



Marine
Management
Organisation

Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impacts Evidence: Methodology

September 2026



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Contents

Executive summary	2
1 Introduction	3
1.1 Impacts and evidence.....	4
2 Scope of mNLA	6
2.1 Activities	6
2.2 MPA features.....	7
2.3 Low risk mNLA activity-pressures.....	7
2.4 Roles and responsibilities	9
2.4.1 Public authorities	9
2.4.2 Marine and Coastal Access Act (MCAA)	9
2.4.3 Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017	10
3 Methodology	14
3.1 Step 1: Site prioritisation	15
3.2 Step 2: Screening assessment	15
3.3 Step 3: Call for evidence: Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impacts Evidence documents	17
3.4 Step 4: Engagement and site level assessments	18
3.5 Step 5: Develop management measures	19
3.6 Step 6: Communicating management	20
3.7 Step 7: Implementing management measures	21
3.8 Step 8: Monitoring and review.....	21
4 Call for evidence: How to respond	23
5 Next steps	24
References	25
Annex 1: Activities in scope and out of scope of this mNLA project	27
Annex 2: MPA features in scope and out of scope of this mNLA project	35
Annex 3: Glossary of terms used in mNLA	38

Executive summary

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is responsible for assessing and managing the impacts of marine non-licensable activities (mNLA) on marine protected areas (MPAs) in English waters inshore of 12 nautical miles (nm). This work supports the government's commitment to ensure MPAs are effectively managed and that protected habitats and species are maintained in, or recovering towards, favourable condition.

This document explains the methodology MMO uses to assess the impacts of mNLA on designated MPA features and to determine whether management measures may be required. It provides a transparent framework for decision-making and accompanies the mNLA Impacts Evidence documents currently subject to a call for evidence.

The methodology follows a stepwise, evidence-led approach that includes:

- prioritisation of MPAs at potential risk from mNLA;
- screening assessments;
- review of the best available evidence on activity-pressure-feature interactions;
- stakeholder engagement and site level assessments;
- development and implementation of management measures where required; and
- ongoing monitoring and review.

The approach draws on Natural England conservation advice, published scientific evidence, MMO evidence projects, site level information and stakeholder input. Management decisions will be based on both the available evidence and local site conditions and will be developed proportionately to the identified level of risk.

MMO is seeking feedback on both the evidence base and the methodology through the call for evidence. Responses will help strengthen the assessments, address evidence gaps, and ensure that future management decisions are informed by the best available information.

Given the novel and complex nature of managing mNLA across England's MPAs, the methodology will be applied using an iterative and adaptive approach, incorporating new evidence, lessons learned and stakeholder feedback as the project progresses.

1 Introduction

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is the principal regulator for England's seas, including leading the assessment and management of marine Non-Licensable Activities (mNLA) for marine protected areas (MPAs) inshore of 12 nautical miles (nm). This document forms part of MMO's work to achieve the government's aim of identifying and implementing appropriate management measures for all inshore MPAs in English waters by the end of 2030. As part of the updated Environmental Improvement Plan 2025 (DEFRA, 2025), the government has committed to ensuring that 48% of MPA features are in favourable condition by 2028, in line with the recovery trajectory to ensure that 70% of features are in favourable condition by 2042, with the remaining 30% in a recovering condition status.

Under the [Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009](#)¹ (MCAA) and the [Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017](#)² (Habitats Regulations), MMO has a duty to further the conservation objectives of MPA features to ensure they are in, or recovering towards, favourable condition in English waters. MMO is responsible, alongside other governmental bodies, for managing mNLA which take place in MPAs within its jurisdiction between 0 and 12nm from the shoreline in English waters. mNLAs are marine activities that do not require a consent or licence before they can be undertaken. They include, but are not limited to:

- anchoring;
- diving and snorkelling;
- hovercraft;
- motorboats;
- motorised personal watercrafts (such as "Jet skis");
- paddle sports (such as kayaking, canoeing, paddleboarding);
- sail boats;
- wildlife watching at sea; and
- wind sports (such as windsurfing, kitesurfing, wingsurfing and kite foiling).

Recreational sea fishing is not included in this list as responsibility for managing its impacts on MPAs within 6nm of the shoreline lies with the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) (refer to **section 2.1** for all out of scope activities).

To support the achievement of MPA conservation objectives, MMO is assessing the impacts and risks from mNLA on designated habitats and species within English MPAs and can introduce management measures if needed. Management measures

¹ For more information: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/23/contents

² For more information: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2017/1012/

can include anything from voluntary guidance to more formal restrictions such as byelaws.

This document introduces MMO's work to manage mNLA for the protection of MPAs, including the methodology of our approach to assessing and managing mNLA.

1.1 Impacts and evidence

This methodology sits alongside our [Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impacts Evidence](#)³ documents. To inform our assessment and management of mNLA impacts in MPAs, we have gathered and analysed the best available evidence on mNLA impacts. This information has been collated into the following draft documents:

- Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impacts Evidence: Benthic sediments and associated species;
- Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impacts Evidence: Birds;
- Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impacts Evidence: Grey seals, harbour seals and Eurasian otters;
- Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impacts Evidence: Reef; and
- Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impacts Evidence: Seagrass beds, maerl beds, seahorses and stalked jellyfish.

The Impacts Evidence reviews have collated designated features into functional groups; these groups encompass the designated features for all MPAs within the mNLA project. Collating this information and evidence into stand-alone documents increases the accessibility of mNLA site level assessments and enables the project to have a clear literature base.

Each feature of an MPA will have different sensitivities to varied mNLA impacts from the related activity-pressure pathway, such as abrasion pressure on the seabed from anchoring activity or visual disturbance pressure from recreational vessel movement or noise as the vessel passes near the MPA feature; for example, visual disturbance to marine species such as birds and seals. MPA features were grouped together above if the activity-pressure pathways were the same for each feature or the activity-pressure impacts on one feature (for example, seagrass beds) has an indirect impact on another feature (for example, seahorses), by damage or loss of their supporting seagrass habitat. The greater the sensitivity of a feature to the activity-pressure impacts the greater the risk these impacts will have on the feature conservation objectives for achieving an overall favourable condition status of an MPA.

³ Marine Non-Licensable Activity Impacts Evidence documents are available: www.gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/marine-non-licensable-activities (last accessed 30 September 2026)

We are seeking views and additional evidence through a call for evidence on the Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impacts Evidence documents.

Alongside these documents sits the mNLA Impacts Evidence supporting documents:

- Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impacts Evidence: Methodology. This document describes the stepwise, evidence-led approach used to approach this mNLA project.
- Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impacts Evidence: Summary. This document summarises the key findings of the Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impact Evidence feature documents.

Figure 1 provides a diagram illustrating the document pack produced as part of the call for evidence.

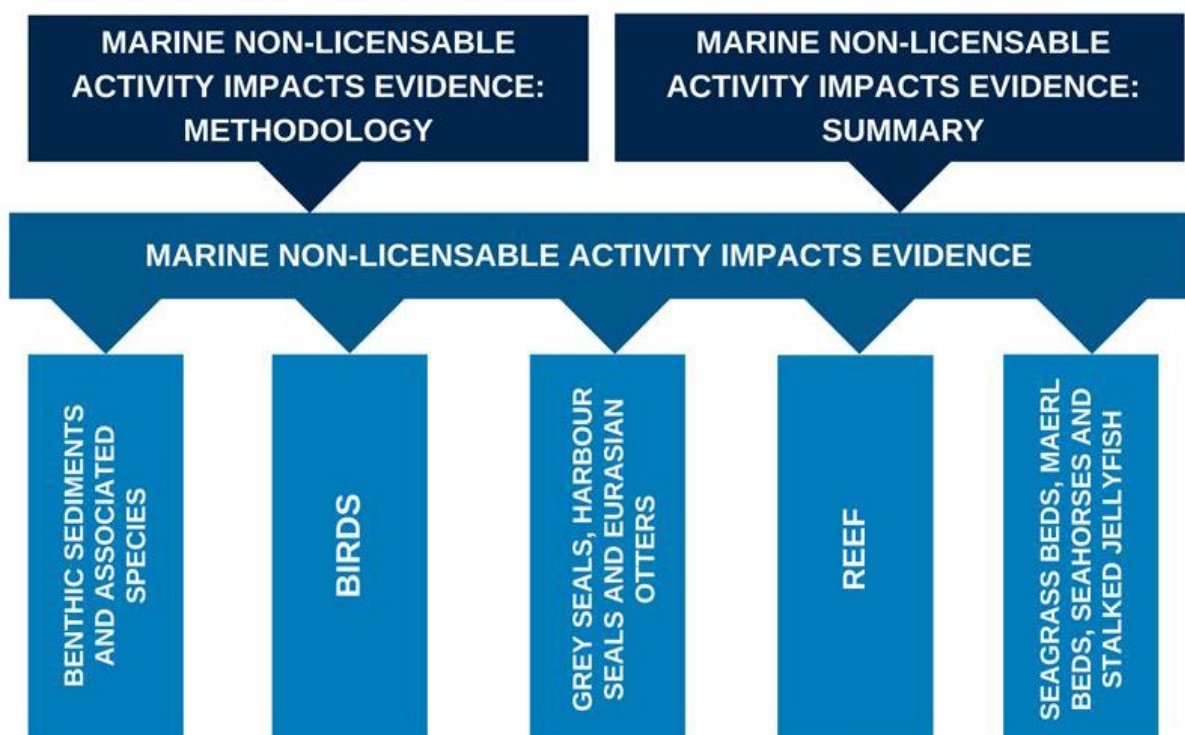


Figure 1: Diagram showing the documents drafted and available to review as part of the mNLA call for evidence.

2 Scope of mNLA

2.1 Activities

mNLA are activities that do not require a consent or licence before they can be undertaken and include most marine recreational activities and anchoring. Therefore mNLA excludes all marine licensable activities (Marine Management Organisation, 2025).

Installation and maintenance of moorings are considered marine licensable activities or are exempt from a marine licence where they occur in a Harbour Authority jurisdiction. Therefore, moorings are out of scope for this project. The impacts of moorings should be assessed under marine licence or by the Harbour Authority.

mNLA excludes all types of fishing. Commercial and recreational fishing inshore of 6nm is the responsibility of IFCA. MMO has responsibilities for managing fisheries in offshore MPAs (Marine Management Organisation, no date) separate from this project.

While trampling impacts are being retained within the mNLA Impacts Evidence documents, they are not currently within the scope of MMO management measures. Trampling can be a significant pressure on coastal and intertidal habitats and therefore remains relevant to understanding the full range of recreational impacts associated with non-licensed activities. Including trampling in the impacts evidence review helps provide a comprehensive assessment of pressures on MPA features and ensures that cumulative interactions between different pressure impact pathways are recognised. However, management of trampling is generally delivered through access management, site infrastructure, visitor management, landowner actions, or Local Authorities (LA) powers, as opposed to MMO statutory management measures, such as a byelaw. As a result, while the evidence on trampling informs our understanding of cumulative and site level risks, any management interventions would typically fall to LAs, landowners, site managers, or other relevant authorities with responsibility for terrestrial and foreshore access.

The foreshore is a complex area and is host to a wide variety of activities out of scope for MMO management. There are a diverse range of authorities who each have a specific duty to help manage these foreshore activities. For more information, please refer to the roles different authorities in the [Management of Marine Non-Licensable Activities in England](#) (Marine Management Organisation, 2022). The roles and responsibilities for other authorities are explained in more detail below.

Table A1. 1 in the Annex provides a full list of activities in and out of scope for this mNLA project.

2.2 MPA features

MPAs are designed to protect a range of different habitats and species known as the “designated features” of an MPA. Some designated features have been scoped out of this project on the bases they do not have a marine element, or they are geological features that do not require assessment at the feature level, in this instance the biological communities of the sub-features are considered for assessment of the mNLA impacts. For example, the feature “estuaries” would be assessed for the impacts on the estuary sub-feature communities such as intertidal mud or sand.

Certain vegetated terrestrial features such as dunes, Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous scrubs, perennial vegetation of stony banks and shore dock are not in scope as these are considered terrestrial features of an MPA that straddles the intertidal zone and therefore these features would fall under the regulatory management of LPAs and/or landowners.

Fish species are not considered in scope, unless there is direct evidence of mNLA impacting the MPA feature.

To summarise, the main reasons certain features are considered out of scope of this project are:

- they are primarily terrestrial features managed by other authorities;
- they are already addressed through other projects or management regimes;
- there is no feasible pathway for impact from mNLA;
- the wider feature is protected indirectly through management of its constituent sub-features.

Table A2. 1 in the Annex provides a full list of MPA features in and out of scope for this mNLA project.

2.3 Low risk mNLA activity-pressures

Low risk pressures associated with mNLA have been identified using [Natural England conservation advice packages](#)⁴ and MMO judgement. These low risk pressures have not been included in the Impacts Evidence documents as these pressures generally do not occur at a pressure benchmark level of concern as a result of mNLA activities. Should site level factors increase the risk of these pressures, these would be considered in an individual site level assessment on a case-by-case basis.

Low risk pressures from mNLA include:

- hydrocarbon and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon (PAH) contamination;
- introduction of light;

- introduction or spread of invasive non-indigenous species (INIS)*;
- litter;
- synthetic compound contamination (including pesticides, antifoulants, pharmaceuticals);
- transition elements and organo-metal (such as tributyltin (TBT)) contamination;
- organic enrichment; and
- removal of target species.

***Introduction or spread of invasive non-indigenous species**

The terms “non-indigenous” and “non-native” are essentially synonymous. Both describe species occurring outside their natural range due to human introduction. When referring to pressures set out in Natural England’s advice on operations⁴ we will refer to invasive non-indigenous species (INIS), but consistent with the GB Non-Native Species Strategy, MMO otherwise uses the term invasive non-native species (INNS).

The risk of introducing and spreading INNS through recreational boating is high, particularly due to biofouling on boat hulls and equipment. Boats, trailers, and gear can unintentionally transport species between water bodies, allowing them to establish in new environments (Fiona Pearce, 2012). However, efforts to mitigate these impacts include biosecurity measures, risk assessments, and best practices to reduce the introduction and spread of invasive species. Voluntary measures and legislation have been implemented to reduce the risk of INNS. For example, since 2011 the government has been running the Check Clean Dry (Great Britain (GB) Non-native Species Secretariat, 2026) public awareness campaign aimed at improving biosecurity amongst water users. A European Code of Conduct on Recreational Boating (Council of Europe, 2016) was also developed in 2016 under the Bern Convention.

Under domestic legislation, the [Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981](#)⁵ provides a general prohibition on the release or allowing the escape of most non-native species of animal and many plants in England. INIS may also be introduced through a range of other activities, therefore it is important that the cumulative risk from INIS is not considered solely through an mNLA lens, as the contributing pathways may vary between sites. Overall, the cumulative risk from INNS may be a higher risk, but it is

⁴ For more information on Natural England conservation advice packages: www.gov.uk/government/collections/conservation-advice-packages-for-marine-protected-areas

⁵ For more information: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/

currently being managed by various mitigation interventions. However, should site level factors increase the risk, it will be assessed in the site level assessments.

2.4 Roles and responsibilities

There are a number of organisations with responsibilities for the marine environment and with roles in reviewing the potential impact of mNLA on MPA features within their jurisdiction. This section provides an overview of some of these organisations, their respective jurisdictions and how they are engaged with this work. This is also summarised in **Figure 2**.

MMO mNLA management jurisdiction

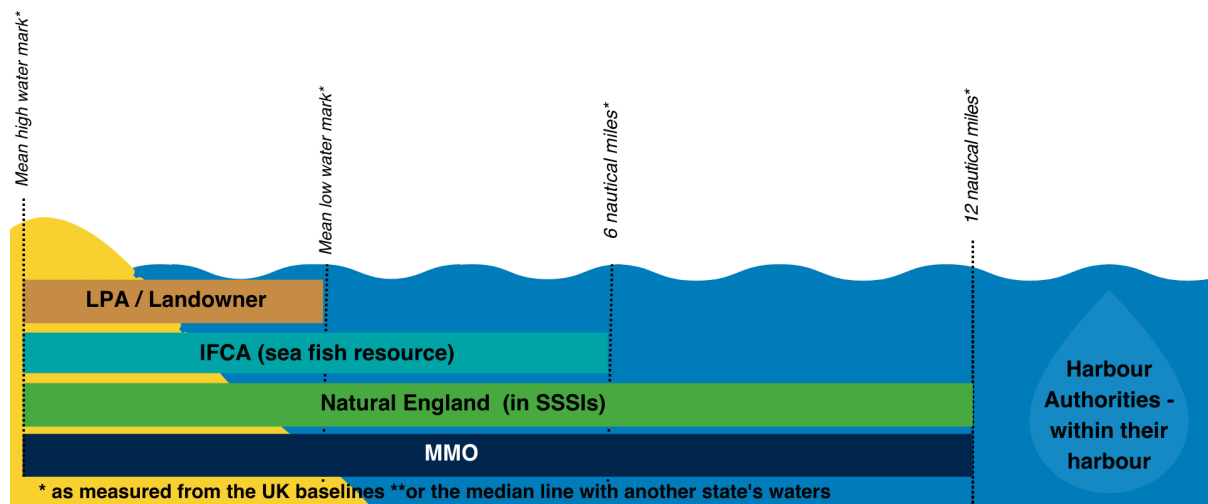


Figure 2: The jurisdiction of regulators including MMO, Natural England, IFCA, Harbour Authorities and LPA.

2.4.1 Public authorities

There are a number of statutory obligations placed on public authorities and public bodies in relation to MCZ's. Public authorities and public bodies are defined below.

2.4.2 Marine and Coastal Access Act (MCAA)

[Section 322](#) of MCAA¹, defines a public authority to include a Minister of the Crown, a public body, or a public office holder. [Section 322](#) of MCAA¹, defines a public body as:

- government departments;
- local authorities and local planning authorities;
- statutory undertakers; or

- other persons or bodies holding public or statutory functions such as fisheries and conservation authorities and harbour authorities whose administrative actions affect the marine and coastal environment.

These broad definitions will encompass governmental departments, local councils, harbour authorities, and specialised groups like IFCA's when they are carrying out public functions.

[Section 125](#) of MCAA¹ places a positive duty on public authorities whose functions are capable of affecting, other than insignificantly, an MCZ, its protected features, or the ecological and geomorphological processes that support those features to exercise their functions to further the conservation objectives of an MCZ. If furthering them is not possible, they must act in a manner to least hinder the conservation objectives.

In summary, public authorities must:

- further MCZ conservation objectives wherever possible;
- minimise harm where furthering objectives is not possible;
- notify the statutory nature conservation body of potential impacts;
- consider risks before undertaking activities;
- report suspected offences; and
- have regard to conservation advice.

2.4.3 Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

The duties under MCAA are closely aligned with the obligations placed on public authorities under the [Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017](#)² (Habitats Regulations).

Under [regulation 9](#) of the Habitats Regulations² and associated guidance, competent authorities must exercise their functions in a manner that helps to protect, conserve and restore European sites (special areas of conservation (SAC) and special protection areas (SPA)) and their qualifying features. They must consider how their decisions can prevent deterioration of habitats, avoid significant disturbance, and contribute to meeting conservation objectives.

Under MCAA¹, statutory harbour authorities and other public authorities also have binding legal duties as public authorities to comply with regional marine plans and adhere to environmental licensing regulations.

2.4.3.1 MMO

MMO is responsible for assessing and managing impacts of mNLA in MPAs inshore of 12nm in England. These assessments aid the MMO's delivery of our legal obligations for MCZs, SACs and SPAs as set out below.

MCZ: [Section 129](#) of the MCAA¹ provides the legal mechanism for the MMO to manage activities that may damage the protected features of an MCZ. It allows the MMO to introduce byelaws where management measures are needed to prohibit or restrict activities that may damage protected features, or the ecological processes that support them, to further the conservation objectives of an MCZ.

Byelaws may:

- prohibit specific activities within all or part of an MCZ;
- restrict when, where, or how activities may be carried out;
- impose conditions on activities to reduce their impacts;
- apply either permanently or for specified periods.

SAC and SPAs: [Section 129](#) of MCAA¹ (byelaws for the protection of MCZs) enables the MMO the power under [section 40](#) of the Habitats Regulations² to protect European marine sites (SACs and SPAs) inshore of 12nm in England, and provides the mechanism for MMO to make byelaws for the protection of a European marine site (SACs and SPAs) in England.

2.4.3.2 Natural England

Natural England is the government's statutory nature conservation advisor for England inshore of the 12nm limit. Natural England provides conservation advice for MPAs and reports on the condition of protected features. Natural England also outlines the feature conservation objectives (for European marine sites) or the general management approach (for MCZs) in their conservation advice packages (Natural England, 2026)

Conservation objectives set out the broad ecological aims for MPAs. MMO and other regulators are responsible for ensuring that our decisions help further these conservation objectives. Natural England Conservation Advice Packages and direct consultation with Natural England was used to develop Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impacts Evidence documents.

Natural England also has a duty to notify sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs) in England, and advise owners, managers and public authorities on the protection and management of those sites. Natural England may also make byelaws to protect SSSIs under [section 28R](#) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981⁵, incorporating [section 20](#) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949⁶.

⁶ For more information: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo6/12-13-14/97/section/20

2.4.3.3 IFCA

There are 10 IFCAs in England, with jurisdictions for the 0 to 6nm area. IFCAs are responsible for assessing fishing impacts and where necessary, introducing management to protect MPAs.

Under the MCAA¹, IFCAs have the powers to make byelaws in their district. IFCAs also have the powers to enforce any section 129 MMO byelaws.

IFCA powers cover the exploitation of sea fisheries resources which includes recreational activities such as sea angling, bait collection, and seaweed harvesting.

2.4.3.4 Local authorities

Under the [Byelaws \(Alternative Procedure\) \(England\) regulations 2016](#)⁷, local authorities (district councils and London borough councils) have the authority to make and amend byelaws relating to the seashore. This includes activities such as access and dog walking.

Under the MCAA¹, public authorities must take any authorisation or enforcement decision in accordance with the relevant marine plan unless relevant considerations indicate otherwise. Non authorisation or enforcement decisions capable of affecting the UK marine area must also have regard to the relevant marine plan.

In general, local authorities are responsible for decisions landward of the mean low water mark. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981⁵ and the Habitats Regulations² also place legal duties on the local authority, where it is a landowner, to have regard to habitat and species conservation whenever it exercises its statutory functions.

Local Planning Authorities must consider the effects of planning decisions on MCZs and exercise their functions in a manner that best furthers, or least hinders, the achievement of MCZ conservation objectives, taking account of advice from the relevant statutory nature conservation body.

2.4.3.5 Harbour Authorities

Harbour authorities must exercise their functions to further the conservation objectives of an MCZ. If furthering them is impossible, they must act to least hinder the objectives (MCAA¹ [section 125](#)).

Harbour authorities should manage harbour activities within their jurisdiction, including navigation, harbour operations, dredging and moorings. They should consider and manage potential adverse environmental impacts arising from harbour activities in accordance with relevant statutory duties for all MPAs, this includes supporting the achievement of site conservation objectives.

⁷ For more information: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2016/165/contents/made

Harbour authorities should seek and consider advice from the relevant Statutory Nature Conservation Body (SNCB), namely: Natural England for inshore waters, where harbour activities may affect MPA features or conservation objectives.

Harbour authorities are encouraged to work collaboratively with other agencies and conservation bodies where harbour activities interact with protected habitats, species or features, including considering management measures that further MPA conservation objectives.

3 Methodology

The following section outlines the steps taken to assess the impacts from mNLA on MPA features (from site prioritisation, the call for evidence and intended next steps). **Figure 3** provides a step-by-step flow diagram to illustrate the process.

Annex 3 provides a full glossary of terms.

MMO management of Marine Non-Licensable Activities in MPAs

Step 1: Site prioritisation	Identify and prioritise MPAs potentially at risk from mNLA to focus assessment effort on sites most likely to require management.
Step 2: Screening assessment	Gather and analyse best available evidence on the impacts of mNLA on MPA features.
Step 3: Call for Evidence	Seek views from interested parties and update impacts and evidence documents using the evidence collected.
Step 4: Engagement and site level assessments	Regional engagement where required and impacts of mNLA at site level assessed
Step 5: Develop management measures	Where necessary, develop proposed management measures to address negative impacts of mNLA on MPA features
Step 6: Communicate management	Engage on proposed management measures, consider stakeholder feedback, finalise decisions with relevant authorities and communicate agreed measures to affected stakeholders.
Step 7: Implement management measures	Implement management measures in collaboration with stakeholders and regulatory authorities, support behaviour change, compliance and adaptive management where required.
Step 8: Monitor	Monitor and review management measures begin.
Step 9: Review	Review the need for and effectiveness of MMO mNLA management every five years.

Figure 3: Flow chart showing the steps taken for mNLA call for evidence.

3.1 Step 1: Site prioritisation

A review of MMO evidence projects, engagement with Natural England, and an analysis of all other available evidence identified 98 MPAs as having designated features potentially at risk from pressures caused by mNLA. The MMO evidence projects include:

- MMO1013 (Compilation of spatial data on marine recreation activities) (Marine Management Organisation, 2012)
- MMO1043 (Compilation of spatial data on marine recreation activities: Phase 2) (Marine Management Organisation, 2013)
- MMO1064 (Modelling Marine Recreation Potential in England) (Marine Management Organisation, 2014)
- MMO1136 (Non-licensable Activity Impacts on Marine Protected Areas) (Marine Management Organisation, 2019)
- MMO1243 (High Priority Non-Licensable Activities in MPAs) (Marine Management Organisation, 2021)

Engagement with Natural England has included:

- information from a survey of Natural England senior advisors on inshore MPAs where mNLA may be having a negative impact (January 2023);
- [condition assessments for inshore MPAs published by Natural England](#)⁴ where available;
- consultation with Natural England recreation and regional specialists; and
- further consideration of MPA features and mNLA in and out of scope for MMO management.

These MPAs will be prioritised further depending on the outcomes of screening assessments (**section 3.2**). To streamline the project MPAs have been clustered together taking a feature and or geographical based approach where possible to make the assessment and management process more efficient, consistent, holistic and proportionate.

3.2 Step 2: Screening assessment

We have taken a stepped approach to collating the best available evidence for mNLA-feature interactions and conducted MPA screenings on the 98 MPAs before completing site level assessments. Not all sites will be at risk from mNLA and not all will therefore require management. This screening process provides us with an initial assessment of each MPA to establish which MPAs will require a full site level assessment and potential management for mNLA.

The screening considers whether there is a credible risk of mNLA impacting the features of an MPA and preventing their conservation objectives from being

achieved, whether existing management measures are already effective, and whether a more detailed site level assessment is required.

Where no significant effect or pathway of impact is identified, no further assessment or management action is required at that time. These sites will, however, remain under review to ensure that any future changes in activity levels, activity types, evidence or site condition can be considered.

Table 1 provides a summary of the different feature and potential mNLA interactions that can exist.

Table 1: mNLA-feature interactions considered in each of the Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impacts Evidence documents. These interactions are identified from [Natural England's Advice on Operations](#)⁴.

Feature	Potential impacts from mNLA
Benthic sediments and associated species features	• abrasion/disturbance of the substrate on the surface of the seabed; • penetration and/or disturbance of the substratum below the surface of the seabed, including abrasion; and • physical change (to another sediment type).
Birds	• above water noise; • underwater noise change; and • visual disturbance.
Seals and otters	Seals: • above water noise; • underwater noise change; • visual disturbance; and • collision above water with static or moving objects not naturally found in the marine environment. Otters: • above water noise; and • underwater noise change.
Reefs	• abrasion/disturbance of the substrate on the surface of the seabed; and • penetration and/or disturbance of the substratum below the surface of the seabed, including abrasion.

Feature	Potential impacts from mNLA
Seagrass, maerl, seahorses and stalked jellyfish	• abrasion/disturbance of the substrate on the surface of the seabed; • penetration and/or disturbance of the substratum below the surface of the seabed, including abrasion; • removal of target species; • removal of non-target species; • visual disturbance; and • underwater noise changes.

3.3 Step 3: Call for evidence: Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impacts Evidence documents

To inform our assessment and management of mNLA impacts in MPAs, we have gathered and analysed the best available evidence on mNLA impacts. The Impacts Evidence documents have collated designated features into functional groups; these groups encompass the designated features for all inshore priority MPAs. Collating this information and evidence into stand-alone documents increases the accessibility of mNLA site level assessments and enables the project to have a clear literature base.

The evidence base comprises five habitat and species-specific Impacts Evidence documents, supported by a Methodology and Summary (**Figure 1**)^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}. The sources of evidence, procedures and rationale used in each of these analyses are outlined in the respective documents:

- Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impacts Evidence: Benthic sediments and associated species;
- Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impacts Evidence: Birds;
- Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impacts Evidence: Grey seals, harbour seals and Eurasian otters;
- Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impacts Evidence: Reef; and
- Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impacts Evidence Seagrass beds, maerl beds, seahorses and stalked jellyfish.

These reports are supported by:

- Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impacts Evidence: Methodology. Which describes the stepwise, evidence-led approach used to approach this mNLA project (this document); and
- Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impacts Evidence: Summary. Which summarises the key findings of the five Marine Non-Licensable Activities

Impacts Evidence documents as well as an analysis of our confidence in the evidence used.

We are now seeking views and additional evidence through a call for evidence on these documents.

This suite of literature reviews has enabled us to gather and synthesise existing knowledge on the impacts of mNLA on the designated features of MPAs. The process so far has included:

- reviewing scientific studies on the ecological impacts of mNLA;
- analysis of MMO evidence projects on mNLA to date;
- summarise findings by feature type; with a publishable impact evidence document on each category or group of MPA features;
- identify knowledge gaps where evidence is lacking or outdated; and
- develop a summary document to support literature reviews and identify the confidence in evidence and data used.

This call for evidence will be used to gather new or unpublished data from stakeholders and experts to fill any gaps in the literature review.

This call for evidence will aim to:

- engage stakeholders such as Natural England, IFCAs, environmental non-government organisations, coastal partnerships, local marine users, MPA network officers and academic institutions;
- request submissions of data, observations, reports, or studies related to mNLA impacts;
- incorporate stakeholder insights into site and feature assessment and outcomes; and
- ensure transparency by documenting how evidence is used in decision-making.

We will use the feedback to our call for evidence to finalise the mNLA MPA impacts evidence documents and to draft site level assessments, in liaison with Natural England. Following the screenings and regional engagement, MMO will make a decision on whether full site level assessments are required.

Figure 1 provides a diagram illustrating the document pack produced as part of the call for evidence.

3.4 Step 4: Engagement and site level assessments

To gather regional evidence on mNLA and develop management options, MMO will engage regionally with all relevant stakeholders using the mNLA engagement model outlined in **Figure 4**.



Figure 4: Summary of the engagement and consultation approach for mNLA management.

We will use the feedback to our call for evidence to finalise the mNLA MPA impacts evidence documents and to draft site level assessments, in liaison with Natural England. Following the screenings and regional engagement, MMO will make a decision on whether full site level assessments are required.

Site level assessments will then consider the evidence analysed in the mNLA impacts evidence documents alongside the screening and site level details, including:

- the conservation objectives of the MPA;
- the intensity and nature of the mNLA;
- any existing mNLA management;
- the outcomes of regional engagement;
- the environmental conditions of the site;
- the ecological characteristics of the designated feature and/or biological community; and
- for habitats, the presence of particularly sensitive species.

Management measures for each MPA will be developed based on the outcome of the site level assessments and regional engagement.

If no management measures are considered to be required at this time, then the MMO will monitor the site. If evidence indicates that mNLA may be negatively impacting the site, MMO will assess the site and consider appropriate management.

Following assessment, the following steps will be initiated to finalise and implement management where required and then monitor and review management.

3.5 Step 5: Develop management measures

Potential management for mNLA may include a range of options such as:

1. no management required – monitoring only;
2. non-statutory – education and awareness, voluntary agreement or code of conduct; and or
3. statutory – MMO byelaw with seasonal, partial or full prohibition or permit conditions.

MMO management options may be delivered via the following methods:

- on site access management – zoning, access or activity restrictions, seasonal restrictions;
- education, communication to public and site users – interpretation, codes of conduct, engagement with relevant local clubs, national education campaigns, navigational app links, .gov pages, targeted engagement events such as [Operation Seabird](#)⁸ events;
- enforcement – byelaws and or permit requirement and permit conditions.

These and other management measures may be delivered through collaborative partnership working.

3.6 Step 6: Communicating management

A de minimis assessment (DMA) will be drafted for any sites where statutory management is recommended (step 5) to capture the impacts of the proposed management measures. These assessments will be used to ensure that the most appropriate and proportionate management decision is selected. Site level assessments and other supporting documentation such as the DMA will then be provided to our stakeholders as part of a formal consultation on proposed management measures.

All responses to the formal consultation will be considered and amendments made to the draft documentation or proposed management decision where required. Decisions on management will be finalised in consultation with Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Natural England and IFCAs.

Final documentation for any sites requiring statutory management will be submitted to the Secretary of State for approval where required. Further information on our byelaw making process can be found at: www.gov.uk/guidance/marine-conservation-byelaws⁹.

⁸ For more information on Operation Seabird: www.operationseabird.org (last accessed 30 September 2026)

⁹ For more information on MMO byelaws: www.gov.uk/guidance/understand-mmo-marine-conservation-byelaws (last accessed 30 September 2026)

Where non-statutory management is recommended then MMO will follow a process of engagement with regional stakeholders and collaboratively working to communicate and implement management measures.

3.7 Step 7: Implementing management measures

Management measures will be implemented with support from other regional stakeholders and regulatory authorities where required. Engagement of management measures will form a fundamental part of the project.

Where impacts are assessed as low to moderate, and where there is a realistic prospect that improved awareness, voluntary compliance, or changes in practice can reduce pressures on protected features, it may be appropriate to allow a reasonable period for behaviour change before escalating to regulatory controls.

All mNLA management measures will be published in an annual mNLA management document, this will allow for adjustments in our approach as our learning develops with this project regarding the most effective management measures and or where new evidence changes the management measures required.

3.8 Step 8: Monitoring and review

When our management decisions have been implemented, then monitoring and control activities will commence, with management being reviewed at least once every five years. Any significant changes in the site (for example, to mNLA levels) and/or new evidence becoming available, may trigger this review to take place earlier than scheduled.

Any MPA management measures will require regular review. Monitoring, evaluation and reporting will form an essential part of ensuring management measures remain effective in improving MPA condition and there continues to be a reasonable level of adherence or compliance with the measures.

Regular reviews will be required of the management measures implemented to ensure that adherence or compliance is increasing over time and education and awareness is effective. Advice from Natural England will inform MMO if the management measures are supporting an improvement in the condition of impacted features.

Regular feedback from MMO coastal teams and other regional stakeholders will be used to monitor any changes in activity within the site. This will act as an early warning system for potential negative impacts on the site. If a report determines that a change in mNLA is a risk to the conservation objectives of the site, a re-assessment of the site may be triggered.

MMO will regularly review the need for and effectiveness of any mNLA management measures. Adaptive management measures may be required, these may include moving from non-statutory to statutory management measures, or emergency byelaws if required.

4 Call for evidence: How to respond

We would like to hear any feedback or additional evidence you can provide on mNLA impacts on MPA features so that we can have the best available evidence to inform our next steps.

MMO works with coastal communities to protect these special places for future generations by balancing the needs of recreational water users with environment protection. We know that the people who live, work, and play along the coast have valuable local knowledge of their marine environment. That is why we are asking you to help shape how we protect it.

We want to hear from you. Your knowledge, your experience, and your ideas will help us develop management approaches that work for your community and for the marine environment.

This call for evidence on the Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impacts Evidence documents reviews will run for eight weeks from 30 September 2026 to 25 November 2026.

Questions to consider before you start

1. Do you have any additional evidence about the impacts of mNLA on protected habitats and species in MPAs?
2. Do you agree with the conclusions of the Impacts Evidence reviews for each feature-activity interaction provided in each Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impacts Evidence document? If not, please provide details.

There is also an opportunity to share further information, which you can upload as a document.

You can provide a response to these questions for each Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impacts Evidence document under its dedicated section. Alternatively, if you would like to provide a response that relates to all Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impacts Evidence document, please provide comments under the “All Documents” section.

It is possible to respond only to specific sections of the survey; you do not need to provide comments on every Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impacts Evidence document. For example, broad responses relating to all habitats and species can be submitted for all documents.

5 Next steps

Given the novel and complex nature of the mNLA project, we will adopt an iterative approach, learning from each stage of development and implementation to refine our methods, address emerging challenges, and incorporate new evidence as it becomes available.

We will use the feedback to our call for evidence to finalise the Marine Non-Licensable Activities Impacts Evidence documents and to draft site level assessments, in liaison with Natural England engaging on management measures where required.

As detailed in **section 3.3** above, the information received during this call for evidence (step 3) will be used, alongside other information (including site characteristics and mNLA data) to produce site level assessments.

Site level assessments will consider if mNLA management is required (step 4). If we know that management measures are required, we will identify the most appropriate and proportionate way to implement these and take steps, including further formal consultation(s) with our stakeholders and advisors, prior to any management measures being decided and or statutory measures submitted to the Secretary of State for approval (steps 5 to 7).

Further information on our byelaw making process can be found at:
www.gov.uk/guidance/marine-conservation-byelaws.

If you would like to receive updates on the mNLA project, please email your name and email address to conservation@marinemanagement.org.uk to be added to our stakeholder list.

If you have any further questions or queries, please email or call our helpline (using the details provided):

Email: conservation@marinemanagement.org.uk

MMO helpline: **0300 123 1032**

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Annex 1: Activities in scope and out of scope of this mNLA project

Table A1. 1: mNLA in scope and out of scope for MMO mNLA Management.

mNLA	Description	In or out of scope	Reason
Anchoring	This activity involves the dropping of an anchor, by any vessel (with or without an engine) to secure a vessel to the seabed, temporarily, in order to prevent it drifting with the wind or current. This includes anchorage areas such as: • Designated safe anchorage; • Reported anchorage; • Designated commercial anchorage.	In scope	mNLA - Harbour Authorities may designate anchorages. Liaison with harbour authority may be required.
Diving and snorkelling	Swimming, either underwater or on the surface, using self-contained underwater breathing apparatus (scuba) or snorkelling equipment. This activity excludes any extraction of resources (such as spearfishing).	In scope	mNLA - Activity can disturb species such as seahorses which are protected features of MPAs. It is an offence to disturb them; therefore divers require a Wildlife Licence to intentionally look for them.
Hovercraft	A hovercraft, also known as an air-cushion vehicle (ACV). Hovercrafts are capable of travelling over land, water, mud, ice and other surfaces.	In scope	mNLA

mNLA	Description	In or out of scope	Reason
Motorised personal watercraft (MPW)	MPA is a recreational watercraft that the rider rides or stands on. Some models have an inboard engine driving a pump jet that has a screw-shaped impeller to create jet thrust for propulsion and steering. These craft are often referred by the brand names such as Jet Ski. MPW includes e-foils, "jet ski" and electric powered vessels.	In scope	mNLA
Hydroflying	A hydroflyer is a water sports device that allows a person to "fly" above the water, propelled by the force of water jets. It connects to a motorised personal watercraft, like a "jet ski", via a long hose, and the rider controls the thrust and direction by shifting their weight. The high-pressure water jets propel the person on the hydroflyer above the water and below.	In scope	mNLA
Motorised watercraft	The use of motorised vessels, including motorboats (powerboats), sailing vessels and yachts using their motor in marine and estuarine waters. Motorised watercraft includes watersports that are towed behind a motorised vessel including wakeboarding, waterskiing, parascending and parasailing. This does not include emergency vessels such as RNLI vessels. This does not include commercial vessels for example, shipping vessels.	In scope	mNLA

mNLA	Description	In or out of scope	Reason
Non-motorised sailing	Sailing boats of any size, including day boats or other keelboats which are not using a motor. These may be wind powered or rowed. These may be taken out of water at end of use.	In scope	mNLA
Non-motorised watercraft	This includes canoeing (all types), kayaking (all types), rowing, kitesurfing, kite boarding, kite foiling, windsurfing, wingsurfing, wingfoiling, winging, kite winging, non-motorised dinghies, stand up foil boarding and stand-up paddle boarding (SUP).	In scope	mNLA
Removal of marine litter by hand (including abandoned, lost, discarded fishing gear).	Removal of any litter from the sea or seabed. This may occur during diving activities. Removal of litter on the foreshore as part of an organised event requires landowner/local planning authority permission.	In scope	Removal of litter by hand whilst diving without additional equipment does not require a marine licence as exempt, therefore considered mNLA.
Wildlife watching from the sea (commercial)	Wildlife watching from a commercial vessel, this includes organised trips and excursions such as seabird tours, whale/dolphin watching tours/trips. Recreational wildlife watching from the sea (such as incidental watching from recreational vessels, watercraft, kayaks, SUPs etc) does not fall within this category.	In scope	mNLA - Commercial wildlife watching is not currently regulated and can cause disturbance impacts to protected features of MPAs.

mNLA	Description	In or out of scope	Reason
Coasteering	Coasteering involves traversing along the intertidal, subtidal and supralittoral zones, using a combination of scrambling, walking and swimming to complete the journey, without the aid of boats, surf boards or other craft. It often involves a series of jumps into deeper water.	Not in scope, unless direct evidence of mNLA impacting the feature.	Often ran by organised groups therefore this activity is in the jurisdiction of the relevant LPA and/or the landowner. May be occasional individuals, small groups independent from organised groups. This may require management.
Commercial vessels	For example, shipping and cruise vessels. Movement of vessels may be causing disturbance to MPA features sensitive to visual disturbance or underwater noise impacts.	Not in scope, unless direct evidence of mNLA impacting the feature.	Managed under Merchant Shipping Act 1995 ¹⁰ and Sport or pleasure vessel code (in commercial use).
Collection of seagrass seeds by hand (diving)	Collection of seagrass seeds or removal of part of a plant not using a vessel. If a vessel is used to carry out the removal, this is marine licensable. Marine licence exempt activity removal by hand recreational diving: Recreational dive activity table - GOV.UK	Out of scope	Marine Licensing exempted activities , though caveat in Environmental risk: Marine Licensing exempted activities . IFCAs manage the removal of sea fish resources including seaweed.

¹⁰ For more information: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1995/21/contents

mNLA	Description	In or out of scope	Reason
Bait collection	The collection of natural bait, such as worms, shellfish or other marine organisms, for use in recreational or commercial fishing.	Out of scope	Under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 ¹ , bait collection is classed as exploitation of a sea fisheries resource. This activity is therefore in the jurisdiction of the relevant IFCA. Natural England is also responsible for management of this activity in National Nature Reserves and SSSIs.
Drones, gliders and aircraft	The use of a drone, light aircraft, glider or other small aircraft.	Out of scope	Civil Aviation Authority manage airspace use generally. Landowners may require permission for use of drones on their land. Natural England permission is required for use over SSSIs.
General beach recreation	General beach recreation is defined as activities undertaken on the foreshore including beach games, beachcombing, sunbathing, rockpooling, horse riding and swimming and surfing.	Out of scope	This activity is in the jurisdiction of the relevant local planning authority and/or the landowner.
Harvesting of seaweed by hand	Foraging for seaweeds on foreshore at low tide. If a machine is used a marine licence will be required.	Out of scope	IFCAs manage the removal of sea fish resources including seaweed.

mNLA	Description	In or out of scope	Reason
Installing a mooring (includes installing a mooring in an area of harbour authority jurisdiction).	Installing a mooring requires a marine licence, however, harbour authorities and lighthouse authorities do not need a licence to <u>deposit</u>, <u>construct</u> or <u>remove</u> any: • pile mooring • swinging mooring • trot mooring • aid to navigation	Out of scope	Though some installed before 2010 were prior to marine licensing and may be impacting on features of MPAs. Harbour authorities are exempt: Marine Licensing exempted activities , though some may be impacting on features of MPAs.
Motorised and non-motorised land craft	Includes activities such as dune buggies, quad bikes and all-terrain vehicles.	Out of scope	This activity is in the jurisdiction of the relevant local planning authority and/or the landowner.
Trampling, launching and recovery	Trampling by foot, or through abrasion caused by equipment in intertidal and shallow sub-tidal areas (for example launching and recovering equipment).	Out of scope	This activity is in the jurisdiction of the relevant local planning authority and/or the landowner.
Removal of marine litter using a vessel, vehicle or marine structure.	This includes the use of a lifting bag.	Out of scope	A marine licence is required to undertake this activity.

mNLA	Description	In or out of scope	Reason
Removal of sea fish resources	Including fishing, angling, spearfishing and seaweed harvesting all considered with IFCA remit inshore of 6nm.	Out of scope	IFCAs manage the removal of sea fish resources including seaweed. Environment Agency manage the removal of freshwater fish.
Use of a mooring	Picking up and using a mooring.	Out of scope	As installation of moorings are a marine licensable activity (see above), impacts from use of moorings should be considered at this stage.
Walking and dog walking	Walking and dog walking in coastal areas can often disturb birds and seals in coastal locations through visual disturbance.	Out of scope	This activity is in the jurisdiction of the relevant LPA and/or the landowner.

mNLA	Description	In or out of scope	Reason
Wildfowling (includes punt gunning)	Wildfowling is a traditional form of hunting that involves shooting wild ducks, geese, and other waterfowl, usually in coastal marshes, estuaries, or tidal flats. It is often done at dawn or dusk when birds are most active, and it requires skill, patience, and knowledge of tides and weather conditions. Includes punt gunning which is a 19 th century water fowling method using massive, boat-mounted shotguns (up to 10ft long) to harvest large numbers of waterfowl in tidal estuaries. Designed for hunting, these guns were mounted on	Out of scope	Licensable activity requiring: • Landowner or Sporting Rights Permission (British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BSAC) or The Crown Estate (TCE)) • Wildfowling Permit / Sporting Licence (BSAC or TCE) • Bird Licences (Legal Exceptions) if needed (Defra or Natural England)
	specialised shallow-draft boats (punts) and often fired by a single gunner, or with a crew of two to navigate.		
Wildlife watching from the land	Wildlife watching from the land includes viewing a range of marine species such as marine mammals, basking sharks and birds from the land.	Out of scope	This activity is in the jurisdiction of the relevant LPA and/or the landowner.
Marker buoys for sensitive marine areas	These markers identify ecological boundaries and communicate restrictions like voluntary "no-anchor" zones or sensitive sites.	Out of scope	Currently require a marine licence outside of harbour authority jurisdiction (as of September 2026).

Annex 2: MPA features in scope and out of scope of this mNLA project

Table A2. 1: MPA features in scope and not in scope for MMO mNLA Management.

MPA features	Description	In or out of scope	Reason
All MPA features (except those listed as not in scope below)	All designated, qualifying and protected features of MPAs. This includes supporting habitats for SPAs protected features and supporting habitats for geological features such a “Large shallow inlets and bays”.	In scope	Qualifying features of MPAs. Supporting features of SPAs and geological and/or geomorphological features.
Salt marsh including: <i>Spartina</i> swards (<i>Spartinion maritimae</i>)	Where crossing saltmarsh for another mNLA activity is impacting that feature. Trampling over intertidal areas to access other mNLA activities may have an impact on MPA site features.	Not in scope as considered terrestrial features	Considered terrestrial features under the regulatory management of LPAs and landowners.
Vegetated features	Such as dunes with annual vegetation of drift lines, embryonic shifting dunes, humid dune slacks, Mediterranean and thermo-Atlantic halophilous scrubs, perennial vegetation of stony banks, shore dock.	Not in scope as considered terrestrial features	Considered terrestrial features under the regulatory management of LPAs and landowners.
Geographical features	Such as estuaries, estuarine rocky habitats, large shallow inlets and bays, submerged or partially submerged sea caves, coastal	Not in scope	However sub-features will be in scope. The geological feature will be protected by protecting the sub-features.

MPA features	Description	In or out of scope	Reason
	lagoons, boulder cliff geological feature, vegetated sea cliffs.		
Red Throated Diver (RTD)	RTD in Outer Thames SPA - disturbance from all vessels includes recreational vessels.	Not in scope	Stage 4 project includes RTD. COWSC Red Throated Diver group is addressing impacts on RTD from all vessels in combination.
Harbour porpoise	mNLA considerations within Bristol Channel Approaches disturbance to Harbour porpoises.	Not in scope, unless direct evidence of mNLA impacting the feature.	mNLA impacts may occur from all vessels including recreational vessels. Would require credible evidence of threat to species from mNLA and holistic management.
Fish species including smelt and allis shad	Sea fish resource where fish are a designated feature of the MPA.	Not in scope, unless direct evidence of mNLA impacting the feature.	Generally managed as fisheries resource: Within 6nm IFCA jurisdiction. Would require credible evidence of threat to species from mNLA.

MPA features	Description	In or out of scope	Reason
Giant goby or other non-commercial fish species	Giant goby is not a commercial species. Rock pooling impacts discussed with Natural England.	Not in scope, unless direct evidence of mNLA impacting the feature.	Rock pooling would come under general beach recreation therefore it is in LPA remit. Also lacking evidence of impacts of rock pooling on giant goby. Would require credible evidence of threat to species from in scope mNLA.
Spiny lobster	Commercial species and a sea fish resource.	Not in scope, unless direct evidence of mNLA impacting the feature.	IFCA and MMO fisheries management. Would require credible evidence of threat to species from mNLA.

Annex 3: Glossary of terms used in mNLA

Advanced Mooring Systems (AMS) - may also be referred to as an eco-mooring. It is designed to reduce the interaction between the mooring and sensitive seabed habitats. There is growing evidence globally as well as in the UK of the reduction in impacts to seagrass habitat from switching to AMS (Luff et al., 2019; Solandt and Parry, 2023). The AMS term was developed by partners in the ReMEDIES project following a Royal Yachting Association led workshop in 2018 to reflect the dual advantages of this technology, both for the environment and for users (Natural England, 2024).

Benthic - relating to or occurring at the bottom of a body of water, such as an ocean.

Broadscale habitat - a large grouping of ecological communities defined by shared physical and environmental characteristics.

Byelaw - a specific law created by a local government authority or an organisation to regulate its local area.

Circalittoral - an area of the seafloor where light cannot reach in levels high enough to support plant life, thus being dominated by animals.

Conservation objectives - objectives set for each designated feature of an MPA, to either maintain or restore a designated feature of the protected site.

Designated features - a species, habitat, geological, or geomorphological entity for which an MPA is identified and managed.

De minimis Assessment (DMA) - (a financial impact assessment) An assessment which addresses the financial and socio-economic impacts of management measures. The purpose of the De minimis Assessment in this case would be to demonstrate the financial impacts of any statutory management measures.

Ecosystem services - the benefits provided by ecosystems that contribute to human wellbeing and quality of life. Ecosystem services is the term used in conservation advice to describe the service provided by the habitat or species. For example: nutrition, nutrient cycling, climate regulation or bird and whale watching.

European marine site (EMS) - any special protection areas (SPAs) and special areas of conservation (SACs) consisting of marine areas.

Habitats - the natural environment in which an animal or plant usually lives.

Impact - the consequence of pressures (such as habitat degradation) where a change occurs that is different to that expected under natural conditions.

Infralittoral - an area of the ocean near to the surface but fully submerged, where there is enough light to support plant life.

Intertidal zone - the coastal area located between the high tide and low tide lines.

Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) - responsible for fisheries management from 0 to 6 nautical miles (nm). There are 10 IFCAs in England, each one funded by local planning authorities.

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) - a public body that advises the government on UK and international nature conservation. This includes aspects related to the marine environment from 12 to 200nm; they have a statutory responsibility to provide conservation advice for MPAs and report on the condition of protected features.

Littoral zone - the area where land meets water, often stretching between high and low tides.

Marine conservation zone (MCZ) - a type of MPA in English, Welsh and Northern Irish waters designated under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009¹ (for England and Wales) or the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013¹¹ (for Northern Ireland).

Marine Management Organisation (MMO) - an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and is the manager and independent regulator of England's seas.

Marine plans - MMO marine plans have been designed to help manage the seas around England.

Marine protected area (MPA) - a generic term to cover all marine areas that are a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values. This includes special areas of conservation (SAC), special protection areas (SPA), and marine conservation zones (MCZ).

Natural England - government advisor for the environment in England. This includes aspects of the marine environment of 0 to 12nm. This organisation has a statutory responsibility to provide conservation advice for MPAs and report on the condition of protected features.

Precautionary principle - the precautionary principle is defined in the 1992 Rio Declaration, to which the UK government is a signatory, and states: "In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation".

¹¹ For more information: www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2013/10/contents

Pressure - the mechanisms through which an activity has an effect on a feature. Individual pressures are broadly defined in [JNCC's Marine Pressures-Activities Database \(PAD\)](#) in the “pressures” tab of the data tables (JNCC, 2022).

Resilience - the ability of a species or habitat to recover from disturbance or stress.

Resistance - the ability of a species or habitat to absorb disturbance or stress without changing in character.

Sensitivity - the sensitivity of a feature (species or habitat) is a measure that is dependent on the ability of the feature (species or habitat) to resist change and its ability (time taken) to recover from change.

Special area of conservation (SAC) - MPAs designated under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017², and The Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017¹² to protect important habitats and species.

Special protection areas (SPA) - MPAs put into place to protect rare, vulnerable or migratory birds, classified under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, and the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Sublittoral zone - extending from the lowest limit of the intertidal zone to the outer edge of the continental slope. This can be divided into the infralittoral zone (characterised by algae) and the circalittoral zone (the subzone below the infralittoral dominated by animals) (JNCC, 2022).

Subtidal zone - the area below the low tide mark that remains permanently submerged.

Vessel monitoring system (VMS) - all commercial fishing vessels over 12 metres in length in UK waters must report their position via VMS when at sea. VMS devices on the vessels send regular reports of position and vector.

¹² For more information: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2017/1013/contents/made