

Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge Special Area of Conservation (SAC) MMO byelaw: Information sheet

Summary

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) has made a byelaw to protect the designated habitats and species of Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge SAC. The byelaw will prohibit bottom towed fishing and the use of pots and anchored nets and lines over sensitive habitats within the SAC. The SAC is one of 40 sites in English offshore waters that contribute to the UK Blue Belt of protected areas. It is located in the approaches to The Wash, off the north Norfolk coast and it covers an area of 845 km².

Why these management measures matter

The SAC is home to extensive reefs built by the Ross worm *Sabellaria spinulosa*. These reefs provide habitat for fish and invertebrates, increasing the biodiversity around them in a similar way to tropical coral reefs. As living structures, Ross worm reefs are susceptible to damage from fishing gear which comes into contact with the seabed. The site also contains large sandbanks which create a range of habitats including shallow areas away from shore which attract food for a variety of animals.

The site provides a source of food and shelter for many animals including fish, crabs, and mussels, as well commercially important species such as the European lobster, and pink shrimp. The site also acts as a breeding ground for commercially important fish species such as sand eels and Atlantic herring.



Ross worm and the structures they create (left) which are home to many more species including European lobster (*Homarus gammarus*) which is a commercially important species for UK fisheries (right) © 825580416, 1018979716 iStock

Effects of these management measures

The measures will protect these important and varied 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 £35,650 of which £35,610 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 £12,329 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 Inner Dowsing SAC and its designated habitats please see [Natural England's Conservation Advice](#) and the [JNCC Site Information Centre](#).





Marine
Management
Organisation

Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge Special Area of Conservation (Specified Areas) Prohibited Fishing Gears Byelaw 2022

- 6 Nautical Mile Limit (1983) (UKHO)
- 12 Nautical Mile Limit (1983) (UKHO)
- Specified area of sandbank
- Specified area of reef

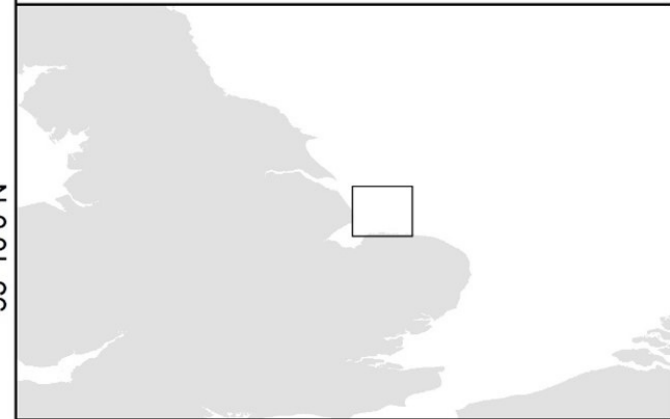
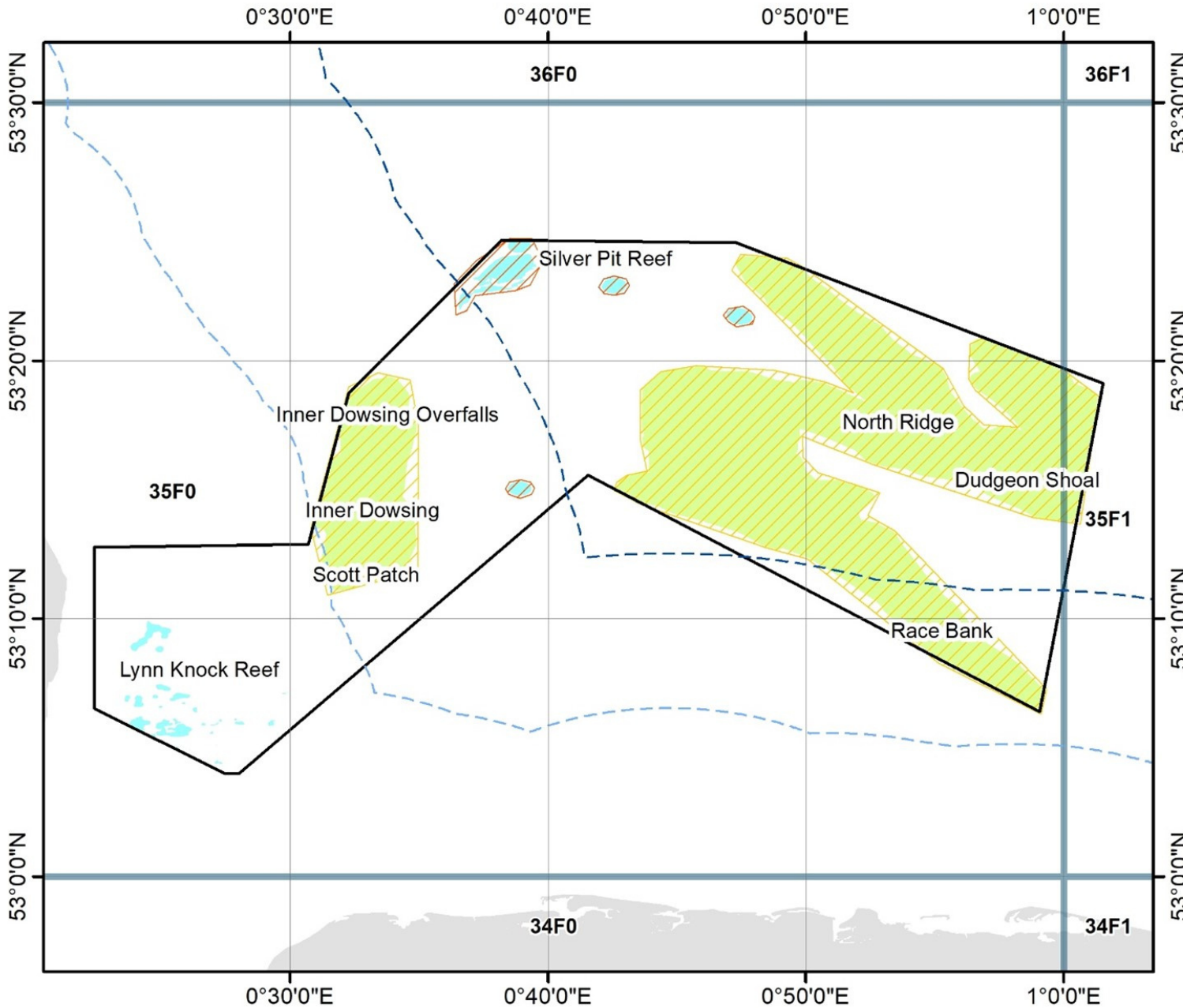
ICES Statistical Rectangles

Inner Dowsing Race Bank and North Ridge SAC

Area to be managed as Annex I Reef

Annex I Sandbank

Date: 14/03/2022
Coordinate System: GCS WGS 1984
Datum: WGS 1984
Units: Degree



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