

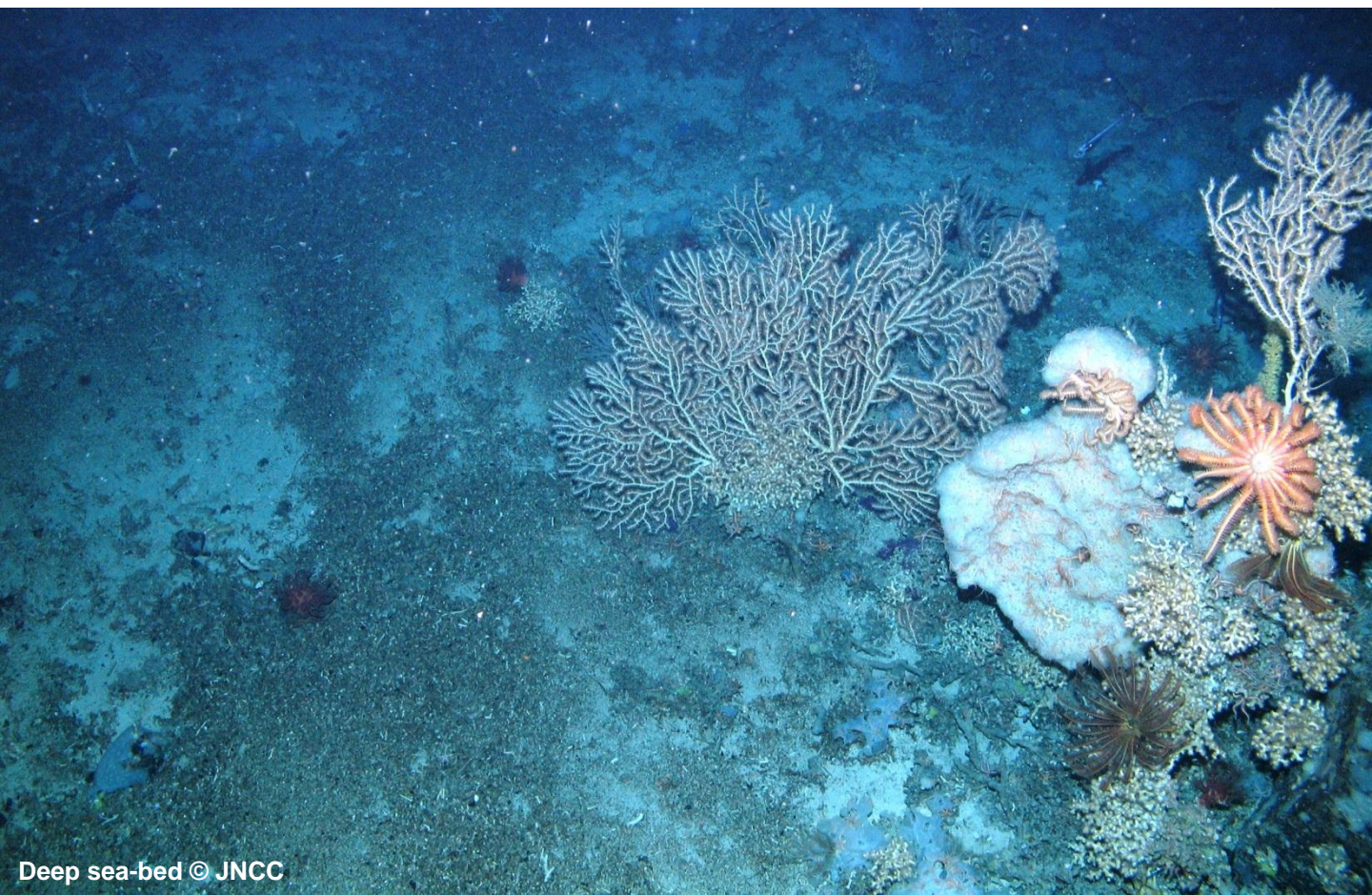
The Canyons Marine Conservation Zone

Where is this site?

The Canyons MCZ is an offshore site located to the far south-west corner of the UK's continental shelf area. The site covers an area of around 661 km² and lies more than 330 km from the Cornish coast, making it the most remote MCZ.

Why is this site important?

The Canyons MCZ protects an area that is quite unique when compared with the UK's generally shallow seas. Within the site is the shelf break, the point at which the continental shelf begins to drop steeply before forming the deep ocean floor, as well as two deep canyons. The depth of the site varies considerably from 200 to around 2000 metres in places. This difference, combined with varying environmental conditions creates a range of habitats including the only living deep-water coral reef recorded within England's seas.



What does this Marine Conservation Zone protect?

Large areas of deep-sea bed are protected within the site. This habitat is typically made up of a range of seabed types including bedrock, gravel and mud or limestone pavements.

Cold-water coral reefs are found around the world in deep, cold water and typically form on slopes and underwater mountains where subsurface currents bring plentiful food supplies. Within the site there is a patch of cold-water coral growing on one of the canyon walls. The reefs provide a source of food and shelter for many animals such as fish, sea urchins, anemones and sponges, and additionally they are also thought to act as breeding grounds for commercially important fish species.

Cold-water corals can live for a very long time but require protection as they are extremely slow growing, at a rate of about 6 mm a year. This slow growth, combined with their brittle skeletons, means the reefs are particularly vulnerable to damage from a variety of pressures.



Features	General management approach
Cold-water coral reefs	Recover to favourable condition
Deep-sea bed	Recover to 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.marinemanagement.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 the UK and EU commercial fisheries sector (predominately mobile gear).

As this site is offshore (over 12nm from the coastline) management measures will need to be proposed and agreed through the European Commission in accordance with the Common Fisheries Policy, applying to UK and non-UK fishing vessels alike. Defra will coordinate input from the MMO and JNCC before formally submitting proposals to the EC. The MMO will be the lead authority regarding implementation and compliance of those measures. All current relevant national and EU fisheries legislation apply to this site such as Hake Recovery and Western Waters control measures.

Further information is available at

www.marinemanagement.org.uk/fisheries/index.htm

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 JNCC's advice available at <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-6460>

Annex: Management

Lead organisation	Activities
Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fisheries (0-6nm) including commercial fisheries and recreational fishing activities such as sea angling <p>For further information visit www.association-ifca.org.uk</p>
Marine Management Organisation (MMO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 <p>For further information visit www.marinemangement.org.uk/fisheries or www.marinemangement.org.uk/licensing/marine.htm</p>
Environment Agency (EA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fisheries management for migratory and fresh water fish Coastal protection and flood management Water quality Permitted discharges from terrestrial sources <p>For further information visit www.environment-agency.gov.uk/default.aspx</p>
Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oil and Gas related activities Renewable energy related activities <p>For further information visit www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-energy-climate-change</p>
Harbour Authorities and local planning authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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, <p>For further information contact your local authority or IFCA</p>
Department for Transport (DfT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for shipping, harbours, ship pollution and offshore safety <p>For further information visit www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport</p>
Natural England (NE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public access <p>For further information visit www.naturalengland.org.uk/</p>