



# **Tranche Three Marine Conservation Zone Workshop - Day 1: Summary report of the West of Lundy Area of Search Breakout**

**Joint Nature Conservation Committee**

**December 2016**

## **JNCC Tranche Three Marine Conservation Zone Workshop: Summary report from Breakout session for the West of Lundy 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 Western Channel & Celtic Sea CP2 region. Further details about the workshop and the AoS can be found in the Workshop Guide<sup>1</sup> and Options Summary paper produced as supporting workshop materials<sup>2</sup>.

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 were supportive of AoS generally as there is a large gap in the local region;
- Belgian, French and UK mobile bottom contacting fishing vessels are very active within the AoS and raised concerns about a potential site;
- West of Lundy AoS is a particularly important area for the Belgian Fleet as a seasonal sole fishery. There are currently no alternative areas within the region to prosecute this fishery as most Belgian vessels are restricted to fishing beyond 12nm due to vessel size restrictions;
- French fishing activity is concentrated in the southwest of the AoS, representing the end of a tow. They proposed shifting the site to the north. They also suggested shifting the site eastwards due to greater mobile gear activity in the offshore;
- Fishing industry proposed fragmenting the site rather than one large site however no specific site suggestions were made;
- Alternative areas were proposed to meet the contribution for Subtidal coarse sediment in the region:
  - Bristol Channel; and
  - Eastern extension of South-West Deep (East) rMCZ.
- It was argued that Tranche Three designation should be completed before assessing shortfall and looking for additional sites; and
- There were general concerns over data quality and reservations were expressed over confidence in the habitat model.

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<sup>1</sup> 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](http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/MCZWS02_T3_Workshop_Guide_Final.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Option Summary for the West of Lundy Area of Search in the Western Channel and Celtic Sea. Available online at [http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/MCZWS07\\_WesternChannelandCelticSea\\_OptionsSummary\\_vFinal.pdf](http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/MCZWS07_WesternChannelandCelticSea_OptionsSummary_vFinal.pdf)

### Specific interests or concerns

- Despite the fact that contribution of Subtidal coarse sediment from the AoS would likely exceed regional “targets”, NGO interests argued that the focus shouldn’t only be on minimum contribution targets;
- With response to comments over the high productivity of this region SWFPO highlighted that this also made the area important for fishing activity. It was suggested that it would be preferable to for a new site to be located closer to the shore where there is less mobile gear use and higher levels of static activity such as potting which will be less likely to be affected (however, there are already inshore MCZs designated or in consideration);
- It was brought to attention that the bottom third of the site overlaps with a military firing range, although it was assumed that designation of a site was unlikely to have a significant effect on MOD activities in the area and the frequency of the activities was unknown;
- The area is important to the Belgian Fleet as a seasonal (March-April) sole fishery. There are currently no alternative areas within the region to prosecute this fishery as most Belgian vessels are restricted to fishing beyond 12nm due to vessel size restrictions;
- There were suggestions that this area is fished by Irish and possibly Scottish fleets but there was no representative from these groups for input by these sectors. The quotas are currently changing and therefore there may be a shift in Irish fisheries;
- There were concerns over the size of the AoS after the other Tranche sites which haven’t yet reached management decisions. This could result in many potential areas that could be unusable by fisheries and therefore there is a high level of uncertainty;
- MMO highlighted that this AoS is across the regulatory 12nm boundary and questioned whether this is one of the areas where there is movement of the 12nm boundary as could affect the site if it changes on designation ‘up to the 12’; and
- MCS were supportive of the AoS as there is a lack of sites in this area and therefore this would help to fill a gap in the connectivity so that a coherent network can be achieved in Tranche Three.

### Comments regarding data

- Several stakeholders highlighted that there had been discussions of a similar area as one of the building block sites (as an alternative to North of Lundy) during the Finding Sanctuary Regional Stakeholder Group discussions. It was agreed that it would be useful to revisit this information and identify why it was not put forward as a recommended MCZ and that this may help to inform the process. It was added however that data and information may have changed since these discussions;
- Suggestions of requesting further sources of information were made for other industries such as fishermen, telecommunications and wind farm operators (e.g. ground-truthing data);
- It was questioned whether there may already be previous stakeholder comments on the larger area for an SAC, due to the north coast of Cornwall already being designated as a closed area or other local fisheries restrictions. The Cornish IFCA and CFPO were highlighted as a potential source of further information;

- A suggestion of an additional information source was the Biodiversity of Celtic Seas programme by Cefas which will collect and assess fisheries data however the commencement of this was uncertain. Cefas and BODC were suggested for providing information on habitats and species from industry to fill knowledge gaps;
- Wildlife Trusts made us aware of a project which identified this AoS as an area of productive upwelling with very high levels of important species which JNCC should currently have access to but has not been used in the evidence base;
- French Government offered to send socio economic data after shapefiles have been shared;
- Crown Estate noted the potential importance of the area as a key resource area for opportunities for development (e.g. tidal energy). They agreed to respond with information on any potential plans for development<sup>3</sup>;
- A query was raised as to whether the collocation of energy locations had been considered such (e.g. Markham's Triangle);
- NFFO highlighted a lack of data from smaller fishing vessels, and therefore under-representation of activity in the AoS, due to under 12m vessels not being fitted with VMS and 12-16m vessels only having recently been fitted with VMS. MMO suggested that sightings data may need to be checked as a source of additional data for this activity;
- A lack of data with regards to shipping lanes and other activities that might affect fishing activities was identified and the suggestion that addition to these data might help to identify areas which were not so good for fishing industry but could be used for protection of habitats instead; and
- The lack of good quality recent data was discussed within all of the groups and this was said to be a problem for all of the AoS. In West of Lundy it was highlighted that the more recent Cefas samples disagreed with the broad-scale modelled habitat map. The evolution of sampling techniques and therefore differences in the categorisation of sedimentary habitats was discussed with regards to this. Wildlife Trusts acknowledged that although the more recent Cefas data points did not support the modelled habitat map, these were both classified as Subtidal coarse sediment and therefore still support the presence of the feature in the AoS.

### **Alternative AoS options**

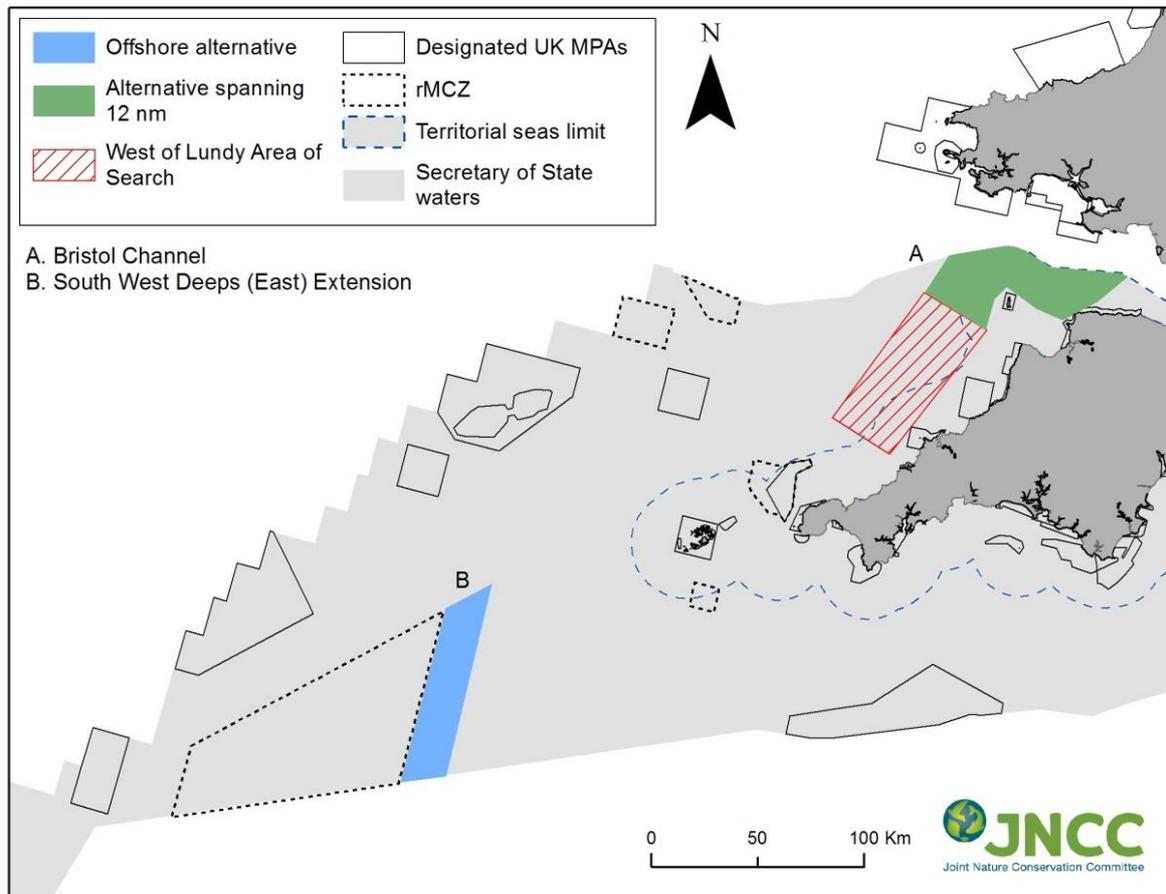
During the breakout sessions any suggestions for movement or modification of the AoS were recorded and presented during the plenary session to be considered further and for further information to be gathered regarding these. There were some broad comments made on the size and shape of the AoS such as suggestions to split the area into two or more smaller sites. The UK fishing industry suggested that a few smaller sites would have a lower impact than the one larger site, as this would result in less displacement and that they had no experience of zonal management in larger sites. There was a suggestion that the site could be moved further to the west and also suggestions to move the site further north as this would have less conflict with French fishing which occurs predominantly in the south-west corner. An area in the south-west of the region adjacent to South-West Deeps (East) rMCZ was also suggested.

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<sup>3</sup> This has since been checked and the AoS boundary is just outside of the key resource area.

New Area of Search options to consider to meet the contribution for Subtidal coarse sediment in the region:

- Bristol Channel; and
- Eastern extension of South-West Deeps (East) rMCZ.



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The CP2 regional sea boundaries have been modified to show the updated extent of the UK continental shelf and are unofficial

Figure 1: Alternatives to the West of Lundy Area of Search in the Western Channel & Celtic Sea region as proposed during discussions at the Tranche Three MCZ workshop

**Area A: Bristol Channel** to the area north-east of the discussed West of Lundy AoS, spanning the 12nm limit.

**Proposed by:** French and Belgian fishing industry

**Any other comments regarding this area:** This area was proposed as it has Subtidal coarse sediment coverage and has lower intensity French and Belgian fishing activity. There were suggestions that habitats in this region would be more dynamic than the area further south and that the tidal nature of the Bristol Channel may not be an appropriate alternative because the biological communities are likely to be very different to West of Lundy. There were issues raised regarding Welsh jurisdiction in this area. The Crown Estate stated that marine aggregate dredging activity is much higher in the Bristol Channel so it would be more challenging moving the site further north.

**Area B: South West Deeps (East) rMCZ extension** to the eastern side of the rMCZ, offshore.

**Proposed by:** UK fishing industry

**Any other comments regarding this area:** The area in the south-west adjacent to South West Deeps (East) rMCZ was proposed as an alternative by UK fisheries as it appears to be lower in fishing activity. However, there is more widespread and higher intensity activity by French fisheries in the south-west area of the region which is much higher in the South West Deeps (East) rMCZ than West of Lundy.

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**

- General concerns were raised concerning the MPA process and whether this is an efficient tool for feature conservation. There was the suggestion that MCZ designation and the subsequent potential restriction on mobile gear could displace fishermen and therefore result in higher intensity activities elsewhere, especially as the area is heavily fished;
- It was suggested that zonal management had already been implemented in the North Sea but that this was experimental for habitats and their recovery;
- NGOs supported the process and the methods used for gap identification;
- MMO had the view that any management would have to be proved to be non-discriminatory against any Member State or fleet;
- There was question as to what would happen if sites do not go forward due to issues such as with data quality and whether a shortfall would remain in the network. It was highlighted that data quality needs to be addressed in the advice;
- Some expressed a general dissatisfaction that additional sites were being proposed beyond Regional Stakeholder Group recommendations;
- One issue raised was the dynamic nature of this coastline and region due to the exposure to Atlantic swells. The effect of this on the diversity of the seabed, movement of sediments and subsequent changes to habitat properties could have implications for objectives, e.g. a 'recover' objective may be impossible to achieve by removing human activity due to the presence of natural activity. However, it was also suggested that the dynamic nature of the environment may not be so prevalent in this area due to its depth. There were additional comments that the habitats are far more heterogeneous than the maps suggest; and
- There were questions on whether Irish fishermen are contributing towards similar sediments in their waters and the need for a coordinated approach.