in turn, provide a habitat for a wide range of shore-dwelling species including anemones, snails, crabs and seaweeds.

The sandy beaches (intertidal sand and muddy sand) host a range of species, such as shrimp-like sandhoppers, cockles, sea snails and worms buried beneath the surface. The peat exposures which are also a feature of this site provide a habitat which piddocks, a type of burrowing clam, and other species can tunnel into.

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

Protected features	General management approach
Low energy intertidal rock	Maintain in favourable condition
Moderate energy intertidal rock	Maintain in favourable condition
High energy intertidal rock	Maintain in favourable condition
Intertidal biogenic reefs	Maintain in favourable condition
Intertidal coarse sediment	Maintain in favourable condition
Intertidal sand and muddy sand	Maintain in favourable condition
Moderate energy infralittoral rock	Maintain in favourable condition
Subtidal biogenic reefs	Maintain in favourable condition
Subtidal coarse sediment	Maintain in favourable condition
Subtidal mixed sediments	Maintain in favourable condition
Subtidal sand	Maintain in favourable condition
Peat and clay exposures	Maintain in favourable condition
Blue mussel *(Mytilus edulis)* beds	Maintain in favourable condition
Honeycomb worm *(Sabellaria alveolata)* reefs	Maintain in favourable condition

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 are existing byelaws, national laws and European Regulations which regulators use to manage fishing, coastal development, recreation and pollution. These also apply 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, from using the existing licensing framework, specific byelaws and orders or an EU Regulation for a site. 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	• 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	• Fisheries in the 6-12nm area • Fisheries: enforcement of national and EU legislation • Licensable activities such as dredging and disposal of dredged material, removal of gravel below mean high water springs, subsea cables (up to 12nm), construction (including renewables below 100MW generating capacity, ports and coastal protection) • Harbour Orders and Harbour Empowerment Orders • Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 and safety zones for offshore renewable energy installations consents • Enforcement of licensable activity and other consents (including deemed marine licences) • Development of marine plans • Activities requiring a wildlife licence
Environment Agency (EA) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency	• Fisheries for migratory and freshwater fish • Coastal protection and flood management • Water quality • Permitted discharges from terrestrial sources
Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-energy-climate-change	• Oil and gas related activities • Renewable energy related activities
Harbour Authorities and local planning authorities	• Harbour authorities have management responsibilities for the port and coastal waters within their jurisdiction • Local authorities manage activities at the coast. These include coastal recreation, tourism, economic regeneration, flood protection and planning on coasts and estuaries. For further information contact your local authority or IFCA
Department for Transport (DfT) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport	• Ports, shipping, harbours, ship pollution and offshore safety
Natural England (NE) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england	• Public access

Further information

Read about government policy on MCZs at:
https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/marine-environment
See Natural England's advice on MCZs at:
http://nepubprod.appspot.com/publication/4594304593952768

Moderate energy infralittoral rock: shallow water rock, below the tides, with some shelter from waves and currents © Lin Baldock

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/publications

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

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