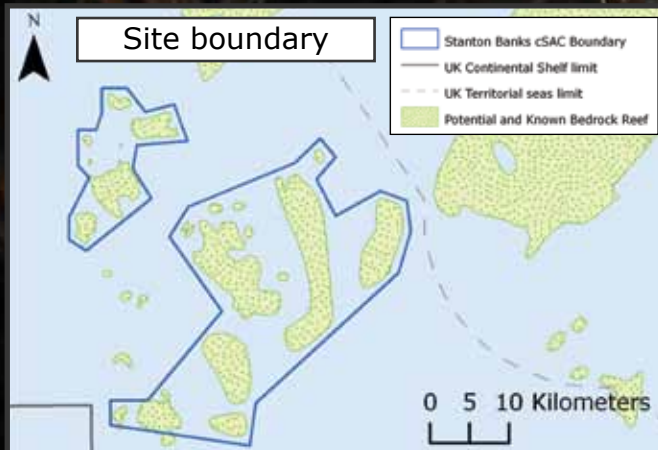


# Joint Nature Conservation Committee

The JNCC is responsible for identifying marine protected areas in the offshore environment around the UK. As part of this work, Stanton Banks has been recommended to Government, and to the European Commission, as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the EU Habitats Directive.



# Surveys of Stanton Banks

Stanton Banks has been extensively surveyed by many organisations, some in collaboration with the JNCC. Two surveys were carried out by DARDNI (Department for Agriculture and Rural Development, Northern Ireland - now Agri-Food & Biosciences Institute) in 2003 aboard the RV Lough Foyle, when acoustic data and underwater video/stills were gathered. Further survey was undertaken by the North Western Shelf Consortium, as part of the MESH project in 2005 and 2006.

The JNCC is the statutory adviser to Government on UK and international nature conservation

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[www.jncc.gov.uk/marineprotectedsites](http://www.jncc.gov.uk/marineprotectedsites)

Further reading:  
Mitchell, A., *et al*, R. 2009. Blackstone Bank and Stanton Banks Habitat Mapping. JNCC Report 425.

Project partners:  
British Geological Survey - [www.bgs.ac.uk/](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/)  
Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute - [www.afbini.gov.uk/](http://www.afbini.gov.uk/)  
Queen's University, Belfast - [www.qub.ac.uk/Marine](http://www.qub.ac.uk/Marine)  
Institute, Ireland - [www.marine.ie/](http://www.marine.ie/)  
Mapping European Seabed Habitats (MESH) - [www.searchmesh.net/](http://www.searchmesh.net/)

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# STANTON BANKS

The areas surveyed at Stanton Banks included an impressive rocky seabed criss-crossed by deep gullies, the biggest of which were approximately 100m wide and 30m deep, other gullies were only a few tens of metres wide.

At the top of the gullies, areas of bedrock outcrops were heavily encrusted with coralline algae, keel worms and brittlestars, with regions of sponges in places. At the bottom of the gullies clean sand predominated with areas of gravel and cobble interspersed.

Cirralitoral boulder and bedrock reef habitat with the sponge *Mycale lingua* recorded on Stanton Banks

In other areas smooth, silty bedrock was found, dominated by coralline red algae, numerous barnacles, brittlestars, small sponge crusts, cup-shaped Axinellid sponges and massive sponges. Sea urchins and colonies of filamentous tubeworms were also common. On the slopes the smooth bedrock changed to fissured rock outcrops, boulders and cobbles with featherstars, dead man's fingers and robust hydroids.

Fissured bedrock outcrop with brittle stars and encrusted coralline algae\*



Featherstars *Leptometra celtica*, calcareous tube worms and the blue sponge crust *Hymedesmia paupertas* on bedrock and boulder reef



Bathymetry of Stanton Banks (vertical exaggeration 5-fold) looking NW

Vertical Scale (Metres)

