

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 St Catherine's Point West recommended Reference Area no. 18	3. Site surface area 1381 ha 13.81 km ²
2. Site centre location ETRS89 N50 34' 42.689" W1 19' 57.659" N50 34.711' W1 19.961' (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 St Catherine's Point West rRA ¹

Feature type	Feature name	Area ²
Broad-scale habitats	A3.1 High energy infralittoral rock	2.11 km ²
	A3.2 Moderate energy infralittoral rock	6.03 km ²
	A3.3 Low energy infralittoral rock	3.73 km ²
	A4.1 High energy circalittoral rock	0.94 km ²
	A4.2 Moderate energy circalittoral rock	0.52 km ²
	A5.4 Subtidal mixed sediments	0.51 km ²
Habitat FOCI	Subtidal sands and gravels	2.11 km ²

6. Other features occurring within St Catherine's Point West rRA (to be protected)

None

7. Map of site (see below)

8. Site summary

The site boundaries encompass a subtidal area off the south west coast of the Isle of Wight, from 150m offshore seawards to the boundary of the South Wight Maritime SAC in which the rRA lies. The eastern boundary is at St Catherine's Point, and the western boundary is approximately by Atherfield Green, south of Atherfield Ledges. The South Wight Maritime SAC has been recently surveyed by both the Eastern English Channel Synthesis REC study (James *et al.* 2011) and the Natural England commissioned multibeam survey, results of both of these studies providing data for this rRA. The area contains four rock and sediment broad-scale habitats, covering the infralittoral and circalittoral zones and including the entire range of energy levels, a combination which only occurs in one other place in the project region, the Dover Straits. The habitat FOCI subtidal and sands and gravels is also specifically identified for protection. (Given the levels of human activity occurring in the intertidal areas, intertidal habitats are not included within the boundary of the site – see Section 15 Evolution of Site).

Recognising the economic importance of this area for a number of sectors, the RSG and Local Groups discussed alternative options for an rRA for these features. In the Balanced Seas region, there are two main areas of these types of habitat: south of the Isle of Wight and in the Dover Straits. The Isle of Wight seabed area has been very recently surveyed under the MALSF South Coast Regional Environmental Characterisation Study (James *et al.* 2010) and reclassified again under the English Channel Synthesis Regional Environmental Characterisation Study (James *et al.* 2011), providing high

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.

quality evidence for the existence of the infralittoral habitats within the area. By contrast, the Dover Straits area was surveyed some time ago, and has not been subject to the higher quality survey methodology or reclassification. We obtained specific advice from the British Geological Survey (who undertook surveys of both areas) that there was low confidence in the distribution of those infralittoral habitats in the Dover straits.

The St Catherine's Point West is also the only area that could accommodate a site with a minimum of 5km in diameter within an existing Marine Protected Area or MCZ. None of the existing MPAs or suggested MCZs in the Dover Straits were large enough to encompass these habitats sufficiently to meet the ENG requirements. The Dover Straits is naturally constricted by the shape of the channel and is also an area of extremely high commercial fishing activity by both UK and international vessels, and as such it was not thought to be an acceptable alternative.

The same suite of broad scale habitats occurs further west between the Needles and Freshwater but this area is more intensely used by commercial vessels than the St Catherine's site.

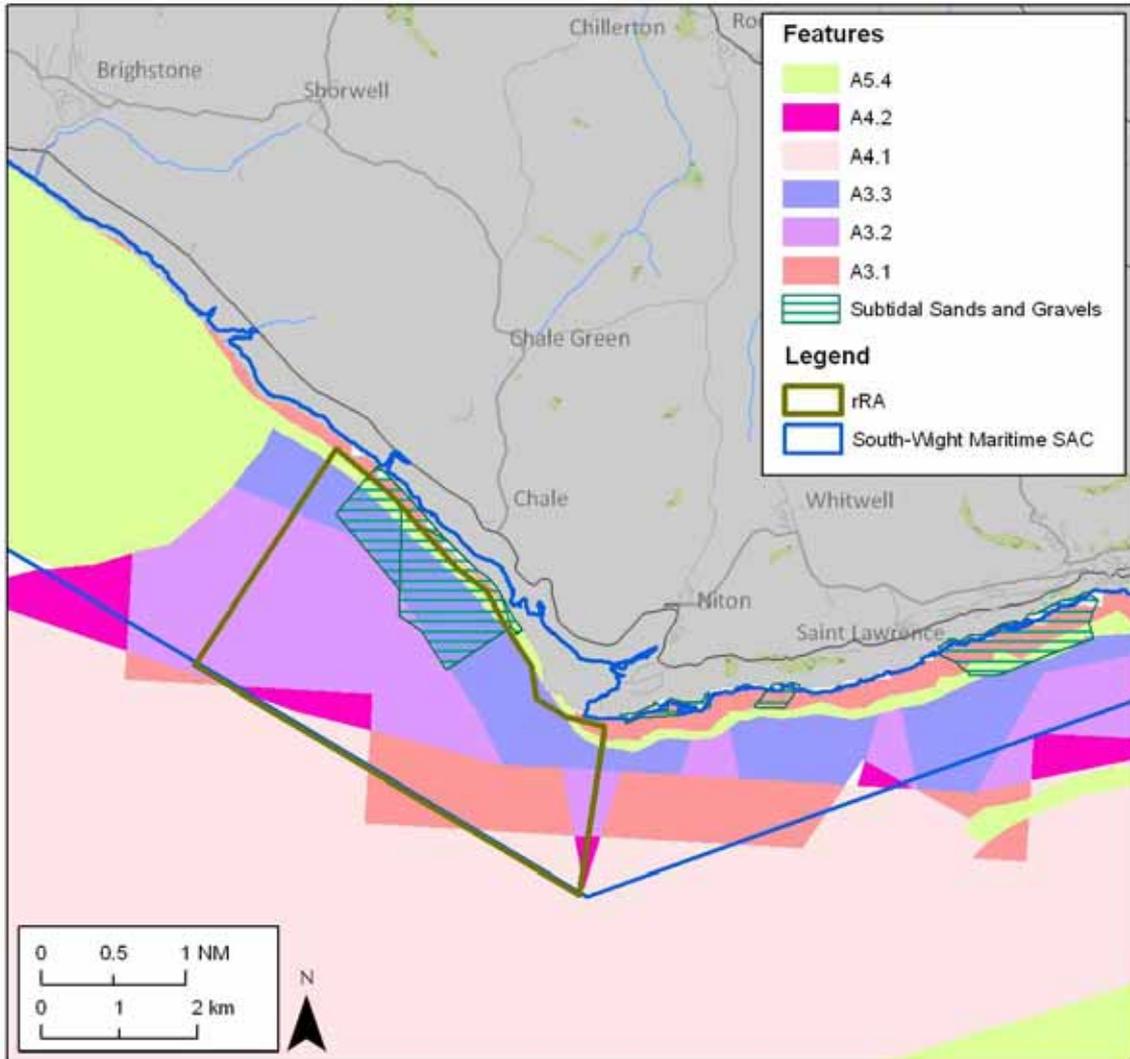
The RSG therefore decided that St Catherine's Point should be forward as the most suitable rRA for ecological reasons, but fully notes that this has important socio-economic implications (see below).

9. Detailed site description

Amongst the large number of rock and sediment broad-scale habitats contained within the site is the full range of low to high energy infralittoral rocks. The data for the broad scale habitats off the Isle of Wight has high confidence as a result of the recent surveys by both the Eastern English Channel Synthesis REC study (James *et al.* 2011) and the Natural England commissioned multibeam survey.

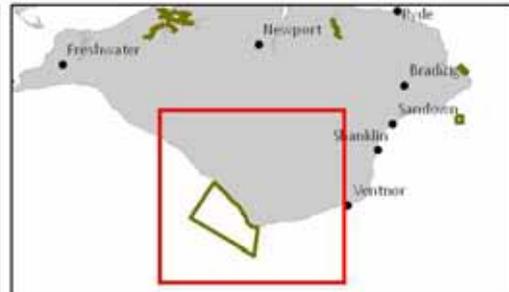
St Catherine's Point is at the transition zone between warmer south-western and colder North Sea waters, where several species reach their eastern limit of distribution along the English Channel (Natural England, 2001). The suite of infralittoral rocks and other broad scale habitats here support a rich and diverse community of flora and fauna. Large populations of Lusitanian (warm temperate) littoral species occur at the eastern limit of their distribution in the Channel; these include the molluscs *Patella depressa* and *Gibbula umbilicalis* and the barnacles *Balanus perforatus* and *Chthamalus montagui*. Kelp forests and subtidal faunal turf communities (highly diverse assemblages of attached animals growing on subtidal hard substrata) ranging from low encrusting forms, such as sea mats and sponges, to tall erect forms, such as soft corals and sea fans occur within the shallower subtidal area of the site. *Beneath the canopy of the kelp forests* subtidal red algal communities flourish in water depths that brown and green algae cannot tolerate. Occurring across the site, varying with reef substrate and hydrography, these communities provide an important habitat for marine fauna as well as hosting a number of rare or unusual algal species (South Wight Maritime SAC, 2001). Kelp forests and subtidal faunal turf communities (highly diverse assemblages of attached animals growing on subtidal hard substrata) ranging from low encrusting forms, such as sea mats and sponges, to tall erect forms, such as soft corals and sea fans occur this site. These communities also include prominent mobile organisms associated with the attached fauna such as decapod crustaceans, echinoderms, molluscs and fish (Hartnoll, 1998 cited in South Wight Maritime SAC)

St Catherine's Point West
Recommended Reference Area no 18



Features to be protected within reference area:

- A3.1 High energy infralittoral rock
- A3.2 Moderate energy infralittoral rock
- A3.3 Low energy infralittoral rock
- A4.1 High energy circalittoral rock
- A4.2 Moderate energy circalittoral rock
- A5.4 Subtidal mixed sediments
- Subtidal sands and gravels



This map and list show the main features selected by the RSG for inclusion within this Draft Reference Area. However, **ALL** features (including any additional) falling within this area would be given Reference Area protection.

Map and coordinates displayed in WGS84, UTM Zone 31 North.
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NOT TO BE USED FOR NAVIGATION.

St Catherine's Point West rRA no 18

10. Site boundary

The site boundary was drawn to include the range of infralittoral rock features that have been surveyed by the English Channel Synthesis REC study (and has the higher confidence associated with it). The outer boundary of the rRA is defined by the South Wight Maritime SAC.

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 is contained within the South Wight Maritime SAC.

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

Information	Type of information	Source	Name of survey	No of points	Dates
Broad scale habitats	Modelled and survey data	UKSeaMap/MESH v7	Combined	n/a	2011
Broad scale habitats	Modelled data	MALSF REC study	Synthesis study of the central and eastern English Channel		
Subtidal sands and gravels	Survey	National contract data, DEFRA MB102 2C		2	2006

References

- JAMES, J. W. C. PEARCE, B. COGGAN, R. A. LEIVERS, M. CLARK, R. W. E. PLIM, J. F. HILL, J. M. ARNOTT, S. H. L. BATESON, L. DE-BURGH THOMAS, A. & BAGGALEY, P. A. 2011. *The MALSF Synthesis Study in the Central and Eastern English Channel*. British Geological Survey Open Report OR/11/01. 158pp. MALSF, Suffolk. <http://nora.nerc.ac.uk/14031/>
- 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.
- Natural England. 2001 South Wight European marine site English Nature's advice given under Regulation 33(2) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 25th May 2001 South Wight Maritime SAC, 2001

14. Stakeholder support for this site

There is very little support for this site with only one sector actively supporting it. The RSG as a group reached consensus that this site should be put forward in their final recommendations in part due to the need to fulfil the ENG criteria but also because the accompanying Impact Assessment will show how damaging the site would be for socio-economic interests.

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 St. Catherines Point rRA 18
Yachting	RYA	Strong local fishery opposition and difficult / impossible to manage.
Sea Angling		Shore boundary moved 150m from shore to allow beach angling but not acceptable to boat anglers.
Fisheries	Local Fisheries Representatives	Absolutely no support from fishing sector. No support from IFCA and other users. Cost to commercial fishing too high.
Fishing - FPO, beam trawling		No support - very vigorous opposition by local potting sector.
Offshore renewables	EoN (on behalf of BWEA)	Tidal interest - ref Jim Fawcett Local Group + recent email June / July 2011.

St Catherine's Point West rRA no 18

SECTOR	ORGANISATION	COMMENT for St. Catherines Point rRA 18
Birds	RSPB	Support site as we need it to meet Reference Area targets for broadscale habitats.
Wildlife Trusts	Hampshire Wildlife Trust	I support this site and believe the boundary should be MHW.
Owners	Crown Estates	Support the need for reference areas. It must be noted that this is a good area for tidal energy resource and therefore micro-siting of devices should be allowed if it is designated.
Heritage and Archaeology	English Heritage	Erosion of cliffs, archaeological remains at bottom, may be embedded and may at some point need to be excavated.

15. Evolution of the site recommendations

St Catherine's Point West was one of several suggestions made for potential RA suggestions at the RSG meeting in April 2011, in order to meet the ENG requirements for Reference Areas to capture at least one example of each ENG feature. A large number of concerns were raised about the impact on stakeholders. However, the RSG agreed that this area was better than the other options discussed (Dover Straits, Freshwater to Needles) for the reasons laid out in Section 8 above. St Catherine's Point West was subsequently discussed at RSG 9B (May 23rd), RSG 10 (June 2011), the Solent Local Group (July 19th) and RSG 11 (August 2nd /3rd), an all objections and concerns have been logged. The RSG decided to include this site in the Final Recommendations, as it is critical for meeting the ENG requirements, but wanted it clearly noted that there is full support from only one sector. The RSG emphasised the need for the accompanying Impact Assessment to clearly show the full economic and social implications for those stakeholder affected.

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:

- There is no support for, and indeed strong opposition to, this site by the fisheries sector as it is very important for the local fishing fleet and vessels from further away on the mainland. The area is worked for most of the year and is one of the main potting areas (crabs) around the Isle of Wight and is a staple for vessels from Freshwater, Ventnor, Yarmouth and a larger vessel from Lymington (one person who has fished there for 47 years and obtains 95% of his earnings are it). The suggestion is that more than 25 livelihoods would be seriously affected if this reference area were to be designated; shore-based businesses would also be affected.
- Not acceptable to private boat anglers
- Charter fishing is heavy at certain times of the year
- Heavy recreational anchoring occurs during the Round the Island Race
- A potential tidal extraction site overlaps the south east corner of the site
- Supported by the Wildlife sector, who noted that excluding the intertidal does not make ecological sense as the same species will be using both habitats as the tide goes in and out.
- There is concern over the size of the site and that there has never been experience of a reference area of this size on the coast.
- The Southern IFCA does not support the site as it will be a very difficult RA to enforce. The distance of the site from the home port of their patrol vessel would make enforcement very costly. Concern that activities will continue regardless of the designation as mariners will be able to warn each other of their approach due to the long travel times to reach the site. However, the site lies within a SAC which should be managed.

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.