

## Yarmouth to Cowes Marine Conservation Zone

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

**31 May 2019**



High Energy Circalittoral Rock with a cover of mixed encrusting animals © Chris Pirie

### Overview

This site became a Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) in May 2019. This means that specific features within this area are protected and, where necessary, regulators will manage marine activities.

### Where is the site?

Yarmouth to Cowes MCZ is an inshore site that covers an area of approximately 16 km<sup>2</sup>. The site runs along the north-west coast of the Isle of Wight. The site stretches along the coast from Yarmouth Pier in the west to the village of Gurnard in the east.

## 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.

Yarmouth to Cowes MCZ contains a wide variety of habitats which support a number of ecologically important species and features. This includes one of the best examples of the habitat 'peat and clay exposures' in the region. The Bouldnor Cliff geological feature, rising eight metres above the surrounding seabed, was submerged 8,000 years ago and is not only inhabited by a variety of important species but is also an important archaeological site.

On the areas of outcropping clay in Thorness Bay the distinct boring holes of piddocks, a species of shellfish with a serrated shell, can be seen along with a thriving community of plants and animals living under the boulders and on the rocky surfaces in the intertidal areas.

The once commercially important native oyster is also found throughout the site. This important species is supported by the various habitats found within the site, including many of the rock reef-like structures which run through from the intertidal zone into the deeper waters off the coast.

As well as rocky seabeds, the site also contains a multitude of soft sedimentary habitats. These habitats are favoured by animals who use the sediments to forage, scavenge, catch prey and hide. Large swathes of the deeper areas of the site contain sediments made up of a mixture of muds, sands and gravels that support a wide variety of species including worms, bivalve molluscs (such as mussels and oysters), starfish, urchins and anemones.

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
Bouldnor Cliff geological feature	Maintain in favourable condition
Estuarine rocky habitats	
Intertidal coarse sediment	
Intertidal under boulder communities	
Littoral chalk communities	
Low energy intertidal rock	
Moderate energy intertidal rock	
Subtidal coarse sediment	
High energy circalittoral rock	Recover to favourable condition
High energy infralittoral rock	
Moderate energy circalittoral rock	
Moderate energy infralittoral rock	

Native oyster ( <i>Ostrea edulis</i> )	Recover to favourable condition
Peat and clay exposures	
Sheltered muddy gravels	
Subtidal chalk	
Subtidal mixed sediments	
Subtidal mud	

## 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
<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 within British limits around the coast of England.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>Section 36 (of the Electricity Act 1989) Consents and Safety Zones for offshore renewable energy installations producing up to 100MW.</li> <li>Activities requiring a marine 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, including environmental permits for discharges from terrestrial sources.</li> </ul>
<b>Oil and Gas Authority</b> <a href="https://www.ogauthority.co.uk/">https://www.ogauthority.co.uk/</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Licensing for exploration and exploitation of oil and gas reserves.</li> </ul>
<b>Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)</b> <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-business-energy-and-industrial-strategy">https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-business-energy-and-industrial-strategy</a> <b>Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment and Decommissioning (OPRED) – Part of BEIS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oil and gas related activities</li> <li>Renewable energy related activities</li> <li>Environmental approvals and consents for offshore oil and gas related activities, Carbon Capture and Storage and Gas Unloading and Storage, and decommissioning activities.</li> </ul>
<b>Harbour Authorities and Local Planning Authorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Harbour authorities have management responsibilities for ports and coastal waters within their limits.</li> <li>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</li> </ul>

	zone.
<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>• Policy on environmental impacts associated with ports and shipping, including pollution from ships.</li> <li>• Policy on maritime safety including navigation safety.</li> </ul>
<b>Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) - An Executive Agency of the Department for Transport</b> <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/maritime-and-coastguard-agency">https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/maritime-and-coastguard-agency</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vessel safety consents, including certification of seafarers and equipment.</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>• Establishment and management of the English Coastal path.</li> <li>• Activities requiring consents and ascents within or adjacent to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).</li> <li>• Activities requiring wildlife licences for terrestrial and intertidal species.</li> </ul>
<b>The Planning Inspectorate</b> <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/planning-inspectorate">https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/planning-inspectorate</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities requiring Development Consent Orders under the Planning Act 2008, regarded as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects</li> </ul>

## 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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