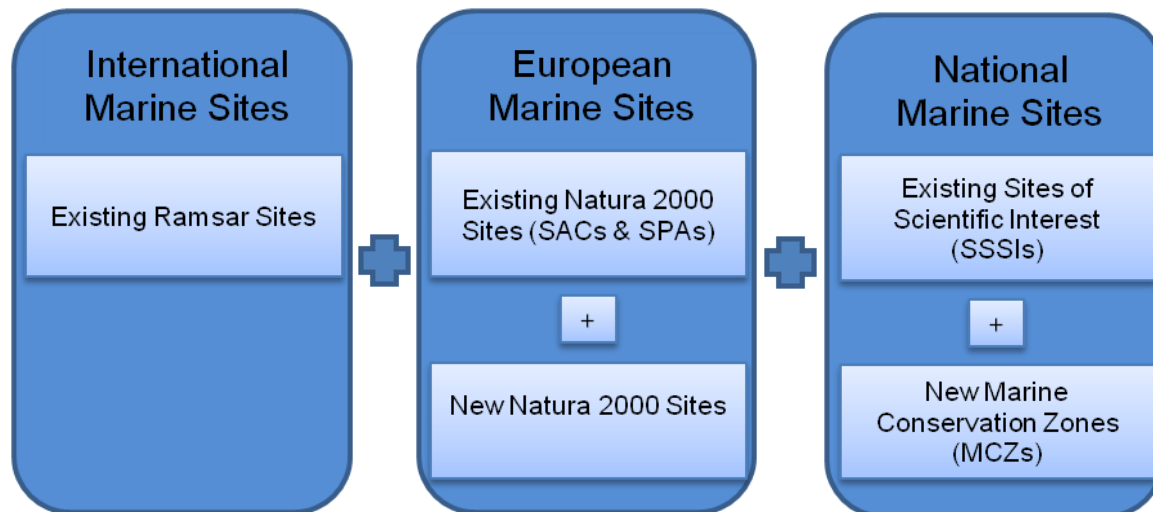


The differences between Natura 2000 and Marine Conservation Zones

The Government's aim is that we will have an ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas. Natura 2000 sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs)); and Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) within the MCZ project area¹ will contribute to this network along with Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Ramsar Sites.



Natura 2000 sites and MCZs are currently being identified and recommended for designation through two parallel, but different processes. Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are contributing to the network with their own Marine Protected Areas.

The main differences between Natura 2000 and MCZ designation are:

Natura 2000 (SACs / SPAs)

- Natura 2000 sites in the MCZ project area are designated under Habitats Regulations and Offshore Marine Conservation Regulations.
- SACs aim to protect habitats and species of importance at the European scale including sandbanks, sea caves, reefs, grey seals etc.
- SPAs aim to protect threatened seabird aggregations.
- Selection of site boundaries must be based completely on scientific evidence and socio-economic factors cannot be taken into consideration.

Progress with Natura 2000 sites in the MCZ Project area

- Natural England submitted its final recommendation for Studland to Portland possible SAC to Defra in July 2012, for their consideration for onward submission to the European Commission. This site has been identified for its reefs.
- In May 2012 JNCC submitted its final recommendations on three sites in offshore waters to Defra. These are Wight-Barfleur Reef in the English Channel recommended for its bedrock and stony reef;

¹ covering English territorial waters and UK offshore waters adjacent to England, Wales and Northern Ireland
Produced by Natural England and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee

and Croker Carbonate Slabs and Pisces Reef Complex in the Irish Sea recommended for their submarine structures made by leaking gases and reef habitats respectively.

- The network of Special Areas of Conservation in the MCZ Project area is then expected to be complete by the end of 2012.
- The UK Government is also committed to identifying a network of SPAs in the marine environment to fulfil its obligations under the EU Wild Birds Directive. In 2012, JNCC will conclude its survey programme of seabirds and waterbirds to inform the designation of new marine SPAs. Natural England will use evidence from these surveys to identify and recommend further potential marine SPAs by 2015.
- Informal dialogue with stakeholders about proposals for the first of these new sites, an extension to the existing Flamborough Head and Bempton Cliffs SPA, is taking place during summer 2012.

Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs)

- Designated under Marine & Coastal Access Act 2009.
- MCZs aim to protect a range of nationally important wildlife and habitats.
- The identification process was delivered through the Marine Conservation Zone Project, made up of four regional MCZ projects: Net Gain (north-east), Balanced Seas (south-east), Finding Sanctuary (south-west) and Irish Sea Conservation Zones (Irish Sea).
- Process has been stakeholder-led, with recommendations evolving through negotiations undertaken by representatives of sea users and interest groups. Identification of MCZs allows for socio-economic factors to be taken into consideration.
- Site selection complements existing designation of habitats and species already protected through existing MPAs, and proposed for protection through new Natura 2000 sites.
- MCZs should not duplicate the purpose of Natura 2000 sites and should only be proposed for habitats and species which are protected under EC legislation in exceptional circumstances to meet the objectives of the wider MPA network.
- There may be circumstances where MCZ and Natura 2000 sites fully or partially overlap to protect different features.

Timeline for the MCZ Project

- Stakeholder groups formed - October 2009 to February 2010.
- Data collected – March to November 2010.
- Stakeholder group meetings took place and draft recommendations produced in four iterations – March 2010 to August 2011.
- Final stakeholder recommendations for MCZs submitted by regional MCZ projects to Natural England and JNCC – September 2011.

Next steps:

- Regional MCZ projects' Impact Assessment material and advice from Natural England and JNCC along with unaltered regional MCZ project recommendations submitted to Government – July 2012.
- Public consultation – late 2012.
- Designation of first tranche of MCZs - 2013.