



A short guide to Finding Sanctuary

(Updated June 2011)

Introduction to Finding Sanctuary

Finding Sanctuary is a project that is working with local people who use the sea for their livelihood or leisure, to design and plan Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) in the seas around south-west England. It is one of four regional projects in England to be established by Natural England and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) to work with stakeholders to develop recommendations for Marine Conservation Zones by June 2011. Finding Sanctuary is a partnership project between Natural England and the JNCC, county councils and wildlife NGOs.

The bottom line for Finding Sanctuary is that Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) must be planned through a transparent, fair and collaborative process. If the MCZs are to be viable, they must be capable of delivering clear benefits for nature conservation, whilst minimising the impact to livelihoods and leisure activities.

Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs)

The Marine and Coastal Access Act enables the creation of a new type of Marine Protected Area, called a Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ). The purpose of MCZs is to protect nationally important marine wildlife, geology and geomorphology. Sites will be selected to protect not just the rare and threatened, but the full range of marine wildlife.

Once a site has a potential MCZ has been identified, the protection levels required for the features within MCZs will be decided through a vulnerability assessment.

The project area

The Finding Sanctuary project area includes the sea surrounding England's south-west peninsula, out to 200 nautical miles (or the median line with France and Ireland). It covers territorial waters (to 12 nm) as well as EU waters beyond 12nm.

How are MCZs identified in the south-west?

The Finding Sanctuary Steering Group is responsible for identifying sites to be recommended as MCZs for the south-west. Finding Sanctuary has brought together a wide cross-section of stakeholders on its Steering Group so that they can explore different MCZ configurations, identify conflicts, and find ways of working around them. These stakeholders represent commercial fishing, tourism, recreational sea angling, diving, nature conservation interests, enforcement and marine renewables among others.

Natural England and the JNCC have developed Ecological Network Guidance which sets out the targets for planning MCZs (This document can be downloaded from [Natural England's website](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)). Each member of the Steering Group works to try to meet the conservation targets that have been set out in the Guidance, represent their own interests and listen to the needs and points of view of other sectors in the room. A national Science Advisory Panel has been established to provide

scientific support to the Steering Group and to ensure that the recommendations from all four regional MCZ projects meet the Guidance.

The Steering Group established two Working Groups from its members to conduct the detailed planning work on behalf of the Steering Group. The Working Groups met every four to six weeks over the past year to make planning recommendations that are submitted to the Steering Group.

Although the MCZ recommendations will be made at the regional level by the Steering Group, local suggestions and knowledge are important, together with ongoing feedback to ensure MCZs are well planned and therefore have stronger support from local communities. Local MCZ Groups in Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset and the Isles of Scilly have had the opportunity to submit site suggestions for consideration, participate in mapping meetings and feed in comments on the network as it has developed. Each Local Group is also represented on the regional Steering Group.

Some stakeholders have requested to be Named Consultative Stakeholders - they play a less intensive role in the development of MCZ recommendations, but are asked for their views on the developing proposal at key stages.

The JNCC is working to ensure that European fishing organisations are engaged in the MCZ planning process and that we have a clear understanding of their patterns of activity. A number of European organisations have also joined Finding Sanctuary as Named Consultative Stakeholders. This will ensure that European fishing interests are being considered during the planning of MCZs.

What about existing Marine Protected Areas?

There are existing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the south-west, including European Marine Sites called Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protected Areas (SPAs). Together with these other MPAs, Marine Conservation Zones will deliver the Government's aim for an 'ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas'. This means the Marine Protected Area network will be a collection of sites that work together to provide more benefits than an individual site could on its own.

At the same time as the MCZs are being planned, Natural England and the JNCC are identifying additional European Marine Sites in the south-west and consulting on them. European legislation requires these sites are identified on a purely scientific basis and Finding Sanctuary has no influence on their location. The Finding Sanctuary Steering Group will, however, take into account the location of existing Marine Protected Areas and the conservation benefits that they already bring to the overall MPA network, when making decisions about where to place MCZs.

Gathering information from stakeholders

In order to be able to make informed decisions on where potential MCZs should be placed, the Steering Group needs as much information as possible on the location of habitats and species, and information on how the sea is used for commercial or recreational purposes. The Project Team has collated all the existing data sets for the south-west and liaison officers have collected activity data from sea users. Their role was to engage stakeholders and gather activity information and important local knowledge, which has been used during the planning of sites. This detailed level of information for activities has been vital in order to ensure that impacts to stakeholders can be minimised through careful planning. Initially there were seven liaison officers however as we near the end of the project only one remains covering the whole of the region.

An online mapping tool, the Interactive Map was developed to allow people to visualise the data we have gathered and to contribute their own information. Although the opportunity to contribute to the data collection ceased in October 2010 the data can still be viewed on the national Marine Conservation Zone project interactive map at www.mczmapping.org and as individual maps on our [website](#). Please note that important new information will still be incorporated into the planning of MCZs, as it becomes available.

Over 240,000 west country sea users have had their views represented as part of Finding Sanctuary's sea user activity mapping to date. Our figures include people who were interviewed individually and members of clubs whose views were represented in interviews with the head of their organisation. This data collection work finished at the end of October 2010.

Progress & timeline

- The Working Groups have considered a range of potential sites for Marine Conservation Zones. These started as building blocks identified by the Finding Sanctuary team following a request from the Steering Group. The team identified building blocks by looking at the ecological data for the region and considering the outputs from the Local Groups. Where there was flexibility in choice economic data such as licensed areas for renewables and commercial fishing activity were taken into account. The building blocks provided the Working Groups with a starting point – they could select, remove, move and add building blocks and then assess how each configuration meets the Ecological Network Guidance.
- Finding Sanctuary has submitted three progress reports and three iterations of the socio-economic Impact Assessment to the Science Advisory Panel (SAP). The first was submitted on the 30th June 2010, the second on the 30th October 2010 and the third on the 28th February 2011. The progress reports are a snapshot of the Working Groups' work so far, along with additional comments and feedback from the Steering Group.
- As of June 2011 as we submit our network there are 58 sites in total which make up the network consisting of 13 potential MCZs (pMCZs) in the offshore; 32 pMCZs in the inshore (The Isles of Scilly MCZ consists of 11 separate components and two non-disturbance areas); 3 Reference Areas in the offshore and 10 Reference Areas in the inshore.
- Over the last few months of the project the working group will finalise the network and supporting narrative. The project team will work with the SNCBs to determine management of activities. The management within each pMCZ will depend on the feature being protected. A vulnerability assessment will be carried out which will determine pressures impacting features to be protected, and the activities causing those pressures. The outcome of the vulnerability assessment will determine which activities that need to be managed.

Our Final Report and Designation Process

- **The Steering Group will meet for the final time in July to review and sign off the final recommendations produced by the Joint Working Group.**
- **Final recommendations will be given to Natural England and the JNCC in August 2011.**
- **Natural England and the JNCC will then combine the four regional MCZ project outputs into one recommendation to Defra.**
- **Defra ministers will designate the sites following a public consultation in 2012.**

Finding out more

Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) could impact your constituents in different ways and it is likely that many of them are already or have been involved in Finding Sanctuary. If constituents have particular concerns about the potential MCZ recommendations they should get in touch with the appropriate Steering Group member. Details of the Steering Group members are on our website.

- For more information about Finding Sanctuary please visit our website www.finding-sanctuary.org
- The reports of the Local Group, Working Group and Steering Group meetings, as well as the progress reports, the impact assessments and Science Advisory Panel feedback are all available to download from our website in the [‘Resources’ section](#).
- You will also find a list of members for each of the Groups under the relevant Group heading in the Resources section.
- A project timeline and meetings calendar is available on the website in the ‘Resources’ section under the ‘Process Support’ heading.
- Visit the [FAQs](#) section of the website if you require further detail.

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