Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Ribble Estuary Marine Conservation Zone

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

31 May 2019



Smelt © Jack Perks

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 Ribble Estuary MCZ is an inshore site that covers an area of approximately 15 km². It is located on the north-west coast of England, near Preston.

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.

Smelt were once widespread in estuaries in the UK but have declined considerably over the past 200 years. They are known to congregate in large shoals in lower estuaries and migrate into freshwater where they spawn in spring. Estuaries such as the Ribble therefore provide critical habitats required to complete smelt lifecycles, including for feeding and post-larval development. Smelt are viewed as an indicator of ecosystem health, being very sensitive to a broad range of environmental degradations, including overfishing, loss of spawning habitat, blockage to migration and water quality impacts.

You can find detailed information about smelt at http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-4527.

Protected feature	General management approach
Smelt (Osmerus eperlanus)	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	Fisheries in the inshore area (0-6 nautical miles
Conservation Authorities (IFCAs)	(nm)) including commercial fisheries and
http://www.association-ifca.org.uk	recreational sea angling.
Marine Management Organisation	Fisheries within British limits around the coast of
(MMO)	England.
https://www.gov.uk/government/orga	Licensable activities such as construction,
nisations/marine-management-	alteration or improvement of works, dredging and
<u>organisation</u>	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)	Fisheries for migratory and freshwater fish.
https://www.gov.uk/government/orga	Coastal protection and flood management.
nisations/environment-agency	Water quality, including environmental permits for
	discharges from terrestrial sources.
Oil and Gas Authority	Licensing for exploration and exploitation of oil
https://www.ogauthority.co.uk/	and gas reserves.
Department for Business, Energy	Oil and gas related activities
and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)	Renewable energy related activities
https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-business-	
energy-and-industrial-strategy	
Offshore Petroleum Regulator for	Environmental approvals and consents for
Environment and	offshore oil and gas related activities, Carbon
Decommissioning (OPRED) – Part	Capture and Storage and Gas Unloading and
of BEIS	Storage, and decommissioning activities.
Harbour Authorities and Local	Harbour authorities have management
Planning Authorities	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/orga nisations/department-for-transport	 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	Vessel safety consents, including certification of seafarers and equipment.
Natural England (NE) https://www.gov.uk/government/orga nisations/natural-england	 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	Activities requiring Development Consent Orders under the Planning Act 2008, regarded as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects

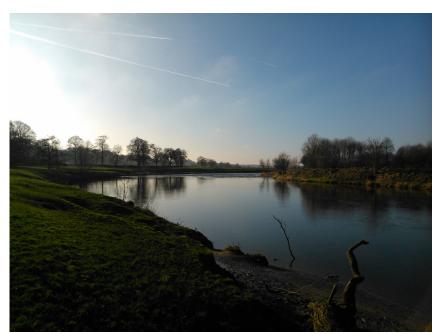
Further information

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



The Ribble Estuary © Emily Hardman / Natural England



© 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