

Thanet Coast Marine Conservation Zone

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

31 May 2019



Blue mussel beds © 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. An additional feature, stalked jellyfish (*Haliclystus sp.*), was added to the site in May 2019.

Where is the site?

Thanet Coast MCZ is an inshore site that covers an area of 64 km² and is located on the Kent coast.

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.

Thanet Coast MCZ contains the best examples of a variety of features found within the south-east region, including an area of subtidal chalk that extends seawards from the chalk reefs, cliffs and coves. The chalk seabed within the area is the longest continuous stretch of coastal chalk in the UK.

The site also includes an unusual composition of blue mussel beds and Ross worm reefs that have formed a complex intertidal reef. Living reefs such as this play an important role within the ecosystem as they stabilise mobile sediment. The small habitat niches they provide can support a range of species which live on or within the sediment pockets. Reefs also play an important role in protecting our coastlines, by reducing the energy of incoming waves and improving water quality through water filtration processes.

The MCZ protects two species of stalked jellyfish. The stalked jellyfish *Calvadosia cruxmelitensis* found within the site is small, reaching less than 1 cm in height. Unlike other species of stalked jellyfish it is rarely attached to seagrasses but instead is typically found on small red seaweeds on rocky shores. The stalked jellyfish *Haliclystus sp.* found within the site are typically found attached to seagrasses.

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 features	General management approach
Blue mussel (<i>Mytilus edulis</i>)	Maintain in favourable condition
Moderate energy circalittoral rock	
Moderate energy infralittoral rock	
Peat and clay exposures	
Stalked jellyfish (<i>Haliclystus sp.</i>)	
Stalked jellyfish (<i>Calvadosia cruxmelitensis</i>)	
Subtidal chalk	
Subtidal coarse sediment	
Subtidal mixed sediments	
Subtidal sand	
Ross worm (<i>Saballeria spinulosa</i>) reefs	Recover to 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 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.
Marine Management Organisation (MMO) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/marine-management-organisation	<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/maritime-and-coastguard-agency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vessel safety consents, including certification of seafarers and equipment.
<p>Natural England (NE) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england</p>	<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.
<p>The Planning Inspectorate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities requiring Development Consent Orders

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/planning-inspectorate>

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>



Ross worm reef © Natural England

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