

Fareham Creek rMCZ no 24.2

Marine Conservation Zone : Selection Assessment Document

Version and Issue date	Amendments made
V1.0 07.09.11	Draft final recommendations refined by the RSG and Local groups in July 2011 and finalised by the RSG 2/3 August 2011.

1. Site name Fareham Creek rMCZ no 24.2	3. Site surface area 358 ha 3.58 km ²
2. Site centre location ETRS89 N50 50' 12.084" W1 8' 54.363" N50 50.201' W1 8.906' (N.B. WGS 84 UTM 31N coordinates are provided in the map vertices)	4. Biogeographic region Eastern English Channel

5. Features proposed for designation within Fareham Creek ¹

Feature type	Feature name	No. of records ²
Habitat FOCI	Native oyster beds	(only data is for species FOCI)
	Sheltered muddy gravels	1 record
Species FOCI Low mobility	Native Oyster (<i>Ostrea edulis</i>)	5 records

6. Features within Fareham Creek not proposed for designation ³

Feature type	Feature name	Comments
Broad-scale habitats	A2.3 intertidal mud	Protected by Portsmouth Harbour SSSI
	A2.5 coastal saltmarshes/saline reedbeds	Fully protected by Portsmouth Harbour SSSI
	A5.3 Subtidal mud	Not considered a suitable site
Habitat FOCI	Seagrass beds	Protected in Portsmouth Harbour SSSI.

¹ Sources of information relating to these features are listed in Section 13.

² A "record" is a survey point where a single individual, population or habitat has been found.

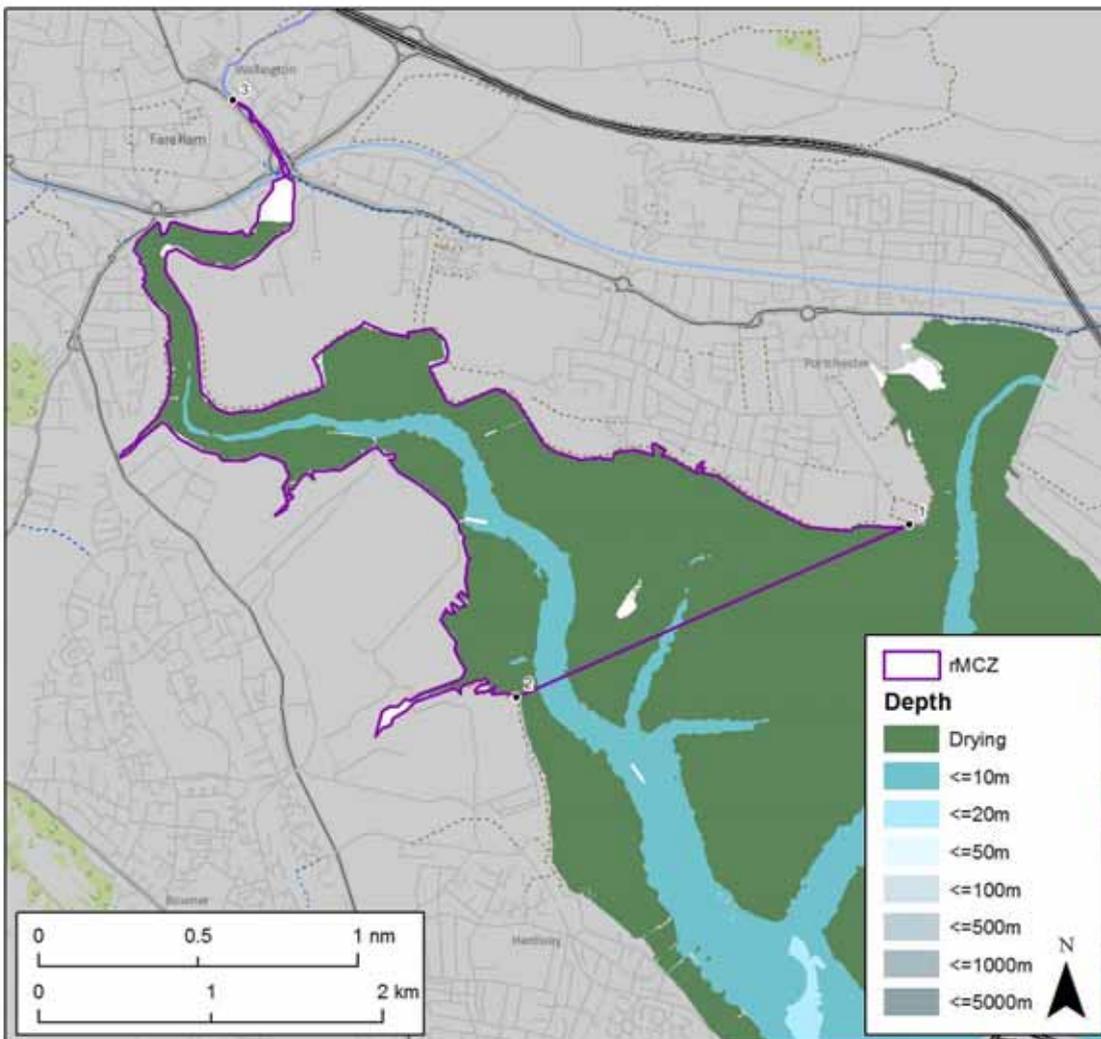
³ Features may occur in both tables (sections 5 & 6) if the rMCZ overlaps with an existing MPA where the features are protected.

Fareham Creek rMCZ no 24.2

7. Map of site (see below)

Fareham Creek rMCZ no 24.2 Site Map

Version: 1.0
Date: Aug 2011



Boundary coordinates
Degrees Minutes Seconds Degrees Decimal Minutes

ID	Latitude	Longitude	Latitude	Longitude
1	N50° 50' 9.853"	W1° 6' 50.854"	N50° 50.164°	W1° 6.844°
2	N50° 49' 33.079"	W1° 8' 44.419"	N50° 49.551°	W1° 8.740°
3	N50° 51' 23.313"	W1° 10' 18.565"	N50° 51.389°	W1° 10.309°



Map and coordinates displayed in WGS84, UTM Zone 31 North.

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NOT TO BE USED FOR NAVIGATION.

8. Site summary

The site covers Fareham Creek (also known as Fareham Lake) in the northwestern-most corner of Portsmouth Harbour, where the River Wallington runs into the Harbour. It is considered by local fishermen and Southern IFCA to be an area rich in Native Oyster (*Ostrea edulis*) species and beds. Although no data were initially held by the project to verify either feature, the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust has confirmed the presence of this species by collecting and photographing specimens (see below). Due to the difficulty in identifying potential MCZs for Native Oysters that are not commercially harvested in this region, the site has been selected due to the restriction on shellfish harvesting activities through a recent MMO byelaw. Sheltered muddy gravels also occur within the site.

An emergency byelaw is in place in Portsmouth Harbour to prevent damage to seagrass from bottom gear, and this is currently providing protection for the oysters here; this will become a permanent IFCA byelaw in due course. Other activities are considered to be acceptable according to the available information.

9. Detailed site description

The following is a description of the site based on extracts from literature held by the Balanced Seas Project and stakeholder correspondence. It does not constitute a complete literature review or ecological description of the site.

The site covers Fareham Creek, the northwesternmost tributary into Portsmouth Harbour. The banks of the estuary at Fareham are the only parts of Portsmouth Harbour that are developed and thus retain their natural setting of wooded banks and grassland (Fareham Easy Access Trail, 2011).

Due to the difficulty in identifying potential MCZs for Native Oysters that are not commercially harvested in this region, Fareham Creek was selected due to the current emergency byelaw prohibiting damage to seagrass beds from mobile gear which thus bans shell fish harvesting. The presence of Native Oysters in Fareham Creek was noted by Natural England in its notification concerning the emergency byelaw (Natural England, 2011). In addition the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust carried out a reconnaissance mission to verify the presence of this species in the area (see Figure 1 and FOCI map, below).



Figure 1. Examples of Native Oyster (*Ostrea edulis*) found in Fareham Creek (courtesy of HloWWT)

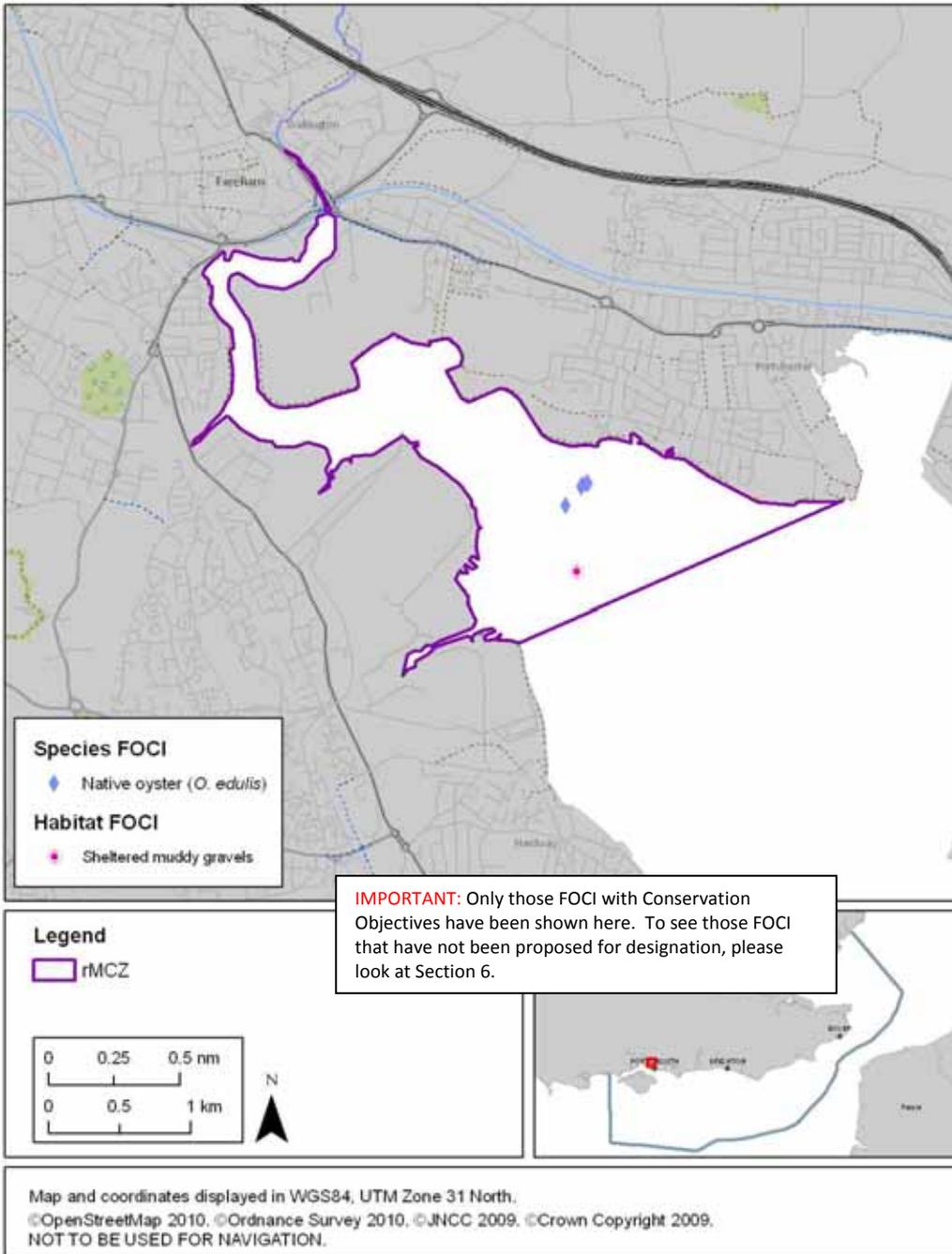
Fareham Creek rMCZ no 24.2

Sheltered muddy gravels are also a habitat FOCI listed for protection in the site, though little is known about the quality or distribution of the feature. There is some concern that dredging activity in the creek might be incompatible with protection of this feature in its recorded location, but it is assumed that its distribution is likely to be more extensive than shown. Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust have provided data to show that tagged grey seals frequent Portsmouth Harbour on a regular basis and so may occur here. This rMCZ is a small part of the larger area (Eastern Solent Harbours) which is one of the Key Inshore Biodiversity Areas in the Balanced Seas Region recommended as an MCZ by the South East England Biodiversity Forum (SEEBF, 2011).

Fareham Creek rMCZ no 24.2

Version: 1.0
Date: Aug 2011

Habitat and Species FOCI Conservation Objectives



Fareham Creek rMCZ no 24.2

10. Site boundary

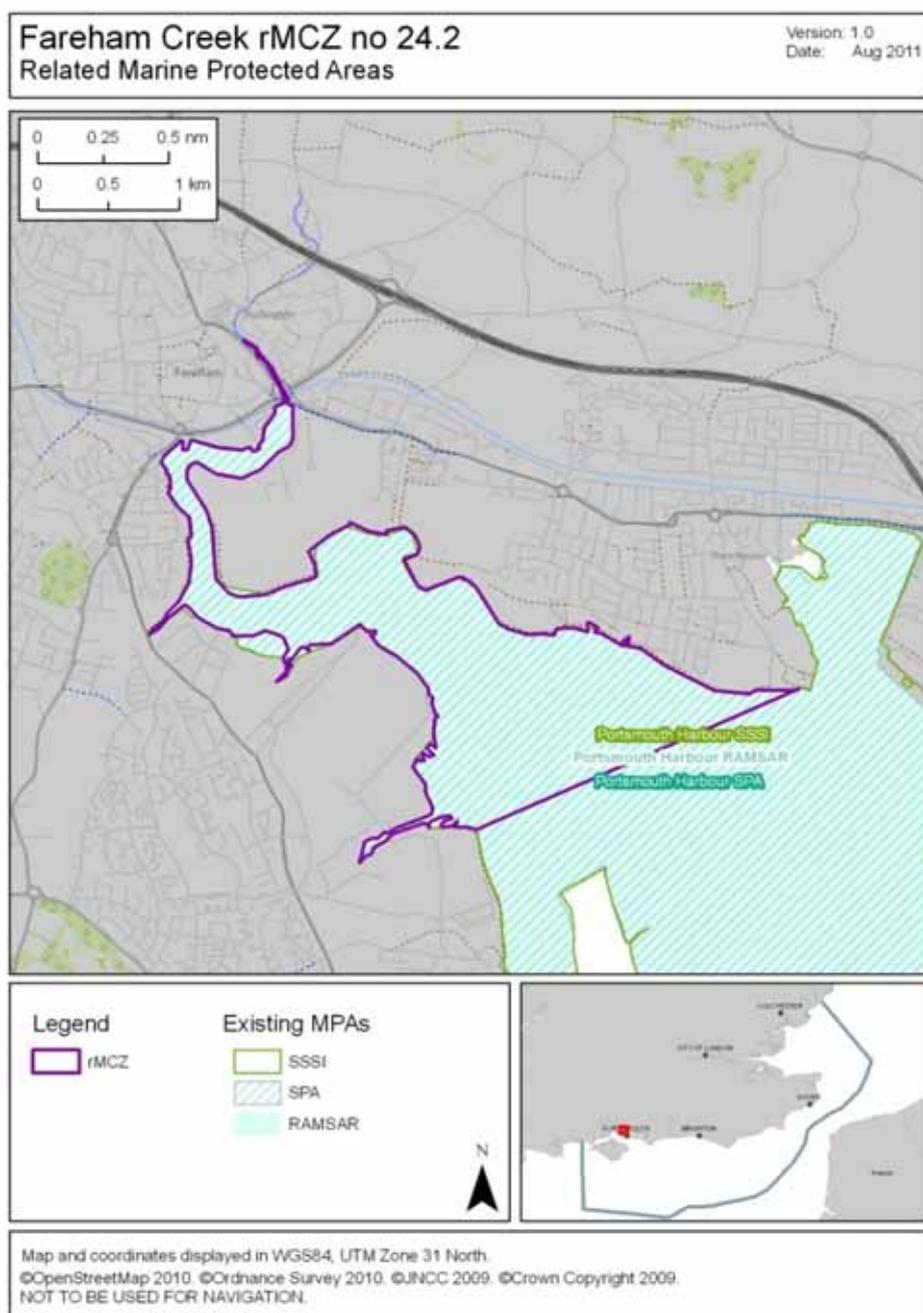
The landward boundary of the site is described by the Mean High Water mark. The seaward boundary is set to run from the Portchester Castle headland on the north west side to Bridgemary on the south east side.

11. Conservation objectives

Individual conservation objective forms for each feature can be found in Appendix 1. For a site-based summary of the conservation objectives and proposed management measures, please see Section 15.

12. Sites to which this site is related

This site is completely contained within the Portsmouth Harbour SSSI, SPA and Ramsar site.



Fareham Creek rMCZ no 24.2

13. Supporting documentation (information relating to ENG features only)

Information	Type of information	Source	Name of survey	Date
Broad-scale habitats	Modelled and survey data	JNCC V.7 Combined UKSeaMap and MESH	Combined	June 2011
Seagrass beds	Survey data	Hampshire and IoW Wildlife Trust		2008-2009
Native Oyster (<i>Ostrea edulis</i>)	Photographic and reconnaissance data	Hampshire and IoW Wildlife Trust	Specific reconnaissance mission	15.06.2011

References (additional information can be found in the Bibliography)

Hampshire County Council. 2011. Fareham Easy Access Trail: A Mile Long Surfaced Path Overlooking Fareham Creek
 Natural England email from DT 24.01.11. Re Site 24.2 – Portsmouth Harbour.
 Natural England. 2010. European Marine Site Risk Review – Solent Site Plan
 Natural England. 2011. The Introduction of an Emergency Byelaw by the Marine Management Organization (MMO) to Protect the Eelgrass Beds of Portsmouth Harbour European Marine Site
 SOUTH EAST ENGLAND BIODIVERSITY FORUM (SEEBF) 2011. *Key Inshore Biodiversity Areas in the Balanced Seas Region for Recommendation as Marine Conservation Zones*. Letter and list to RSG and Balanced Seas Project Team, 22 Nov 2011.

14. Stakeholder support for the site

The RSG as a group reached consensus that this site should be put forward in their final recommendations.

Individual sectors wishing to note their support or concerns about the site recorded the following at the final RSG meeting in August 2011; their comments have been transcribed verbatim from the form that they completed:

SECTOR	ORGANISATION	COMMENT for Fareham Creek rMCZ 24.2
Yachting	RYA	Support subject to continuation of channel and moorings maintenance.
Kite Surfing	British Kite Surfing Association	Good place for a MCZ, current management makes an easy plan for future.
Sea Angling		Portsmouth Harbour. RSA has no problem (maintain agreed).
	Local Fisheries Representatives	No support for seagrass protection through byelaw. Opens the way to foreign invasive species.
Fishing - FPO, beam trawling		I have no real knowledge of this area, or expertise, but fisheries sector overriding principle is that "current activities must be allowed to continue".
Birds	RSPB	Fareham Creek - support.
Wildlife Trusts	Hampshire Wildlife Trust	I support this site but believe it could be bigger. The boundary is based on existing protection so as not to impact further on fishermen.
Marine Ecology	Seasearch	Strongly support this site.
Marine Wildlife	Marine Conservation Society	<u>Support site</u> . Recover CO for all broadscale habitats to protect from bottom towed fishing.

15. Site summary of conservation objectives (COs) and proposed management measures

A conservation objective (CO) is a statement describing the desired quality of the feature. Existing MPAs in the UK use the term *Favourable Condition* to represent the desired state of their features. Some pressures caused by human activities may stop the feature attaining favourable condition if present at sufficient intensity.

MAINTAIN means that, the *stated levels of activity* currently occurring on the feature are considered acceptable, but features will be monitored and restrictions may have to be introduced if the condition declines.

RECOVER means that restrictions may be necessary on the activity causing the pressure, in order to allow the feature to recover to favourable condition. It does not necessarily mean that the activity will be prohibited, as other mitigation measures might be appropriate (e.g. change in gear type, reduction of intensity, seasonal restrictions, etc)

The table below documents the draft COs for ALL the features listed for protection within the site, as established by JNCC and NE through the Vulnerability Assessment (VA) process⁴ and then sense-checked at the national level⁵. Where a RECOVER objective is noted, the associated activity causing the pressure is indicated. In some cases, where information and data warrant it, the RSG chose to adopt the changes to COs recommended by the public authorities: Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs), Marine Management Organisation (MMO), Environment Agency (EA) or Natural England. Changes were only accepted when recommended by these authorities and have been clearly noted. Where the VA has not yet been undertaken, or there is considerable uncertainty surrounding the accuracy of the information being used to recommend a change to the conservation objective, it has been noted as 'TO BE ASSESSED'. Local and regional stakeholders were given the opportunity to comment on the COs and potential management measures and to provide additional information that might not have been taken into account in the VA work.

For greater detail on discussions relating to the site and the network, please refer to both RSG and Local Group stakeholder meeting reports at www.balancedseas.org.

Feature	Draft conservation objective	Activity exerting pressure	IFCA/MMO/EA/NE Comments	Stakeholder comments on draft COs and potential management measures
Native Oyster (<i>Ostrea edulis</i>) beds	MAINTAIN		MMO emergency byelaw currently in place to stop bottom gear in order to protect seagrass; primarily aimed at manila clams but this prevents all towed dredges in the area Will be replaced by an IFCA byelaw and then 12 months after this a review will be completed for all current activities.	RSG expressed concern that maintenance dredging occurs here and might be damaging. There is no assumption that this activity should stop, but it was noted that mitigation may be appropriate within the dredging protocol.
Sheltered muddy gravels	MAINTAIN			
Native Oyster (<i>Ostrea edulis</i>)	MAINTAIN			

⁴ The process of establishing conservation objectives is outlined in the [Conservation Objectives Guidance](#) (JNCC /NE 2011)

⁵ VA results were standardised across all four regional projects but the fisheries activity data is still undergoing assessment.

16. Evolution of the site

A Broad Area of Interest covering the full extent of Portsmouth Harbour was originally proposed in RSG 4 (9.9.10) in response to the Science Advisory Panel's suggestion that insufficient protection was given to the Solent area of the Balanced Seas region. When several of the features suggested for protection were found to be listed under other MPA designations, the BAI was reduced in size to protect the important seagrass bed in Fareham Creek. The BAI was then dropped from the network when it was found that seagrass is listed under the Portsmouth Harbour SPA designation. During an attempt to meet ENG FOC replication targets, the RSG Inshore Task Group (09.02.11) reconsidered Fareham Creek as a good site to protect the Native Oysters, since an emergency MMO byelaw (for the seagrass) prevents mobile gear (e.g. oysters dredgers) from operating in the creek. At that time, only anecdotal evidence existed for the presence of oysters in the Creek, but the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust have since verified the presence of this species in the site.

For greater detail on discussions relating to the site and the network, please refer to both RSG and Local Group stakeholder meeting reports at www.balancedseas.org.

17. Implications for stakeholders

This site was suggested as a good place for the protection of Native Oysters since fishing is currently restricted by the byelaw protecting the seagrass. As such, the site has fairly good support from the stakeholder group, with the existing oyster fishery willing to maintain this fishing restriction.

Issues associated with this site are:

- The channel going up to Fareham requires maintenance dredging that might be incompatible with sheltered muddy gravel FOCI, though this habitat may be more extensive than displayed by the point records.
- The main channel leading up to Bedenham Pier is used by ammunition barges for the MoD, and has a maintained depth of 5.0 metres. The channel is surveyed annually and dredged if necessary (c. every 2 or 3 years).
- Coastal defences may need to be maintained in this site
- The Crown Estate supports the site, noting there is an active cable here and licenses for moorings, outfalls and coastal protection.

This list represents only the major issues associated with the site. To see all stakeholder discussions, please refer to the Balanced Seas RSG and Local Group meeting reports at www.balancedseas.org.