Annex J3a Qualitative impacts on commercial fisheries arising from the suite of recommended Marine Conservation Zones in the Balanced Seas Project Area

1 Impact on UK fleets

1.1 Method

J3a.1 A total of 11 interviews were conducted with 12 commercial fishing representatives of the Balanced Seas Project Area to assess qualitative impacts of the recommended Marine Conservation Zones (rMCZs) and to gauge the likely response of the fleet to potential management of the sites. Six interviewees from Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, three from Sussex and three from Kent and Essex were selected. Selection was based on their suitability as representatives of the local fleets in these areas, and thus their knowledge of the rMCZs for these areas (the majority were members of the Balanced Seas Regional Stakeholder Group or Local Groups and had participated in the process to develop the final recommendations) and on their proximity to suites of rMCZs for which fisheries restrictions have been proposed. Each interview was done face to face with the Fisheries Stakeholder Engagement Officer and a single fisherman (except one interview where two fishermen were present and contributed information) with the support of a written questionnaire (Appendix 1; this was a generic questionnaire developed in collaboration between and used by all four regional MCZ project areas). The interviewees were shown an interactive PDF, which could be viewed at fine scale, showing where all features recommended for protection occurred. Responses for each interview were recorded electronically. The meetings sought to collect information about how the behaviour of the fishing fleets is likely to change if Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) are designated. The following impacts were discussed: vessel displacement to other fishing grounds; vessel adaptation to new gear types and target fisheries; vessels leaving the industry; and wider economic impacts on the processing sector and supporting industries.

J3a.2 The following sections also draw on information received during the course of the process to develop the final recommendations for the Balanced Seas Project Area in relation to the potential impact of groups of rMCZs on local UK fishing fleets.

1.2 Potential response of fleet to restrictions

a) Continuing fishing as normal regardless (no adaptation)

J3a.3 All respondents stated that if restrictions were placed in rMCZs in which they fished, and enforced, all vessels affected would leave the relevant fishery and be put out of business.

b) Adaptation by changing gears or species

J3a.4 All respondents stated that adaptation was not possible for three reasons:

- Commercial fishing is seasonal and fish are caught using gears adapted over decades to suit the type of seabed and behaviour of fish targeted.

- Fishing capacity is already at a maximum for one type of fishing in a multi-targeted species area; for example, netting is at full capacity in rMCZ 22 and so potters could not change gears to nets.
- There are no species other than those currently caught which could be targeted.

c) Displacement to other fishing grounds

J3a.5 Although displacement is often considered the normal response to new fishing management restrictions, in the case of fishers using the Balanced Seas Project Area it will provide only a low level of compensation to the loss of fishing grounds and revenues. For most of those interviewed, displacement is not a viable option for the following reasons:

- The majority of the fishing fleet is made up of vessels under 10 metres in length. The small vessel size often prohibits travel beyond the traditional fishing grounds. Most vessels in the region undertake day trips, and displacement will be impossible for these small local fleets.
- Additional travel time to alternative fishing grounds will increase operating costs, in particular fuel costs, which the majority of vessel owners would not be able to afford.
- Options for diversification to catches and gears in other fishing areas outside an rMCZ are limited as most available species are already targeted using appropriate fishing methods and competition for catches would be fierce.
- An increased effort on fishing grounds outside rMCZs (i.e. without additional management restrictions imposed by rMCZs) would cause increased competition and create tensions between fleets from nearby ports and harbours. This would have an adverse effect on the ecology of those areas, depleting the quality and quantity of fish and shellfish caught.
- The Balanced Seas Project Area is a 'busy sea', is the smallest of the four regional MCZ project areas and is in close proximity to the Continent. It includes some of the most heavily used UK waters, in which major economic activities are taking place (renewable energy (wind farm); aggregate extraction; ports, harbours, shipping and disposal sites; and recreation). This means that there is limited available sea space outside rMCZs to which fishing activities could be deployed.
- Many interviewees expressed concern that displacement could lead to higher safety risks, as vessels would be forced to go further offshore, with those over 10 metres pushed to fish in the Channel shipping lanes.

The list above indicates that the potential options offered by displacement will not be sufficient to compensate for the loss of fishing grounds and corresponding revenues.

d) Leaving the fleet (ceasing fishing)

J3a.6 Small, inshore vessels whose range is limited due to their vessel size will have no choice but to cease fishing if an rMCZ is situated on their traditional grounds. Rising costs of fuel and competition from other, larger fishing vessels will threaten them with bankruptcy. All interviewees from inshore fleets stated that they and other local vessels would cease to operate. This could

result in a high social cost for local fishing communities, coupled with the loss of demand for onshore activities linked to fishing, such as wholesale markets, shipping services, fuel supply or repairs, restaurants and tourism. Some of the interviewees reported that there is an understanding that for every one fisher who loses his/her livelihood, seven jobs are lost. There is grave concern over the current economic climate and the difficulty of finding alternative employment.

J3a.7 Interviewees with larger vessels capable of fishing offshore could not answer the question about, whether or not they would cease fishing as this would depend on the cumulative impacts of other pressures such as wind farms, aggregate dredging, coastal development and protected areas.

1.3 Other impacts

J3a.8 The following additional impacts were also mentioned:

- All respondents (representing both small and large vessels) were concerned about the cumulative effects of other maritime industries which could potentially squeeze out viable fishing grounds, leaving little choice for commercial fishing vessels and contributing to conflict between fleets.
- The fisheries restrictions proposed for some MCZs would result in a loss of regional, national and international sales, as some species involved are specifically caught for sale abroad.
- Restrictions to existing fishing activities could result in an increase in invasive or pest species that would harm some Features of Conservation Importance (FOCI). Some fishers consider that their activities help to keep invasive species in check, such as starfish on oyster beds.
- All respondents were concerned about the lack of quota and felt the way forward for the fishing industry was through local management, technical measures to regulate landings, increased minimum landing sizes, removal of the current quota system and education of the public to better understand the fishing methods used.
- Many respondents were concerned about the MCZ process as a whole, reiterating issues that many sectors have voiced throughout the process. These included lack of time for the process to be conducted, lack of evidence about where FOCI occur, uncertainties over how the management of each site would be enforced and bias towards conservation.
- Some respondents were concerned about the Minister receiving advice from organisations that they felt did not understand the industry.
- One respondent was concerned that a number of sites had been 'forced inshore' (inside 6nm) due to international pressures, endangering British inshore fishers' livelihoods and lives. The lack of input permitted into non-UK Marine Protected Area (MPA) processes which affected them was also a concern.

J3a.9 Two respondents (both potters and netters) felt that restrictions will not result in healthier ecosystems as, given the dynamic nature of much of the comparatively shallow water of the

Thames Estuary and English Channel, natural events and processes are more destructive than most commercial fishing practices (other than beam trawlers). Several respondents noted that they consider industries other than fishing to have longer-lasting detrimental effects on seabed habitats. Aggregate extraction was a particular concern, with the suggestion that public money would be better used investigating the environmental effects of such practices. A number of interviewees stated that they did not think that fish stocks will improve overall as a result of MCZs due to the migratory nature of many target species, resulting in them being caught elsewhere.

1.4 Specific impacts on local fishing fleets

Isle of Wight fishing industry

J3a.10 In total, 4 rMCZs (19, 20, 22 and 23) have been proposed for the inshore waters of the Isle of Wight (with associated rMCZ Reference Areas for some of these), as well as an rMCZ Reference Area (rMCZ Reference Area 18 St Catherine's Point) within the South Wight Maritime Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The local fisheries industry has expressed concern about the impact that these recommendations will have on their activities, when combined with future management of the 2 SACs that lie off the north and south coasts of the Isle of Wight (the Solent European Marine Sites (SEMS) comprising the South Wight Maritime SAC and the Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC). There are potential impacts on two sub-sectors: those who use bottom towed gear; and those who use pots and traps.

Bottom towed gear – Isle of Wight fleet

J3a.11 The four rMCZs are aimed at protecting sea grass (among other features), and Natural England advice is that bottom towed gear will not be allowed over this feature. In December 2011, after submission of the final MCZ recommendations, the Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) formed a Seagrass Working Group, comprising Natural England, the Marine Management Organisation (MMO), Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, harbour authorities and fishing sector representatives, to develop a standardised management approach for sea grass for all existing and proposed MPAs within the Southern IFCA district which will be subject to closure of sea grass beds to bottom towed gear under a voluntary code of conduct. Sea grass distribution maps produced by the Hampshire Wildlife Trust have been used to indicate the area for management (down to 2 metres below chart datum). The fishing sector has said that the oyster fishing industry in the Solent would not suffer any significant detriment to business if the sea grass beds are closed to bottom gear, as native oysters do not overlap with the sea grass beds in commercial quantities (Southern IFCA Seagrass Working Group meeting, December 2011). Given that this management measure will be implemented shortly, the Impact Assessment (IA) may overestimate the impact of the rMCZs on the fishing industry in relation to the use of bottom towed gear on sea grass beds for 3 rMCZs: 19, 22 and 23. In the fourth rMCZ (20 The Needles) seagrass does not have a recover objective for bottom towed gear.

Pots and traps – Isle of Wight fleet

J3a.12 For rMCZs 22 Bembridge and 23 Yarmouth to Cowes, and rMCZ Reference Area 18 (St Catherine's Point), additional features have been proposed for protection which potentially impact

the Isle of Wight potting sector. The rMCZ Reference Area and rMCZ 22 will particularly impact this sector, as a number of enterprises are dependent for all or a major part of their earnings on these two sites, as described more fully in the section on rMCZ Reference Area 18 in Annex I.

South Kent fishing industry

J3a.13 The easternmost part of the English Channel, off Hythe, Folkestone and Dover, has a high concentration of recommended MPAs, including 4 rMCZs (11.1, 11.2, 11.4 and 26) and the future French Three Estuaries Marine Park in adjacent French waters, all of which could have an impact on fishing, particularly as bottom trawling is widely used in this area and the features proposed for protection in the rMCZs are vulnerable to this gear type.

J3a.14 During the discussions that led to the final recommendations, the Folkestone trawler fleet agreed to cease trawling in rMCZs 11.1, 11.2 and 11.4 provided that rMCZ 26 Hythe Bay is not uniformly closed to trawling but that 'management units' put forward during discussions are adhered to if the site is designated (Balanced Seas Final Recommendations Report, 2011). Recommended MCZ 26 is particularly heavily used, as it lies across the boundary between International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) area IVc (North Sea), and ICES area VIId (English Channel) which occurs at the 51 degree latitude line. Fishermen using Hythe Bay are thus able to access to fishing quota within both ICES areas and rely on this additional quota for their livelihoods due to the small size of the local vessels and their limited range. . Within rMCZ 26, four units have been proposed as no-trawling areas, with potting and set-netting allowed at current levels; it is proposed that two areas be fully closed to fishing. The impact on the local trawling fleet of the closure of rMCZs 11.1 and 11.2 will be relatively small, as there is currently an informal agreement between this fleet and the potting sector whereby trawlers avoid the area except during certain seasons when commercial species of importance to the fleet move in; for the rest of the year, the area is used by the potting sector only.

1.5 Conclusion

J3a.15 The common view from fishers is that the implementation of additional mitigation would result in a high probability of fishers leaving the fleet. Static gear (nets, pots, traps and drift netting) are viewed as the most vulnerable segment of the fleet, as they primarily use small inshore vessels with limited range. A common request from fishers is that fishing restrictions are only introduced once the feature in question has been surveyed and GPS mapped, and that they are limited to the exact location of the feature, reducing overall impacts on the industry.

2 Impacts on non-UK fishing fleets

2.1 Methods

J3a.16 For the purpose of the IA, a questionnaire designed by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and the regional MCZ project economists was completed by the non-UK fisheries representatives involved in the MCZ Project in the course of meetings held in the relevant countries. JNCC fisheries liaison officers contacted member state fisheries representatives to organise the meetings, at which they presented an update on the MCZ Project as a 30-minute

presentation, following which the IA questionnaire was completed by the fisheries representatives and fishers.

2.2 France

J3a.17 JNCC representatives met with Comité Regional des Pêches Maritimes et des Elevages Marins (CRPMEM) Nord/Pas de Calais/Picardie at one meeting, and with CRPMEM Haute Normandie and CRPMEM Basse Normandie at a second meeting (combined with CRPMEM Bretagne, which uses the Finding Sanctuary Project Area but not the Balanced Seas Project Area).

Activity of the fleet in each site/groups of sites

J3a.18 Several of the rMCZs correspond to important fishing grounds for high-value species such as scallops, bass, mackerel and whiting caught by the Haute Normandie fleet. All vessels that use the rMCZs are over 15 metres. They use rMCZ 9 Offshore Foreland (6 vessels), rMCZ 14 Offshore Brighton (45 vessels), rMCZ 17 Offshore Overfalls (5 vessels), rMCZ 21 Wight-Barfleur Extension (13 vessels), rMCZ 29 East Meridian (15 vessels) and rMCZ 31 Inner Bank (12 vessels).

J3a.19 In the Basse Normandie fleet, about 20 boats use the Balanced Seas Project Area, all of which are under 15 metres. These 20 vessels use rMCZ 14 Offshore Brighton, rMCZ 21 Wight–Barfleur Extension, rMCZ 17 Offshore Overfalls and rMCZ 29 East Meridian. These areas are of great importance to the fleet, with rMCZ 21 Wight-Barfleur Extension being particularly important for long-line caught fish and rMCZ 14 Offshore Brighton, rMCZ 21 Wight-Barfleur and rMCZ 29 East Meridian important for vessels targeting scallops. According to CRPMEM Basse Normandie it is very difficult or even impossible to estimate the landings from a specific area, as a trawler may cross several rMCZs in a single haul.

J3a.20 The Nord/Pas de Calais/Picardie fleet uses rMCZ 9 Offshore Foreland, rMCZ 14 Offshore Brighton, rMCZ 17 Offshore Overfalls, rMCZ 29 East Meridian, rMCZ 30 Kentish Knock East and rMCZ 31 Inner Bank. Approximately 40% of the fleet's vessels are under 15 metres, most of which are trawlers. The fleet uses trawlers (between 8 and 25 metres), dredgers, netters (under 15 metres) and line fishing vessels (under 15 metres) and targets mainly scallops and also red mullet and squid as they are high-value, non-quota species.

J3a.21 The use of the rMCZs by the French fleets is highly variable from year to year, particularly for trawlers, according to stocks present, fluctuation of annual quotas, changes in fuel prices, competition and changes in European regulation (e.g. the introduction of bans on undulate ray and tope), but the rMCZs are nevertheless generally used each year. For example, red mullet and squid are targeted in the Balanced Seas Project Area by the Nord/Pas de Calais/Picardie fleet as they are high-value species, but reductions in value/quota of these species would force vessels to move into fishing grounds in the Net Gain Project Area.

J3a.22 Values of landings for the French fleets are separated into two categories (French Department of Maritime Fishing and Aquaculture, 2012): mobile gear (trawls, dredges, seines

(excluding purse seines) and glass eel sieves) and static gear (lines, long lines, nets, pots and traps), and so a full breakdown by gear type is not possible. In the Balanced Seas Project Area, the highest values of landings for French vessels using mobile gear are from rMCZ 29 East Meridian (£1.030m/yr) (with rMCZ 29.2 East Meridian (Eastern Side) accounting for £0.631m/yr) and rMCZ 17 Offshore Overfalls (£0.754m/yr). The highest values of landings for French vessels using static gear are from rMCZ 9 Offshore Foreland (£0.001m/yr), rMCZ 31 Inner Bank (£0.001m/yr) and rMCZ 21 Wight-Barfleur Extension (£0.001m/yr).

The impact of rMCZs on the French fishing industry

J3a.23 The highest management scenario for fisheries will involve the closure of entire rMCZs to bottom trawls and dredges. As more than 90% of the fleet that frequents these areas are bottom trawlers, designation would undoubtedly lead to displacement of the Basse Normandie fleet to other areas. CRPMEM Haute Normandie also considers that the rMCZs will have an impact on the number of vessels continuing to operate and that there will be displacement to other areas, which will experience increased pressure and more impact on their habitats. There will also be a significant drop in landings by trawlers and scallop dredgers if, for example, towed gear is banned in areas such as rMCZ 29 East Meridian. The Nord/Pas de Calais/Picardie fleet will be impacted by rMCZ 9 Offshore Foreland if designated, as this site alone accounts for between 25% and 70% of turnover for their trawling vessels. Recommended MCZ 29 East Meridian would also impact on the Nord/Pas de Calais/Picardie fleet, as 40 scallop dredgers from Boulogne-sur-Mer and Dunkirk fish here from February to May.

J3a.24 From the landings data available for the French vessels it can be seen that under the highest cost scenario, rMCZ 29 East Meridian will have the greatest impact on French fishing fleets, with a total cost of £1.030m/yr (bottom trawls/dredges) and £0.001m/yr (static gears); French fleets will also be heavily impacted by rMCZ 9 Offshore Foreland, with a cost of £0.754m/yr (bottom trawls/dredges). Under the highest cost scenario, the remaining sites will impact French fleets less heavily: rMCZ 14 Offshore Brighton (£0.154m/yr), rMCZ 31 Inner Bank (£0.148m/yr), rMCZ 17 Offshore Overfalls (£0.135m/yr), and rMCZ 30 Kentish Knock East (£0.012m/yr).

J3a.25 Adaptation through conversion to other gear types is not thought possible as this would require a large capital investment; also most vessels already target several species using different towed gears. The French fleet is trying to make vessels more fuel efficient so there may be gear changes in the future, but this is a long-term process.

J3a.26 The Haute Normandie and Basse Normandie fleets have already suffered a sharp decline in size, which has reduced economic activity associated with fishing. It is felt that the associated coastal areas could not support a further reduction in landings, and that it is not therefore appropriate to consider reducing the size of the fleets.

J3a.27 The rMCZs are considered by the French fleets to be likely to have an indirect impact on associated industries. According to CRPMEM Basse Normandie, a job at sea generates five jobs on land, taking into consideration the entire marketing chain, processing, repairs, maintenance,

port facilities, transportation, etc. The rMCZs correspond to sites where the majority of vessels target species of high value. Therefore if areas and target species change, the positive impact that the fleet has on the economy will be lessened. There is also concern for the large tonnage vessels that will be highly impacted by these sites, as they are important to the economy.

J3a.28 The Basse Normandie representatives felt that as the future of the Common Fisheries Policy and the future level of quotas are unknown, assessing the impact of rMCZs now is difficult. The proposed Bay of Seine wind farm may restrict the scallop fishery in French waters, with potential displacement to UK waters, but equally designation of rMCZ 14 Offshore Brighton and rMCZ 29 East Meridian, with any associated prohibition of towed gear, would potentially displace British and Belgian vessels to areas used by French vessels for scallop fishing. The designation of rMCZs will potentially lead to competition between different gears and activities (e.g. aggregate mining and wind farms) and might compromise safety in busy shipping lanes. The cumulative effect could potentially increase fuel costs for fleets targeting high-value species, for which effort is concentrated during periods of high abundance. The reduction of fishing grounds will have a significant impact on the fishing industry, and also on the upstream and downstream sectors, such as fish trade, suppliers of fishing equipment, transportation, boat construction and repair, as well as on tourism.

Effects of the proposed restrictions on regional, national and international supply of fish

J3a.29 French fishery representatives were concerned that the fish auctions used by Basse Normandie and Haute Normandie vessels would close and wholesalers would turn to other markets, particularly as the large tonnage vessels which contribute significantly to the economy will be most impacted by the rMCZs. There is a risk of an impact to local, regional and international supply of fish products, the exact form of which will depend on the species, for example whiting in northern Europe and squid and red mullet in southern Europe.

Effects of the proposed restrictions on the local community and wider society

J3a.30 The Basse Normandie fleet would be particularly affected as it has about 550 vessels and 1,200 fishers and generates a large number of jobs. If the activities of vessels are affected by the implementation of rMCZs, the industry that it supports will also be affected. The fishing industry here also contributes to tourist activity in the region which might also be indirectly impacted.

J3a.31 The north-eastern coastal region of France is suffering economically and fishing has a disproportionate influence on the economy; for example, Boulogne-sur-Mer's biggest industry is fishing/fish processing. Any impact on the fleet/landings will therefore have a large effect on the local community. There are 1,200 fishers in the Nord/Pas de Calais region, each of which is considered to generate an additional 4 or 5 jobs on land between Dunkirk and Boulogne-sur-Mer.

2.3 Netherlands

J3a.32 In the Netherlands, 2 representatives and approximately 40 fishers attended a meeting. A written report was also submitted (Productschap Vis, 2011).

Activity of the fleet

J3a.33 About 25 Dutch and Dutch-flagged vessels fish on Bassurelle and the English Channel Banks, all of which are over 15 metres. The gear type used is predominantly beam trawls, with some fly shooting and twin rigging and pelagic gear used during the autumn. The Dutch fleet operates beyond 12nm in rMCZs 14 Brighton, 29 East Meridian, 29.2 Eastern Meridian (Eastern Side) and 30 Kentish Knock East and in a small part of rMCZ 31 Inner Bank; rMCZ 30 Kentish Knock East is important for the Dutch sole fishery (bottom trawling). Recommended MCZs are fished by beam trawlers, otter trawlers (including twin riggers and out riggers) and fly shooters, with an approximate average annual value of landings over 2007-2009 of £19.269m/yr (22.99m euros) throughout the rMCZs in the Balanced Seas Project Area (Productschap Vis, 2011).

J3a.34 Changes in total allowable catch and quota distribution have shifted the target species from plaice to sole. Due to the many spatial planning procedures such as Natura 2000 sites, wind farm developments and the increase in the use of real-time closures (RTCs), the fishing industry faces an increasing loss of fishing ground.

Likely impacts of proposed activity restrictions in rMCZs on the fleet

J3a.35 It was reported that an increase in sole quota will lead to more fishing in the rMCZs, but that the use of lower-impact gears will continue and increase, resulting in an overall reduction of impacts. Proposed measures in the rMCZs are thought to affect 100% of the fleet if these measures are put in place, and none will be able to continue fishing in these areas, since all Dutch vessels use some form of benthic gear. Displacement will increase fuel and labour costs, and will provide a more uncertain income for fishers as a result. Certain businesses are more adaptable than others, but in general it will take a business a couple of years to familiarise itself with the implications of closed areas and find new fishing grounds. In addition, displacement may result in greater impacts from fisheries on the marine ecosystem, with fishing moving from areas where few fish are discarded to areas with more discards and/or vulnerable benthic communities. It is not thought that vessels will leave the Dutch fleet.

Likely impacts of proposed activity restrictions in rMCZs on other sectors dependent on fishing

J3a.36 It is thought that fishers may choose different ports from which to get supplies/repairs depending on the distance they have to travel to avoid the MCZs. The Dutch representatives think that fishers may choose different ports to land their fish depending on the distance they have to travel to avoid the MCZs. Certain ports may benefit from this development, whereas others may lose valuable income and jobs. In general, the southern fleet (Goedereede, Stellendam, Breskens) fishes more in the southern North Sea (below 54 °N), and the fleet from IJmuiden, Urk, Den Helder and Texel fishes more to the north. It is thought that the rMCZs will mostly affect the southern fleet.

2.4 Belgium

J3a.37 The meeting organised by JNCC in Belgium was attended by two representatives and eight fishers.

Activity of the fleet

J3a.38 Most Belgian vessels operating in the Balanced Seas Project Area are over 15 metres. There are only two under 15 metre vessels working in UK waters; both are netters and one works in the Thames Estuary area. Belgian fleets currently use rMCZ 9 Offshore Foreland, rMCZ 29 East Meridian, rMCZ 30 Kentish Knock East and rMCZ 31 Inner Bank. Belgian fishing activity has decreased dramatically everywhere. Quotas, however, have barely changed in the last 5 years. Although detailed quantitative information is not available for the Belgian fleets, the total value of landings is estimated to be approximately £12.040m/yr (T. Craeynest, Consulent Rederscentrale, e-mail 27 July 2011).

J3a.39 The Belgian fleets use the areas where fish are found and fear being displaced to areas where there might not be fish. In many areas, catch reductions have not been seen for over 40 years, but activities such as aggregate dredging can remove entire fishing grounds (e.g. in the Thames Estuary) and Real Time Closures such as wind farms in the Thames Estuary can have an impact. Fuel costs are affecting the fleet massively and, if boats are displaced, they will have to use more fuel to fish unproductive grounds. Vessels land into UK ports and the fish are trucked back to Belgian fish markets (this has always been the case in the Belgian fleet).

Likely impacts of proposed activity restrictions in rMCZs on the fleet

J3a.40 Proposed restrictions will significantly impact the Belgian fleet. Beam trawl fishers cannot alter their location, because of safety reasons, nor modify their gear to Sumwing as others are doing, as it would still be classed as benthic trawling. Belgian fleets were unable to make a general statement regarding the proportion of vessels that could continue to fish the site by gear adaptation or a change of target species due to uncertainty. Each vessel makes its own decisions. Assuming proposed management plans, the Belgian fleet anticipates never finding fishing grounds that are similar to its current location. The concentration of vessels will increase dramatically in the few areas left to fish. It is impossible for trawlers to change to static gear and they would therefore be forced out of the fishery. There will be no decommissioning and it is thought that the rMCZs and restrictions would be a financial disaster for the Belgian fleet.

Likely impacts of proposed activity restrictions in rMCZs on other sectors dependent on fishing

J3a.41 It is thought that if beam trawling is halted, the market and the suppliers will go out of business, as no other gears are possible. While some fish are imported, the fish auction and processors rely on Belgian-landed fish, so any reduction in landings will have a significant effect on business. Local, regional and international businesses will be affected: 75% of processed fish is exported to the Netherlands for every job at sea when we consider repair companies, fishing gear supply, fish processing, markets, etc. The greatest impact will be on the fish auctions, as these people will not easily find another job.

Effect of proposed restrictions on the natural environment

J3a.42 The Belgian representatives believe that MCZs will have little beneficial effect, as they consider that the beam trawls have very little impact on the seabed. They think that more evidence is required to assess the impact of their fisheries. Belgium is reducing its fleet (it has decreased from 130 to 80 vessels in the last 10 years) and is using more sustainable gear, and the Belgian

representatives do not think that additional management is needed. They consider that fishing activity can be beneficial in preventing invasive alien species from ballast waters from establishing themselves.

References

Balanced Seas Final Recommendations Report, 2011. Final Recommendation Submission to Natural England and JNCC.

Productschap Vis, 2011. Notitie en MCZ en N2000. Code: 2011194/35.6. *Rijswijk,27 September 2011*

Appendix 1 Impact Assessment fishing questionnaire

MCZ Impact Assessment Participant:
Fishing Questionnaire Sites:

1. Review of the regional stakeholder group recommendations **a. Site boundaries** **b. Features and conservation objectives** **c. Activity restrictions**
2. Discussions of the likely impacts of MCZs upon the affected fleet, namely the fleet response as a direct result of MCZ activity restrictions **a. Vessels likely to continue fishing the site(s) regardless, no adaptation** **b. Vessels likely to continue fishing the site(s) by changing target species/gear types** **c. Vessels likely to be displaced to other fishing grounds** **d. Vessels likely to leave the fleet**
3. Discussions of wider impacts of MCZs upon: **a. Businesses servicing and supplying the fleet** **b. Businesses dependent on landings** **c. Regional, national and international supply of fish** **d. The local community and wider society** **e. Natural environment**
4. Baseline trend of fishing fleet **a. Growth patterns** **b. Sustainability of stocks** **c. Cumulative impacts of government policy and other industries** **d. The way forward for fishing**
5. Any other business

Venue: **Date/time:**