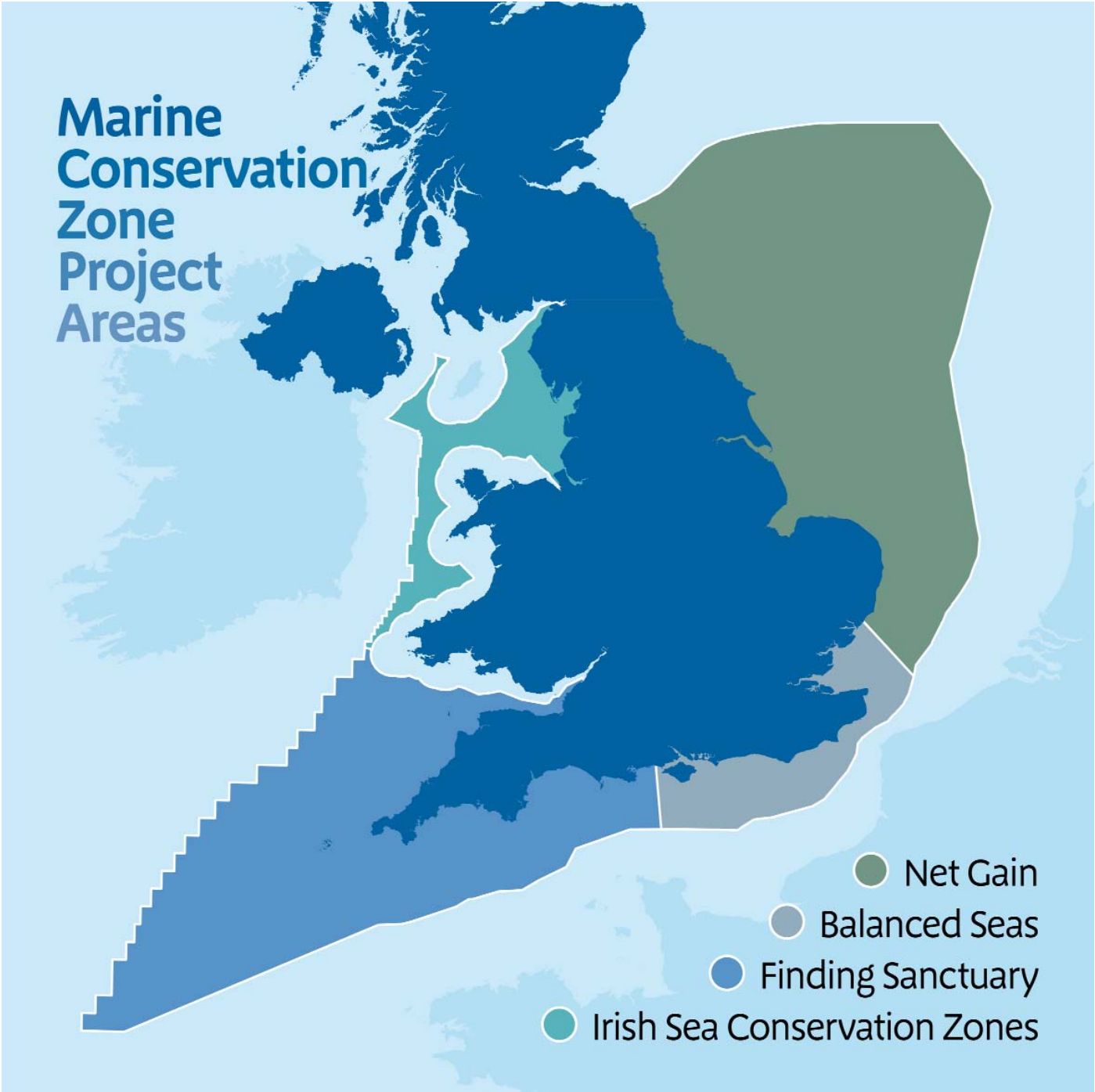


**The Marine Conservation Zone Project is being led by Natural England and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee to identify and recommend Marine Conservation Zones to Government**

**The Marine Conservation Zone Project**



# The Marine Conservation Zone Project



The Marine Conservation Zone Project is being delivered through four regional MCZ projects covering the south-west, Irish Sea, North Sea and south-east (see map for the areas of sea the projects are working in). They are working with sea users and interest groups to identify Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) and provide recommendations for sites within their regions to Government.

## Marine Conservation Zones

The Marine and Coastal Access Act received Royal Assent on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2009. It creates a new type of Marine Protected Area (MPA), called a Marine Conservation Zone. MCZs will protect nationally important marine wildlife, habitats, geology and geomorphology. The Marine Conservation Zone Project concerns the selection of MCZs in English inshore waters and offshore waters next to England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Sites will be selected to protect not just the rare and threatened, but the range of marine wildlife.

The management measures required within MCZs will be decided on a site-by-site basis and will depend on what the site has been designated for. In a similar way to protected areas on land, there will be sites where some activities are not allowed but others can occur, or where there are seasonal restrictions on activities rather than a complete ban. Not all sites will need the same management measures and there is no presumption that any specific type of activity will be restricted. There may however, be some sites where many activities are restricted.

MCZs, together with other types of MPA, will deliver the Government's aim for an 'ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas'. This means the MPA network will be a collection of areas that work together to provide more benefits than an individual area could on its own. To provide further information on other types of MPA JNCC have produced another document called "Different Types of Marine Protected Area".

### Where will the Marine Conservation Zones be and how will they be selected?

We don't yet know where MCZs will be. It is the job of the regional MCZ projects to identify MCZs by putting sea users and interest groups at the centre of the site selection process. In contrast to the designation of European sites, the designation of MCZs may take socio-economic factors into account, as long as these factors do not undermine the creation of the network. This will ensure that a network of sites can be achieved in a way that minimises adverse impacts on sea users and maximises benefits for nature conservation.



Finding Sanctuary mapping with a diver  
© Tom Mullier, Finding Sanctuary

In each region, sea users and interest groups have applied to represent their sector on a stakeholder group. The stakeholder groups have responsibility for developing recommendations on the location and proposed conservation objectives of MCZs. The regional MCZ project team and an independent facilitator will make sure that all group members have equal opportunity to voice their views during the process and that deadlines are met. Decisions will be made through a process of negotiation which will be professionally facilitated.

The MCZ Project has developed an additional mechanism to engage national and international stakeholders who may not have the resources to engage in the regional stakeholder groups. This will be through becoming a Named Consultative Stakeholder.

Stakeholders can apply to become a Named Consultative Stakeholder directly through the regional MCZ project which will allow them to provide comment on the MCZ iterations produced by the regional stakeholder groups. Stakeholders will be informed by liaison officers on the options available to them to feed comments on the iterations to the regional stakeholder groups.

The regional MCZ projects have been provided with national network design guidance for the MPA network, this is called the Ecological Network Guidance. The MCZ recommendations that the stakeholder groups make will have to take account of the Ecological Network Guidance to ensure the MCZs they identify will contribute, with other MPAs, to an ecologically coherent MPA network. To help achieve this, the groups will be able to submit draft recommendations to an independent Science Advisory Panel that will provide feedback on whether they have met the guidance. Natural England and JNCC will advise Government on whether the network meets the national criteria and will bring this advice to the stakeholder group during the planning stages.

Each regional MCZ project will also prepare an Impact Assessment that will set out the anticipated costs and benefits of the proposed network of sites and identify the environmental, social and economic implications.



Jewel anemones © Keith Hiscock

The regional stakeholder groups will submit their final recommendations and their Impact Assessments to Natural England and JNCC. Natural England and JNCC will combine the recommendations into one document (without changing them) and formally submit to Defra:

- ♦ A single document containing the unchanged recommendations of the four regional stakeholder groups;
- ♦ Advice as to whether they consider the recommendations to be sufficient to meet the MCZ contribution of an ecologically coherent network of MPAs;
- ♦ Advice on any changes they consider necessary;
- ♦ The advice of the Science Advisory Panel.

Once these documents have been submitted to Defra, Ministers will consider the proposals and advice from Natural England and JNCC and make a decision on what sites should be subject to a formal public consultation process. After considering any public responses, Ministers will designate MCZs where evidence shows it is desirable to do so.

## The regional MCZ projects

In partnership with sea users and interest groups each regional MCZ project team is:

- ♦ Gathering data on the marine environment;
- ♦ Gathering data about what areas of sea are important to people.

The data collected by the project teams from sea users will be used to develop the stakeholder groups' knowledge of their region, so that they have a good understanding of the marine environment and of which areas are important to different sea users, helping them to plan MCZs carefully. An interactive map has been launched to allow sea users to view the data that has already been gathered and to enter information on areas of the sea that are important to them.



The project teams will also support group members in communicating with their sector to ensure that all sea users and interest groups receive feedback from the meetings and are up to date with progress.

## **National and international stakeholders**

To influence the decisions on where MCZs are located, national and international stakeholders will need to have representation on the stakeholder groups for the regional MCZ projects or become a Named Consultative Stakeholder. At a national and international level there is also a UK MPA Stakeholder Forum. This forum is intended to provide UK national stakeholder bodies, and equivalent international groups, with information about the work of the MPA projects in the UK and the opportunity to know more about key strategic issues.



Cuckoo Wrasse at Hands Deep, Plymouth © Keith Hiscock

## **When is this happening?**

All of the regional MCZ projects have established their stakeholder groups. They now have until mid-2011 to gather data and develop their recommendations. Defra require the final recommendation in autumn 2011.

It is important to be aware that at the same time as the location of MCZs are being decided upon additional Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) will also be identified and designated for the UK to meet its legal obligations to Europe. These sites must be identified on a purely scientific basis and the regional MCZ projects will not be able to influence their location. The stakeholder groups will, however, be able to take into account the location of both existing and proposed SACs and SPAs when making decisions about where to place MCZs.

## How do I get involved and find out more?

If you are a national or international stakeholder and would like to find out more about the Marine Conservation Zone Project in the context of the other Marine Protected Area work that is going on in the UK then please get in touch with the JNCC MCZ Project team who will be happy to speak to you. The regional MCZ projects are organising events and distributing information throughout their region to get in touch with sea users and interest groups and make sure that you know what is happening. If you have not heard from them or would like further information on your regional MCZ project and how it is progressing then please visit the websites listed below or contact the regional MCZ projects directly.

### JNCC Marine Conservation Zone Project team

E: [mczproject@jncc.gov.uk](mailto:mczproject@jncc.gov.uk)  
T: 01733 866927

### MCZ Project Interactive Map

W: [www.mczmapping.org](http://www.mczmapping.org)

### Regional MCZ project teams

#### *Finding Sanctuary (South-West)*

W: [www.finding-sanctuary.org](http://www.finding-sanctuary.org)

E: [info@southwestfoodanddrink.com](mailto:info@southwestfoodanddrink.com)

T: 01392 878328

#### *Irish Sea Conservation Zones*

W: [www.irishseaconservation.org.uk](http://www.irishseaconservation.org.uk)

E: [info@irishseaconservation.org.uk](mailto:info@irishseaconservation.org.uk)

T: 01925 813200

#### *Net Gain (North Sea)*

W: [www.netgainmcz.org](http://www.netgainmcz.org)

E: [info@yhsg.co.uk](mailto:info@yhsg.co.uk)

T: 01482 382007

#### *Balanced Seas (South-East)*

W: [www.balancedseas.org](http://www.balancedseas.org)

E: [balancedseas@kent.ac.uk](mailto:balancedseas@kent.ac.uk)

T: 07584 020775

For further information on the marine conservation work of JNCC and Natural England, please visit our websites:

#### *JNCC*

W: [www.jncc.gov.uk/marine](http://www.jncc.gov.uk/marine)

#### *Natural England*

W: [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)



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