



Tranche Three Marine Conservation Zone workshop - Day 1: Summary report of the South of Chesil Beach Area of Search Breakout

Joint Nature Conservation Committee

December 2016

JNCC Tranche Three Marine Conservation Zone Workshop: Summary report from Breakout session for the South of Chesil Beach Area of Search

This report is an account of the discussions that took place during day 1 of the JNCC Tranche Three Marine Conservation Zone workshop in November 2016 on the Area of Search (AoS) in the Eastern Channel CP2 region. Further details about the workshop and the AoS can be found in the Workshop Guide¹ and Options Summary paper produced as supporting workshop materials².

During the sessions stakeholders were asked two key questions:

- Are there particular parts of the AoS that are of greater interest to you?
- Are there additional human activity or marine habitats and species datasets available in relation to the AoS that we have missed?

Summary

- NGOs expressed general support to designate sites to fulfil the network;
- The group noted that there is intense mobile bottom fishing effort in this AoS by multiple Member States with active historic fishing agreements in place. The high effort is focussed in the southern portion of the site. Concern around the impact this site could have on the fishing industry led to a few alternative site options being presented within the group which aimed at reducing this impact. These were followed by discussions around their suitability to fill the gap in Subtidal mixed sediments in the area. The group identified a need for JNCC to explore these options by comparing their relative value in minimising impacts on the fishing industry and the relative strength in the underpinning evidence of the presence of Subtidal mixed sediments;
- The group discussed the quality of the data underpinning this AoS and the implications for sea users and management. The strength or quality of the data was considered by some to be poor and given the stakes are high for sea users, wondered if the data could be improved upon before taking the site forward any further and emphasised how important it would be to monitor the effectiveness of any measures put in place;
- Concern was voiced over the focus in the process of protecting specific habitats as this may not necessarily protect a range of biotopes. The principle of putting forward an area containing a range of habitats without waiting for good data was put forward as good practice if the objective is to conserve biodiversity;
- Concern was also voiced over a lack of coordination between the UK and France with respect to designating sites for habitats and mobile species; and

¹ Workshop Guide for the JNCC Tranche Three Marine Conservation Zone Workshop 2016. Available online at http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/MCZWS02_T3_Workshop_Guide_Final.pdf

² Option Summary for the South of Chesil Beach Area of Search in the Eastern Channel. Available online at http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/MCZWS05_EasternChannel2_OptionsSummary_vFinal.pdf

- Some in the group kindly offered to provide further information on activities in the area which could support JNCC's advice going forward e.g. under 12m vessel fishing effort, disposal sites and MoD exercises.

Specific interests or concerns

- The AoS is located in a region heavily fished by both the UK and non-UK fleets. There are historic potting agreements in place between the UK and other member states;
- There are high levels of activity from the French fleet in the region; Normandy fisheries have a big interest in the area (trawling and dredging activity) and have concerns over impact of any management. Also noted was a lack of co-ordination between England and France in relation to MPAs in the Channel. Better awareness is needed of the displacement and activity squeeze occurring in the English Channel due to the designation of UK and French MPAs;
- Brittany fisheries have a strong interest in the area (bottom-trawl activity) and noted that even a small site can have implications in terms of making it more difficult to access fishing grounds should they have to go around it. This can increase costs to fishers; and
- There is Belgian beam trawl activity in the area between 12nm and offshore. The importance of providing information on monitoring and management was highlighted. In particular, there were comments on the lack of information provided regarding management. The point was made that in regards to fishing we are talking about livelihoods and the fishing industry has a large stake in the process. If an area is closed to fishing, then industry needs to understand why and that the approach is working.

Comments regarding data

- Queries were raised as to whether or not there will be further data gathering exercises, such as a verification survey of the AoS. It was felt that more information on the biotopes present would be useful;
- There was general concern over the quality of the data available, noting that while it is the best available, it can still be misleading. The example of South Dorset MCZ just to the north of the AoS was raised to demonstrate this. It is located in the middle of the same modelled extent of mixed sediments, yet the habitat map from survey showed no mixed sediments were actually present. This example indicated low confidence that the AoS actually contains Subtidal mixed sediments;
- Data may be available through the DORIS Project undertaken by Dorset Wildlife Trust which translates MCA survey hydrograph data;
- The MMO Lyme bay trial may have VMS and sightings data for the under 15m fleet in the vicinity of the AoS; and
- French government can provide further information such as landings data and levels of fishing activity in the area.

Alternative AoS options

During the breakout sessions any suggestions for movement or modification of the AoS were recorded and presented during the plenary session to be considered further and for further information to be gathered regarding these. There were some broad comments made on relocating the AoS further east where less activity occurred.

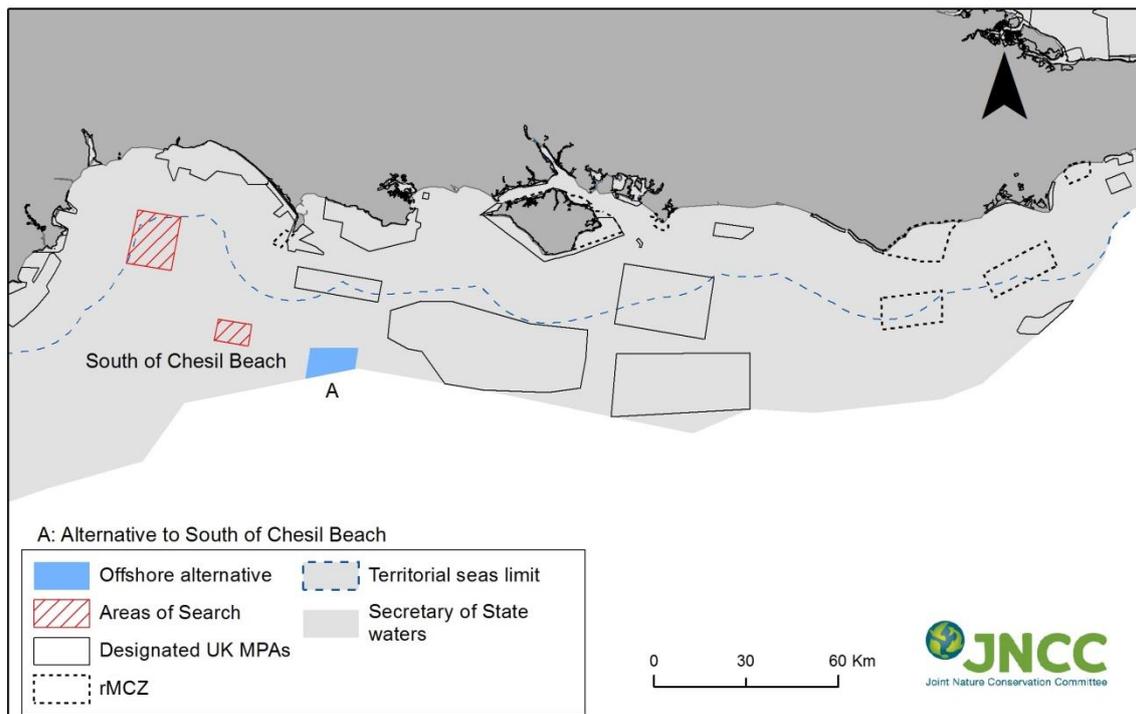


Figure 1: Alternatives to the South of Chesil Beach Area of Search in the Eastern Channel region as proposed during discussions at the Tranche Three MCZ workshop

Area A: The alternative Area of Search for Subtidal mixed sediments occurs along the boundary of UK waters to the west of Wight Barfleur SAC in the Eastern Channel.

Proposed by: Fishing Industry & group discussion

Any other comments regarding this area:

- It was suggested by multiple fisheries industries that an area to the east of the AoS where less activity occurred and/or under the shipping lane would be preferable;
- As any fisheries measures pursued under the Common Fisheries Policy would require agreement from other European Member States, it was proposed that a biologically equivalent area coincident with less fishing activity may stand a better chance of getting fisheries measures successfully implemented. The MMO was in support of this;
- It was stressed by multiple NGO participants that an alternative AoS to the east would only be acceptable if it has sufficient data, fulfilled the network criteria, such as depth, and was ecologically comparable. It was highlighted that when trying to fill

shortfalls in the network, it is better to be over in the area of size needed rather than under; and

- There was some discussion as to whether all of the AoS was needed to meet the shortfall or if only a portion of the AoS or alternative AoS could be taken forwards (individually or in combination). A suggestion was put forward to remove the southern portion of the site to minimise impacts on the fishing industry while maintaining some Subtidal mixed sediment within the AoS. The proposed area to the east could support filling the gap in this region. A quick check of the data available for the AoS revealed that it is the southern as opposed to northern portion of the AoS which is actually more strongly supported by data and removing it would lower confidence further in the AoS overall.

JNCC have followed up on any alternative suggestions to Areas of Search presented at the workshop. Details of alternative proposals across the five CP2 regions made at the workshop can be found in the separate document specifically looking at the alternative proposals which will be published alongside this report.

General stakeholder comments

- The fishing industry would like to see more research into the impacts of different gear types and the impacts of displacement and shifts in gear use with effort directed to address key issues; and
- Support for the work regarding this AoS was voiced by multiple NGOs, and that designation of sites in general to fulfil shortfalls in the network would be welcome.