

East Meridian (eastern side) rMCZ no 29.2

Marine Conservation Zone: Selection Assessment Document

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

1. Site name East Meridian (eastern half) rMCZ no 29.2	3. Site surface area 20146 ha 201.46 km ²
2. Site centre location ETRS89 N50 34' 27.850" E0 24' 35.857" N50 34.464' E0 24.598' (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 East Meridian (eastern side)¹

Feature type	Feature name	REC Broad-scale Habitats (L4/L3)	Area ²
Broad-scale habitat	A5.2 Subtidal sand	A4D.92 ME deep circalittoral rock and thin sands	58.67km ²
		A5.27 deep circalittoral sand	
	A5.4 Subtidal mixed sediments	A5.45 deep circalittoral mixed sediments	142.79 km ²
		A4D.94 ME deep circalittoral rock and thin mixed sediments	
Habitat FOCI	Subtidal sands and gravels		47.38 km ²

6. Features within East Meridian (eastern side) not proposed for designation

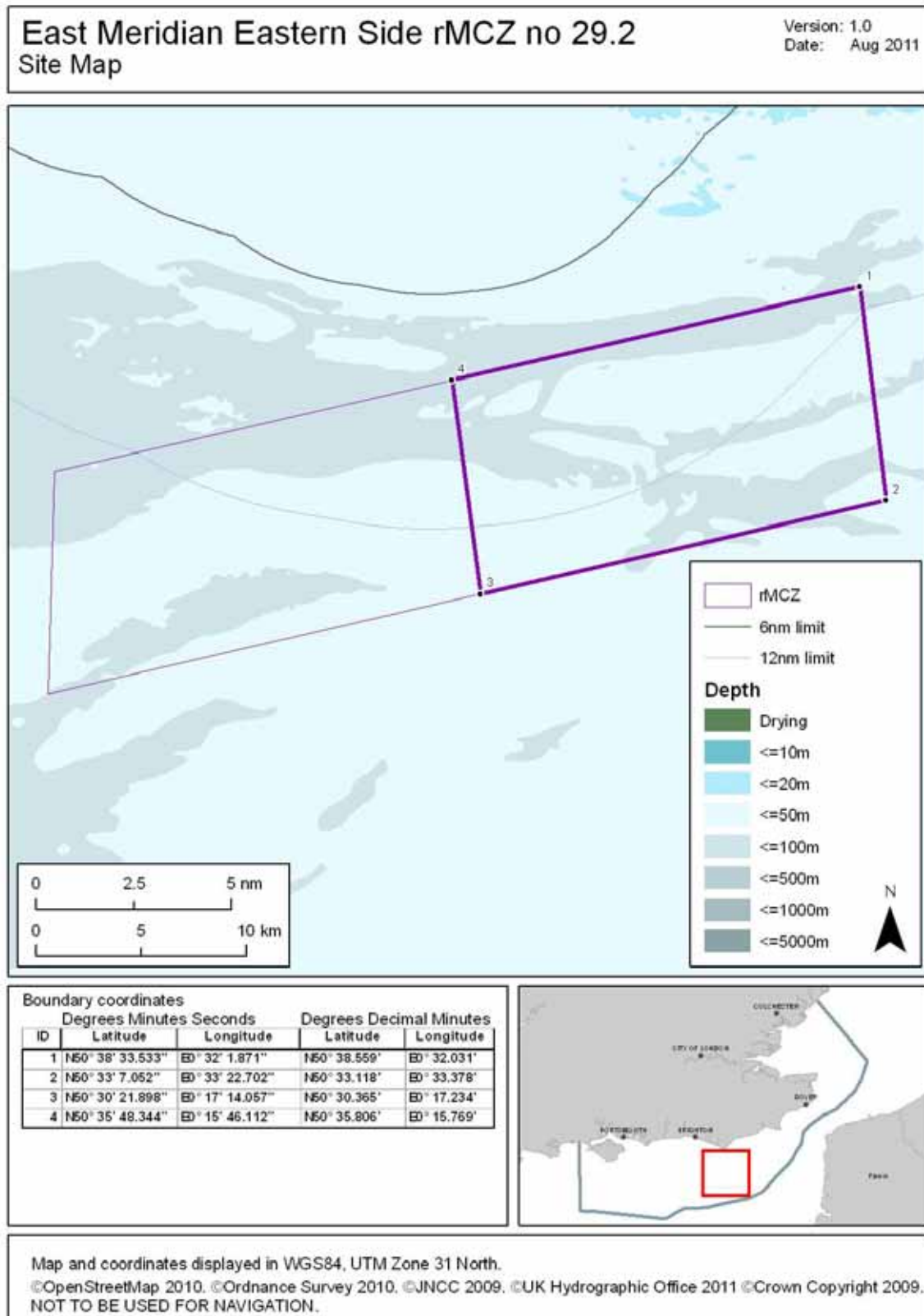
Feature type	Feature name	Comment
Geology	English Channel Outburst Flood feature	Was not identified until after final RSG. As this makes up the majority of the site area, it would be a good site to protect the feature

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

² Areas have been calculated according to spatial GIS data and are indicative only.

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7. Map of site



8. Site summary

This site lies within the inner English Channel shipping lane, to the east of the Greenwich Meridian line of longitude and directly south of Beachy Head. It is the eastern half of rMCZ 29, an option suggested by the RSG to reduce the impact on the fishing fleets which use the area intensively. Lying over the Northern Palaeovalley and Palaeovalley Banks, the geological remnants of the deeper ancient river system, the seabed within the site is comprised of deep circalittoral rock overlain with a thin veneer of either sands or mixed sediments or areas of thicker sands and mixed sediments (See Broad-scale habitats and Geology maps, below.) The area represents the top 10% of benthic Chao 2 species richness, with pelagic data showing the north of the site is higher in biodiversity. Locating the site within the shipping channel has the advantage of reducing (relatively speaking) the amount of human activity that will be associated with the seabed, which, it is hoped, will increase the ecological recovery potential of the site for various marine communities.

The SAP's feedback on the Draft Final Recommendations said that it would be acceptable to decrease the amount of some of the subtidal broad-scale habitats included provided the minimum targets were still met and if this would improve key stakeholder support for sites. The RSG discussed reducing the area of rMCZ 29 but different fishing sectors were impacted by different areas of the site, and the group could not agree a single alteration that suited all sectors. The RSG thus settled on two options: the full extent (rMCZ 29 – see separate site sheet) and this smaller eastern half (rMCZ 29.2).

The draft conservation objectives of this smaller site still have implications for benthic trawling which would need to be reduced; the issues will need to be addressed in the next stage, if this site goes, through as CFP processes will be involved because of the large amount of non-UK fishing in the site and further information is needed on activities, particularly scallop dredging. Subtidal sands and gravels were added as a feature at the last RSG meeting and await the vulnerability assessment. The geological feature was not identified in the site until after the RSG final meeting but is likely not to have additional implications for management if it were incorporated into the list of features for protection.

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.

A proposal for a site in this approximate location was made in April 2011 by the South East England Biodiversity Forum (SEEBF) in order to meet shortfall subtidal broad-scale habitats, incorporate the finer-scale REC habitats of the Eastern English Channel Synthesis Study, include areas of high biodiversity, increase the average viability of sites in the region and improve the level of connectivity between them (SEEBF MCZ Proposal 18.04.2011).

During the RSG discussion (RSG Meeting 9A, May 2010), the location and shape of the site were adjusted in an attempt to meet similar levels of habitat complexity, biodiversity and connectivity, whilst minimising the overlap with some of the most heavily fished areas in the region. The site was thus reshaped to lie within the inner shipping channel (see Figure 1), as this was thought to naturally reduce the number of additional activities occurring in the vicinity. Furthermore, the Science Advisory Panel had encouraged the RSG to investigate placing MCZs in shipping channels, given that ecological benefits to fish stocks had resulted from other MPAs placed in similar locations.

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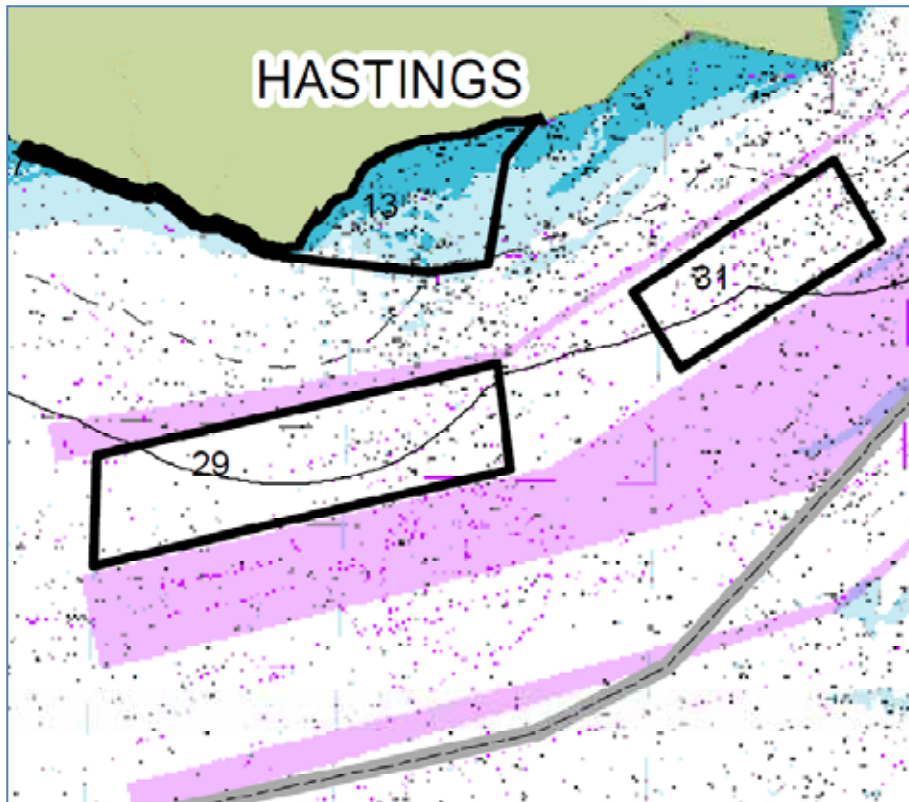


Figure 1. Positioning of rMCZ 29, 29.2 (separate boundary not shown) and rMCZ 31 in relation to the shipping channels and traffic separation marks (pink areas)

In its current location, using the UKSeaMap/MESH (v7 JNCC) EUNIS Level 3 habitat map, this rMCZ is made up of subtidal sand and subtidal mixed sediments (see Broad-scale habitats map). This EUNIS Level 3 habitat definition is the result of 'back translating' the reclassified finer-scale habitats from the MALSf-funded seabed surveys (REC data: James *et al.* 2010, 2011) into the broader ENG habitat classifications, which generally gives a coarser definition of the seabed³.

Data from the MALSf English Channel Synthesis Regional Environmental Characterisation data (REC, James *et al.* 2011), shows that the site consists of four finer-scale EUNIS Level 4 habitats, including both thick sediment depositions (where the site overlaps the palaeovalley) and areas of moderate energy circalittoral rock that is covered with a thin veneer of sands or mixed sediments (see REC EUNIS Level 4 map). National contract data (Seeley *et al.* 2010 DEFRA MB102 2C) show that subtidal sands and gravels occur across the southern half of the site. (see FOCI map). The Environment Agency collated and analysed biotope data from grab sample and core sample records from various sediment surveys in the region, but samples from the site did not highlight particular richness. The site lies just outside the belt of highest pelagic richness just to the north of the site, where thermal fronts are persistent throughout the year) as shown in the national contract data for pelagic biodiversity.

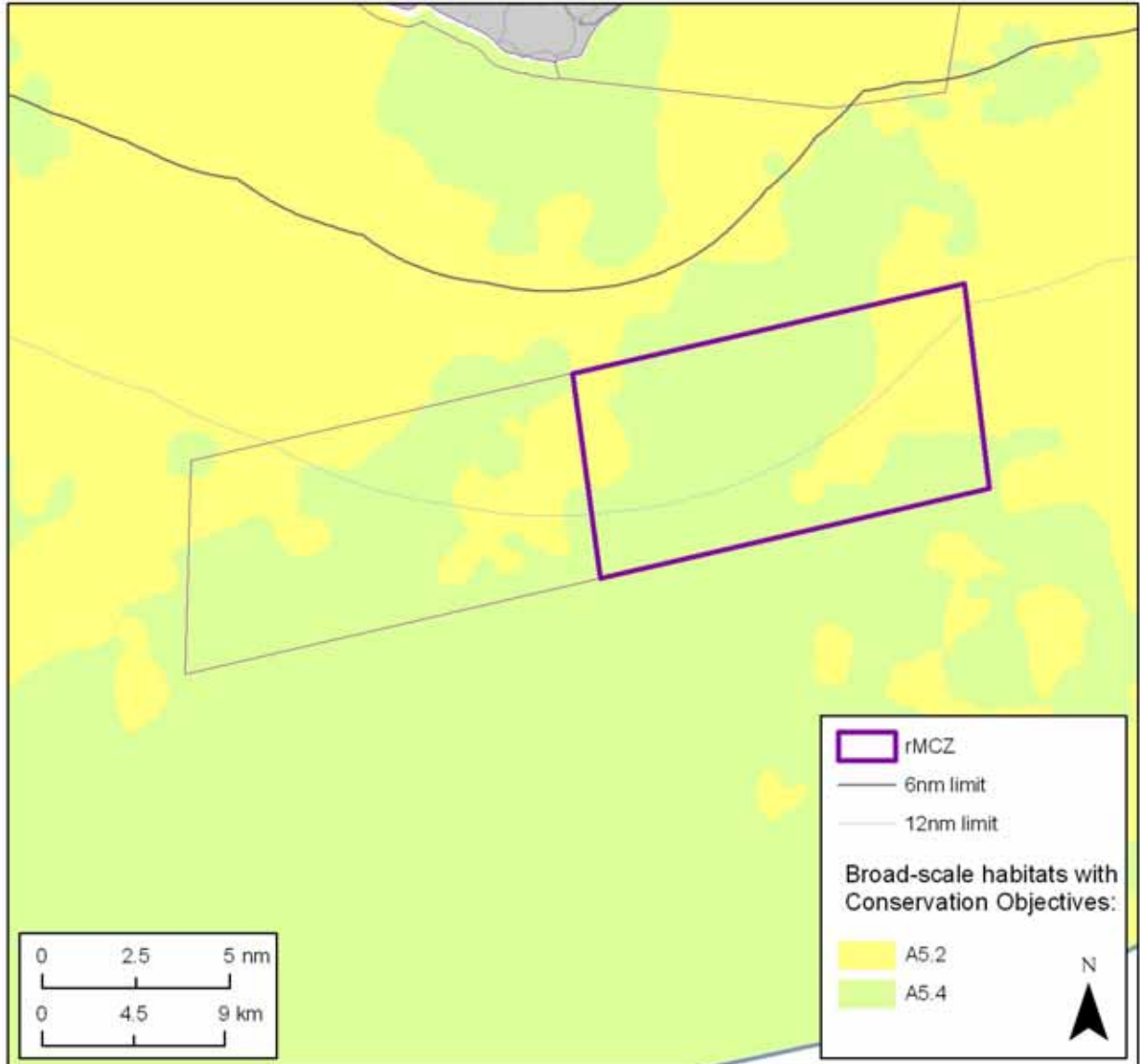
From the national contract data (Natural England, Brooks *et al.* 2009), the majority of the site's seabed shows geomorphological evidence of the Eastern English Channel Outburst Flood, the presence of which was not recognised in time to allow stakeholder discussions to select it as a feature for protection should they have wished to. Since this is perhaps the site which captures the greatest extent of the feature in the Balanced Seas region, and the RSG have selected the feature in several other sites without adverse effects to any particular stakeholder sector, this feature could be considered for protection if the site goes forward.

³ Please see the Final Recommendations report for a more detailed explanation of how these datasets have been used.

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Broad-scale habitats (EUNIS Level 3) with Conservation Objectives



Broad-scale habitats with Conservation Objectives:
- A5.2 subtidal sand
- A5.4 subtidal mixed sediments

IMPORTANT: Only those broad-scale habitats with Conservation Objectives have been shown here. To see those habitats that have not been proposed for designation, please look at Section 6.



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

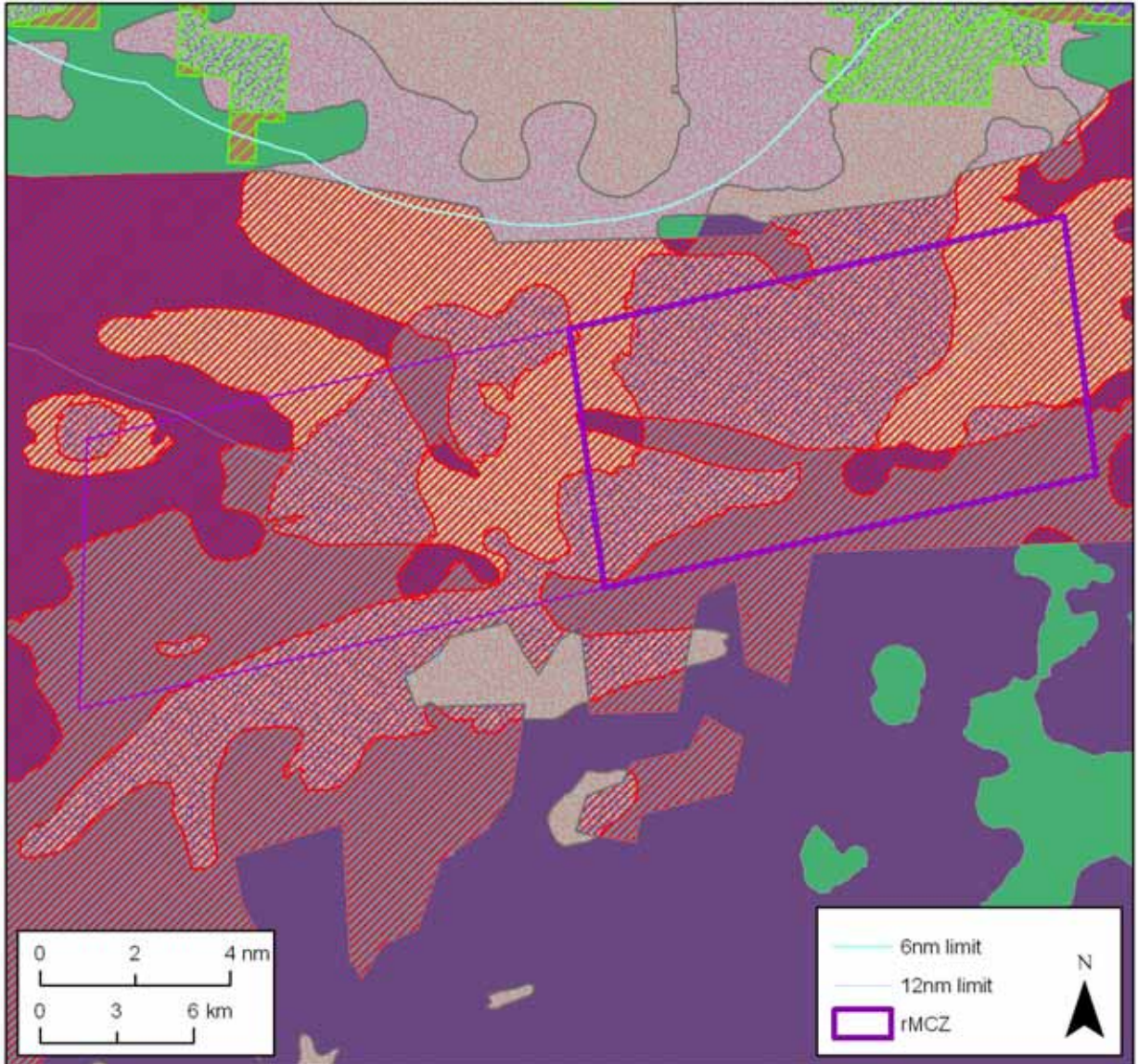
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Broad-scale habitat (reclassified EUNIS Level 4 from REC data)



Broad-scale habitat (reclassified EUNIS Level 4 from REC data)

-  A4D.92 : Moderate energy deep circalittoral rock and thin sands
-  A4D.94 : Moderate energy deep circalittoral rock and thin mixed sediments
-  A5.27 : Deep Circalittoral sand
-  A5.45 : Deep circalittoral mixed sediments

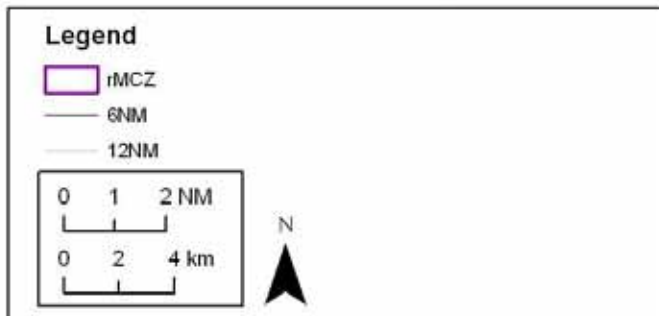
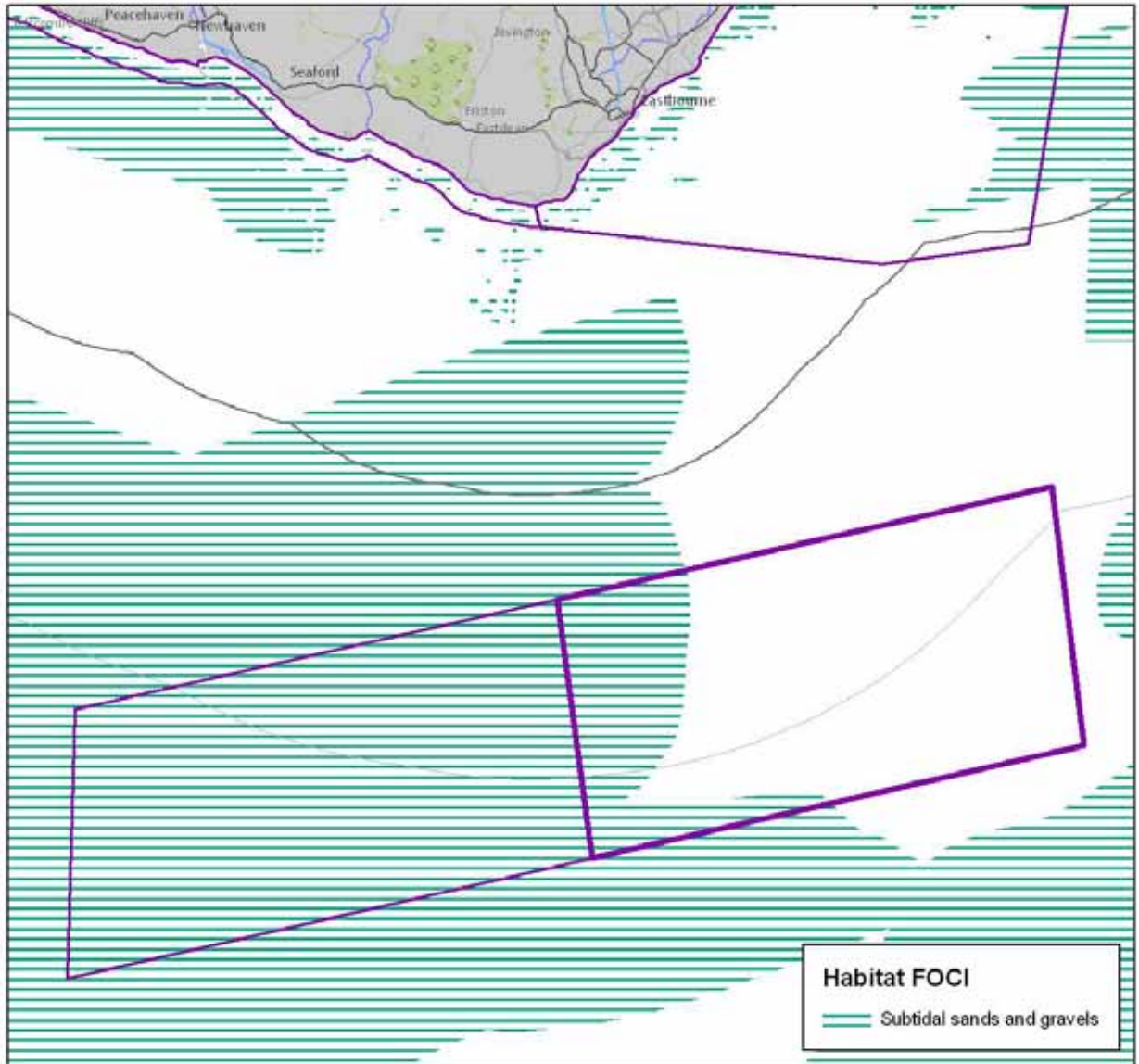


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Habitat and Species FOCI with Conservation Objectives



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

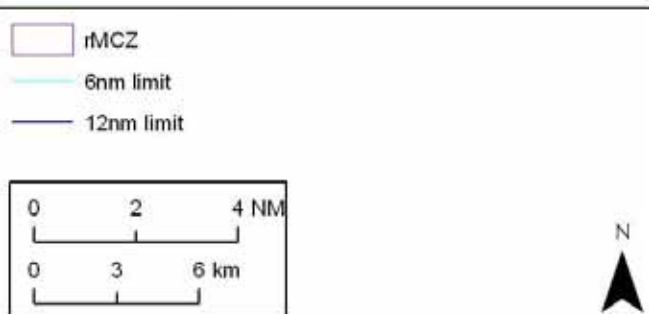
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Geology



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10. Site boundary

The site boundary has been drawn to align with the shipping lane. The eastern boundary has at the point at which the shipping lane alters course. The western boundary runs parallel to the eastern boundary, with the north-western corner being due south of Beachy Head. The site lies partly within 6 naut mi and partly within the area 6-12 naut mi which has implications for management.

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 not associated with any existing designation.

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	Multiple	June 2011
Broad-scale Habitats	Modelled data	MALSF REC	Synthesis study of Central and Eastern English Channel	2011
Subtidal sands and gravels	Survey	National contract data, DEFRA MB102 2C		Jan-Sept 2008
Geology	Literature search	National Contract Data. DEFRA MB102 2A	Mapping of Geological and Geomorphological Features	2009

References (additional information can be found in the bibliography)

- BROOKS, A.J., ROBERTS, H. KENYON, N.H. & HOUGHTON, A.J. 2009. *Accessing and Developing the Required Biophysical dataset and Data Layers for Marine Protected Areas Network Planning and Wider Marine Spatial Planning Purposes. Report No 8 Task 2A: Mapping of Geological and Geomorphological Features*. DEFRA, London.
- James, J W C, Pearce, B, Coggan, R A, Leivers, M. Clark, R W E, Plim, J F, Hill, J M, Arnott, S H L, Bateson, L, De-Burgh Thomas, A and, Baggaley, P A. 2011. The MALSF synthesis study in the central and eastern English Channel. British Geological Survey Open Report OR/11/01. 158pp. Published by MALSF.
- James, J W C, Pearce, B, Coggan, R A, Arnott, S H L, Clark, R W E, Plim, J F, Pinnion, J, Barrio Frójan, C, Gardiner, J P, Morando, A, Baggaley, P A, Scott, G, Bigourdan, N (2010) The South Coast Regional Environmental Characterisation. British Geological Survey Open Report OR/09/51. 249pp. Published by MALSF.
- SEEBF MCZ proposal 18.04.2011. SEEBF Recommendation for an additional MCZ off the coast of Sussex
- SEELEY, B., HIGGS, S., LEAR, D., EVANS, J., NEILLY, M., CAMPBELL, M., WILKES, P., ADAMS, L., 2010. *Accessing and Developing the Required Biophysical Dataset and Data Layers for Marine Protected Areas Network Planning and Wider Marine Spatial Planning Purposes. Report No 16: Mapping of Protected Habitats (MB102 Task 2C)*. DEFRA, London.

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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: (Note that these comments must be read in association with the description of the larger option for this area: rMCZ 29 East Meridian. Comments have been transcribed verbatim from the form that they completed)

SECTOR	ORGANISATION	COMMENT for East Meridian (eastern side) rMCZ 29.2
Yachting	RYA	Stronger support for 29.2 only.
Kite Surfing	British Kite Surfing Association	Confidence higher for 29.2 than 29.1, however as 29.2 is less contentious there would be a higher chance of designation if this was the only site available. 29 as a whole will more than likely be rejected for high opposition.
Sea Angling		29.2 East Meridian has more support from the offshore fleet, not a lot of interest to RSA.
	Local Fisheries Representatives	29 No support. 29.2 Least worst option. Low support.
Fishing - FPO, beam trawling		29 No support for any of this site, extremely contentious, for UK and foreign interests. 29.1 No support. 29.2 Some support for this area by UK and French, if SW corner of this area is taken out.
Birds	RSPB	East Meridian - support larger site rather than 29.2 because larger site captures more biodiversity and smaller site doesn't get full support from all sectors.
Wildlife Trusts	Hampshire Wildlife Trust	I support the full 29 above the reduced 29.2, with the recovery CO. This site has already been moved for socioeconomics.
Marine Wildlife	Marine Conservation Society	<u>Support site.</u> Recover CO for all broadscale habitats to recover from bottom towed fishing.
French Fishing industry	CRPMEM Nord - Pas de Calais / Picardie	We are strongly against this site, very important for the French fleet (trawling and dredging activity from Boulogne-sur-Mer and Dunkirk (40-45 vessels) and from Haute Normandie). Option 29.2 is clearly better but still impacting the fleet from Boulogne-sur-Mer. In the Conservation Aims paper (version 1 August 2011), you have to add "the Dutch, Belgian, UK and French fishing fleets strongly oppose this site". My sector can support the 29.2's area option but cannot absolutely support the 29.1. A lot of scallops dredgers (about 40) used to fish between February to May in this area
Dutch fishing industry	VisNed	1. Strongly opposed. 2. See 9.

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.

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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.

NB: Due to the structure of information used in the Vulnerability Assessment for offshore sites, in this site the RECOVER CO for *benthic trawling* is likely to include *shellfish harvesting in the form of scallop dredging*. The demersal fishing activity layer did not differentiate between bottom trawls and dredges and so RECOVER should be applied to both activities. Further analysis will be conducted on the breakdown of activity to inform the Impact Assessment.

Feature	Draft CO	Activity Exerting Pressure	MMO Comments	Stakeholder comments
A5.2 Subtidal Sand	RECOVER	Fishing - benthic trawling (bottom gear)	From 6-12 nm, would be Prohibition Order and CFP agreement Beyond 12nm would be CFP alone	
A5.4 Subtidal mixed sediments	RECOVER	Fishing - benthic trawling (bottom gear)	From 6-12 nm, would be Prohibition Order and CFP agreement Beyond 12nm would be CFP alone	
Subtidal sands and gravels	Not assessed	This feature was discussed in the time available, but was noted as a question mark in the list of features for protection. Given that it represents a very similar habitat type to the existing broad-scale habitats for protection, it has been included in this list by default, but no vulnerability assessment has been undertaken. However, discussions with NE suggest that the conservation objectives are likely to be the same as above.		
English Channel Outburst Flood Feature	Not assessed	This feature was not discussed by the RSG. Further stakeholder discussion would be necessary to include this feature if it presented socio-economic implications		

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

In April 2011 by the South East England Biodiversity Forum (SEEBF) proposed a site in this general area in order to meet shortfall subtidal broad-scale habitats, incorporate the finer-scale REC habitats of the Eastern English Channel Synthesis Study, include areas of high biodiversity, increase the average viability of sites in the region and improve the level of connectivity between them (SEEBF MCZ Proposal).

During stakeholder discussions in RSG 9A (May 2011), the location and shape of the site were adjusted in an attempt to meet similar levels of habitat complexity, biodiversity and connectivity, whilst minimising the overlap with some of the most heavily fished areas in the region. The site was thus reshaped to lie within the inner shipping channel, as this was thought to naturally reduce the number of additional activities occurring in the vicinity, and because the Science Advisory Panel had encouraged the RSG to investigate placing MCZs in shipping channels, given the ecological benefits to fish stocks that had resulted from other MPAs placed in similar locations.

The SAP's feedback on the Draft Final Recommendations said that it would be acceptable to decrease the amount of some of the subtidal broad-scale habitats included provided the minimum targets were still met (they suggested 2% over the minimum target would be acceptable) where improved seabed habitat data (i.e. REC data) had been used and if by doing this, it would improve key stakeholder support for individual sites and the network as a whole. Using this rationale, the RSG discussed reducing the area of this site at its meeting in July 2011. However, different fishing sectors were impacted by different areas of the site, and the group could not agree a single alteration that suited all sectors. The RSG thus proposed three options – the full site; the western half; and the eastern half– with the suggestion that the Impact Assessment should demonstrate the different socio-economic impact of each option. At their final meeting (2/3 Aug 2011), the RSG determined that only two options were necessary for the final recommendations as there was no support for the third. The two options are: the full extent (rMCZ 29 – see separate site sheet) and this smaller eastern half (rMCZ 29.2).

17. Implications for stakeholders

The issues associated with this site are:

- The location of this site very close to the Rampion wind farm which increases the area of seabed that will be effectively off limits to the trawling sector
- Despite the fact that the Fisheries Minister has gone on record to say that any fisheries restrictions will apply to both UK and international fleets equally, the UK fishing fleet have stated that they will not support offshore sites located between 6-12 nautical miles because there is a possibility that UK vessels will be unfairly disadvantaged if sites are designated through UK legislation prior to being agreed through the Common Fisheries Policy.
- UK fishing fleet would prefer this site go forward in place of rMCZ 29.
- The French and Belgian fleets also use this area intensively but seasonally, and the French Normandy fleet have stated that they would prefer this site in place of rMCZ 29.

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.