

Cumbria Coast Marine Conservation Zone

Where is this site?

Cumbria Coast MCZ is an inshore site that stretches for approximately 27 km along the coast of Cumbria. It extends from south of Whitehaven, around the cliffs at St Bees Head, to the mouth of the Ravenglass Estuary. The total area of the site is approximately 18 km². The surrounding area is particularly important for seabirds with an estimated 10,000 breeding seabirds thought to be present. The MCZ partially overlaps with a Site of Special Scientific Interest which protects seabird nesting areas.



Intertidal sand and muddy sand
© Natural England

Why is this site important?

St Bees Head supports the best, most extensive and important examples of intertidal rocky shore habitats and communities on the predominantly sedimentary coast of North-West England. The extensive intertidal boulder and cobble reefs, or 'scars', within the site support good examples of nationally important honeycomb worm reefs. Where these scars extend to and below the low water mark, particularly at Barn Scar and Kokoarra Rocks, they support rich marine wildlife including some of the best examples of under-boulder communities on the coast of North-west England.



Intertidal rock in Cumbria Coast MCZ © Natural England

What does this Marine Conservation Zone protect?

The red sandstone rock platforms and boulders around St Bees Head support an extensive area of wave-exposed intertidal and shallow subtidal habitats and a diverse range of plant and animal communities.

On the lower shores at St Bees Head , Barn Scar and Kokoarrah Rocks are thriving communities of sponges, sea squirts, barnacles, tube worms, crabs and lobsters develop on and under the boulders. These in turn support other species, such as sea slugs that feed on the encrusting sponges. Where rocky or boulder covered shores extend below the low water mark, such as around St Bees Head and at Kokoarrah Rocks, the underwater seabed becomes dominated by kelp and a rich turf of red seaweeds, this is one of the best sites for such algae within the area.

The intertidal honeycomb worm (*Sabellaria alveolata*) reefs are formed from the closely packed sand tubes constructed by these colonial worms. The reef structures resemble honeycomb and can extend for tens of metres across and up to a metre deep. The reefs provide habitats for a wide range of other animals including anemones, snails, shore crabs and seaweeds.

South of St Bees Headland, the rocky scars are interspersed with extensive areas of sandy beach. The fine sands are dominated by polychaete worms, such as lugworm (*Arenicola marina*), identifiable by their distinctive casts on the sediment surface, and small crustaceans. Towards the lower shore, the sandy habitats also support burrowing sea urchins. On the upper shore, the sands give way to coarse sediments and shingle.

The peat exposures provide habitat which piddocks, a type of bivalve mollusc, and other species can burrow into.

Features	General management approach
Intertidal biogenic reefs	Maintain in favourable condition
Intertidal sand and muddy sand	Maintain in favourable condition
High energy intertidal rock	Maintain in favourable condition
Moderate energy infralittoral rock	Maintain in favourable condition
Honeycomb worm (<i>Sabellaria alveolata</i>) reefs	Maintain in favourable condition
Intertidal underboulder communities	Maintain in favourable condition
Peat and clay exposures	Maintain in favourable condition

Who will manage Marine Conservation Zones?

Many activities within the marine environment are regulated through marine licences. More information regarding the marine licensing process in relation to MCZs can be found on the MMO website www.marinemangement.org.uk/licensing/marine.htm

Other activities are regulated through different mechanisms. For example fishing activities are managed through European legislation, national statutory instruments, byelaws and self-imposed voluntary agreements. Similar arrangements are in place to manage the range of activities that may impact MCZs including pollution, coastal development and recreation.



Management of sites is currently being prioritised nationally according to the potential or actual adverse impacts of activities on the features designated in relation to fishing activities. This prioritisation will be further refined at a local level taking into account relevant information and will guide regulators to those sites which may need protection before others.

Any management measures that are required for MCZs will be applied on a case-by-case basis. Management measures will be implemented at sites most at risk of damage first, regulating only those activities which have a detrimental impact on the features. In cases where there is a high risk to designated features being damaged emergency measures may be put in place to ensure the protection of vulnerable habitats and species.

What happens now this site has been designated?

The site specific information below provides an overview of which activities may be affected by the designation of the MCZ and the current management measures. As with all management measures, they may, of course, be subject to change in the light of new evidence becoming available.

Current activities identified at this site which could be affected include commercial fisheries, hand gathered mussels and port and harbour operations. Any future activities undertaken by the ports and harbour authorities will be regulated through the appropriate licensing regimes. MCZ designation will need to be taken into consideration when assessing environmental impacts of marine works as part of the licensing application process.

The Cumbria Coast MCZ site is within the jurisdiction of the North Western IFCA for fisheries management. All relevant North Western IFCA byelaws apply to this site within the IFCA jurisdiction, in addition to all relevant national and EU fisheries legislation. Further information is available at www.marinemanagement.org.uk/fisheries/monitoring/regulations_bluebook.htm

Specific restrictions relating to this site include limits on the quantity of fish taken and restrictions on the location for fishing activities to take place. A range of North Western IFCA Byelaws further limit the size and types of nets which can be used with complete prohibitions on various gear types. For further information visit the IFCA website at www.nw-ifca.gov.uk

Where can I find out further information?

An interactive map showing this MCZs and other marine protected areas is available at <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-5201>

Additional information about this site and other MCZs is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/protecting-and-sustainably-using-the-marine-environment> and within Natural England's advice available at <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/1499649>



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Love Sea Life

Annex: Management

Lead organisation	Activities
Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs)	Fisheries (0-6nm) including commercial fisheries and recreational fishing activities such as sea angling For further information visit www.association-ifca.org.uk
Marine Management Organisation (MMO)	- Fisheries (management) (6-12nm) - Fisheries (enforcement) national and EU legislation - Licensable activities such as deposit and removal activities below mean high water springs, including subsea cables (up to 12nm), construction (including renewables <100MW, ports and coastal protection), dredging and disposal - Harbour Orders and Harbour Empowerment Orders - Section 36 and safety zone consents - Enforcement of licensable activity and other consents (including deemed marine licences) - Development of marine plans integrating the social requirements, economic potential and environmental priorities of marine plan areas - Activities requiring a wildlife licence For further information visit www.marinemangement.org.uk/fisheries or www.marinemangement.org.uk/licensing/marine.htm
Environment Agency (EA)	- Fisheries management for migratory and fresh water fish - Coastal protection and flood management - Water quality - Permitted discharges from terrestrial sources For further information visit www.environment-agency.gov.uk/default.aspx
Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC)	- Oil and Gas related activities - Renewable energy related activities For further information visit www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-energy-climate-change
Harbour Authorities and local planning authorities	- Harbour authorities have management responsibilities for the port and coastal waters within their jurisdiction - Local authorities have role to manage, regulate and facilitate activities at the coast. These include management of coastal recreation, tourism, economic regeneration, flood protection, spatial planning and coastal zone and estuary management, For further information contact your local authority or IFCA
Department for Transport (DfT)	Responsible for shipping, harbours, ship pollution and offshore safety For further information visit www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport
Natural England (NE)	Public access For further information visit www.naturalengland.org.uk/