

Marine Conservation Zone: Selection Assessment Document

Version and Issue date	Amendments made
V1.0 07.08.11	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 North Utopia recommended Reference Area no. 13	3. Site surface area 28 ha 0.28 km ²
2. Site centre location ETRS89 N50 39' 33.798" W0 53' 5.222" N50 39.563' W0 53.087' (N.B. WGS 84 UTM 31N coordinates are provided in the map vertices)	4. Biogeographic region Eastern English Channel

5. Features identified for specific protection within the North Utopia dRA ¹

Feature type	Feature name	Area / No. of records ²
Habitat FOCI	Fragile sponge & anthozoan communities	1 record
	Subtidal sands and gravels	0.08 km ²

6. Other features occurring within the North Utopia dRA (to be protected)

Feature type	Feature name	Reason not specifically identified for reference area protection
Broad Scale Habitats	A5.4 Subtidal mixed sediments	Not viable for subtidal Broad Scale Habitat RA

7. Map of site (see below)

8. Site summary

This site, lying within rMCZ 28 Utopia, is the location for one of only two examples of fragile sponge and anthozoan communities in the region, found on a prominent area of bedrock reef and large boulders that stands out from the otherwise sediment-dominated seabed. A single point record denotes the fragile sponge and anthozoan feature, but additional video footage and still images have been collected to demonstrate the extent of the habitat (see rMCZ 28). SAP advice to make the entire rMCZ 28 an RA was not acceptable to most sectors and so not put forward by the RSG.

9. Detailed site description

Please see detailed site description for rMCZ 28.

10. Site boundary

The boundary of the rRA has been defined by a 500 x 500m square to meet the minimum viable patch size for fragile sponge and anthozoan communities. Discussions with local stakeholder showed that the northern part of the reef outcrop, of which the full area is covered by the rMCZ, is less heavily used than the southern part, leading the RSG to suggest the RA be located in the north.

11. Conservation objectives

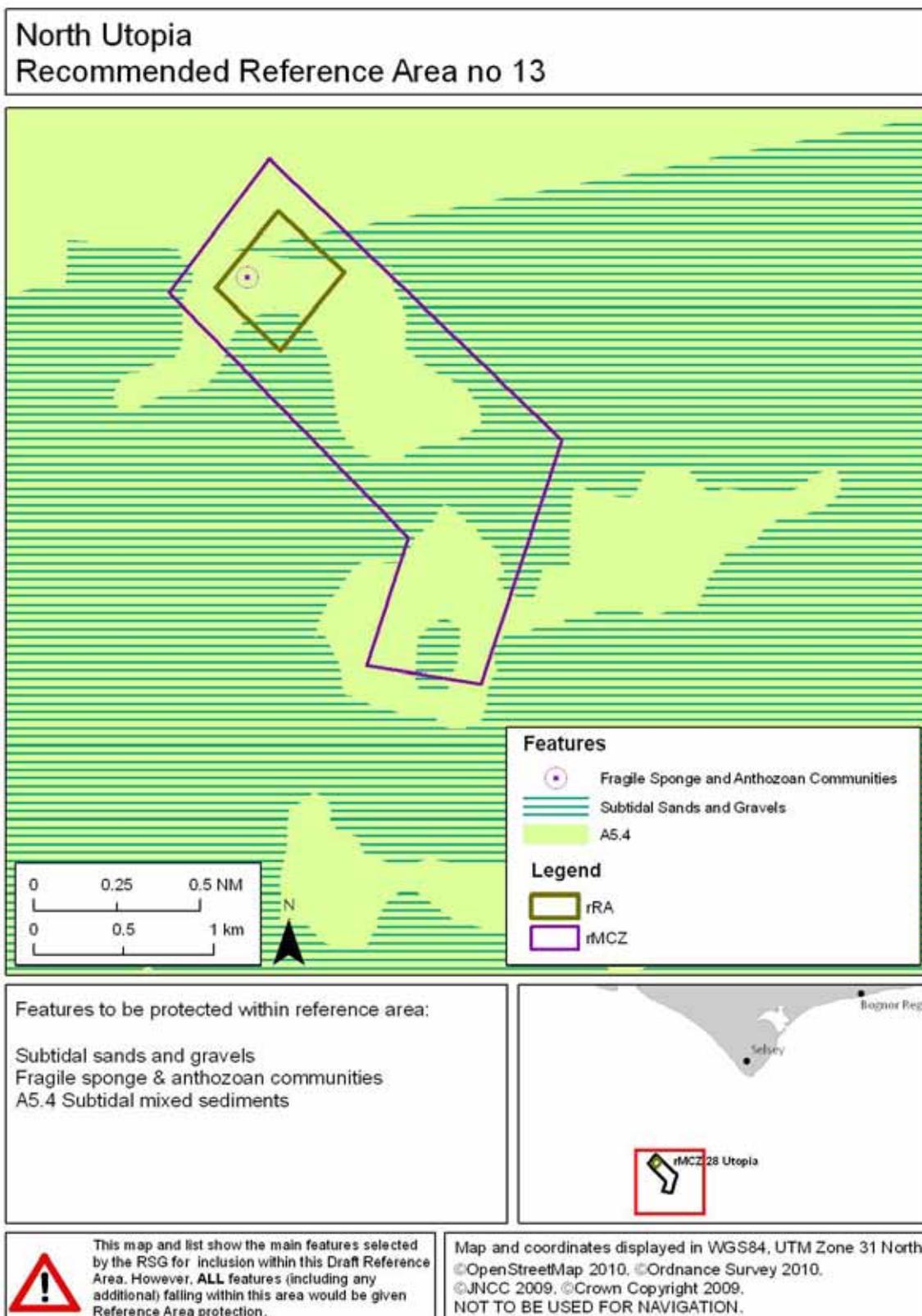
Individual conservation objective forms for each feature can be found in Appendix 1. In selecting the reference areas, stakeholders have identified specific features that merit reference area protection.

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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ALL features in a reference area will, by default, have a Conservation Objective of "RECOVER to Reference Condition."



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12. Sites to which this site is related

This site falls within the Utopia rMCZ no 28

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
Fragile sponge & anthozoan communities on subtidal rocky habitats	Survey	Hampshire and IoW Wildlife Trust		1	16/08/2005
Subtidal sands and gravels	Survey	National contract data DEFRA MB102 2C		n/a	2006

References

Please refer to the references in the site description of rMCZ 28.

14. Stakeholder support for the Site

There is broad support for the RA from most sectors noting the concerns of the marine aggregate industry and ports sector. The RSG as a group reached consensus that this site should be put forward in their final recommendations but only on the basis that these activities (nearby aggregates and navigational waste disposal) can continue.

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 North Utopia rRA 13
Yachting	RYA	Doubts about suitability because human activity impacting feature cannot be stopped, and feature may require human activity to flourish.
Sea Angling		Keep it as small as possible. RSA concerned. Voluntary agreement.
Ports		Key assumption that if RA not compatible with the indirect effects of Nab disposal sedimentation and aggregate site then this RA should not go forward.
Aggregates		Serious concerns that under ENG guidance for reference conditions, adjacent down stream operations would be compromised. Could only be supported with strong guidance/advice over compatibility. Not stopping operations.
	Local Fisheries Representatives	No support for any alteration to ref site. Industry reflects moderate support as is.
Fishing - FPO, beam trawling		No support.
Birds	RSPB	Support Reference Area though recognise further information needed from SNCBs on whether sponges present prefer a silty environment which arises partly from secondary effects of aggregates dredging.
Wildlife Trusts	Hampshire Wildlife Trust	I support this but would like the Ref Area to cover the whole feature as per SAP advice.
Marine Ecology	Seasearch	Strongly support this as one of only 2 examples of FOCI sponge and anthozoans. Suggest the whole feature should be RA which may help viability as a reference in vicinity of aggregate extraction.
Marine Wildlife	Marine Conservation Society	<u>Support site</u> . Recover CO all broadscale habitats.
Owners	Crown Estates	Only agreement if NE are able to provide caveat that sites outside the ref area

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		(i.e. aggregates) are able to continue.
Heritage and Archaeology	English Heritage	Support.

15. Evolution of the site recommendations

This site was proposed as a 500m x 500m site to fulfil the minimum viable patch size guidelines in the ENG for this FOCI feature. It has remained unchanged ever since. However, communications with Natural England specialists (NE email 11.07.11) raised serious concerns that the features would not be compatible with the indirect effects of aggregate dredging in close proximity. The RSG discussed this issue but concluded that the only alternative - the highly trawled area with rMCZ 11.4 – was less suitable, and therefore retained this site, recommending additional survey work to clarify the condition of the features.

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.

16. Implications for Stakeholders

The following issues are associated with this site:

- The rRA is in close proximity to aggregate Licence Area 395 and as a result, the marine aggregates sector does not support it as they do not think it compatible with indirect effects of the extraction site. The licence area has been actively dredged since 1999, its licence is due for renewal and, if successful, extraction will continue for a further 15 years. Considering that extraction has been ongoing for 12 years and the site appears to be in good condition it is not considered that this activity has a negative impact on the quality of the Fragile Sponge and Anthozoan FOCI. The marine aggregates industry noted that certain sponge species flourish in silty environments and it may be worthwhile seeking advice from sponge experts. If this is the case, and the site is designated as an rRA there should be no requirement to cease dredging in Area 395 (NE e-mail 11.07.11). The RSG have taken note of this in their recommendation. SNCBs have nevertheless expressed concerns over the secondary effects of the dredging activity and think this may prevent the feature from reaching reference condition.
- Port dredge waste disposal site at the Nab is to the south west and should not be affected, but the ports sector has expressed concerns; if the sediment is having an impact that degrades the value as this site as a RA area, the recommendation would need re-assessment.
- This general area is very important for anglers but the sector said they would be willing to avoid this small area
- Charter boats, particularly from the mainland, use the area but representatives felt that the sector may be able to accept the rRA
- Potting occurs within this rMCZ but the extent of this activity in the proposed rRA needs to be determined, and whether any restriction on activity would be acceptable to this sector.

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.