

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Poole Rocks Marine Conservation Zone

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

31 May 2019



Subtidal mixed sediment habitat © Natural England / Cefas

Overview

This site became a Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) in November 2013. This means that specific features within this area are protected and, where necessary, regulators will manage marine activities. One additional feature, black seabream (*Spondyliosoma cantharus*), was added to the site in May 2019.

Where is the site?

Poole Rocks MCZ is a small inshore site covering an area of around 4 km². It lies to the east of the entrance to Poole Harbour and approximately 2–2.5 km to the east of the beachfront at Sandbanks. The site protects an area of rocky outcrops within the sediment-dominated Poole Bay.

Why is the site 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.

Subtidal mixed sediments can be diverse, ranging from muddy gravelly sands to mosaics of cobbles and pebbles embedded in or lying upon sand, gravel or mud. They support a wide range of animals including burrowing worms and bivalve molluscs (such as mussels and oysters) that live in the sediment, and star fish and sea urchins that live on the sediment surface.

The rocky outcrops are often characterised by animal-dominated communities growing on the surface. This includes worms, sponges, soft and hard corals and bryozoans as well as some mobile species in more sheltered areas.

Couch's goby is a small marine fish which occurs in the MCZ; it is very rare and secretive having only been recorded in four locations around the UK. This type of goby is thought to live for about six years and can grow up to 9 cm long. It can be found under stones or seaweed on sheltered muddy sand in shallow water, where it feeds on seaweed, bivalve molluscs and worms.

This site is ecologically important for nesting black seabream. This species breeds between April and July, creating nests and spawning in specific habitats characterised by smooth bedrock with a veneer of sediment in shallow water. The males remain at the nest site guarding the nests until the eggs hatch, and they return to the same site to nest each year. High numbers of nesting black seabream are found within the boundary of the site.

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
Moderate energy circalittoral rock	Maintain in favourable condition
Subtidal mixed sediments	

Black seabream (<i>Spondyliosoma cantharus</i>)	Recover to a favourable condition
Couch's goby (<i>Gobius couchi</i>)	
Native oyster (<i>Ostrea edulis</i>)	

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 and national laws that 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, including introducing voluntary measures, use of the existing planning and licensing framework, specific byelaws and orders. 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fisheries in the inshore area (0-6 nautical miles (nm)) including commercial fisheries and recreational sea angling.

<p>Marine Management Organisation (MMO) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/marine-management-organisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fisheries within British limits around the coast of England. • Licensable activities such as construction, alteration or improvement of works, dredging and disposal, other removals or deposits, incineration or the scuttling of vessels within England’s marine area. • Section 36 (of the Electricity Act 1989) Consents and Safety Zones for offshore renewable energy installations producing up to 100MW. • Activities requiring a marine wildlife licence.
<p>Environment Agency (EA) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fisheries for migratory and freshwater fish. • Coastal protection and flood management. • Water quality, including environmental permits for discharges from terrestrial sources.
<p>Oil and Gas Authority https://www.ogauthority.co.uk/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensing for exploration and exploitation of oil and gas reserves.
<p>Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-business-energy-and-industrial-strategy</p> <p>Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment and Decommissioning (OPRED) – Part of BEIS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oil and gas related activities • Renewable energy related activities • Environmental approvals and consents for offshore oil and gas related activities, Carbon Capture and Storage and Gas Unloading and Storage, and decommissioning activities.
<p>Harbour Authorities and Local Planning Authorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harbour authorities have management responsibilities for ports and coastal waters within their limits. • Local planning authorities manage activities at the coast. These include coastal recreation, public rights of way (including the English Coastal Path), tourism, economic regeneration, flood protection, and planning and development on coasts and estuaries, including aquaculture in the intertidal zone.
<p>Department for Transport (DfT) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy on environmental impacts associated with ports and shipping, including pollution from ships. • Policy on maritime safety including navigation safety.
<p>Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) - An Executive Agency of the Department for Transport</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vessel safety consents, including certification of seafarers and equipment.

https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/maritime-and-coastguard-agency	
Natural England (NE) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment and management of the English Coastal path. • Activities requiring consents and ascents within or adjacent to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). • Activities requiring wildlife licences for terrestrial and intertidal species.
The Planning Inspectorate https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/planning-inspectorate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities requiring Development Consent Orders under the Planning Act 2008, regarded as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects

Further information

Read about government policy on MCZs at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/marine-conservation-zone-designations-in-england>

Read the advice provided by Natural England on MCZs at:

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5703660445368320>



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