



Tranche Three Marine Conservation Zone Workshop – Initial assessment of proposed alternative Areas of Search

Joint Nature Conservation Committee

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JNCC Tranche Three Marine Conservation Zone Workshop: Initial assessment of proposed alternative Areas of Search

This report contains a summary of JNCC and Natural England's initial assessment of the alternative Areas of Search proposed by stakeholders during the MCZ Tranche three stakeholder workshop in November 2016. This assessment is primarily based on the sufficiency of the data available for the proposed feature within the option but the ecological value of an area and human activities information was also considered. The Areas of Search considered suitable for development into potential new site options will be considered further in relation to feature data, the MPA network and human activities information.

Western Channel and Celtic Sea region

Two alternative Areas of Search were proposed in the Western Channel and Celtic Sea region for Subtidal coarse sediment (Fig. 1).

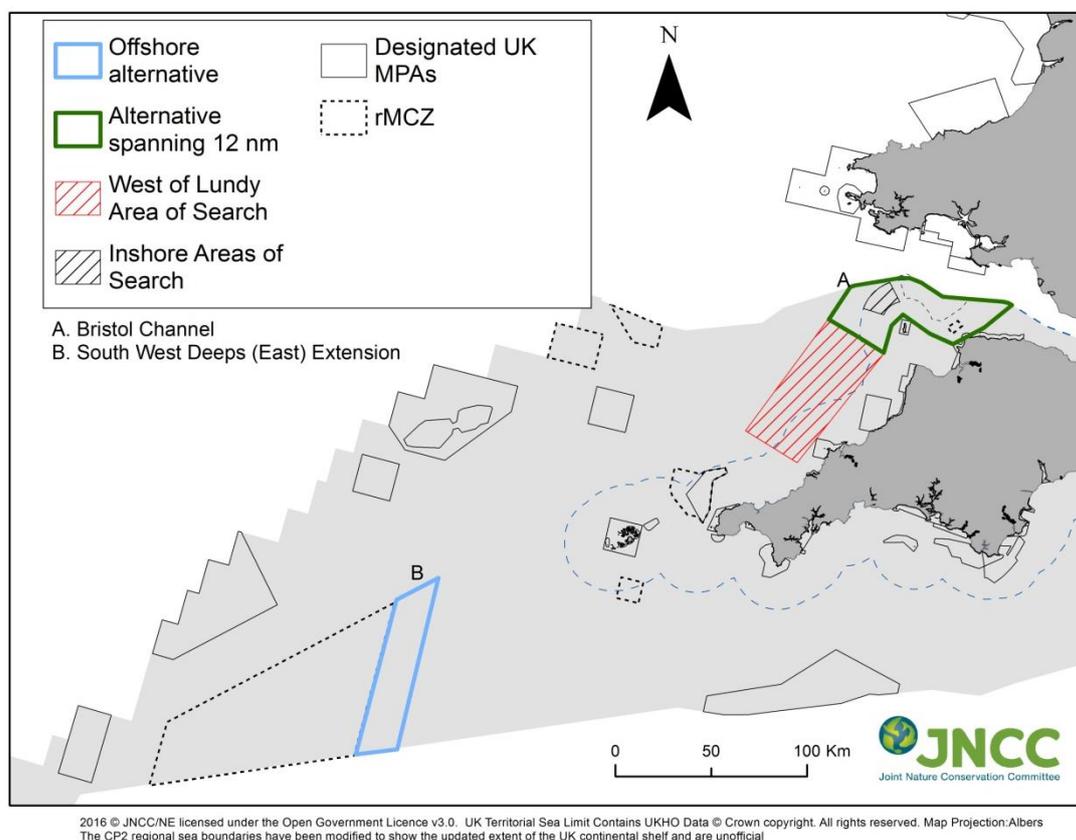


Figure 1: Alternatives areas of search in the Western channel and Celtic Sea Region that were proposed during discussions at the Tranche Three MCZ workshop.

A: Bristol Channel

Overview: The Bristol Channel (Fig. 1) was proposed as an alternative to West of Lundy Area of Search (AoS) to fill the shortfall of Subtidal coarse sediment in Western Channel and Celtic Sea region.

Who proposed the alternative: The alternative was primarily proposed by representatives of the French and Belgian fishing industries, due to lower levels of fishing activity further north of West of Lundy AoS and into the Bristol Channel.

Location: The indicative boundary drawn at the workshop is adjacent to the northern boundary of the West of Lundy AoS and extends inshore and into the Bristol Channel. The boundary of the alternative area of search encompasses the North of Lundy rMCZ which was proposed by the Finding Sanctuary regional project as an rMCZ co-located with the Atlantic Array wind farm. The boundary of the proposed alternative also includes North West of Lundy Area of Search (inshore new site option), Morte Platform rMCZ and overlaps slightly with Bideford to Foreland Point MCZ.

Available evidence for the feature: The following data sources are available to support the presence of Subtidal coarse sediment in this location:

- Particle Size Analysis data from British Geological Society
- 2011 Atlantic array survey
- Outer Bristol Channel Marine Habitat Study
- Cefas Morte Platform rMCZ grab Survey 2014
- EUSeaMap 2016

There is enough ground-truth data to support the presence of Subtidal coarse sediment within the Area of Search. The shortfall of Subtidal coarse sediment in the region is 1220.5 km². The area of Subtidal coarse sediment in the alternative Area of Search in its current draft form is 1108.7 km², once the contribution from Morte Platform rMCZ and Bideford to Foreland Point MCZ have been taken into account. Therefore, the boundary of the alternative Area of Search would need to be altered for it to be suitable to complete the shortfall on its own.

Initial conclusion: Natural England has concluded that there is no suitable area within the inshore section of this alternative that could go forward as a new site option for Subtidal coarse sediment. This conclusion is due to the majority of the evidence for the proposed feature being located within the North of Lundy rMCZ. The North of Lundy rMCZ was no longer considered for designation once the Atlantic Array wind farm proposal was withdrawn by developers. The rMCZ was originally proposed by Finding Sanctuary as a co-location zone and therefore would no longer have stakeholder support. The North of Lundy rMCZ area has remained excluded when identifying appropriate inshore areas of search to address gaps. In addition, the inshore section encompasses the North West of Lundy Area of Search (inshore new site option) and Morte Platform rMCZ within the proposed area. Both these sites have Subtidal coarse sediment as a proposed feature.

Based on a high level assessment of the data available, the offshore section of this alternative will be considered further for a new site option, however whether it progresses or not will depend on further assessment of both scientific and human activities data, as well as the contribution any new site within this AoS could make to the MPA network.

B: South-West Deeps (East) rMCZ extension

Overview: The South-West Deeps (East) rMCZ extension (Fig. 1) was proposed as an alternative to West of Lundy AoS to fill the shortfall of Subtidal coarse sediment in Western Channel and Celtic Sea region.

Who proposed the alternative: The alternative was proposed by the UK fishing industry as it has lower levels of activity in this part of the region.

Location: The boundary suggested at the workshop was an extension of the eastern boundary of South-West Deeps (East) rMCZ to include an extra area of Subtidal coarse sediment.

Available evidence for the feature: The following data sources are available to support the presence of Subtidal coarse sediment in this location:

- Particle Size Analysis data from British Geological Society
- EUSeaMap 2016

There are enough ground-truth records of Subtidal coarse sediment to support its presence within the proposed alternative. The area of Subtidal coarse sediment predicted to be within the alternative is 1326.3 km² which is more than the required extent to complete the shortfall.

Initial conclusion: Based on a high level assessment of the data available for this alternative, an Area of Search could be considered for further consideration in this part of the Western Channel and Celtic Sea region, however it is JNCC's view that this proposal does not offer the same potential as the other Areas of Search for this feature in the region.

Eastern Channel region

Four alternative Areas of Search were proposed for Subtidal sand and one for Subtidal mixed sediments in the Eastern Channel (Fig. 2).

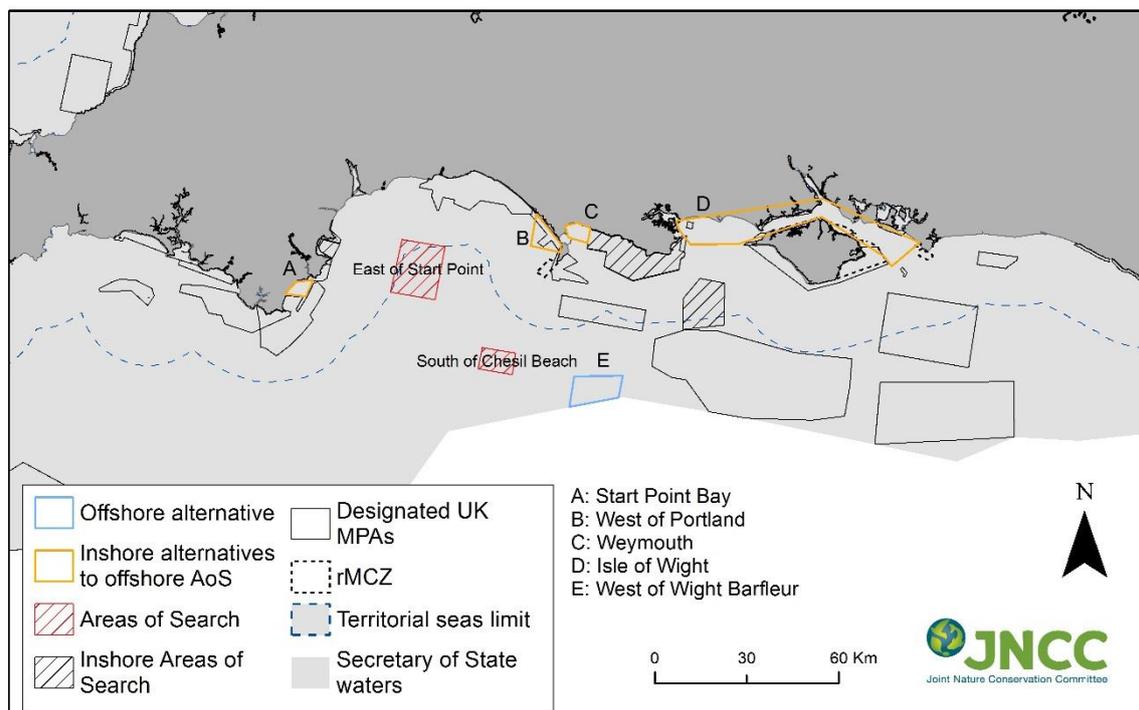


Figure 2: Alternatives areas of search in the Eastern Channel Region that were proposed during discussions at the Tranche Three MCZ workshop.

A: Start Point Bay

Overview: Start Point Bay was proposed as an alternative to the East of Start Point AoS, to fill the shortfall of Subtidal sand in the Eastern Channel.

Who proposed the alternative: The alternative was proposed during group discussions, principally by representatives from the fishing industry because it is an area of lower intensity fishing activity.

Location: The suggested boundary covers an area of Subtidal sand within Start Bay in Devon

Available evidence for the feature: The following data sources are available to support the presence of Subtidal sand in this location:

- Devon Wildlife Trust Habitat Map 2010
- EUSeaMap 2016

The available data suggest that there is 27.4 km² of Subtidal sand within the proposed boundary, although the confidence in the data supporting the presence of Subtidal sand in Start Point Bay is low. The shortfall for Subtidal sand within the Eastern Channel is 103.2 km². Therefore, an MCZ within this Area of Search would not complete the shortfall on its own, unlike the current new site options under consideration.

Initial conclusion: Based on a high level assessment of the data available, Natural England has concluded that this alternative will not be considered further.

B: West of Portland

Overview: West of Portland was proposed as an alternative to the East of Start Point AoS, to fill the shortfall of Subtidal sand in the Eastern Channel.

Who proposed the alternative: The alternative was proposed during group discussions, principally by representatives from the fishing industry because it is an area of lower intensity fishing activity.

Location: The boundary of the proposed area of search encompasses the majority of Chesil Beach and Stennis Ledges MCZ.

Available evidence for the feature: The following data sources are available to support the presence of Subtidal sand in this location:

- Chesil Beach and Stennis Ledges MCZ Verification Survey 2013

Subtidal sand is not currently designated in Chesil Beach and Stennis Ledges MCZ, but the feature is being advised on for potential inclusion in Tranche Three. There is no mapped extent of Subtidal sand within the proposed area of search outside the boundary of Chesil Beach and Stennis Ledges MCZ, therefore a new site could not be created within the West of Portland alternative Area of Search that would contribute any additional area of Subtidal sand to the network.

Initial conclusion: Based on a high level assessment of the data available, Natural England has concluded that this alternative will not be considered further.

C: Weymouth

Overview: Weymouth was proposed as an alternative to the East of Start Point AoS, to fill the shortfall of Subtidal sand in the Eastern Channel.

Who proposed the alternative: The alternative was proposed during group discussions, principally by representatives from the fishing industry because it is an area with no trawling activity.

Location: The boundary of the proposed area of search is in Weymouth Bay. It is adjacent to the western boundary of Purbeck Coast which is currently being considered as an inshore new site option (Area of Search) for Subtidal coarse sediment and Subtidal mixed sediments.

Available evidence for the feature: The following data sources are available to support the presence of Subtidal sand in this location:

- DORIS Photo data
- EUSeaMap 2016

The data supporting Subtidal sand in this area is derived from survey methods with low certainty for defining sediment habitats and is therefore of low quality. The data also conflicts with underlying polygon data. The only available habitat map for Subtidal sand is EUSeaMap. Furthermore, the area of the mapped extent of Subtidal sand within the proposed boundary is 20.4 km² whereas the shortfall for the feature in the region is 103.2 km². Therefore, an MCZ within this Area of Search would not complete the shortfall on its own, unlike the new site options currently under consideration.

Initial conclusion: Based on a high level assessment of the data available, Natural England has concluded that this alternative will not be considered further.

D: Isle of Wight

Overview: Isle of Wight was proposed as an alternative to the East of Start Point AoS, to fill the shortfall of Subtidal sand in the Eastern Channel.

Who proposed the alternative: The alternative was proposed during group discussions, principally by representatives from the fishing industry because it is an area with no trawling activity. One breakout group suggested the whole area shown in figure 2, while another group indicated a possible area of search in the western part of this larger area.

Location: The proposed alternative is the Solent on the northern side of the Isle of Wight, extending westwards to Studland. In its current form the boundary overlaps with a number of MPAs and rMCZs including Poole Rocks MCZ, The Needles MCZ, Yarmouth to Cowes rMCZ, Norris to Ryde rMCZ and Bembridge rMCZ. An extension to Poole Rocks, which is currently being considered as an inshore new site option, is also within the area.

Available evidence for the feature: The following data sources are available to support the presence of Subtidal sand in this location:

- CCO SCOPAC Eastern Solent Seabed Mapping 2014
- Solent Maritime SAC subtidal sandbanks mapping 2015
- EMU Ltd Benthic Ecology Characterisation Navitus Bay 2012
- Cefas MCZ Verification Survey – Bembridge 2012
- EUSeaMap 2016

Most of the evidence of Subtidal sand occurs at the western and eastern corners of the proposed area of search. Much of the evidence comes from EUSeaMap, however some of the mapped extent is derived from survey. Outside existing MPAs and rMCZs where Subtidal sand is considered to be protected, there is 208.7 km² of subtidal sand within the

indicative boundary of the Isle of Wight alternative. The shortfall for Subtidal sand in the Eastern Channel region is 103.2 km².

The area of Subtidal sand in the western part of the proposed area of search near Poole Bay has previously been considered by Natural England as a possible new site option for Subtidal sand. Whilst it is supported by high confidence polygon data and ground-truth data, the area was not considered suitable because conflicting ground-truth data reduced data certainty.

The area in the east of the proposed alternative is the main shipping access to the Solent, Portsmouth and Southampton. As a result, there is significant human activity including that associated with channel maintenance.

Initial conclusion: Based on a high level assessment of the data available, Natural England has concluded that this alternative will not be considered further.

E: West of Wight Barfleur

Overview: West of Wight Barfleur was proposed as an alternative to South of Chesil Beach AoS to fill the shortfall of Subtidal mixed sediments in the Eastern Channel.

Who proposed the alternative: The alternative was proposed during group discussions, principally by representatives from the fishing industry because it is an area of lower fishing activity.

Location: The boundary suggested at the workshop is an area approximately 20 km west of Wight Barfleur SAC.

Available evidence for the feature: The following data sources are available to support the presence of Subtidal mixed sediment in this location:

- Particle Size Analysis data from British Geological Society
- Portland Broadscale Annex I reef survey 2006/07
- EUSeaMap 2016

There is enough evidence of Subtidal mixed sediments to support its presence in the West of Wight Barfleur alternative AoS. The current shortfall of Subtidal mixed sediments in the Eastern Channel Region is 82.9 km² and the predicted area within the proposed alternative is 101.1 km². Therefore, there is sufficient area within West of Wight Barfleur alternative for a potential new site option which could complete the shortfall.

Initial conclusion: Based on a high level assessment of the data available for this alternative, an Area of Search will be considered further in this part of the Eastern Channel, however whether it progresses or not will depend on further assessment of both scientific and human activities data, as well as the contribution any new site that results from this AoS could contribute to the MPA network.

Summary and Next Steps

The four proposed alternative areas of search for Subtidal sand in the Eastern Channel region will not be taken forward for further consideration due to relatively poor confidence in data supporting presence and extent of the feature. The inshore section of the Bristol Channel will not be taken forward because rMCZs and new site options for Subtidal coarse sediment are already being considered in this area. The offshore section of the Bristol

Channel will be taken forward for further consideration as an area of search for Subtidal coarse sediment in Western Channel and Celtic Seas region, along with the West of Lundy Area of Search but the South West Deeps (East) extension will not progress. West of Wight Barfleur will undergo further consideration as an Area of Search for Subtidal mixed sediments in the Eastern Channel region.

The Areas of Search presented by JNCC at the workshop and the proposed alternatives that are being considered further will undergo a more detailed assessment. This will involve further assessment of the available habitat data and of how well a new site in that area would contribute to an ecologically coherent network. Overlap between the areas of search and human activities will also be considered in detail. Based on the outcome of this further analysis, new site boundaries will be developed and advised on by the relevant Statutory Nature Conservation Body. The boundaries of the proposed alternative areas of search displayed at the workshop were intended as indicative areas where new sites could be located based on the group discussions, therefore boundaries of any new sites may not fall completely within the proposed alternative Areas of Search.