

Norris to Ryde rMCZ no 19

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 Norris to Ryde rMCZ no 19 Contains Wootton Old Mill Pond rRA no 16 and Kings Quay rRA no 17	3. Site surface area 1982 ha 19.82km ²
2. Site centre location ETRS89 N50 44' 48.400" W1 11' 49.158" N50 44.807' W1 11.819' (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 Norris to Ryde ¹

Feature type	Feature name	Area / No. of records ²
Broad-scale habitats	A5.3 subtidal mud	11.37 km ²
Habitat FOCI	Seagrass beds	0.5km ² and 7917 records
Species FOCI Low mobility	Tentacled Lagoon Worm (<i>Alkmaria romijni</i>)	14 records

6. Features within Norris to Ryde rMCZ not proposed for designation ³

Feature type	Feature name	Comments
Broad-scale habitats	A2.1 intertidal coarse sediment	Not the primary feature of interest
	A2.2 Intertidal sand and muddy sand	Protected by Solent and Southampton Water SPA, Solent Maritime SAC and Ryde Sands and Wootton Creek SSSI, Kings Quay SSSI
	A2.3 intertidal mud	Partial protection by Solent and Southampton Water SPA, Solent Maritime SAC, Kings Quay Shore SSSI and Ryde to Wootton Creek SSSI. Small amount of habitat occurs outside of the sites.
	A2.4 intertidal mixed sediments	Not the primary feature of interest
	A2.5 coastal saltmarshes/saline reedbeds	Protected in Solent Maritime SAC, Kings Quay SSSI and Solent and Southampton Water SPA
	A2.6 intertidal sediments (aquatic angiosperms)	Protected by Solent Maritime SAC and Ryde Sands and Wootton Creek SSSI
	A5.1 subtidal coarse sediment	Not the primary feature of interest
	A5.2 subtidal sand	Partially protected by Solent Maritime SAC, majority of habitat outside of SAC
	A5.4 subtidal mixed sediments	Partially protected by Solent Maritime SAC
	A5.5 Subtidal macrophyte-dominated sediment	Fully protected by Solent Maritime SAC
	Mosaic of A2.3, A2.5	Protected by Solent Maritime SAC but does not occur in the MCZ
Habitat FOCI	Native oyster beds	Widespread throughout but not good place for protection
	Seagrass beds	Partially protected in the Solent Maritime SAC and Ryde to Wootton Creek SSSI and proposed for designation in areas of rMCZ outside these MPAs (see table above)
	Sheltered muddy gravels	Protected within Solent Maritime SAC
	Subtidal sands and gravels	Protected within Solent Maritime SAC
Species FOCI	Native Oyster (<i>Ostrea edulis</i>)	Widespread throughout but not good place for protection
Species FOCI High mobility	European Eel (<i>Anguilla anguilla</i>)	Not thought an appropriate site
	Smelt (<i>Osmerus eperlanus</i>)	Not a good place for protection
	Undulate Ray (<i>Raja undulata</i>)	Occur throughout but not appropriate

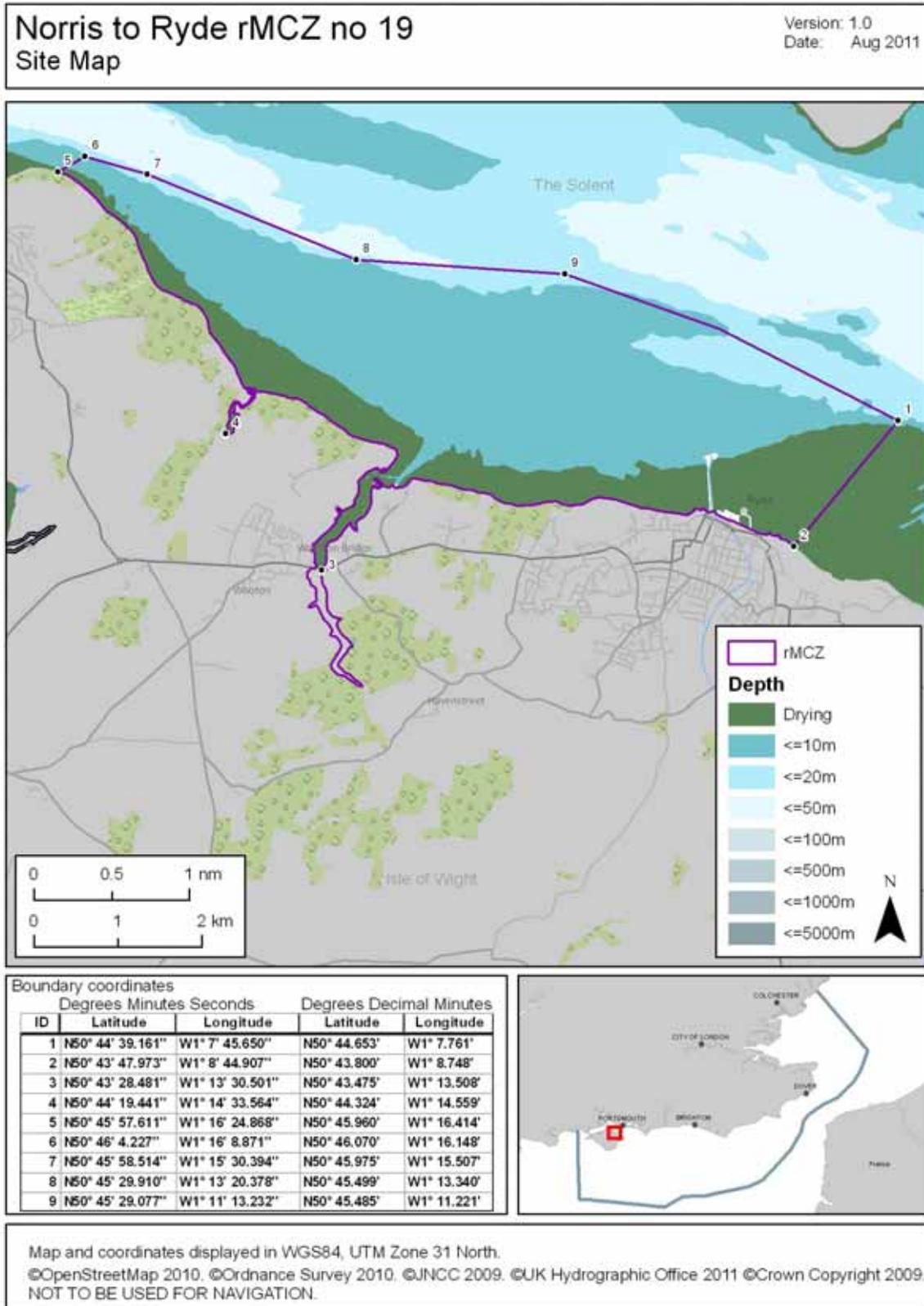
¹ Sources of information relating to these features are listed in Section 13.

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

Norris to Ryde rMCZ no 19

7. Map of site



8. Site summary

The site covers the southern stretch of the Solent adjacent to the northeast coast of the Isle of Wight, stretching from just north of Norris Castle to the widest part of Ryde Sands. The main feature of the site is its subtidal mud, which extends almost throughout the site and is considered to be the best example of this habitat in the region. Extensive areas of seagrass (*Zostera noltii* and *Z. marina*) occur along the greater part of the intertidal drying areas of the site. This seagrass bed, taking the site as a whole, is considered one of the best examples in the Solent. At the neck of Wootton Creek, the Old Mill Pond contains the highest density of Tentacled Lagoon Worm (*Alkmaria romijni*) in the region, considered by the Wildlife Trusts as being the best example in the country. This site is also home to notable Mantis Shrimp warrens and Neolithic archaeological remains.

The draft conservation objectives for subtidal mud and seagrass in this site have implications for a number of activities including benthic trawling, potting, shellfish harvesting, recreational anchoring and bait digging (although for the latter overlap with features is considered to be unlikely and a code of conduct drawn up between the Isle of Wight sea anglers and Natural England is already in place). For the other activities, there is great concern about potential future restrictions and so this site should be taken forward in close consultation with the sectors concerned. Wootton Old Mill Pond would require no further management for the Tentacled Lagoon Worm. Other current 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 the southern stretch of the Solent adjacent to the northeast coast of the Isle of Wight, stretching from just north of Norris Castle to the widest part of Ryde Sands. The site boundaries encompass an intertidal and subtidal stretch of the southern Solent adjacent to the northeast coastline of the IOW, relatively sheltered from the fast tidal currents that occur around the rest of the island.

According to the UKSeaMap/MESH data (JNCC 2011 v.7), the site contains subtidal mud throughout the majority of the site and is considered the best example of this habitat in the region (Balanced Seas RSG Meeting Report 6, January, 2011) due to the sheltered nature of this stretch of coastline, ideal for this type of habitat (see Broad-scale habitats map.) Extensive seagrass beds (*Zostera noltii* and *Z. marina*) range from the intertidal to 4m below chart datum (Hants & IoW Wildlife Trust data) throughout the entire length of the site (see FOCI map). Recent surveys by the Wildlife Trust have mapped the subtidal edge of the seagrass more precisely, which will assist in the establishment of management measures (see Figure 1). These beds are considered to be the best example in the region and thus regionally important (Wildlife Trusts, Solent/Sussex/South Kent Inshore Task Group Meeting Report, December, 2010). As such, a Reference Area has been recommended at King's Quay to protect this feature (see rRA 17 King's Quay).

The highest density population of Tentacled Lagoon Worms (*Alkmaria romijni*) occurs within the tide mill pond at the head of Wootton Creek (Environment Agency data), which the Wildlife Trusts consider this to be the best population in the whole of the UK (Solent/IOW/Hampshire Local Group Meeting Report 4, April, 2011). The full extent of Wootton Creek, a salt marsh creek extending inland with variable tidal regimes incorporating the historic tide mill pond (Wootton Old Mill Pond), is included in the boundaries in order to capture this population and has also been recommended as a Reference Area (see rRA 16 Wootton Old Mill Pond).

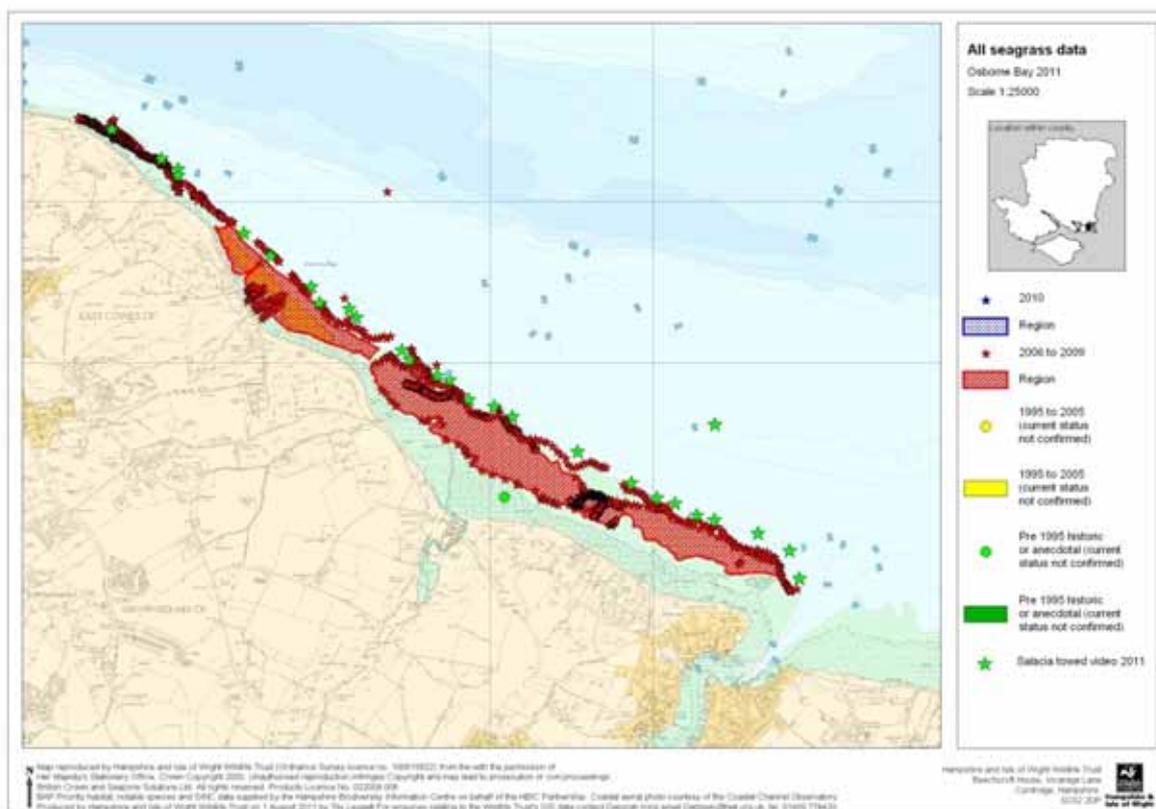


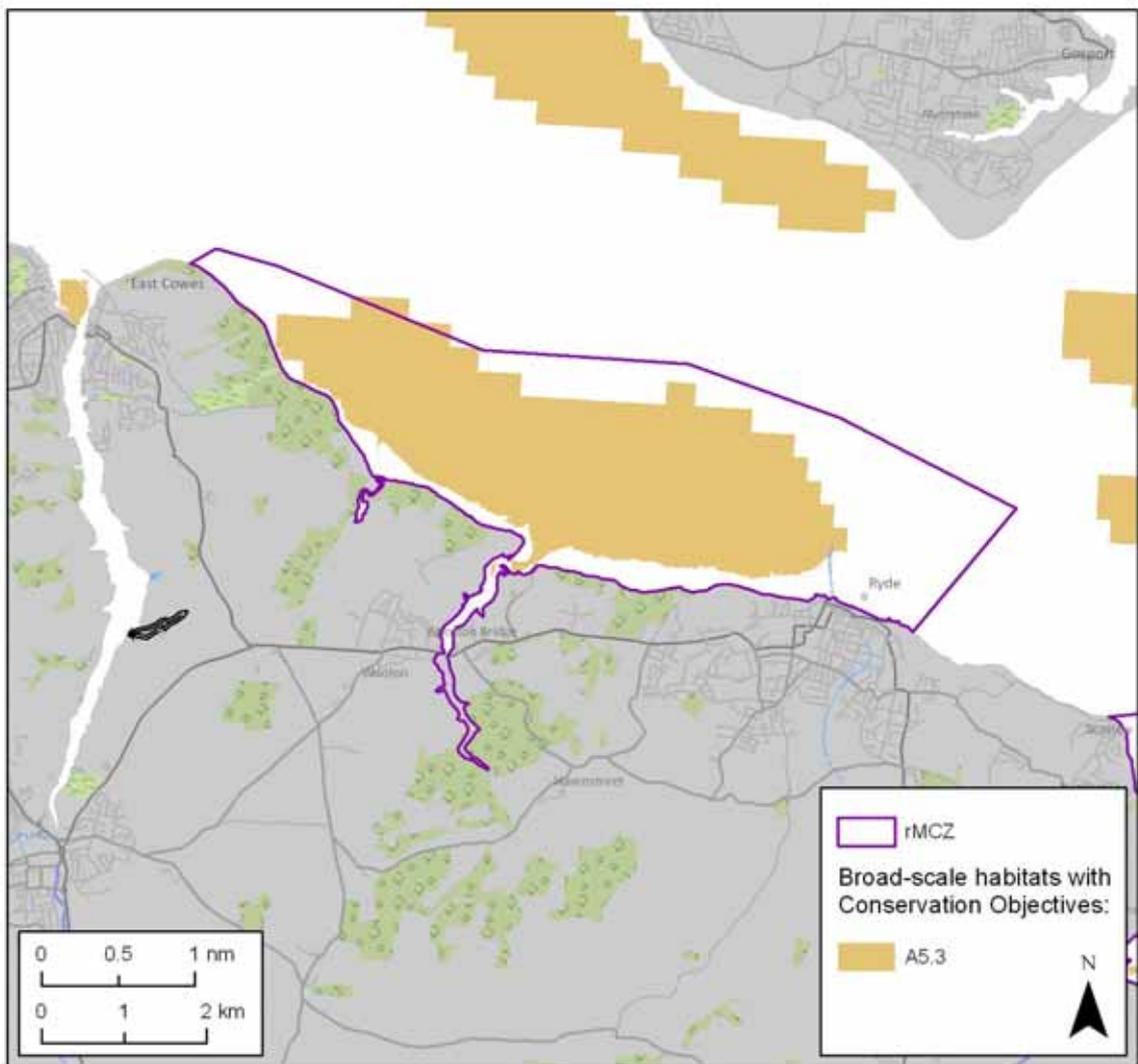
Figure 1. Extent of seagrass beds surveyed by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (2011).

The Wildlife Trusts have collated spatial data for a number of features they consider to be of regional importance in the southeast (see Southeast Features map). This site is one of the few recorded areas in the region to contain Mantis Shrimp and Wildlife Trust surveys have revealed high densities occurring within the western part of the site, which they believe this may be a breeding population and of regional importance (Wildlife Trusts, Balanced Seas IOW Sites Meeting Report, February, 2011). The site 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, 2010). The RSPB has information showing that the Solent and Southampton Water support foraging areas for a range of seabirds, including some arctic breeding birds, such as red-throated diver, found at the southern edge of their range (EMU Ltd, 2010). Birds using this rMCZ specifically include Black Headed Gull, Common Tern, Great Cormorant, Mediterranean Gull and Sandwich Tern.

Neolithic remains were found during the Wootton - Quarr Survey, with archaeological material present throughout the area between King's Quay and Ryde Pier. The remains of neolithic exposures were found in the mouth of Wootton Creek, and are thought to also occur underneath the sand at Ryde Beach. Many are intertidal features such as post alignments, peats and recumbent trees but there are indications that there may be some subtidal remains yet to be uncovered (IOW Maritime Archaeology Unit, Balanced Seas IOW Site Meeting Report, February, 2011)

Norris to Ryde rMCZ no 19
 Broad-scale habitats (EUNIS Level 3) with Conservation Objectives

Version: 1.0
 Date: Aug 2011



Broad-scale habitats with Conservation Objectives:
 - A5.3 subtidal mud

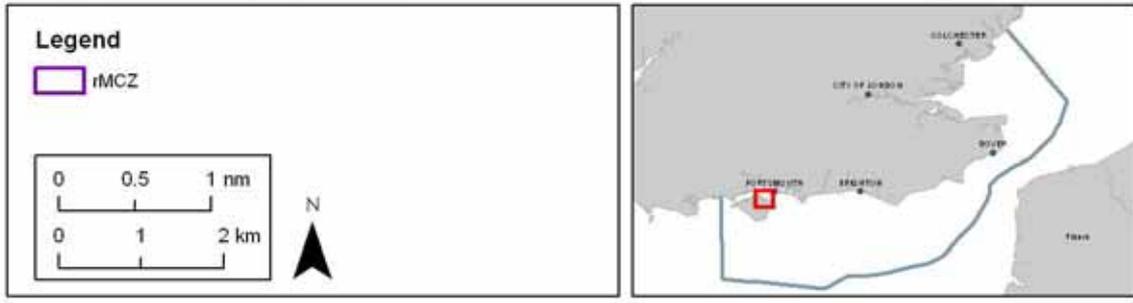
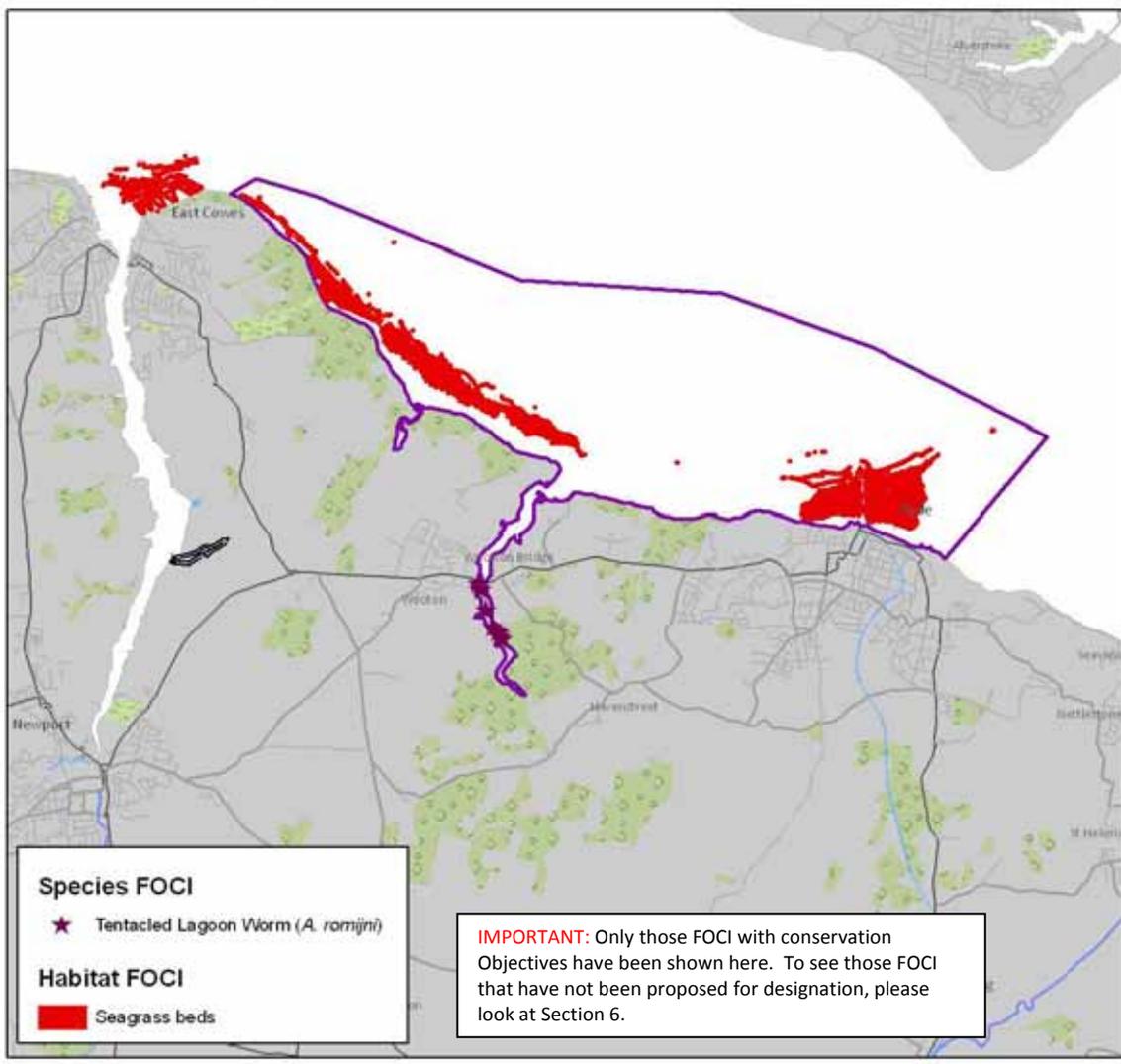
IMPORTANT: Only those broad-scale habitats with Conservation Objectives have been shown here. To see those habitats that have not been proposed for designation, please look at Section 6.



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 NOT TO BE USED FOR NAVIGATION.

Norris to Ryde rMCZ no 19
 Habitat and Species FOCI Conservation Objectives

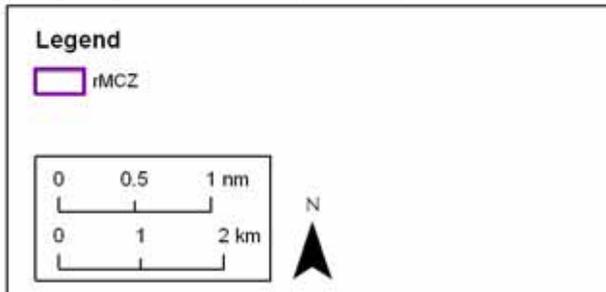
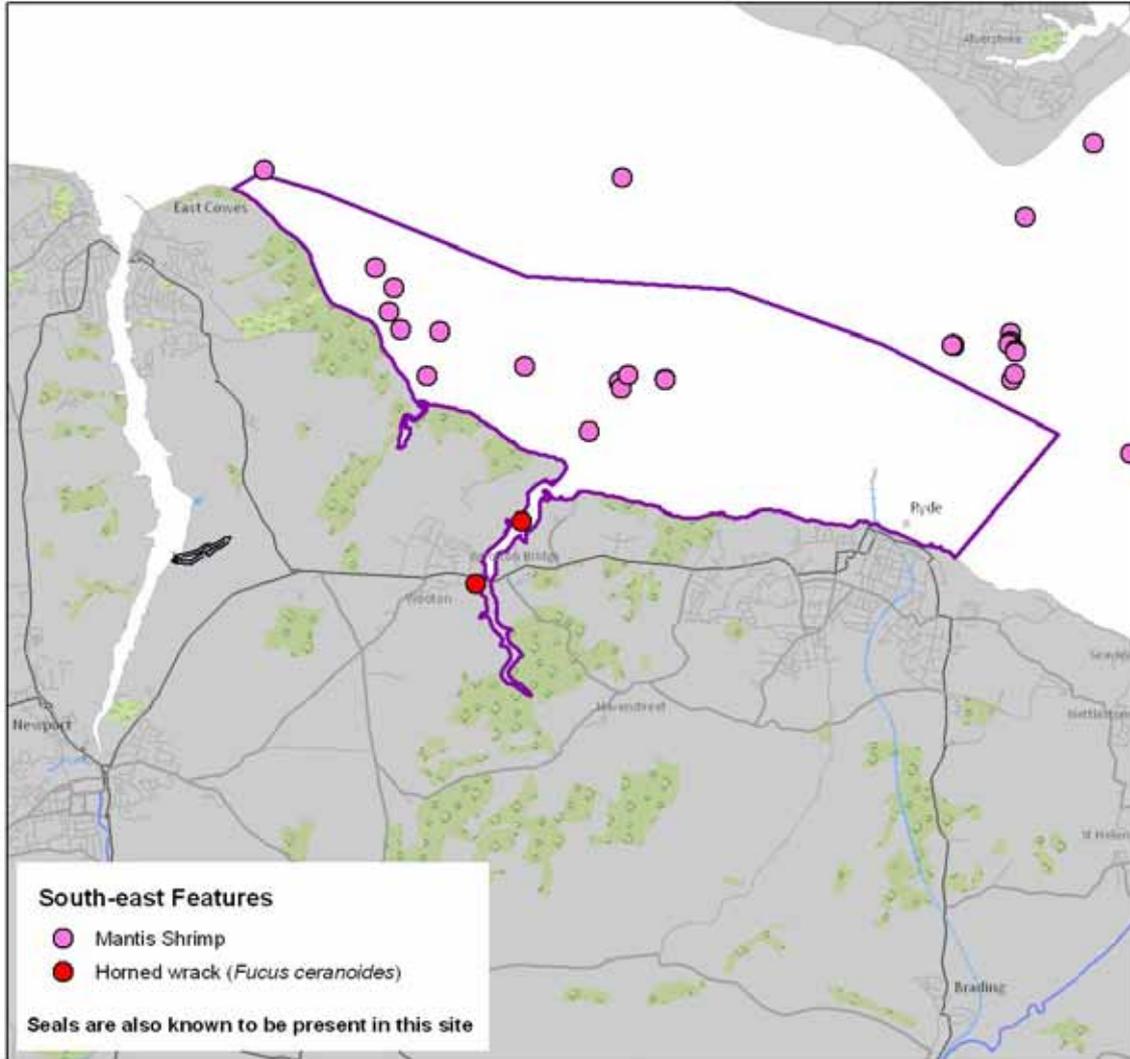
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South-east Features

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10. Site boundary

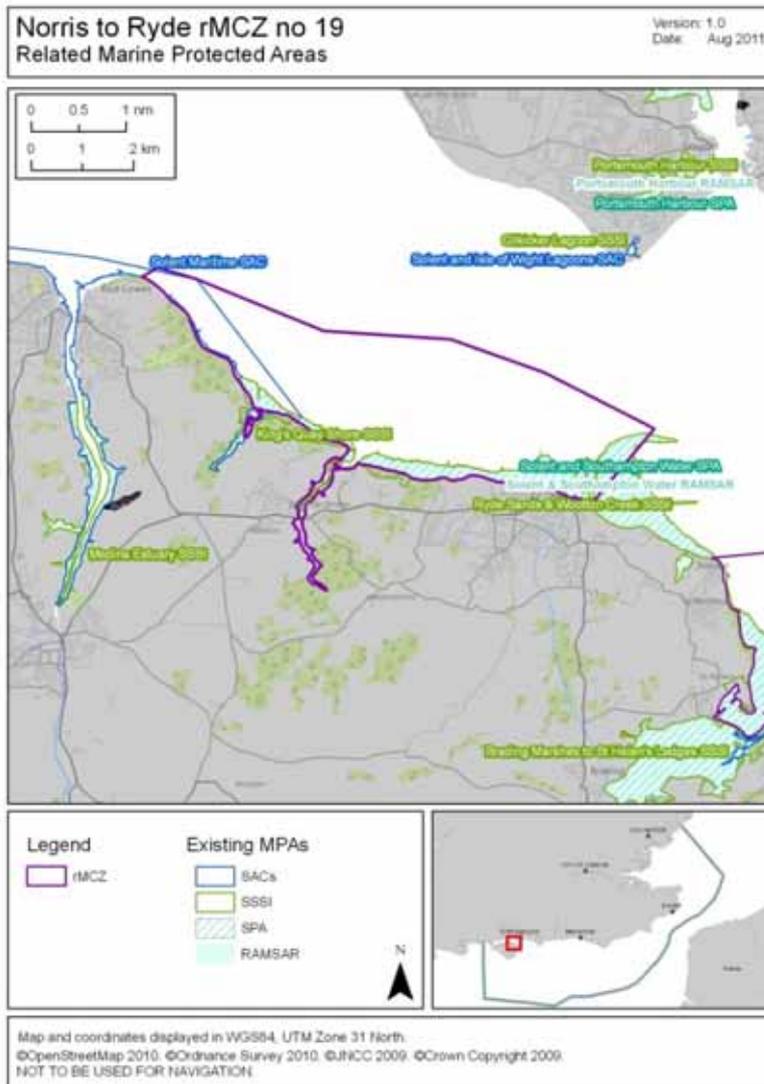
The landward boundary of the site is described primarily by the Mean High Water mark just north of Norris Castle south to the midpoint of Ryde Beach. At Wootton Creek, the boundary extends beyond MHW and follows the extent of Wootton Old Mill Pond, where the population of Tentacled Lagoon Worm occurs. From Norris Castle point, the seaward boundary follows several navigational buoys that demarcate the 10m depth zone, avoiding the main dredging channel, and ends at the point at which this contour meets Ryde Sands. The boundary then extends directly shorewards to Ryde Beach.

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 partially overlaps with: the Solent Maritime SAC; Kings Quay Shore SSSI, Medina Estuary SSSI and Ryde Sands and Wootton Creek SSSI; and Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar site.



Norris to Ryde rMCZ no 19

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

Information	Type of information	Source	Name of survey	Date
Broad-scale habitats	Modelled data	JNCC V.7 Combined UKSeaMap and MESH	Combined	June 2011
Native oyster beds	Survey	National contract data DEFRA MB102 2C		01/01/2009
Native oyster beds	Survey	Marine recorder extract Sept 2010 (via KWT)		02/07/2006
Native oyster (<i>O.edulis</i>)	Survey	National contract data, DEFRA MB102 2B		2009 and 2006
Native oyster (<i>O.edulis</i>)	Survey	Marine Recorder update Aug 2010 (via KWT)		26/10/2009
Seagrass beds	Survey	Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust		Pre-1995 to 2011
Seagrass beds	Survey	National contract data, DEFRA MB102 2C		16/09/2008
Tentacled Lagoon Worm (<i>Alkmaria romijni</i>)	Survey	WM0409MB SOAD. WOOTEN, ISLE OF WIGHT, OLD MILL POND, SURVEY UNDERTAKEN BY PORTSMOUTH POLY (Data sourced from: Environment Agency)	Wootton Old Mill Pond Survey	1990 and 1998

References (additional information can be found in the Bibliography)

- SEELEY, B., LEAR, D. HIGGS, S. NEILLY, M. BILEWITCH, J. EVANS, J. WILKES, P. & ADAMS, L. 2010. *Assessing and Developing the Required Biophysical Dataset and Data Layers for Marine Protected Areas Network Planning and Wider Marine Spatial Planning Purposes: Mapping of species with limited mobility (Benthic species). (Task 2B)*. DEFRA, London.
- SEELEY, B., HIGGS, S., LEAR, D., EVANS, J., NEILLY, M., CAMPBELL, M., WILKES, P., ADAMS, L., 2010. *Assessing 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 (Task 2C)*. DEFRA, London.
- EMU. 2010. South Coast Marine Aggregates Regional Environmental Assessment: Volume 1. EMU Ltd, Portsmouth.
- SOUTH EAST ENGLAND BIODIVERSITY FORUM (SEEBF) 2010. *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 2010.

14. Stakeholder support for the site

The RSG as a group reached consensus that this site should be put forward in their final recommendations. Most sectors support the boundaries of the site and the features, though there is concern regarding the COs for the site.

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 Norris to Ryde rMCZ 19
Yachting	RYA	Need to be clear what voluntary code on anchoring would mean before can support.
Kite Surfing	British Kite Surfing Association	In favour of the possibility of increase in vessels, however only after proper assessments are made into the impacts and conditions. Other than that supported as long as VA takes place again.
Sea Angling		RSA would prefer maintain with local agreements with more monitoring.
Fisheries	Local Fisheries Representatives	CO is not acceptable. Maintain as recommend by IFCA more than adequate.
Fishing - FPO, beam trawling		No support for Osborne Bay area - rest of area tacit support, if mud remains at "maintain".
Birds	RSPB	Support site as it will benefit range of foraging seabirds. Support Co of recover for sub-tidal mud but accept needs to go through vulnerability assessment.
Wildlife Trusts	Hampshire Wildlife Trust	I support this site, but require the COs downgraded by the IFCA for mud be put back to recover. Activity data is inconsistent and not evidenced.
Marine Ecology	Seasearch	Strongly support this site for proper protection of seagrass and mud; this must be managed to recover.
Marine Wildlife	Marine Conservation Society	<u>Support site</u> . Recover all broadscale habitats from bottom towed fishing gear.

Norris to Ryde rMCZ no 19

Statutory environmental	Environment Agency	Broadly support.
Heritage and Archaeology	English Heritage	Support provided that archaeological investigation permitted.

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, 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.

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.

Norris to Ryde rMCZ no 19

Feature	Draft CO	Activity exerting pressure	IFCA/MMO/EA/NE Comments	Stakeholder comments on draft COs and potential management measures
A5.3 Subtidal Mud	TO BE ASSESSED (see RSG comment)	Fishing - benthic trawling (bottom gear)	<p>IFCA recommend CO is MAINTAIN as there are only 2-3 trawling vessels who use the area seasonally using light otter gear; 2-3 potting vessels and 2-3 towed dredges that use the area seasonally.</p> <p>The IFCA considers that this area could probably even take an increase should displacement out of other areas occur.</p> <p>SNCB National sense check of VA stated could change to MAINTAIN, as low vulnerability – borderline conservation objective</p> <p>IFCA code of conduct if CO is recover</p>	<p>CO is marked as ‘to be assessed’ to reflect urgent need to revise vulnerability assessment and lack of agreement on appropriate interim CO.</p> <p>LG (July 2011) agreed with IFCA comment that CO should be RECOVER:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> as fishing has occurred here for over 30 years; sector suggests this activity has contributed to shaping the habitat, as without it, the seabed would be smothered in seaweed all year round Only 8-9 whelk potters last year only one vessel tow dredged this area September to March <p>At the RSG (Aug 2011):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wildlife sector noted concerns about the potential downgrading of the CO as the habitat is sensitive Fishing industry do not agree that their activity has a negative impact on subtidal mud IFCA noted that they would not suggest a reduction in fishing effort without evidence of damage; the RSG said that they would like to see condition assessments done as soon as possible on the subtidal mud due to the uncertainty about its sensitivity.
	TO BE ASSESSED (see RSG comment)	Fishing - potting/creeling		
	TO BE ASSESSED (see RSG comment)	Fishing - shellfish harvesting (towed dredging)		
	RECOVER MAINTAIN	Recreation and tourism - anchoring	NE sense check changed the draft CO due to low vulnerability, but monitor as part of management due to possible levels of exposure	LG (July 2011) however flagged up that commercial anchoring occurs but was not identified in the VA; might have more impact than recreational anchoring
Seagrass beds	RECOVER	Crab Tiling/Bait digging	Code of conduct for bait digging exists between IOW RSA and NE that could be adopted by the IFCA	LG stated that there is no overlap of activity unless accidental/inadvertent
	RECOVER	Fishing - benthic trawling (bottom gear)	<p>IFCA said that there is generally no overlap of fishing with seagrass (and see comments for subtidal mud re number of vessels involved)</p> <p>IFCA code of conduct if CO stays as Recover</p>	<p>Some Local Group members (July 2011) agreed with IFCA comment, as it is unlikely that trawling takes place at 2m below chart datum, although seagrass bed can extend to 4m below chart datum. Wildlife Trust has undertaken a new survey of the seaward extent of the seagrass and the results were made available at the RSG; the RSG considered that the CO of Recover should be retained.</p> <p>LG (July 2011) stated that potting occurs up to MLW springs but the water depth limits this activity and therefore it is not thought to overlap</p>
	RECOVER	Fishing - potting/creeling		
	RECOVER	Fishing - shellfish harvesting (towed dredging)		

Norris to Ryde rMCZ no 19

Feature	Draft CO	Activity exerting pressure	IFCA/MMO/EA/NE Comments	Stakeholder comments on draft COs and potential management measures
	RECOVER	Tourism & recreation (anchoring by recreational vessels)	MMO code of conduct	<p>At the LG (July 2011) there was no agreement on the CO in relation to anchoring or on potential management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anchoring not considered intense outside Osborne Bay which is the most popular spot to anchor for recreational vessels. RYA firmly opposed to restrictions on anchoring in seagrass unless evidence of damage is shown • Seagrass bed can extend to 4m below chart datum. Wildlife Trust has undertaken a new survey of the seaward extent of the seagrass and the results were made available at the RSG; the RSG considered that the CO of Recover should be retained.
Tentacled Lagoon Worm	MAINTAIN			

16. Evolution of the site recommendations

A broad area of interest was identified here early on in the process due to the presence of important seagrass beds, the Tentacled Lagoon Worm population and Mantis Shrimp warrens. The boundaries of the site were refined on the recommendation of Local Group stakeholders, who suggested that the seaward boundary should lie inshore of the shipping lanes, the western boundary be extended to include additional areas of seagrass and the southern boundary should follow the Wootton Old Mill Pond boundary where the Tentacled Lagoon Worm is found (Solent Local Group 2, Sept 2010; RSG 4, September 2010). As a result, the seaward boundary now follows a set of navigational buoys specified by the shipping sector (Inshore Task Group, Feb 2011).

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

The following issues are associated with this site:

- The area is adjacent to the main Solent shipping channel; foul weather anchoring areas will need to be respected and maintained
- There are high levels of recreational anchoring and angling, and great concern among the yachting sector about possible implications of the MCZ on them. However, they have provided extensive information and are willing to help to identify appropriate management measures; the key “hotspot” is Osborne Bay in which large numbers of yachts anchor throughout the summer and particularly during Cowes week
- Ferry companies operating into Ryde and Fishbourne are very concerned that an MCZ would impact their activities which are critical to the economy of the Isle of Wight. The ferry channel currently cuts through the seagrass beds listed for protection, but the RSG have clearly noted that damage to the seagrass is accepted in the area and there is no expectation that the conservation objectives should affect the ferry service in any way.
- English Heritage has flagged up a potential overlap between the seagrass and visitors to Osborne Beach if anchoring is involved.
- The potting sector do not agree with the assertion that subtidal mud is sensitive to pressures caused by their activities and have requested a reassessment of the conservation objectives in this site.

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.