

Morte Platform Marine Conservation Zone

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

31 May 2019



Moderate Energy Circalittoral Rock within the upper circalittoral zone © Crown Copyright

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?

The Morte Platform MCZ is an inshore site that covers an area of around 25 km². It is located in the Western Channel and Celtic Sea region and lies approximately 5 km off the coast of north Devon.

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.

Morte Platform contains a mix of habitats that is rarely represented elsewhere in the UK, primarily due to the high tidal flows, high sediment content within the water column, and the mosaic of sediment and rock ridges within the site.

Subtidal sediment provides important nursery grounds for many ecologically and commercially important fish such as flatfish (e.g. sole and plaice), seabass and sand eel (an important prey species for seabirds such as puffin and guillemots) as well as supporting nationally rare Ross worm reefs. Circalittoral rock habitats support a range of marine life, including worms, sponges, soft and hard corals, bryozoans, small, filter feeding animals and mobile species in more sheltered areas.

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
High energy circalittoral rock	Recover to a favourable condition
Moderate energy circalittoral rock	
Subtidal coarse sediment	

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.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oil and gas related activities Renewable energy related activities
Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment and Decommissioning (OPRED) – Part of BEIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/planning-inspectorate</p>	<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>



Moderate Energy Circalittoral Rock © Crown Copyright



© Crown copyright 2019

You may re-use this information (excluding logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence v.3. To view this licence visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/>.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/publications

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to defra.helpline@defra.gov.uk