



Tranche Three Marine Conservation Zone workshop - Day 2: Summary report of the Irish Sea CP2 region conservation advice Breakout

Joint Nature Conservation Committee

December 2016

JNCC Tranche Three Marine Conservation Zone Workshop: Summary report from Breakout session for the Irish Sea CP2 region.

This report is an account of the discussions that took place during day 2 of the JNCC Tranche Three Marine Conservation Zone workshop in November 2016 on the conservation advice and recommended Marine Conservation Zones (rMCZs) in the Irish Sea CP2 region. Further details about the workshop and the conservation advice can be found in the Workshop Guide¹ and Conservation Advice papers produced as supporting workshop materials².

During the sessions stakeholders were asked two key questions:

- Are there any comments or specific concerns in relation to any of the options under consideration in the region including Areas of Search (AoS), recommended MCZs (rMCZ) and additional features in designated MCZs?
- Are there any comments on the information presented in the conservation advice papers in the context of the sites on the table in the region?

Summary

- All potential rMCZ options in this region are of high value for the UK fishing industry but potentially some more than others;
- The sites in the west of the region tend to be higher in both ecological and economical value;
- Details around the percentage area figures for each option were requested so that the contribution sites could make to the targets for mud in the region could be better understood. There was recognition that potentially not all sites would need to progress to meet targets;
- Queenie Corner was proposed by Northern Irish fleet during consultation late 2014 as an alternative to one of the recommended MCZs from the regional MCZ project. It was clarified that this alternative is of similar sediment, depth and biological communities as the two rMCZs in the western part of the Irish Sea – Slieve Na Griddle and South Rigg; and
- NGOs were keen for all rMCZs in this region to progress because of both their high ecological value individually but also the need to recover the state of the Irish Sea in general.

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 Conservation Advice documents can be found on the Workshop materials page of the JNCC website. Available at <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-7325>

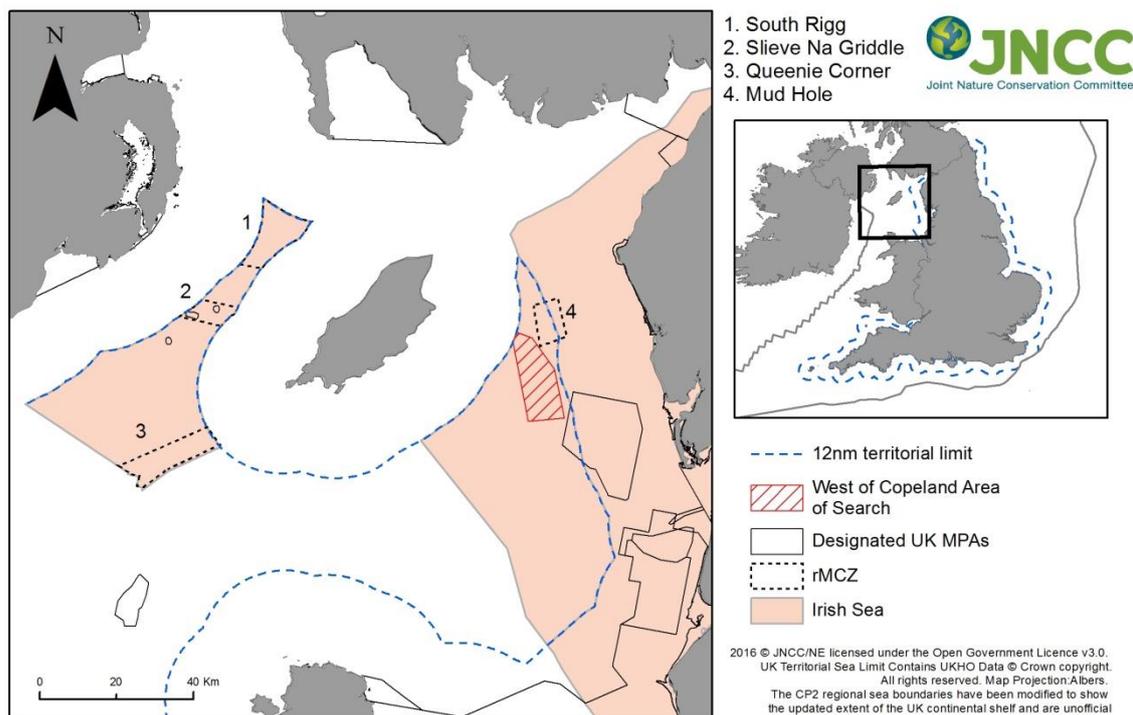


Figure 1: MPAs in the Irish Sea CP2 region.

Specific interests or concerns

- At present there is no real interest in this region from either the French or Belgian fishing industry, although there could be in future if the TAC for sole in the area increases;
- No conflict for the MoD, Ports Authorities or Crown Estates, although Crown Estates mentioned that the location of Mud Hole rMCZ may be of interest for the renewable sector in the future;
- SWFPO: Asked if Mud Hole rMCZ could be moved south-east to align with the AoS and better avoid fishing activity;
- AFBI: Stated that there is no difference in biodiversity between Queenie Corner and other rMCZs in the region;
- AFBI: Mud Hole rMCZ is shallower so hosts different species (Primer analysis shows it is distinct). Mud is deeper in South Rigg and Slieve Na Griddle (more than 75m). Queenie Corner is mainly mud and sandier in one corner but similar biologically to the rMCZs in the same area. Queenie Corner is a better location as there is less fishing activity and it covers two different water bodies so may be better for connectivity. South Rigg mud is different with larger prawns making it more valuable to fishermen. Socioeconomic analysis (reportedly on Seafish website) showed that profitability of South Rigg's prawns are more valuable, however Slieve Na Griddle was more valuable as a whole site to the fishing industry;
- Northern Irish fishermen should be consulted on the sites, as the Nephrops fishery is most likely to be impacted;
- Scottish White Fish Producers Organisation: Scottish fishermen tend to transit the area to fish in south-west UK but may also fish in this area;
- There is some activity from Belgian fishing fleet in the vicinity of Queenie Corner;

- MMO: Management should be implemented within the next 12 months for Pisces Reef Complex cSAC/SCI with a ban on demersal trawls and all seine nets over the reef features;
- RSPB: The rMCZs and NI fisheries proposal could benefit seabirds by protecting their foraging area. Management may overlap as conservation objectives may be different between devolved governments. Some SPAs may extend over MCZs. Liverpool Bay has many features being consulted on at the moment; and
- The Wildlife Trust: Manx shearwaters feed during spring/summer (when they have young) between Isle of Man and mainland UK and so the potential site options in this region are likely to be important for them.

Comments regarding data

- There were requests for shapefiles, presentations and maps;
- NFFO: Asked for breakdown of contributions for each rMCZ, Queenie Corner and AoS;
- AFBI: Update EU Seemap map using the two papers on benthic survey of sites by Cefas and AFBI (funded by Seafish);
- Socio-economic analysis completed on all three rMCZs;
- Use multi-beam and grab data from Queenie Corner survey;
- Nephrops survey video footage records the presence of many species and burrows which is not usually analysed but could be as a condition indicator. All geo-referenced and collected using exactly the same method;
- Fishing activity not representative over the last two years, so need to consider fishing activity data over the last 4 to 5 years;
- Under 12m Isle of Man fleet and potting activity need to be taken into account to understand fishing activity and to avoid gear conflict; and
- Welsh Government: Check that we have data for the west HBDC link cable (managed by Scottish power transmission), which is either built or under construction. The Crown Estate think this cable goes through Slieve Na Griddle rMCZ. Check Walney wind farm extension EIA and location of wind farm cables.

General stakeholder comments

- MCS and WWF broadly support the process and conservation advice provided;
- Widespread displacement and gear conflict concerns. Fishermen were concerned that historical fishing grounds are being protected potentially forcing fishermen to fish virgin areas which can't sustain high level of fishing activity. Concern that Northern Irish fishermen may move to Nephrops grounds in north-west Scotland. Concern over the effect of not harvesting the resource; and
- Clarification over what is meant by waste disposal in the scope of the conservation advice summary document is needed. In theory waste disposal will not be licensed if it is likely to have an impact anyway and so unlikely to occur.