



## Aim

The project provides data on non-licensable activities to underpin MPA site level assessments for 32 priority sites to ensure that the MMO can accurately assess impacts to Marine Protected Areas (MPA) and further their conservation objectives.

Figure 1 - An overview of the 32 priority MPAs



Figure 2: Aerial imagery of mooring buoys



## Introduction and methodology

Under the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009) the MMO is obligated to further the conservation objectives of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in England. Where non-licensable activities occur within MPAs the MMO can manage activity through its byelaw-making powers and through marine planning policy. This report provides insights into the spatial distribution of a subset of marine non-licensable activities within specific MPAs across England. Marine non-licensable activities are those which do not require a marine licence and include a range of recreational activities from mooring and anchoring to boating and SCUBA diving.

There are currently 175 MPAs in UK non-devolved (MMO) waters; the MMO has identified 32 MPAs as having designated features potentially at risk from pressures caused by recreational activities (see Figure 1).

The MMO identified seven types of recreational activity as priority activities to focus on. These activity types are based on the categories used by Natural England in their provision of conservation advice for inshore MPAs. Recreational anchoring and mooring are the highest priority for attention; the remainder have also been identified, but at a lower priority:

- Powerboating or sailing with an engine: mooring and/or anchoring;
- Sailing without an engine: mooring and/or anchoring;
- Powerboating or sailing with an engine: launching and recovery, participation;



- Sailing without an engine: launching and recovery, participation;
- Non-motorised watercraft (e.g. kayaks, windsurfing, dinghies, paddleboards);
- Motorised personal watercraft (PWC) (e.g. jet skis); and
- Recreational SCUBA diving.

Existing spatial data (published since 2015) was identified and collated for each marine non-licensable activity of interest, then validated and supported through the collection of stakeholder information.

### Results

Final outputs are summarised in the accompanying report, and 7 marine non-licensable activity map data layers were produced which are available for public use through the Defra Data Service platform (<https://environment.data.gov.uk/>).

### Conclusions and recommendations

The initial part of this project was data collection and analysis which produced useful information however the COVID-19 restrictions of 2020 caused an impact on the subsequent stakeholder validation exercise. Restrictions on having face to face meetings with stakeholders meant an online data viewer was used which proved to be a successful and efficient way to share existing data and edit new spatial data. The existing data covered all MPAs of interest and were generally found to accord well with stakeholder knowledge. Responses provided by stakeholders covered all non-licensable activities of interest within 19 out of the 32 MPAs considered in this study. Data generated by this methodology can also be a useful tool for highlighting gaps in organisational and regional input of information regarding marine non-licensable activities within MPAs.

To fully understand the extent and intensity of activities, focussed local stakeholder workshops and/or field surveys would be required. Ground-truthing of data where an MPA is considered to be impacted by a non-licensable recreational activity may also be required. However, it is recognised that such data collection is time consuming and expensive.

### MMO comments

This project created new data layers and an accompanying report which will be a key part of MMO's evidence base for considering how the MMO should manage MPAs for the impacts of non-licensable activities moving forward.

### Further information

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