

Cumbria Coast Marine Conservation Zone

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

31 May 2019



Intertidal sand and muddy sand © Natural England

Overview

This site became a Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) in November 2013. An additional feature, razorbill (*Alca torda*), was added in May 2019, along with a small extension to the site boundary. The original site and extended boundary apply only to razorbill. For all other features, designated in 2013, the original site boundary continues to apply.

Following designation, specific features within this area are protected and, where necessary, regulators will manage marine activities.

Where is the site?

Cumbria Coast MCZ is an inshore site that stretches for approximately 27 km along the coast of Cumbria. It extends from south of Whitehaven, around the cliffs at St Bees Head, to the mouth of the Ravenglass Estuary. The total area of the site is now approximately 22km², an increase of about 4km².

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.

St Bees Head supports the best, most extensive and important examples of intertidal rocky shore habitats and communities on the predominantly sedimentary coast of North-West England. The extensive intertidal boulder and cobble reefs, or 'scars', within the site support good examples of nationally important honeycomb worm reefs. Where these scars extend to and below the low water mark, particularly at Barn Scar and Kokoarrah Rocks, they support rich marine wildlife including some of the best examples of under-boulder communities on the coast of North-west England, where large boulders provide shaded, cave-like conditions for unusual algae to thrive, and mobile animals such as long-clawed porcelain crabs, sea slugs and brittlestars shelter among sponges. Crabs, fish and young lobsters also scavenge for food and seek shelter amongst the boulders.

The surrounding area is particularly important for seabirds with an estimated 10,000 breeding seabirds thought to be present. The MCZ partially overlaps with a Site of Special Scientific Interest which protects seabird nesting areas. Razorbills have shown unexpected declines in recent years and protection within the MCZ will help support this vulnerable population.

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 |
|--|----------------------------------|
| High energy intertidal rock | Maintain in favourable condition |
| Honeycomb worm (<i>Sabellaria alveolata</i>) reefs | |
| Intertidal biogenic reefs | |
| Intertidal sand and muddy sand | |
| Intertidal underboulder communities | |
| Moderate energy infralittoral rock | |
| Peat and clay exposures | |
| Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>) | 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 making processes. 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. |
| Environment Agency (EA) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency | <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. |
| Oil and Gas Authority https://www.ogauthority.co.uk/ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensing for exploration and exploitation of oil and gas reserves. |
| Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-business-energy-and-industrial-strategy Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment and Decommissioning (OPRED) – Part of BEIS | <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. |
| Harbour Authorities and Local Planning Authorities | <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. |
| Department for Transport (DfT) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport | <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. |
| Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) - An Executive Agency of the Department for Transport https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/maritime-and-coastguard-agency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vessel safety consents, including certification of seafarers and equipment. |
| 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 | <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>



St Bees Head is a breeding area for Razorbill and, in the foreground, intertidal rock in Cumbria Coast MCZ
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