

## Wight-Barfleur Extension rMCZ no 21

### 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.

<b>1. Site name</b> Offshore Wight-Barfleur Extension rMCZ no 21 Contains: Wight –Barfleur draft Reference Area no 14	<b>3. Site surface area</b> 9404ha                      94.04 km <sup>2</sup>
<b>2. Site centre location</b> ETRS89 N50 9' 49.506" W1 10' 37.620" N50 9.825' W1 10.627' (N.B. WGS 84 UTM 31N coordinates are provided in the map vertices)	<b>4. Biogeographic region</b> Eastern English Channel

#### 5. Features proposed for designation within Offshore South West Corner <sup>1</sup>

Feature type	EUNIS L3 translation from REC	Feature name - REC	Area <sup>2</sup>
REC Broad-scale habitat	A5.4 subtidal mixed sediments	A4.84 HE circalittoral rock and thin mixed sediments	70.13 km <sup>2</sup>
		A4D.84 HE deep circalittoral rock and thin mixed sediments	
	A5.1 subtidal coarse sediments	A4D.81 HE deep circalittoral rock and thin coarse sediments	22.24 km <sup>2</sup>
Habitat FOCI	Subtidal sands and gravels		91.76 km <sup>2</sup>

#### 6. Features within Offshore South West Corner not proposed for designation <sup>3</sup>

Feature type	Feature name	Reason
Broad-scale habitat	A4.1 high energy circalittoral rock	Wight-Barfleur dSAC aims to protect this and therefore the appropriate extent of the habitat should already have been mapped and delineated. JNCC advise not to include additional areas of designated habitats in MCZs adjacent to existing MPAs.
Species FOCI High mobility	Undulate Ray ( <i>Raja undulata</i> )	Not a good place for protection

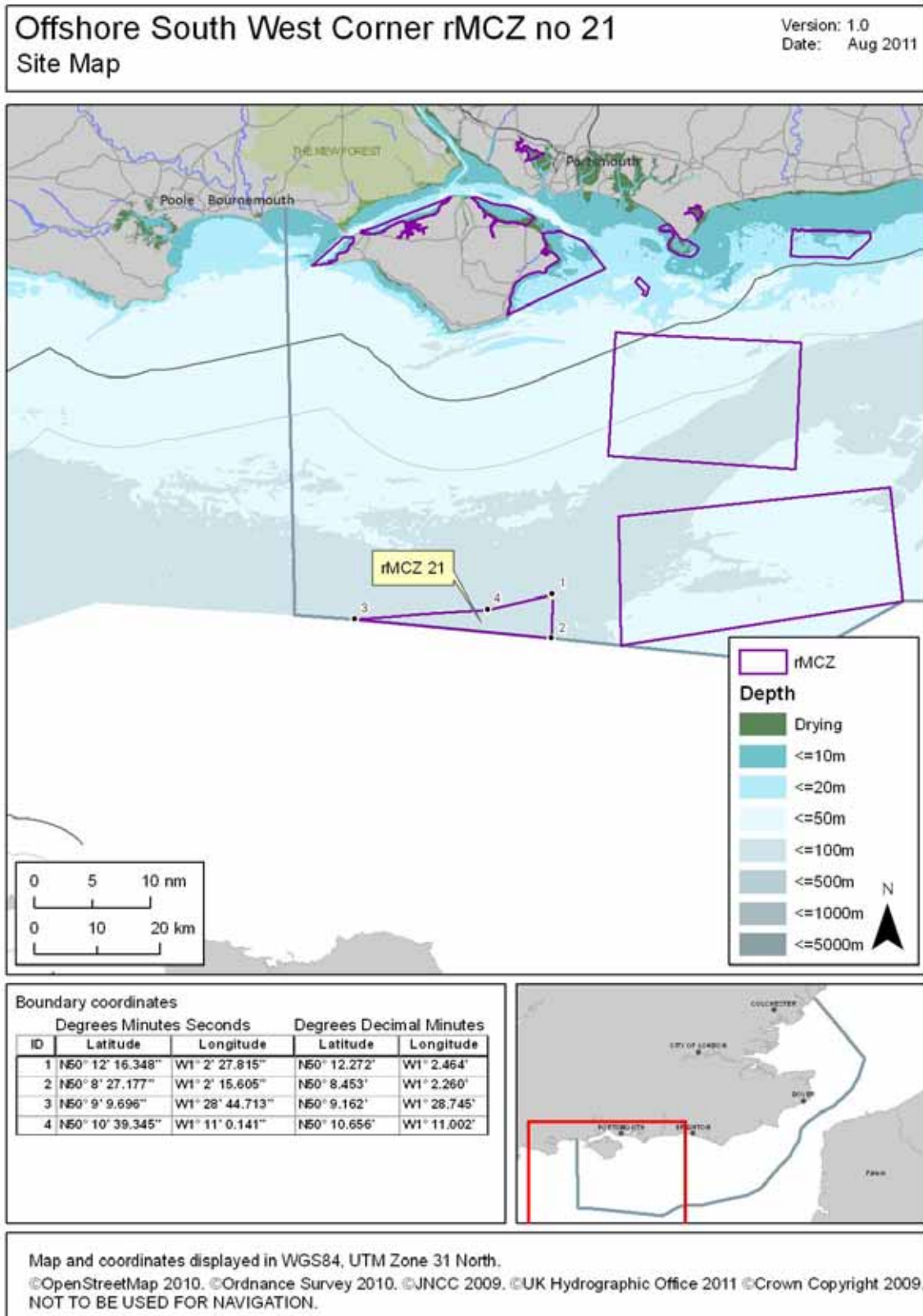
<sup>1</sup> Sources of information relating to these features are listed in Section 13.

<sup>2</sup> Areas have been calculated according to spatial GIS data and are indicative only.

<sup>3</sup> Features may appear in both tables (5 & 6) if an MCZ overlaps an existing MPA where the feature is protected.

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## 7. Map of site (see below)



### 8. Site summary

This offshore site, lying on the median line south of the Isle of Wight, has been identified to protect areas of subtidal mixed (A5.4) and coarse sediments (A5.1) that lie to the southeast of the high energy circalittoral rock reef proposed for protection under the Wight-Barfleur possible SAC (pSAC) which is currently out for public consultation. The rMCZ overlaps with areas of biodiversity, as defined by high benthic biotope distinctness and benthic species richness.

This site originally covered the greater part of the southwest corner of the Balanced Seas project area when the outcome of the Wight-Barfleur Area of Search was unknown. Once this site became a pSAC with clear boundaries, the need to for an MCZ over the rocky reef feature was removed, but the remaining section south to the median line remained as a potential site to capture shortfall sediment broad-scale habitats.

The conservation objectives for this site suggest that the sediment habitats can support the activities currently occurring. The RSG has recommended that management of both the pSAC and rMCZ (if it is designated) should be considered together. The Wight Barfleur pSAC is still out to public consultation, so management has not yet been decided but JNCC has indicated that benthic trawling might be restricted in the the pSAC (which is largely rocky habitat); final decisions about rMCZ 21 will need to be taken in the light of future management of the pSAC.

### 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 is proposed as a southern extension to the median line of the Wight-Barfleur possible Special Area of Conservation (pSAC) which has been proposed to protect the Annex I Reef under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). The Wight-Barfleur pSAC is an area of bedrock and stony reef located in the central English Channel, between St Catherine's point on the Isle of Wight and Barfleur Point on the Cotentin Peninsula in northern France. Further information about this pSAC is given in JNCC (2011).

According to the UKSeaMap/MESH data (JNCC 2011 v. 7) the adjacent rMCZ contains subtidal mixed sediments (A5.4), subtidal coarse sediments (A5.1) (see Broad-scale habitats map.) These EUNIS Level 3 habitat definitions are 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 seabed<sup>4</sup>. Data from the MALSF English Channel Synthesis Regional Environmental Characterisation data (REC, James *et al.* 2011), shows that the site is divided up into high energy circalittoral rock, high energy circalittoral rock and thin mixed sediments (including the deep paleochannel) and deep circalittoral rock and thin coarse sediments (see REC EUNIS Level 4 map.)

According to the Natural England geomorphology data, 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.* 2007).

The area is an important fishing ground. Nursery grounds for Mackerel are present in the west of the site, although this is a low conservation priority. There is a possibility of spawning grounds for Sole

<sup>4</sup> Please see the Final Recommendations report for a more detailed explanation of how these datasets have been used.

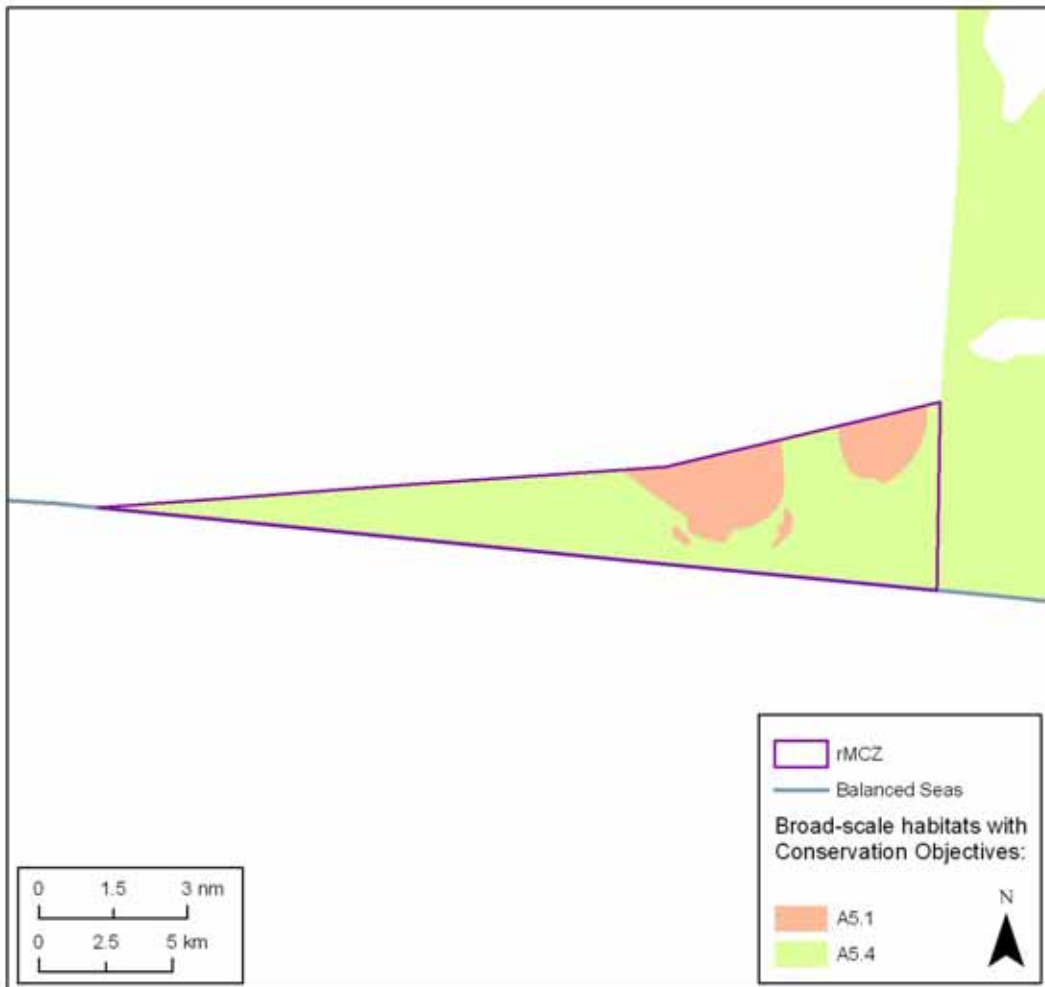
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within this site, as this species is characteristic of sandy sediments (DEFRA Marine Biodiversity Policy and JNCC, 2011).

The area overlaps with areas of biodiversity, as defined by high benthic biotope distinctness and benthic species richness (Jackson et al, 2009 DEFRA MB102 2F). The RSPB have gathered information on the foraging grounds for various bird species and have identified this site as important for Great Cormorant and Sandwich Tern.

### Offshore South West Corner rMCZ no 21 Broad-scale habitats (EUNIS Level 3) with Conservation Objectives

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Date: Aug 2011



Broad-scale habitats with Conservation Objectives:  
- A5.1 subtidal coarse sediments  
- A5.4 subtidal mixed sediments

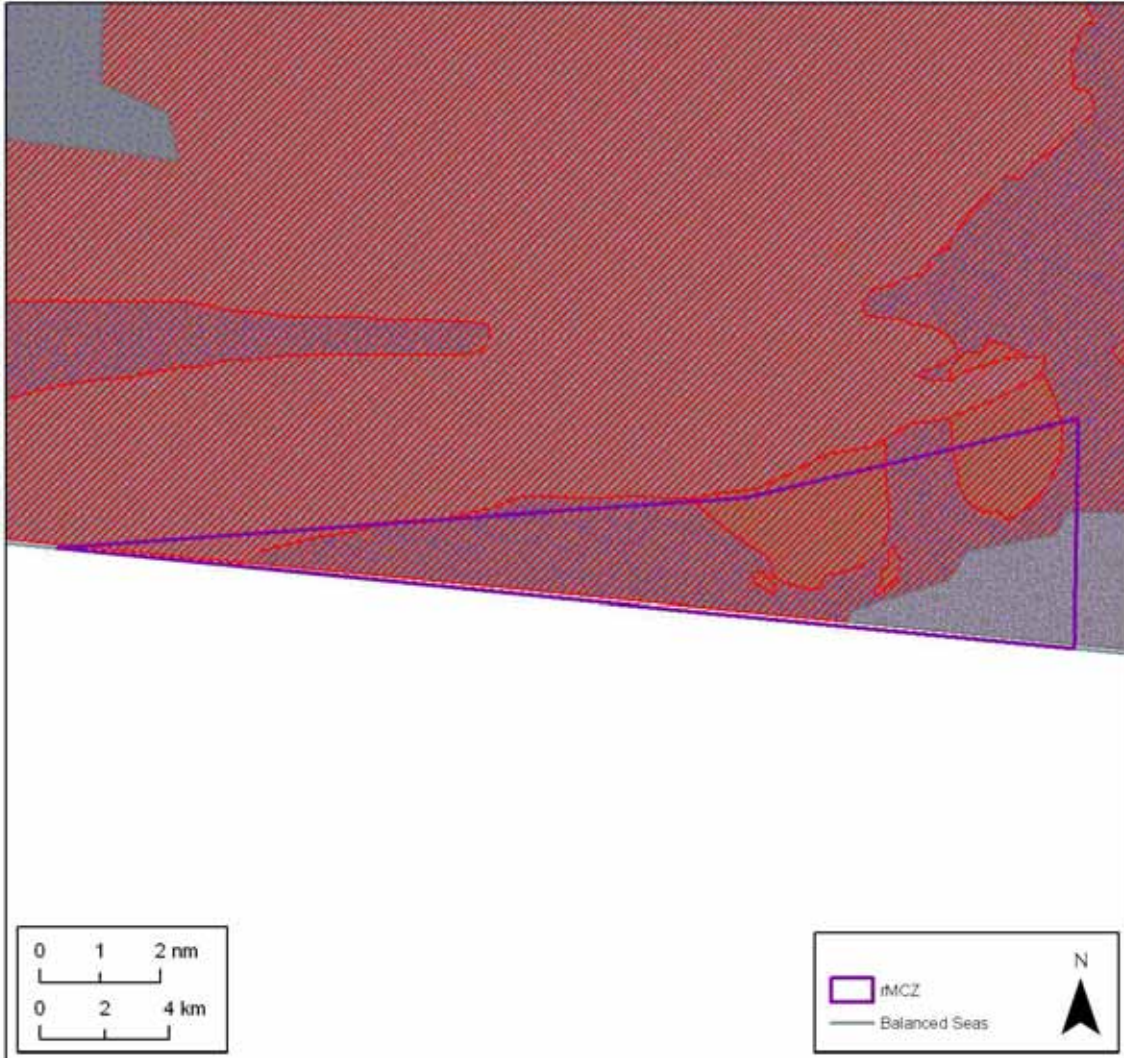


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Broad-scale habitat (reclassified EUNIS Level 4 from REC data)



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

- A4.84 : High energy circalittoral rock and thin mixed sediments
- A4D.81 : High energy deep circalittoral rock and thin coarse sediments
- A4D.84 : High energy deep circalittoral rock and thin mixed sediments

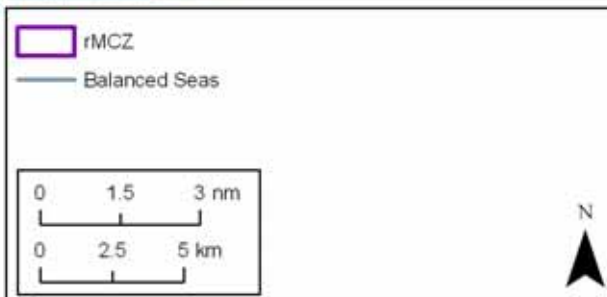


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Offshore South West Corner rMCZ no 21  
Geology

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### 10. Site boundary

The northern boundary of the site is concurrent with that of the Wight-Barfleur pSAC southern boundary from the point at which the pSAC meets the median line to the easternmost point. The boundary then drops due south to the median line, following it westwards to meet the northern boundary. The site is designed to protect the area of seabed habitat that lies between the pSAC and the median line.

### 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 touches and shares a boundary with the Wight-Barfleur pSAC .



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### 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
Geology	Literature search	National Contract Data. DEFRA MB102 2A	Mapping of Geological and Geomorphological Features	2009
Subtidal sands and gravels	Survey	National contract data, DEFRA MB102 2C		09/11/2007

### References (additional information can be found in the Bibliography)

- 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
- COMMITE REGIONAL DES PECHEES MARITIMES ET DES ELEVAGES MARINS NORD – Pas de Calais/Picardie. 21.12.10. AV. French Fisheries Representatives Concerns about the MCZ Designation Process.
- DEFRA Marine Biodiversity Policy and Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC). 2011. Wight Barfleur Reef Special Area of Conservation.
- 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
- 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., LEIVERS, M., CLARK, R.W.E, PLIM, J.F., HILL, J.M., ARNOTT, S.H.L., BATESON, L, DE-BURGH T., & BAGGALEY, P.A. 2011. The MALS F synthesis study in the central and eastern English Channel. British Geological Survey Open Report OR/11/01. 158pp. Published by MALS F.
- 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. Published by MALS F.
- JNCC, 2011. Offshore Special Area of Conservation: Wight-Barfleur Reef. SAC Selection Assessment Document. <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/marineconsult>
- 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.

### 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 supported this site.

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 Wight-Barfleur rMCZ 21
Yachting	RYA	Support.
Sea Angling		This area is simply to meet sea bed targets.
Fishing	Local Fisheries Representatives	Low level of support.
Fishing - FPO, beam trawling		Reasonable UK support - the only caveat being that offshore potting interests must be taken into account.
Birds	RSPB	Support.
Wildlife Trusts	Hampshire Wildlife Trust	I support this site and believe it should have a CO of recover.
Marine Ecology	Seasearch	Strong support for this site, even though it may have been preferable to cover these habitats distant from the SAC. With maintain objective this will achieve no benefit to the ecology and I suggest recover would be more appropriate.
Marine Wildlife	Marine Conservation Society	<u>Support site.</u> Recover all broadscale habitats from bottom towed fishing gear.



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French fishing industry	CRPMEM Nord - Pas de Calais / Picardie	<p>The news boundaries of these dMCZ are quite small and the CO are maintain but we have to take into account this site is next to a big Natura 2000 site beside and the presence of a draft Reference Area.</p> <p>We can accept this are, but my sector is afraid with the pSAC Wight-Barfleur. There is no way to report the fishing effort actually present in this area</p>
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### 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) process<sup>5</sup> and then sense-checked at the national level<sup>6</sup>. 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 (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](http://www.balancedseas.org).

Feature	Draft CO	Activity Exerting Pressure	MMO/JNCC Comments	Stakeholder comments
A5.1 Subtidal coarse sediment	MAINTAIN		Since the Wight Barfleur pSAC is still out to public consultation, management has not yet been decided but JNCC indicated that benthic trawling may be restricted in some way	
A5.4 Subtidal mixed sediments	MAINTAIN			

<sup>5</sup> The process of establishing conservation objectives is outlined in the [Conservation Objectives Guidance](#) (JNCC /NE 2011)

<sup>6</sup> VA results were standardised across all four regional projects but the fisheries activity data is still undergoing assessment.

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Subtidal sands and gravels	MAINTAIN			
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### 16. Evolution of the site recommendations

A large broad area of interest was identified in the south west corner of the Balanced Seas region early in the MCZ process (RSG 2, April 2010) in order to meet broad-scale habitat targets in an area where it was thought there were comparatively few human activities. In November 2010, JNCC announced that the Wight-Barfleur reef had been put forward as an Area of Search for a potential SAC and provided draft boundaries to the RSG. Given the uncertainty as to whether this AoS would go forward, the RSG chose to draw the MCZ boundaries around the entire reef area (A4.1 Low energy circalittoral rock) as a contingency (i.e. if the AoS went forward, the MCZ could be removed). At the same time, the MCZ boundaries were extended southwards beyond the reef feature to meet the median line, as this captured additional sediment habitats that were considered to be of higher biodiversity value (Offshore Task Group, Nov 2010).

Once the AoS officially became a dSAC, the MCZ was adjusted so that it captured only the sediment habitats to the south. Following the incorporation of the MALSF Synthesis REC data (James, 2011) the sediment habitats mapped within the site changed from subtidal sand to mixed sediments and sand, which provided the RSG with the opportunity to recommend a draft Reference Area (dRA) 5km by 5km (see rRA 14) that captured three adjacent broad-scale habitats in an area that is not strongly opposed the fishing industry (Offshore Task Group, March 2011). Although JNCC felt an extension to the Wight-Barfleur pSAC was not ideal in this location, the general support for the dRA by the fishing sector led to the rMCZ being retained in the network. However, on JNCCs recommendation, the boundaries were adjusted to remove A4.1 high energy circalittoral rock from the site as this habitat is protected by the Wight-Barfleur pSAC.

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](http://www.balancedseas.org).

### 17. Implications for Stakeholders

The following issues are associated with this site:

- More detailed information on fishing activity (national and non-UK) is needed before full implications for this sector can be assessed and extent of any potential displacement (although this should be small given the COs of MAINTAIN)
- UK fishing sector accept this site as they recognise that the Wight Barfleur pSAC may have implications for them, and this is simply a small extension; there is a small amount of trawling and possibly some netting and potting (Offshore Task Force March 2011); they have however stated that they will not support MCZs unless restrictions apply equally to both UK and EU fleets; the Minister has confirmed to them that this will be the case.
- The site is used by French, Dutch and Belgian fleets :
  - Used by French fleets particularly vessels from Basse Normandie (demersal trawlers (dependency between 10 and 25 %; pelagic trawlers) and Haute-Normandie: (13 vessels - demersal and pelagic trawlers, scallopers) (Comments on Draft Final Recommendations, June 2011). Also fished for species with high added value – scallops, squid, bass. Fisheries from north of France are present south of the Isle of Wight a few months of each year in order to catch sea bass (CRPMEM, 2011).
  - Low level of use by Belgian fleets (perhaps 5 vessels seasonally) Offshore Task Force March 2011)

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- Low level of use by Dutch fleets (fly shooting and twin rigging) (Offshore Task Force March 2011)

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](http://www.balancedseas.org).