

# Medway Estuary Marine Conservation Zone

## Where is this site?

Medway Estuary MCZ is an inshore site located on the Kent coast. It encompasses the Medway Estuary from Rochester down to its mouth, and extends seaward to include an area between Sheerness and the Isle of Grain. A total area of 60 km<sup>2</sup> is protected by this MCZ.

## Why is this site important?

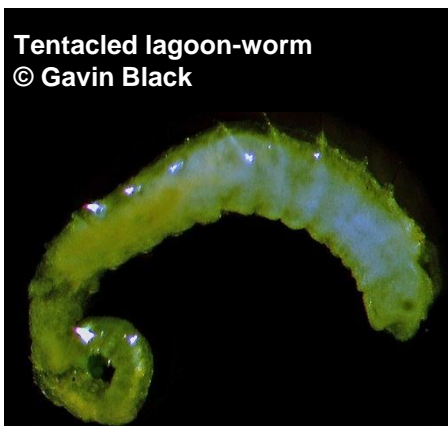
Within the site there is a complex and dynamic ecosystem. The mix of fresh and sea waters combined with tidal movement create changing levels of salinity and nutrients that provide a fertile environment for large populations of animals, particularly invertebrates, fish and birds. Numerous species of commercially important fish including bass, herring, cod, plaice and sole use the area as a nursery ground.



## What does this Marine Conservation Zone protect?

One species and eight different habitats and their associated wildlife are protected by the Medway Estuary MCZ. Such a range of habitats creates an environment that is capable of supporting some of the most diverse communities of animals in the South-East region.

The nationally scarce tentacled lagoon-worm (*Alkmaria romijni*) is found within the estuary. This is a tiny bristleworm which only grows up to 5 mm long. It creates and lives in tubes within the mud habitats of the estuary. These worms have a number of tentacles around their mouths which they use for gathering food from the surrounding muddy sediments. The tentacled lagoon-worm is particularly vulnerable to threats that cause changes in its habitat. This site is the only designated MCZ where this feature is protected.



Peat and clay exposures are an uncommon habitat type which is effectively irreplaceable as it was formed millions of years ago from ancient lakebeds and forested peatlands. Elongated bivalves called piddocks are typically found on the surface of peat and clay exposures. These burrow into the habitat creating holes that, once empty, can be inhabited by and provide shelter to animals such as crabs and anemones.

Features	General management approach
Intertidal mixed sediments	Maintain in favourable condition
Intertidal sand and muddy sand	Maintain in favourable condition
Subtidal coarse sediment	Maintain in favourable condition
Subtidal mud	Maintain in favourable condition
Subtidal sand	Maintain in favourable condition
Low energy intertidal rock	Maintain in favourable condition
Estuarine rocky habitats	Maintain in favourable condition
Peat and clay exposures	Maintain in favourable condition
Tentacled lagoon-worm ( <i>Alkmaria romijni</i> )	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](http://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 port and harbour operations, coastal developments 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 regard to fisheries management the site is within the jurisdiction of Kent and Essex IFCA. All relevant IFCA District-wide byelaws will apply to this site, in addition to all relevant national and EU fisheries legislation. Further information is available at

[www.marinemangement.org.uk/fisheries/monitoring/regulations\\_bluebook.htm](http://www.marinemangement.org.uk/fisheries/monitoring/regulations_bluebook.htm)

Relevant restrictions relating to this site include restrictions on the size of the vessels able to operate in the area. There are a number of private aquaculture grounds within the site which are regulated under different legislation, although aquaculture interests are recognised and will be taken into account when developing measures for the site. For further information visit the Kent & Essex IFCA website [www.kentandessex-ifca.gov.uk](http://www.kentandessex-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  
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## Annex: Management

Lead organisation	Activities
<b>Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fisheries (0-6nm) including commercial fisheries and recreational fishing activities such as sea angling</li></ul> For further information visit <a href="http://www.association-ifca.org.uk">www.association-ifca.org.uk</a>
<b>Marine Management Organisation (MMO)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fisheries (management) (6-12nm)</li><li>• Fisheries (enforcement) national and EU legislation</li><li>• Licensable activities such as deposit and removal activities below mean high water springs, including subsea cables (up to 12nm), construction (including renewables &lt;100MW, ports and coastal protection), dredging and disposal</li><li>• Harbour Orders and Harbour Empowerment Orders</li><li>• Section 36 and safety zone consents</li><li>• Enforcement of licensable activity and other consents (including deemed marine licences)</li><li>• Development of marine plans integrating the social requirements, economic potential and environmental priorities of marine plan areas</li><li>• Activities requiring a wildlife licence</li></ul> For further information visit <a href="http://www.marinemangement.org.uk/fisheries">www.marinemangement.org.uk/fisheries</a> or <a href="http://www.marinemangement.org.uk/licensing/marine.htm">www.marinemangement.org.uk/licensing/marine.htm</a>
<b>Environment Agency (EA)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fisheries management for migratory and fresh water fish</li><li>• Coastal protection and flood management</li><li>• Water quality</li><li>• Permitted discharges from terrestrial sources</li></ul> For further information visit <a href="http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/default.aspx">www.environment-agency.gov.uk/default.aspx</a>
<b>Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Oil and Gas related activities</li><li>• Renewable energy related activities</li></ul> For further information visit <a href="http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-energy-climate-change">www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-energy-climate-change</a>
<b>Harbour Authorities and local planning authorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Harbour authorities have management responsibilities for the port and coastal waters within their jurisdiction</li><li>• 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,</li></ul> For further information contact your local authority or IFCA
<b>Department for Transport (DfT)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Responsible for shipping, harbours, ship pollution and offshore safety</li></ul> For further information visit <a href="http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport">www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport</a>
<b>Natural England (NE)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Public access</li></ul> For further information visit <a href="http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/">www.naturalengland.org.uk/</a>