

Colne Point rRA no 1

Marine Conservation Zone: Selection Assessment Document

Version and Issue date	Amendments made
V1.0 31.8.11	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 Colne Point draft Reference Area no. 1	3. Site surface area 95 ha 0.95km ²
2. Site centre location ETRS89 N51 46' 7.975" E1 2' 5.581" N51 46.133' E1 2.093' (N.B. WGS 84 UTM 31N coordinates are provided in the map vertices)	4. Biogeographic region Southern North Sea

5. Features identified for specific protection within the Colne Point rRA ¹

Feature type	Feature name	Area / No. of records ²
Broad-scale habitats	A2.2 Intertidal sand and muddy sand	863.43 m ²
	A2.3 Intertidal mud	0.19 km ²
	A2.4 Intertidal mixed sediments	0.05 km ²
Habitat FOCI	Blue mussel beds	0.034 km ²

6. Other features occurring within the Colne Point rRA (to be protected)

Feature type	Feature name	Reason not specifically identified for reference area protection
Broad Scale Habitats	A5.2 Subtidal sand	Not viable for subtidal broad scale habitat RA
	A5.3 Subtidal mud	Not viable for subtidal broad scale habitat RA
	A5.4 Subtidal mixed sediments	Not viable for subtidal broad scale habitat RA
Species FOCI Low	Native Oyster (<i>O.edulis</i>)	More appropriate area specified as rRA 2

7. Map of site (see below)

8. Site summary

This area lies within rMCZ3, the Blackwater, Crouch, Roach and Colne. The site was selected for three intertidal broad scale habitats (A2.2, A2.3 and A2.4) and is the only RA identified for A2.4 Intertidal mixed sediments. Blue mussels and oysters are also proposed for specific protection. The Blue mussel beds (which the project data show to be examples of both subtidal and intertidal on mixed and sandy sediments) are not thought by local stakeholders to be the best example in the region. Stakeholders would need to reconsider the data to determine if this is the best reference area for Blue Mussels, though the RSG have struggled to find an alternative that could replace it. One suggestion was the mussel beds occurring on the intertidal consolidated shingle in the Thanet Coast rMCZ 7, but it was thought there may also be problems here with invasive Pacific Oysters (RSG Meeting 11, August 2011). Kent and Essex IFCA recently did an informal survey and described the mussel beds here in rMCZ1 as not very healthy, with approximately 50 individuals per m². The blue mussel beds are already managed through the existing Essex Estuaries SAC. The oyster record is also not the best as there is an established population of the non-native invasive Pacific oyster (N.B. the primary rRA for this species is rRA2 South Mersea).

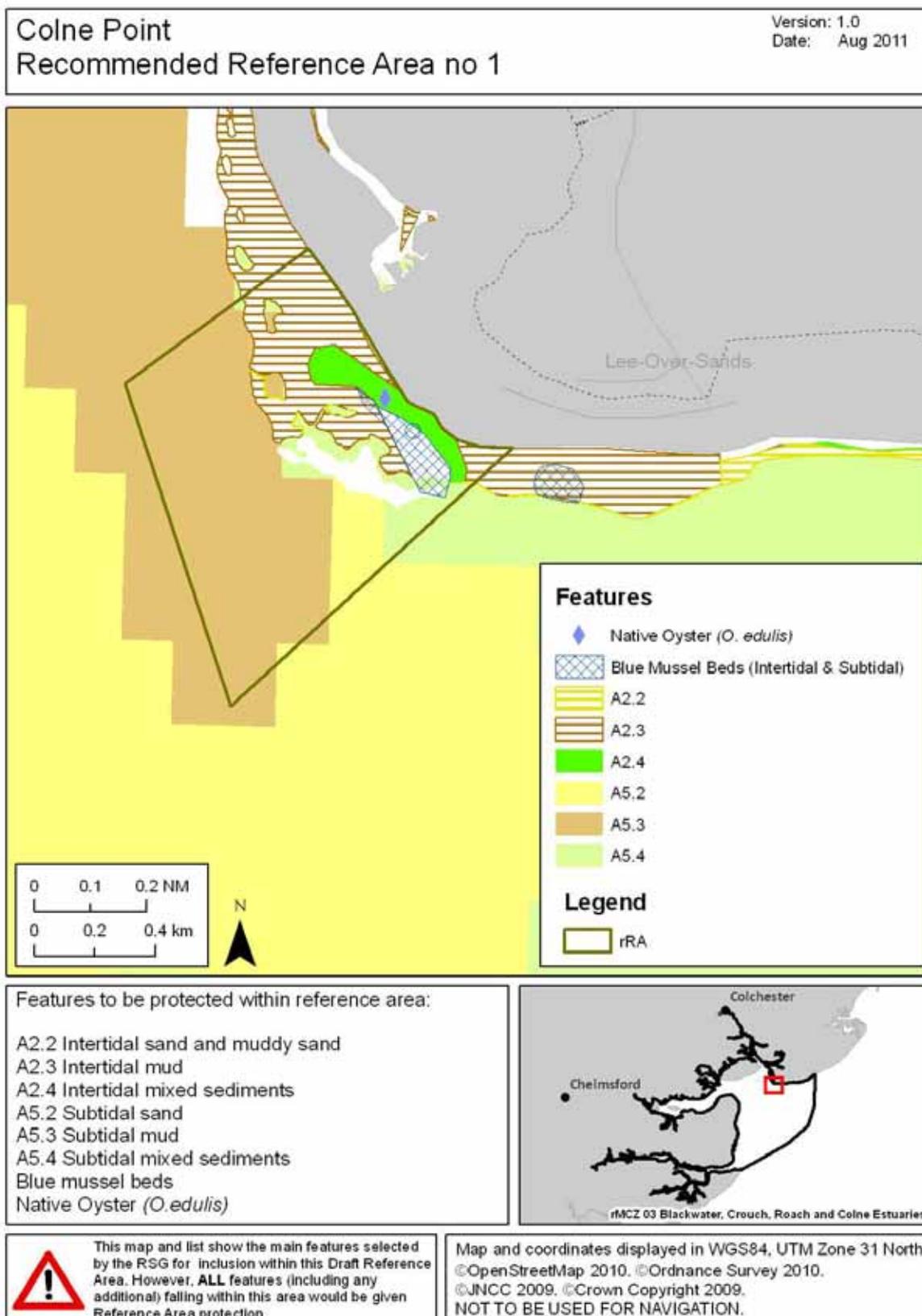
9. Detailed site description

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.

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For further details please see detailed site description for rMCZ 3.



10. Site boundary

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The site boundary was drawn as a simple 500m by 500m box with the landward boundary at MHW.

11. Conservation objectives

Individual conservation objective forms for each feature can be found in Appendix 1. In selecting the reference areas, stakeholders have identified specific features that merit reference area protection. ALL features in a reference area will, by default, have a Conservation Objective of "RECOVER to Reference Condition."

12. Sites to which this site is related

This site falls within the Blackwater, Crouch, Roach and Colne Estuaries rMCZ no 3.

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

Information	Type of information	Source	Name of survey	No of points	Dates
All broad scale habitats	Modelled and survey data	UKSeaMap/MESH v7	Combined	n/a	2011
Blue mussel beds	Survey	National contract data, DEFRA MB102 2C	JNCCMNCR10000341	2	27/09/1992
Blue mussel beds	Survey	National contract data, DEFRA MB102 2C		4	28/06/1905
Native oyster (<i>O.edulis</i>)	Survey	National contract data, DEFRA MB102 2B	JNCCMNCR20000808	1	04/02/1998

References

Please refer to the references in the site description of rMCZ 3.

13. 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 Clone Point rRA 1
Yachting	RYA	Oppose current proposed boundary because of doubts over blue mussel beds. Support RA for intertidal subject to boundaries.
Sea Angling		We cannot support this site until more research is completed.
Fisheries	Local Fisheries Representatives	Example of a management regime which fails to address the threat of invasive foreign species.
Birds	RSPB	Support - though I would suggest a strategic look at blue mussels across the region to see which is best area for blue mussels.
Wildlife Trusts	Hampshire Wildlife Trust	I support this Ref Area for A2.4 and mussels unless a better mussel site can be identified.
Marine Ecology	Seasearch	Strong support for this site being established, although other sites may be preferable for these FOCl but have not been possible due to opposition from industries.
Marine Wildlife	Marine Conservation Society	<u>Support</u> . Although <u>too small</u> to have a marked effect.
Heritage and Archaeology	English Heritage	Possibility of needing to sample peats for I+E landscape reports.

14. Evolution of the site recommendations

An area just slightly to the north of this proposed site was originally suggested by the Kent and Essex IFCA as a potential Reference Area for Blue Mussel beds, as it includes both subtidal and intertidal examples of this feature. The boundary was subsequently redefined by the Project Team to incorporate the project's data records for the Lagoon Sea Slug (*Tenellia adspersa*), but it turned out that this species record had been inaccurately mapped and was therefore dropped from the list of features for protection. 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.

15. Implications for Stakeholders

The following issues are associated with this site:

- Colchester Oyster Fishery which owns the lease for the Colne Estuary water column and sea floor and operate shellfish harvesting within the estuary, strongly object to the subtidal extent of this site as it encroaches onto their grounds. The intertidal extent poses no problems for their business.
- The site encompasses a popular recreational anchoring spot and recreational vessels are regularly dragged across the intertidal area to gain access to the water.
- Bait digging may occur within the site
- A future managed realignment site is adjacent to the rRA which could have wide reaching ecological ramifications.

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.