

# Swallow Sand Marine Conservation Zone

## Where is this site?

Swallow Sand MCZ is an offshore site in the North Sea, located approximately 100 km from the Northumberland coast in the North East of England. It protects an area of about 4,746 km<sup>2</sup>, making it the largest MCZ.



Angler fish on subtidal sandy habitat  
© JNCC

## Why is this site important?

Swallow Sand MCZ covers one of the deepest areas in the North Sea with depths ranging from 50 to 150 metres. The site protects a large area of seabed made up of sands and coarser sediments such as gravels. The site also protects Swallow Hole, a feature of geological interest.



Subtidal coarse sediment © Natural England

## What does this Marine Conservation Zone protect?

Swallow Sand MCZ protects two different types of habitat and one example of a geological feature. Within the site the seabed is a mix of different sediments, which creates a diverse range of habitats.

Deeper parts of the seabed tend to be dominated by animals as reduced light levels restrict the ability of plant life to grow. The animal communities found on coarse sediments are typically made up of species such as polychaete worms and bivalves which burrow within the sediments or sea urchins and anemones which live on the sediment surface. The sandy areas within the site are typically exposed to moderate wave action and weak tidal currents. This relatively stable environment is able to support large numbers of worms, molluscs and crustaceans.

A North Sea glacial tunnel valley, known as Swallow Hole, is protected within the site. This accounts for the deepest area of the site and as such has a localised environment capable of supporting a range of different species from those found in shallower areas.



Features	General management approach
Subtidal coarse sediment	Maintain in favourable condition
Subtidal sand	Recover to favourable condition
North Sea glacial tunnel valleys (Swallow Hole)	Maintain in favourable condition

## Who will manage Marine Conservation Zones?

Many activities within the marine environment are regulated through marine licences. More information regarding the marine licensing process in relation to MCZs can be found on the MMO website [www.marinemanagement.org.uk/licensing/marine.htm](http://www.marinemanagement.org.uk/licensing/marine.htm)

Other activities are regulated through different mechanisms. For example fishing activities are managed through European legislation, national statutory instruments, byelaws and self-imposed voluntary agreements. Similar arrangements are in place to manage the range of activities that may impact MCZs including pollution, coastal development and recreation.

Management of sites is currently being prioritised nationally according to the potential or actual adverse impacts of activities on the features designated in relation to fishing activities. This prioritisation will be further refined at a local level taking into account relevant information and will guide regulators to those sites which may need protection before others.

Any management measures that are required for MCZs will be applied on a case-by-case basis. Management measures will be implemented at sites most at risk of damage first, regulating only those activities which have a detrimental impact on the features. In cases where there is a high risk to designated features being damaged emergency measures may be put in place to ensure the protection of vulnerable habitats and species.

## What happens now this site has been designated?

The site specific information below provides an overview of which activities may be affected by the designation of the MCZ and the current management measures. As with all management measures, they may, of course, be subject to change in the light of new evidence becoming available.

Current activities identified at this site which could be affected include the UK and EU commercial fisheries sector (predominately mobile gear).

As this site is offshore (over 12nm from the coastline) management measures will need to be proposed and agreed through the European Commission in accordance with the Common Fisheries Policy, applying to UK and non-UK fishing vessels alike. Defra will coordinate input from the MMO and JNCC before formally submitting proposals to the EC. The MMO will be the lead authority regarding implementation and compliance of those measures. All current relevant national and EU fisheries legislation apply to this site such as Cod Recovery technical and control measures.

Further information is available at

[www.marinemangement.org.uk/fisheries/index.htm](http://www.marinemangement.org.uk/fisheries/index.htm)

## Where can I find out further information?

An interactive map showing this MCZs and other marine protected areas is available at <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-5201>

Additional information about this site and other MCZs is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/protecting-and-sustainably-using-the-marine-environment>

and within JNCC's advice available at <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-6460>



## Annex: Management

Lead organisation	Activities
<b>Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fisheries (0-6nm) including commercial fisheries and recreational fishing activities such as sea angling</li></ul> For further information visit <a href="http://www.association-ifca.org.uk">www.association-ifca.org.uk</a>
<b>Marine Management Organisation (MMO)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fisheries (management) (6-12nm)</li><li>• Fisheries (enforcement) national and EU legislation</li><li>• Licensable activities such as deposit and removal activities below mean high water springs, including subsea cables (up to 12nm), construction (including renewables &lt;100MW, ports and coastal protection), dredging and disposal</li><li>• Harbour Orders and Harbour Empowerment Orders</li><li>• Section 36 and safety zone consents</li><li>• Enforcement of licensable activity and other consents (including deemed marine licences)</li><li>• Development of marine plans integrating the social requirements, economic potential and environmental priorities of marine plan areas</li><li>• Activities requiring a wildlife licence</li></ul> For further information visit <a href="http://www.marinemangement.org.uk/fisheries">www.marinemangement.org.uk/fisheries</a> or <a href="http://www.marinemangement.org.uk/licensing/marine.htm">www.marinemangement.org.uk/licensing/marine.htm</a>
<b>Environment Agency (EA)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fisheries management for migratory and fresh water fish</li><li>• Coastal protection and flood management</li><li>• Water quality</li><li>• Permitted discharges from terrestrial sources</li></ul> For further information visit <a href="http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/default.aspx">www.environment-agency.gov.uk/default.aspx</a>
<b>Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Oil and Gas related activities</li><li>• Renewable energy related activities</li></ul> For further information visit <a href="http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-energy-climate-change">www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-energy-climate-change</a>
<b>Harbour Authorities and local planning authorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Harbour authorities have management responsibilities for the port and coastal waters within their jurisdiction</li><li>• Local authorities have role to manage, regulate and facilitate activities at the coast. These include management of coastal recreation, tourism, economic regeneration, flood protection, spatial planning and coastal zone and estuary management,</li></ul> For further information contact your local authority or IFCA
<b>Department for Transport (DfT)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Responsible for shipping, harbours, ship pollution and offshore safety</li></ul> For further information visit <a href="http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport">www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport</a>
<b>Natural England (NE)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Public access</li></ul> For further information visit <a href="http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/">www.naturalengland.org.uk/</a>