

Offshore Brighton rMCZ no 14

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 at their meeting 2/3 August 2011.

1. Site name Offshore Brighton rMCZ no 14 Contains: Dolphin Head recommended Reference Area no 10	3. Site surface area 86197 ha 861.97 km ²
2. Site centre location ETRS89 N50 15' 48.082" W0 35' 30.301" N50 15.801' W0 35.505' (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 Offshore Brighton ¹

Feature type	Feature name	EUNIS L4 REC habitats	Area ²	
Broad-scale habitats	A4.1 HE circalittoral rock	A4.1 HE circalittoral rock	175.67 km ²	
		A4D.1 HE deep circalittoral rock		
	A4.2 ME circalittoral rock	A4.2 ME circalittoral rock	11.04 km ²	
		A4.2D ME deep circalittoral rock		
	A5.4 subtidal mixed sediments	A4.84 HE circalittoral rock and thin mixed sediments		675.92 km ²
		A4.94 ME circalittoral rock and thin mixed sediments		
		A4D.84 HE deep circalittoral rock and thin mixed sediments		
		A4D.94 ME deep circalittoral rock and thin mixed sediments		
A5.44 circalittoral mixed sediments				
Habitat FOCI	Rossworm (<i>Sabellaria spinulosa</i>) reef		1,879 m ²	
	Subtidal sands and gravels		458.19 km ²	

6. Features within Offshore Brighton not proposed for designation

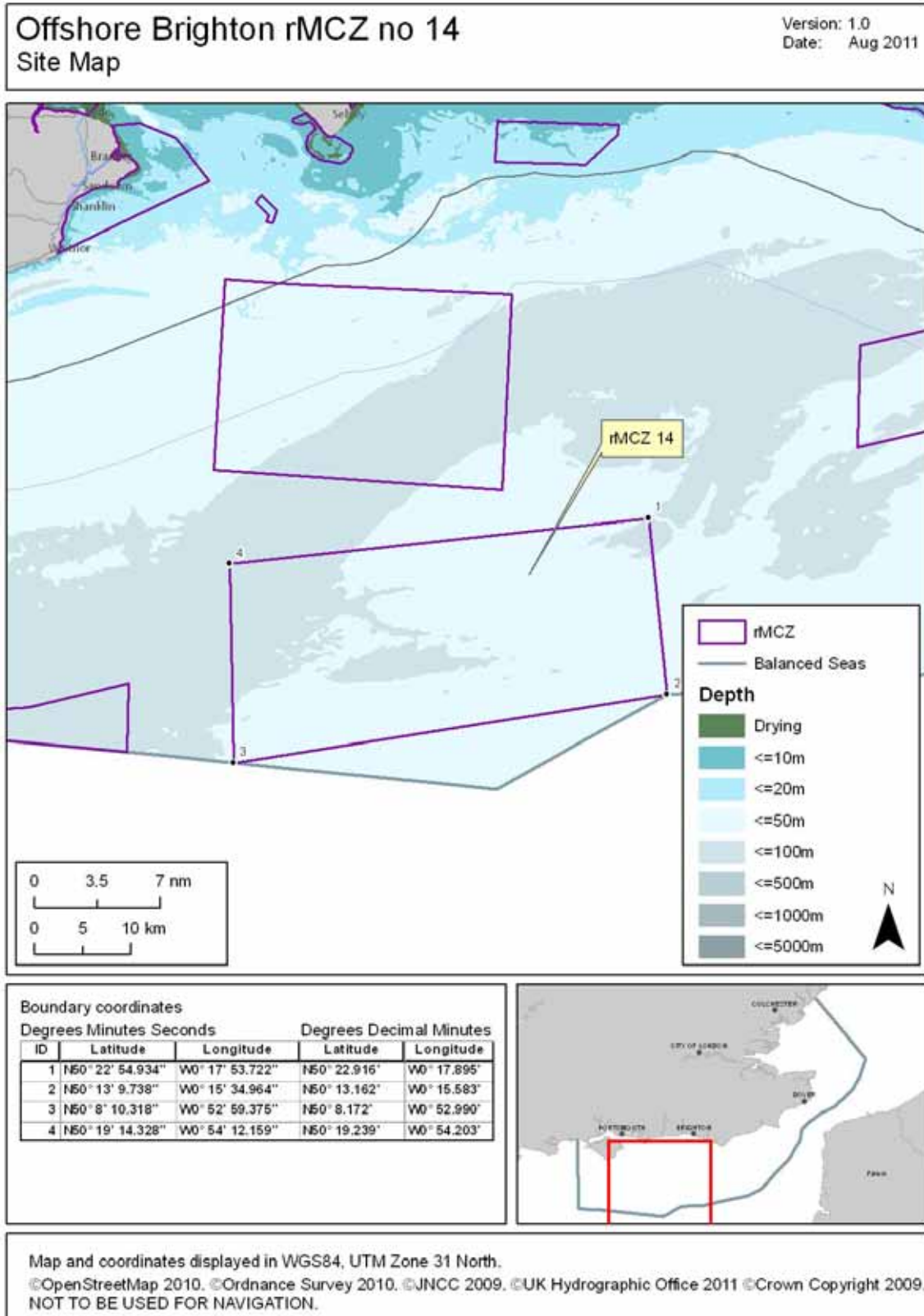
none

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 (see below)



8. Site summary

The site lies offshore in the deeper waters of the mid English Channel, its southeastern and southwestern corners meeting the median line due south of Brighton. According to UKSeaMap/MESH (v7 JNCC) data, the seabed habitats are high (A4.1) and moderate (A4.2) energy circalittoral rock and subtidal mixed sediments (A5.4). The MALSF English Channel Synthesis Regional Environmental Characterisation data confirms that the site contains high and moderate energy circalittoral rock habitats, but shows that in places the rock is covered with a thin veneer of mixed sediment. Where the site overlaps part of the Northern Paleovalley, a morphologically visible remnant of the ancient river system that underlies the English Channel, the habitat is classified as a deeper type of rock covered with sediment and is protected as an English Channel Outburst Flood feature, evidence of a megaflood which occurred some 200,000 years ago. Subtidal sands and gravels also occur, interspersed with Rossworm (*Sabellaria spinulosa*) reef. The site overlaps an area of high benthic species richness, benthic biotope distinctness and Chao 2 richness.

The draft conservation objectives imply that benthic trawling will need to be restricted, and this is not supported by many of the fisheries fleets (UK and non-UK) that use this area. The vulnerability assessment and associated conservation objectives are still to be developed for Rossworm (*Sabellaria spinulosa*) reef, and there is a feeling that a review is needed of the conservation objectives that have already been set, with more detailed 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 lies offshore in the deeper waters of the mid English Channel, its southeastern and southwestern corners meeting the median line due south of Brighton. According to UKSeaMap/MESH (v7 JNCC) data, the seabed habitats are high (A4.1) and moderate (A4.2) energy circalittoral rock and subtidal mixed sediments (A5.4) (see Broad-scale habitats map). This EUNIS Level 3 habitat definition is the result of 'back translating' reclassified finer-scale habitats from recent MALSF-funded seabed surveys (REC data: James *et al.* 2010, 2011) into the broader ENG habitat classifications, generally resulting in a coarser definition of the seabed³.

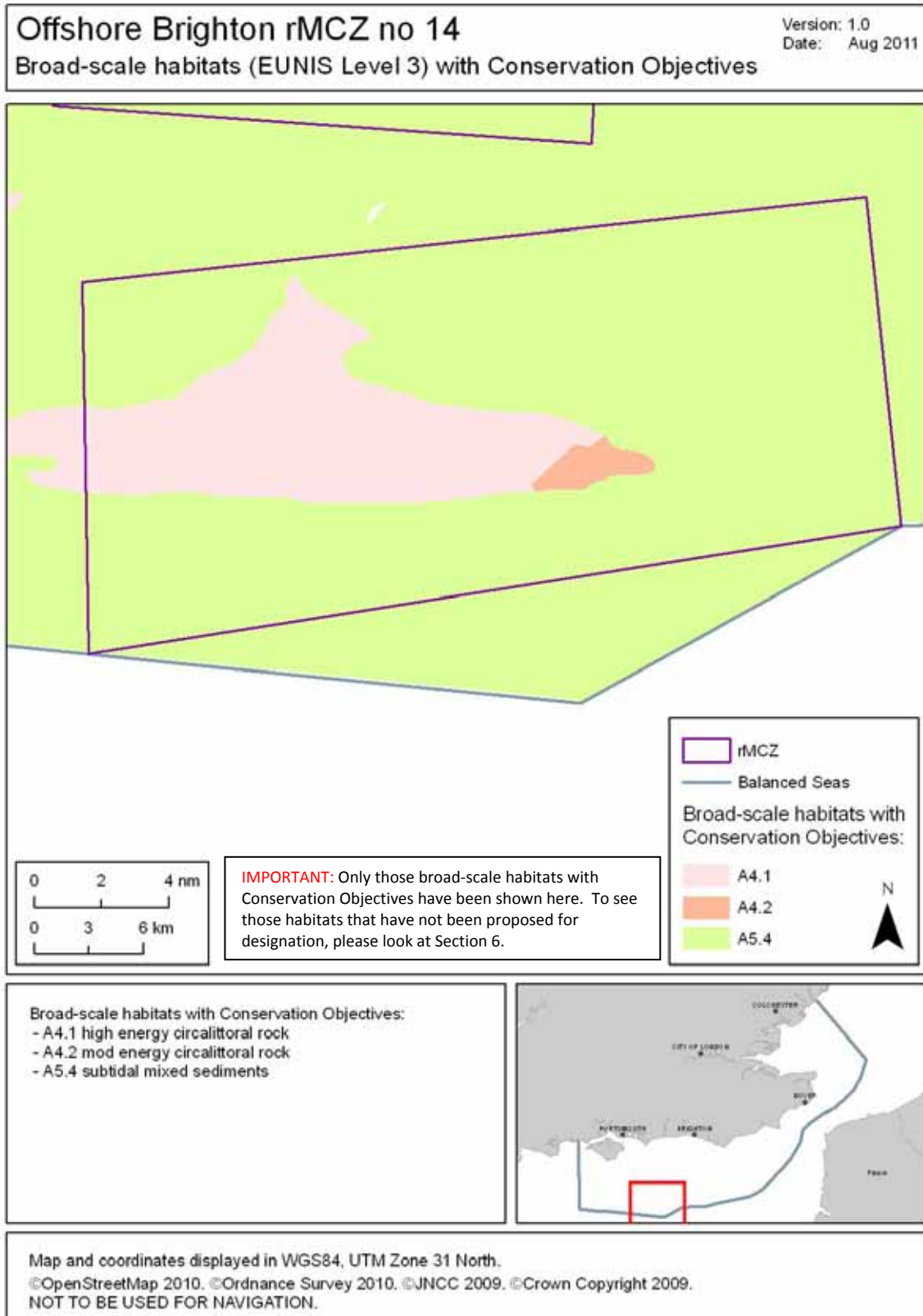
Data from the MALSF English Channel Synthesis Regional Environmental Characterisation data (REC, James *et al.* 2011), confirms that the site contains high and moderate energy circalittoral rock habitats, but shows that in places this is covered with a thin veneer of mixed sediment (see REC EUNIS level 4 map). Where the site overlaps part of the Northern Paleovalley, a morphologically visible remnant of the ancient river system that underlies the English Channel, the habitat is classified as a deeper type of rock covered with sediment.

National contract data records (Seeley *et al.* 2010 DEFRA MB102 2C) show that subtidal sands and gravels occur here, interspersed with Rossworm (*Sabellaria spinulosa*) reef (see FOCI map). According to the geomorphology data (Natural England; Brooks *et al.* 2010 DEFRA MB102 2A), the site overlaps with part of the English Channel Outburst Flood Feature (see Geology map) which runs along the Solent Paleovalley. This geomorphological feature is evidence of a megaflood which occurred some 200,000 years ago when a huge glacial lake in the North Sea burst through the Dover Straits Isthmus which contained it, thus separating England from mainland Europe. Sonar evidence of the seabed reveals deeply gouged channels where the floodwaters broke through (Gupta *et al.*

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

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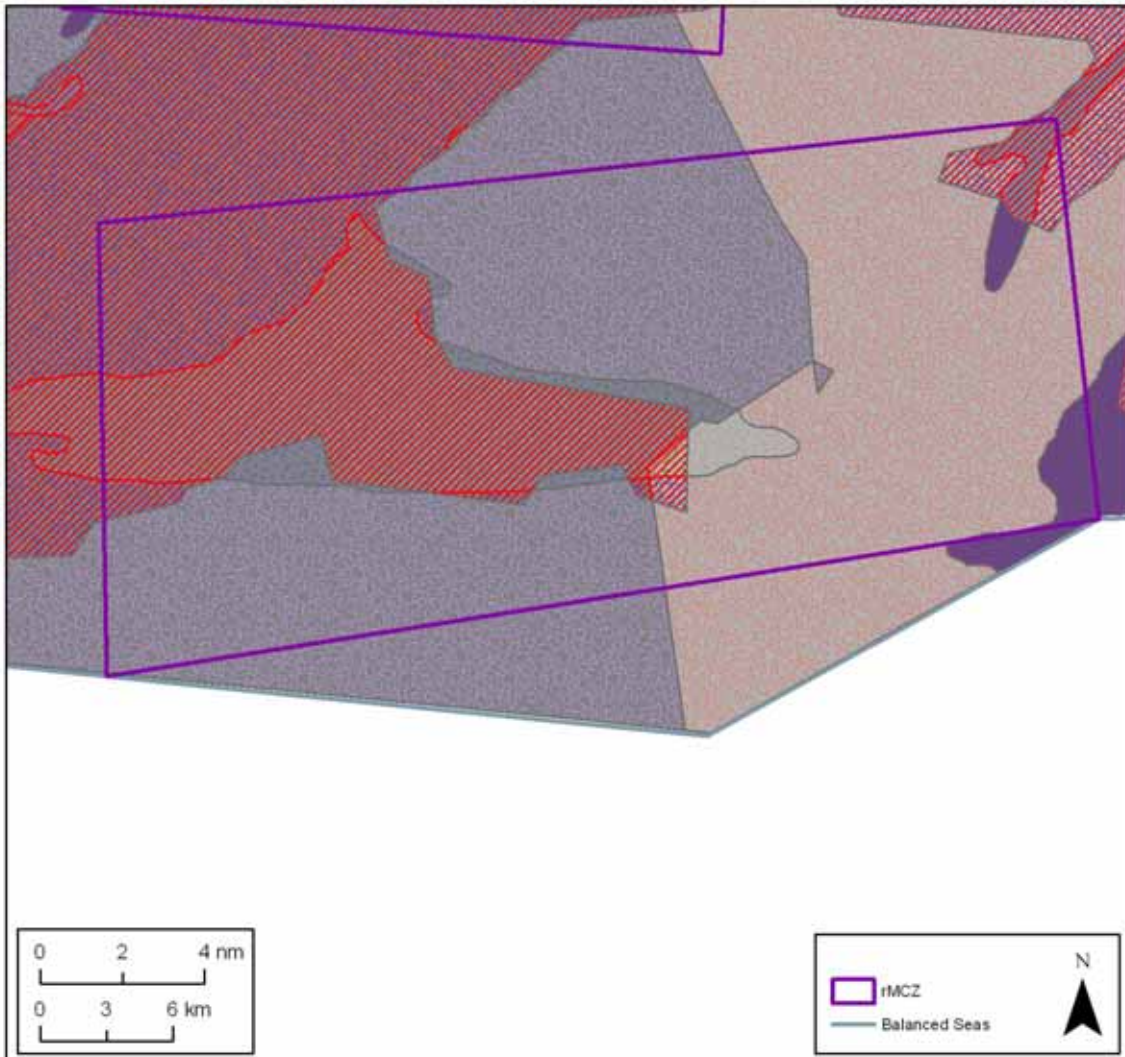
2007). The site overlaps an area of high benthic species richness, benthic biotope distinctness and Chao 2 richness (Jackson *et al.* 2010 DEFRA MB102 2F).



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

Version: 1.0
Date: Aug 2011



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

- A4.1: High energy circalittoral rock
- A4.2: Moderate energy circalittoral rock
- A4.84: High energy circalittoral rock and thin mixed sediments
- A4.94: Moderate energy circalittoral rock and thin mixed sediments
- ND.1: High energy deep circalittoral rock
- ND.2: Moderate energy deep circalittoral rock
- ND.84: High energy deep circalittoral rock and thin mixed sediments
- ND.94: Moderate energy deep circalittoral rock and thin mixed sediments
- AS.44: Circalittoral mixed sediments
- AS.45: Deep circalittoral mixed sediments

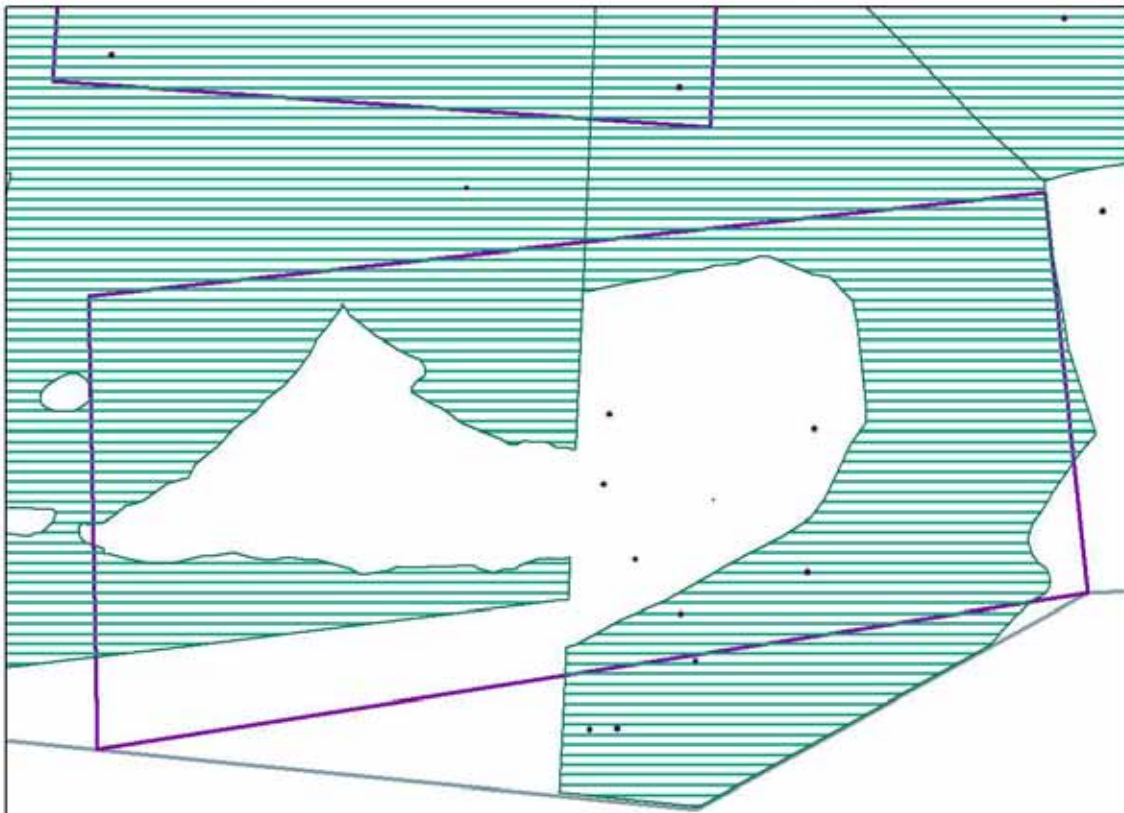


Map and coordinates displayed in WGS84, UTM Zone 31 North.



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Offshore Brighton rMCZ no 14
Habitat and Species FOCI Conservation Objectives



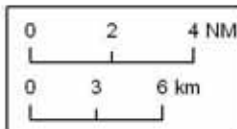
Habitat FOCI

-  Rossworm (*S. spinulosa*) reef
-  Subtidal sand gravels

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

Legend

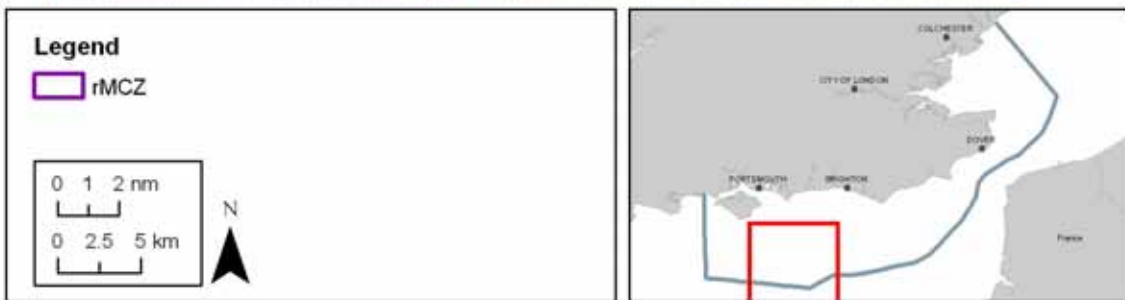
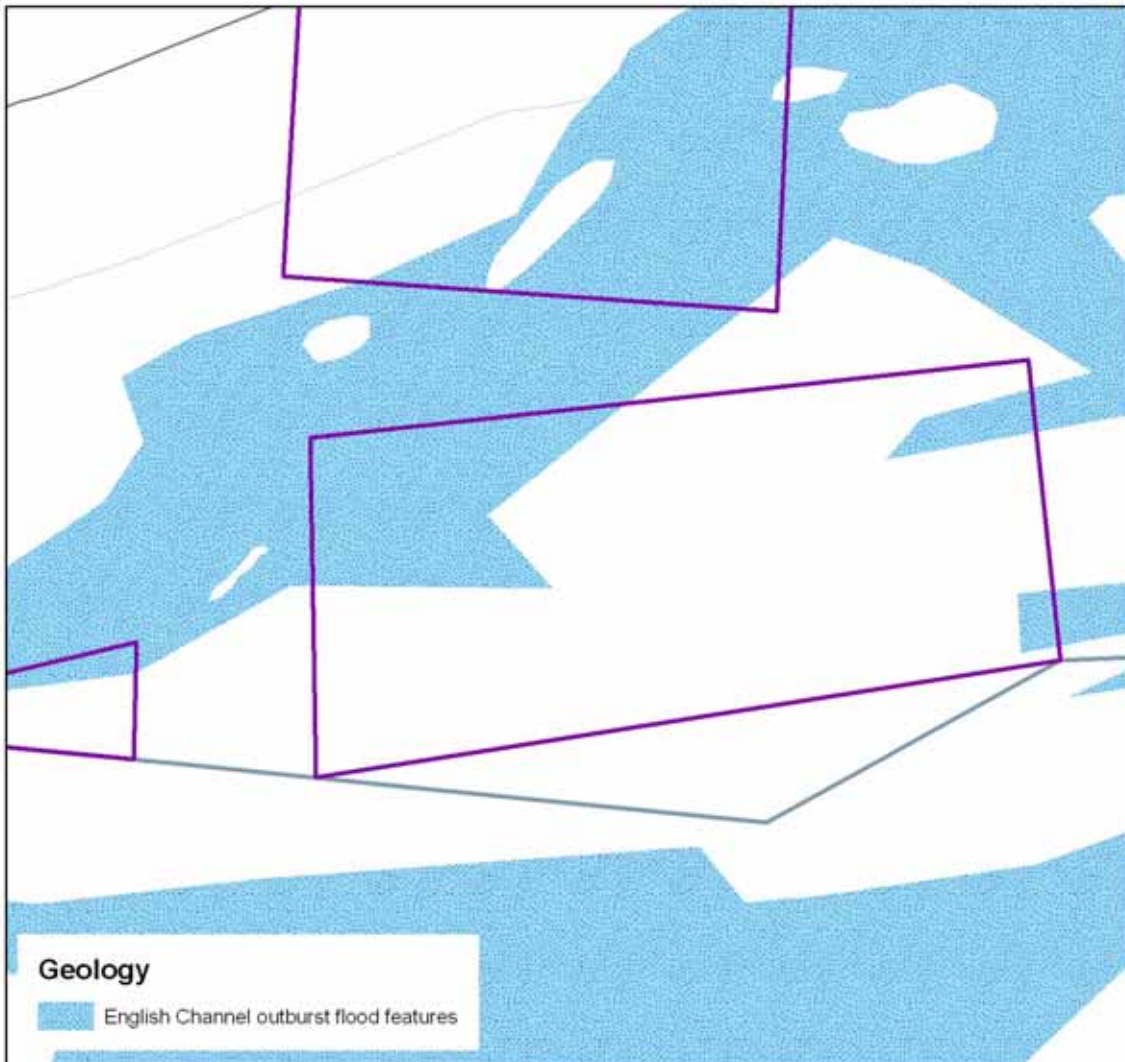
-  rMCZ



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Offshore Brighton rMCZ no 14 Geology



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10. Site boundary

The location and shape (a large rectangle) of the site was chosen to capture the features and areas of biodiversity richness described above. However, given the comparatively large area of ocean involved, it was possible through discussions at the stakeholder meetings to design the boundaries so that socio-economic impact to both the UK and French fishing fleets that use this area extensively was reduced. The lower boundary was set to avoid a heavily used French scallop fishing area to the south of the site, and the site was moved as much as possible to the west to avoid areas to the east heavily used by both UK and Belgian mobile fleets (Offshore Task Group 2, Mar 2011).

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 other 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	Combined	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		2007-2008
Geology	Literature search	National Contract Data. DEFRA MB102 2A	Mapping of Geological and Geomorphological Features	2009
Rossworm (<i>Sabellaria spinulosa</i>) reef	Survey	Environment Agency database		01/01/2007

References (additional information can be found in the Bibliography)

- GUPTA S., COLLIER, J. S., PALMER-FELGATE, A. & POTTER, G. 2007. *Catastrophic flooding origin of shelf valley systems in the English Channel. Nature 448: 342-345.*
- BROOKS, A. J., ROBERTS, H., KENYON, H.H., HOUGHTON, A. J. 2009. Accessing and developing the required biophysical datasets and datalayers for marine Protected Areas network planning and wider marine spatial planning purposes. Report No 8: Task 2A Mapping of Geological and Geomorphological Features. DEFRA MB102
- JACKSON, E.L., LANGMEAD, O. HISCOCK, K. TYLER-WALTERS, H. MILLER, P. McQUATTERS-GOLLOP, A. SAUNDERS, J. & C. FOX. 2009. *Accessing and Developing the Required Biophysical Dataset and Data Layers for Marine Protected Areas Network Planning and Wider Marine Spatial Planning Purposes. Task 2F: Development of Marine Diversity Data Layer: Review of Approaches and Proposed Method.* DEFRA, London.
- 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. MALSF, Suffolk.
- 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 (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. Most sectors agreed with the boundaries of the site, but the fishing sectors were unhappy with the conservation objectives for the sediment habitat.

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 Offshore Brighton rMCZ 14
Yachting	RYA	Needs survey to establish condition of subtidal sediments before setting conservation objectives.
Sea Angling		The RSA have no major concerns but notes that controls to bottom fishing are unfair if they do not include non-UK fleet.
Fisheries	Local Fisheries Representatives	No support for recover status on mobile high energy habitat.
Fishing - FPO, beam trawling		No support at all - extremely contentious for UK and foreign fleets. Would agree if sand/sediment areas were "maintain".
Birds	RSPB	Support site and CO of recover for broadscale habitats.
Wildlife Trusts	Hampshire Wildlife Trust	I support this site and believe the sediment habitat should have a recover CO.
Marine Wildlife	Marine Conservation Society	<u>Support site</u> . Recover all broadscale habitats from bottom trawling.
French fishing interests	CRPMEM Nord - Pas de Calais / Picardie	We are happy the Balanced Seas moved on the North this site. But it still impacts various trawling activities (Haute Normandie, Basse Normandie, Nord-Pas de Calais (10-30 according to the season))
Netherlands fishing industry	VisNed	Same as 9. Specific are for low impact scottish seine/fly shoot fisheries.

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 data and information 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

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.

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(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 CO	Activity Exerting Pressure	MMO/EA/NE Comments	Stakeholder comments on draft COs and potential management measures
A4.1 High energy circalittoral rock	RECOVER	Fishing - benthic trawling (bottom gear)	CFP order including the reference area (rRA 10).	At the RSG (August 2011): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trawling industry supports a RECOVER objective for rock habitats. • Potting sector question the CO of RECOVER for a high energy habitat
A4.2 Moderate energy circalittoral rock	RECOVER	Fishing - benthic trawling (bottom gear)	CFP order including the reference area (rRA 10).	
A5.4 Subtidal mixed sediments	RECOVER	Fishing - benthic trawling (bottom gear)	CFP order including the reference area (rRA 10).	The RSG fishing industry representatives feel this CO has been set without adequate knowledge of the finer scale habitats and their sensitivities, and cannot support the site if this CO is RECOVER.
Rossworm (<i>Sabellaria spinulosa</i>) reef	To be assessed		The vulnerability assessment on this feature had not been undertaken prior to the final Local Group or RSG meetings.	
Subtidal sands and gravels	MAINTAIN			

16. Evolution of the site recommendations

Since the inception of the MCZ recommendation process, some form of site has been suggested in this deeper mid channel area, but the location was modified a number of times according to ENG habitat targets and socio-economic impacts. This final configuration is a modification of the site identified for the 3rd Progress Report, which extended south to the median line. At the request of the French scallop fishing fleet, the very southern portion of the site was removed, thus avoiding the most important part of this fleet's fishing grounds; the Belgian fleet also stated that this revised boundary was more acceptable to them. To ensure that the same amount of broad scale habitat features were captured the northern boundary was shifted north by an appropriate distance.

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 issues associated with this site are:

- UK, French, Belgian and Dutch fishing fleets are very active in this area. While the boundary of the site has been adjusted to avoid the most important French scalloping grounds and to be acceptable to the Belgians, all fishing interests are nevertheless very concerned about this proposal, in terms of the impact it may have on their activities and its proximity to the Wight Barfleur pSAC which might result in displacement into this area. Given the large size of the site, it was suggested that a zoning approach to management might be possible (RSG 11, Aug 2011).
- The fishing sectors have requested that the COs for subtidal mixed sediment be reassessed in order to ensure that fishing activity levels are standardised in all the vulnerability assessments for offshore sites (RSG 11, Aug 2011).
- The Crown Estate support the site, but note there are active and inactive cables in the 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.