

## Coquet to St. Mary's Marine Conservation Zone

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

**17 January 2016**



Survey image from Coquet to St Marys MCZ, showing circalittoral rock, a starfish (*Henricia* sp.) and a species of soft coral (*Alcyonium digitatum*) © Crown Copyright

### 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

Coquet to St Mary's MCZ is an inshore site located along the Northumberland coast in the north east of England. The site covers 192 km<sup>2</sup> of intertidal and offshore waters from near Whitley Bay in the south to near Alnwick in the north. It includes areas around St Mary's Island and Coquet Island.

### Why it's important

MCZs, together with other types of marine protected areas, will form the UK's 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 site helps protect several different types of rock and sediment on the shoreline and on the seabed. Some of the habitats in the site, such as intertidal sediment and mud, do not currently have enough protection in the region. Protecting these features in this site helps to fill gaps within the network of sites.

The seabed protected by this site is made up of rock, sand, mud and sediment. This range of habitats provides a home for a large variety of life. For example, the coarse sediment is home to animals such as bristleworms, sand mason worms, small shrimp-like animals, burrowing anemones, and cockles. Rocks in shallow water (infralittoral rocks) are a habitat for kelp and red seaweed, whilst the deep water (circalittoral) rock is a habitat for cup coral, sea-fans, and anemones, and sponges. These animals thrive in this deeper water where there is not enough sunlight for algal life to grow.

These complex habitats and communities also support mobile species such as starfish, sea urchins, crabs, and lobsters. When this site was surveyed, amongst the species recorded, is the first ever Arctic cushion star, a starfish, on the English coast.

The site also supports a range of intertidal habitats, which are above water at low tide and underwater at high tide. One of these habitats is intertidal underboulder communities. Boulders create shaded areas that provide a refuge to sea squirts, sea mats, and sponges. The undersides of the boulder provide a habitat for animals like sea slugs, long-clawed porcelain crabs and brittlestars, which shelter and feed in the damp shaded conditions. Crabs, fish and young lobsters also scavenge for food and seek shelter amongst the boulders.

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 mixed sediments	Maintain in favourable condition
Intertidal coarse sediment	Maintain in favourable condition
Intertidal sand and muddy sand	Maintain in favourable condition
Intertidal mud	Maintain in favourable condition
Intertidal underboulder communities	Maintain in favourable condition
Peat and clay exposures	Maintain in favourable condition
Moderate energy infralittoral rock	Maintain in favourable condition
High energy infralittoral rock	Maintain in favourable condition
Moderate energy circalittoral rock	Maintain in favourable condition
Subtidal coarse sediment	Maintain in favourable condition
Subtidal sand	Maintain in favourable condition
Subtidal mixed sediments	Maintain in favourable condition
Subtidal mud	Maintain in favourable condition

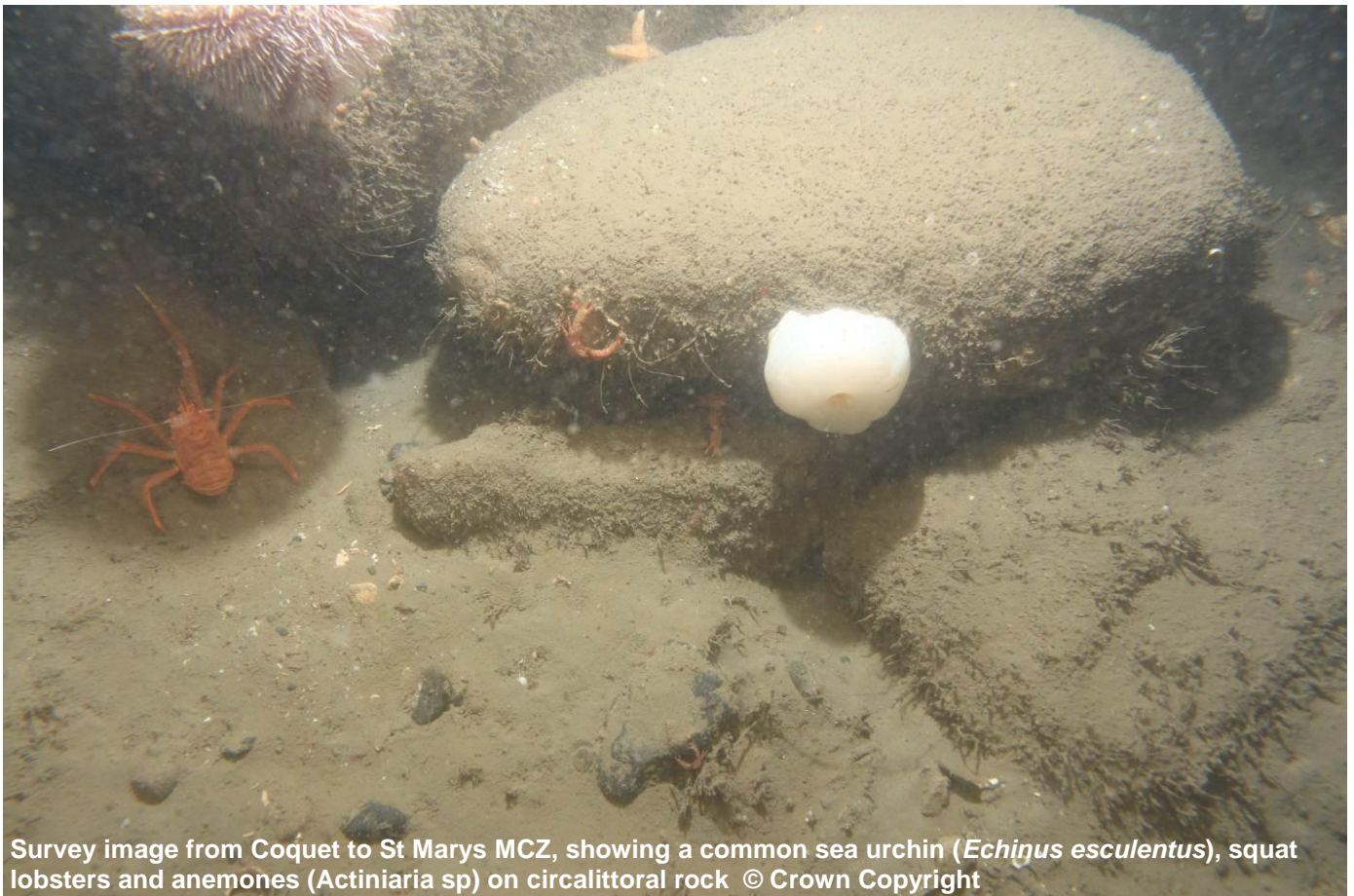
## Management of the site

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 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>.



Survey image from Coquet to St Marys MCZ, showing a common sea urchin (*Echinus esculentus*), squat lobsters and anemones (*Actiniaria* sp) on circalittoral rock © Crown Copyright



## Regulators

This table lists the authorities responsible for MCZs and the activities they manage.

Lead regulator	What it manages
<b>Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs)</b> <a href="http://www.association-ifca.org.uk">http://www.association-ifca.org.uk</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fisheries in the inshore area (0-6 nautical miles (nm)) including commercial fisheries and recreational sea angling</li> </ul>
<b>Marine Management Organisation (MMO)</b> <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/marine-management-organisation">https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/marine-management-organisation</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fisheries in the 6-12nm area</li> <li>Fisheries: enforcement of national and EU legislation</li> <li>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)</li> <li>Harbour Orders and Harbour Empowerment Orders</li> <li>Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 and safety zones for offshore renewable energy installations consents</li> <li>Enforcement of licensable activity and other consents (including deemed marine licences)</li> <li>Development of marine plans</li> <li>Activities requiring a wildlife licence</li> </ul>
<b>Environment Agency (EA)</b> <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency">https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fisheries for migratory and freshwater fish</li> <li>Coastal protection and flood management</li> <li>Water quality</li> <li>Permitted discharges from terrestrial sources</li> </ul>
<b>Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC)</b> <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-energy-climate-change">https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-energy-climate-change</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oil and gas related activities</li> <li>Renewable energy related activities</li> </ul>
<b>Harbour Authorities and local planning authorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Harbour authorities have management responsibilities for the port and coastal waters within their jurisdiction</li> <li>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</li> </ul>
<b>Department for Transport (DfT)</b> <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport">https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ports, shipping, harbours, ship pollution and offshore safety</li> </ul>
<b>Natural England (NE)</b> <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england">https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public access</li> </ul>

## 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>



Survey image from Coquet to St Mary's MCZ of subtidal mud with worm casts and a swimming crab (*Portunidae sp.*) © Crown copyright

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