

Tamar Estuary Marine Conservation Zones

Where are these sites?

The Tamar Estuary MCZs are located in two spatially separate areas. The MCZs cover an area of approximately 15 km² and include the upper reaches of the Tamar and Lynher estuaries of South Devon and Cornwall.



Why are these sites important?

The sheltered habitats found within this site are subject to various salinity levels and tidal exposures. This diverse estuarine environment supports a number of features of ecological importance. These MCZs are particularly important as they are the only site where smelt (*Osmerus eperlanus*) is protected. Smelt is a migratory fish species which has suffered large declines throughout its range and is known to breed in the Tamar.



What do these Marine Conservation Zones protect?

The MCZs protect a variety of habitats including intertidal biogenic reefs and coarse sediments. Biogenic reefs are made from the hard parts of animals, such as blue mussels, and are formed when the animals' shells are bound together with mud and sand by the sticky byssus thread or 'beards' of the mussels. These living reefs are ecologically important as they provide a home or refuge for seaweeds and animals including barnacles, winkles and small crabs.



Smelt (*Osmerus eperlanus*) are shoaling fish, distantly related to the salmon. Smelt are silvery-green in colour and typically around 20 cm long, and unusually they have been recorded to smell like fresh cucumber. They live in the salty water of estuaries and go upriver to spawn in fresh water before returning to sea. They have been included as a protected species within the Tamar Estuary MCZs because of the importance of this area for their breeding. The smelt population is depleted and protecting estuaries used by the species is important because they can become locally extinct from isolated estuaries and will not return.



The MCZs are also home to the Native oyster (*Ostrea edulis*), a species which experienced significant declines during the 20th century in European waters.

Features	General management approach
Intertidal biogenic reefs	Maintain in favourable condition
Intertidal coarse sediment	Maintain in favourable condition
Blue mussel (<i>Mytilus edulis</i>) beds	Maintain in favourable condition
Native oyster (<i>Ostrea edulis</i>)	Recover to favourable condition
Smelt (<i>Osmerus eperlanus</i>)	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 these sites have 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 flood and coastal erosion risk management, ports and harbour operations and archaeological excavations. These activities 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.

With regards to fisheries management this site crosses the boundary of two IFCA districts - Cornwall and Devon and Severn. All relevant IFCA byelaws will apply to this site, in addition to all relevant national and EU fisheries legislation. Further information is available at

www.marinemanagement.org.uk/fisheries/monitoring/regulations_bluebook.htm

Current relevant restrictions relating to the Cornwall IFCA district include the exclusion of towed gear and fixed nets within the Tamar Estuary, as well as the proposed Closed Areas (European Marine Sites) Byelaw. Within the Devon and Severn district there are a number of proposed byelaws under consideration include Potting and Shellfish Permits and a Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw. For further information visit the IFCA websites www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk or www.cornwall-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>



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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 For further information visit www.association-ifca.org.uk
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 For further information visit www.marinemangement.org.uk/fisheries or www.marinemangement.org.uk/licensing/marine.htm
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 For further information visit www.environment-agency.gov.uk/default.aspx
Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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	<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, For further information contact your local authority or IFCA
Department for Transport (DfT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responsible for shipping, harbours, ship pollution and offshore safety For further information visit www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport
Natural England (NE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public access For further information visit www.naturalengland.org.uk/