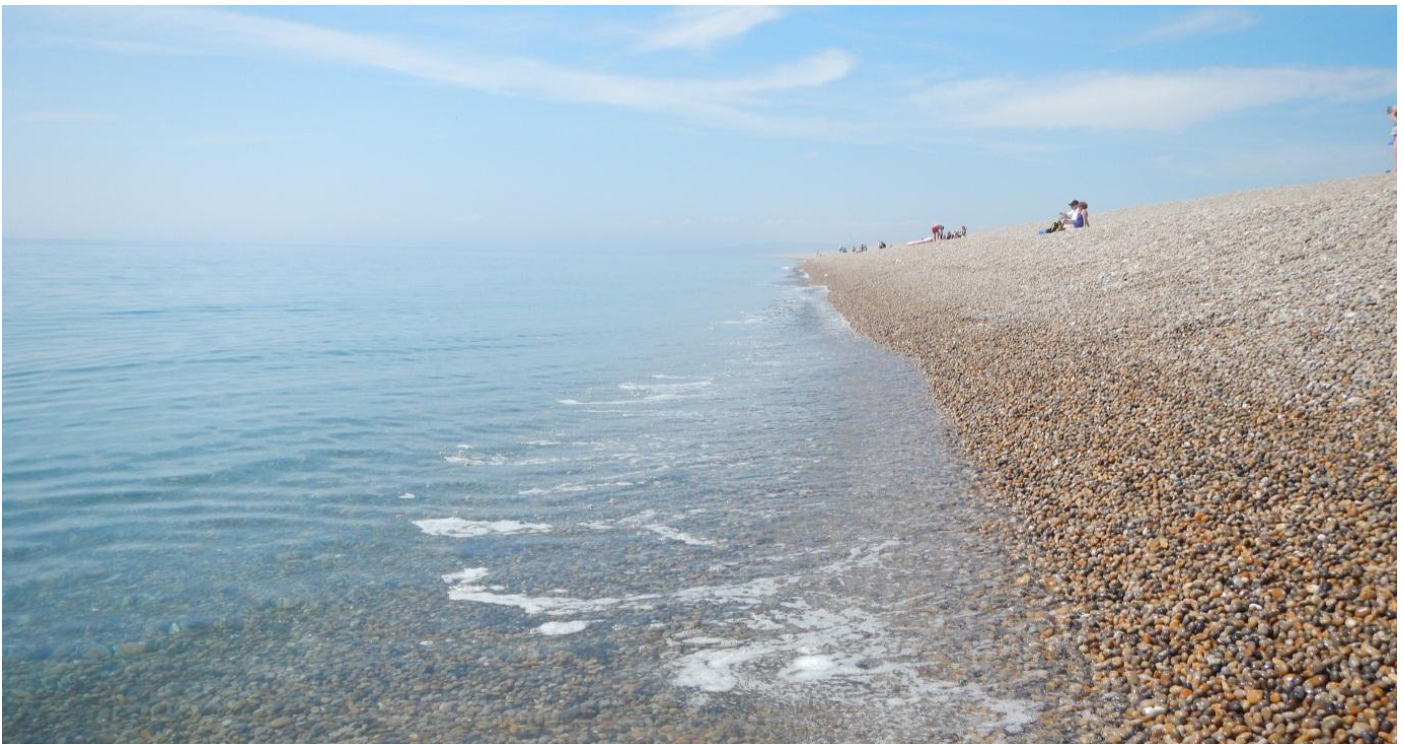


Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Chesil Beach and Stennis Ledges Marine Conservation Zone

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

31 May 2019



Intertidal coarse sediment on Chesil Beach © Natural England

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. Four additional features were added to the site in May 2019: high energy circalittoral rock, subtidal coarse sediment, subtidal mixed sediments and subtidal sand.

Where is the site?

Chesil Beach and Stennis Ledges MCZ is an inshore site located off the Dorset coast. It runs along the length of Chesil Beach from Abbotsbury to Weston on the Isle of Portland in

the south-east. The site covers an area of approximately 37 km² and extends seawards to include the reefs of the Stennis Ledges, an area of rocky ridges and rugged seabed.

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.

The Chesil Beach and Stennis Ledges MCZ provides a wide range of seabed habitats that support a great variety of species. The rocky habitats are rich in plants and animals such as sponges, sea squirts, bivalve molluscs (such as mussels and native oysters), and also support commercially important crustaceans (such as lobsters and crabs).

Sediments including gravels, pebbles and coarse sands are found within the intertidal area of the site. This habitat supports tiny shrimp-like creatures that are able to live within this unstable sediment and tolerate exposure to the air, and these provide an important feeding source for wading birds.

The softer sediments within the site provide habitats for a wide variety of animals that live on the sediment, for example flat fish, starfish and sea urchins, and also those that live within the sediment, such as bristleworms, burrowing anemones and venus clams. Sediment habitats provide nursery grounds for many ecologically and commercially important fish species.

Pink sea-fan is a type of soft coral found within the site. It is made up of colonies of tiny anemone-like creatures that attach to rocky sea bed habitats and never move during their adult lives. It is an extremely slow-growing species and is therefore very sensitive to damage.

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

Protected feature	General management approach
High energy infralittoral rock	Maintain in favourable condition
High energy intertidal rock	
Intertidal coarse sediment	
Subtidal coarse sediment	
Subtidal mixed sediments	
Subtidal sand	

High energy circalittoral rock	Recover to favourable condition
Native oyster (<i>Ostrea edulis</i>)	
Pink sea-fan (<i>Eunicella verrucosa</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 is an existing legal framework that regulators use to manage fishing, coastal development, recreation and pollution. This also applies 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 https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/mca</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vessel safety consents, including certification of seafarers and equipment.

nisations/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

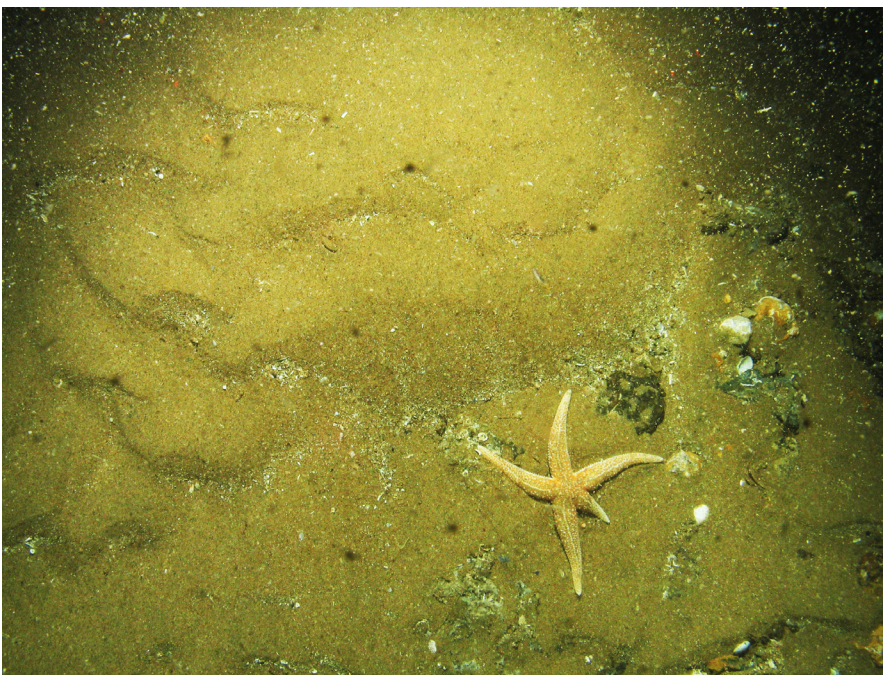
Further information

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>



Subtidal sand and starfish *Asterias rubens* © Natural England

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