

The Canyons Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) MMO byelaw: Information sheet

Summary

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) has made a byelaw to protect fragile habitats and the species that rely on them in The Canyons MCZ. The byelaw will prohibit bottom towed fishing and the use of anchored nets and lines over sensitive habitats within the MCZ.

The Canyons MCZ is one of 40 sites in English offshore waters that contribute to the UK Blue Belt of protected areas. It is located over 300 km from Land's End at the far south-western tip of UK waters, where the continental shelf gives way to much deeper seabed, and covers 661 km².

Why these management measures matter

The Canyons MCZ is home to the only known example of cold-water coral reefs and coral gardens in English waters, as well as biologically diverse communities of sea-pens and burrowing species such as anemones and squat lobsters. Cold-water corals can live for thousands of years and are extremely slow growing, at a rate of about 6 mm a year. This slow growth, combined with their brittle skeletons, means the coral reefs are particularly sensitive to damage from certain types of fishing. The coral reefs add three-dimensional complexity to deep water environments, providing other species with shelter from predators, as well as feeding, spawning and nursery grounds that may enhance the survival of commercially important fish such as mackerel.



old-water corals (left © NOC) squat lobster (centre © 863565760 iStock) sea-pens and burrowing megafauna (right © 2007 Defra, JNCC, Marine Institute, BGS and UoP)

Effects of these management measures

The measures will protect these unique and fragile habitats and provide a safe haven for juvenile fish to grow, which may contribute to commercial fish stocks in neighbouring areas.

Based on recent years, annual fisheries landings which would be impacted by these measures are £1,054,754 of which £25,440 are from UK vessels. Taking into account operating costs, we have estimated that these measures will have a financial impact to UK fishers who fish in the area using bottom towed gears of up to £3,557 per year. MMO is taking a proportionate management approach to protect and enhance our marine ecosystems and secure a more sustainable future for coastal communities, the fishing industry and future generations.

For more information about The Canyons MCZ and its designated habitats and species please see the map overleaf, [The Canyons MCZ factsheet](#) and the [JNCC Site Information Centre](#).



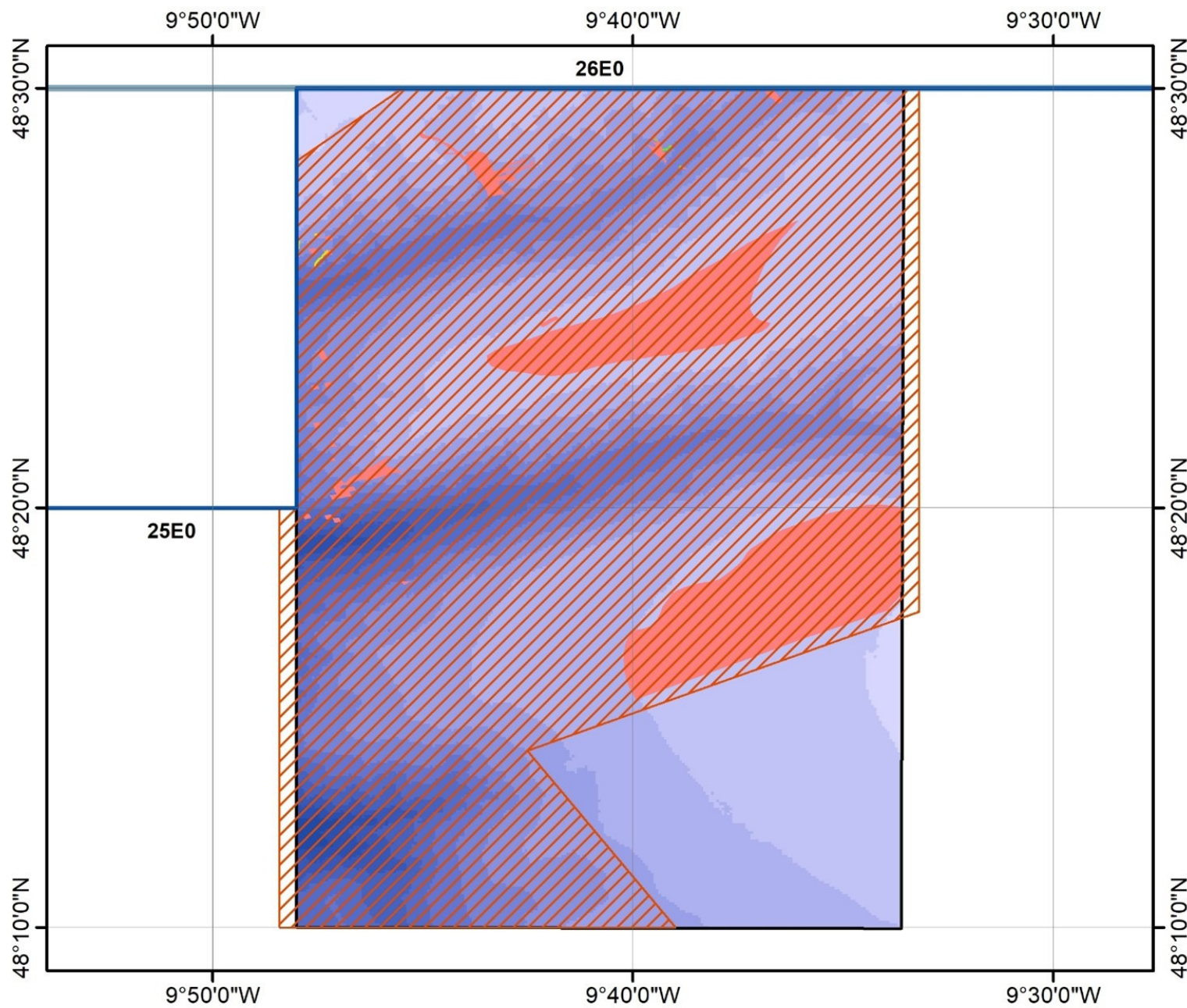


The Canyons

Marine Conservation Zone

Marine Management Organisation

(Specified Area) Prohibited Fishing Gears Byelaw 2022



UK EEZ	Depth (metres)
ICES Statistical Rectangles	< 200
The Canyons MCZ	200 - 400
Specified Area	400 - 600
Designated Features	600 - 800
Sea-pen and burrowing megafauna communities with 10 metre margin	800 - 1000
Coral gardens with 4 metre margin (east section) and 10 metre margin (west section)	1000 - 1200
Area to be managed as coral reef	1200 - 1400
	1400 - 1600
	1600 - 1800
	1800 - 2000
	2000 - 2200
	2200 - 2400

Date: 17/03/2022
 Coordinate System: GCS WGS 1984
 Datum: WGS 1984
 Units: Degree



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