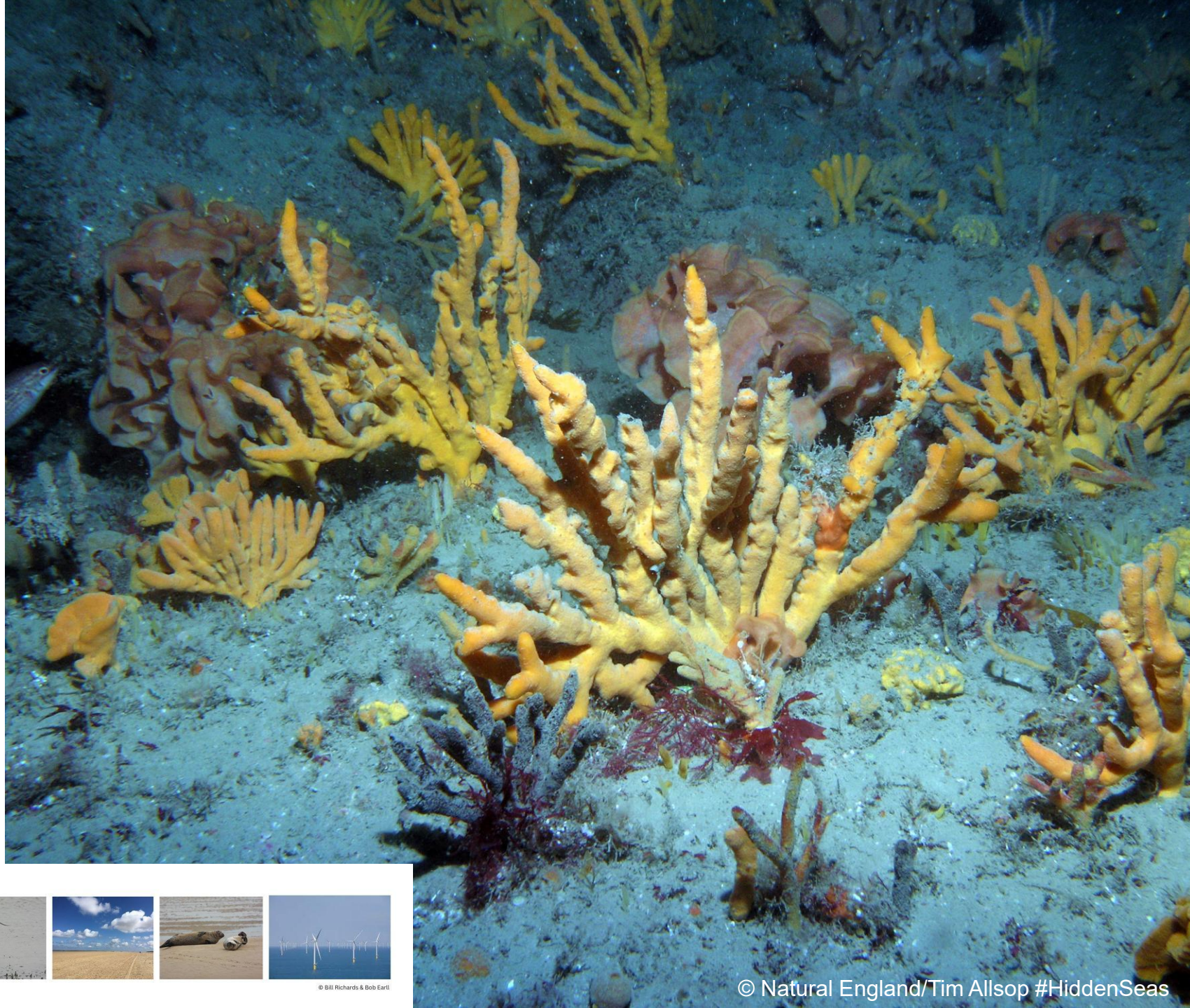


Marine Protected Areas

EastMe 2026

Ellie Falconer (MMO)



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Organisations involved in the MPA Community of Practice

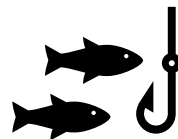


Marine
Management
Organisation





Stage 3 MPAs



Stage 3 Formal Consultation Summer 2025

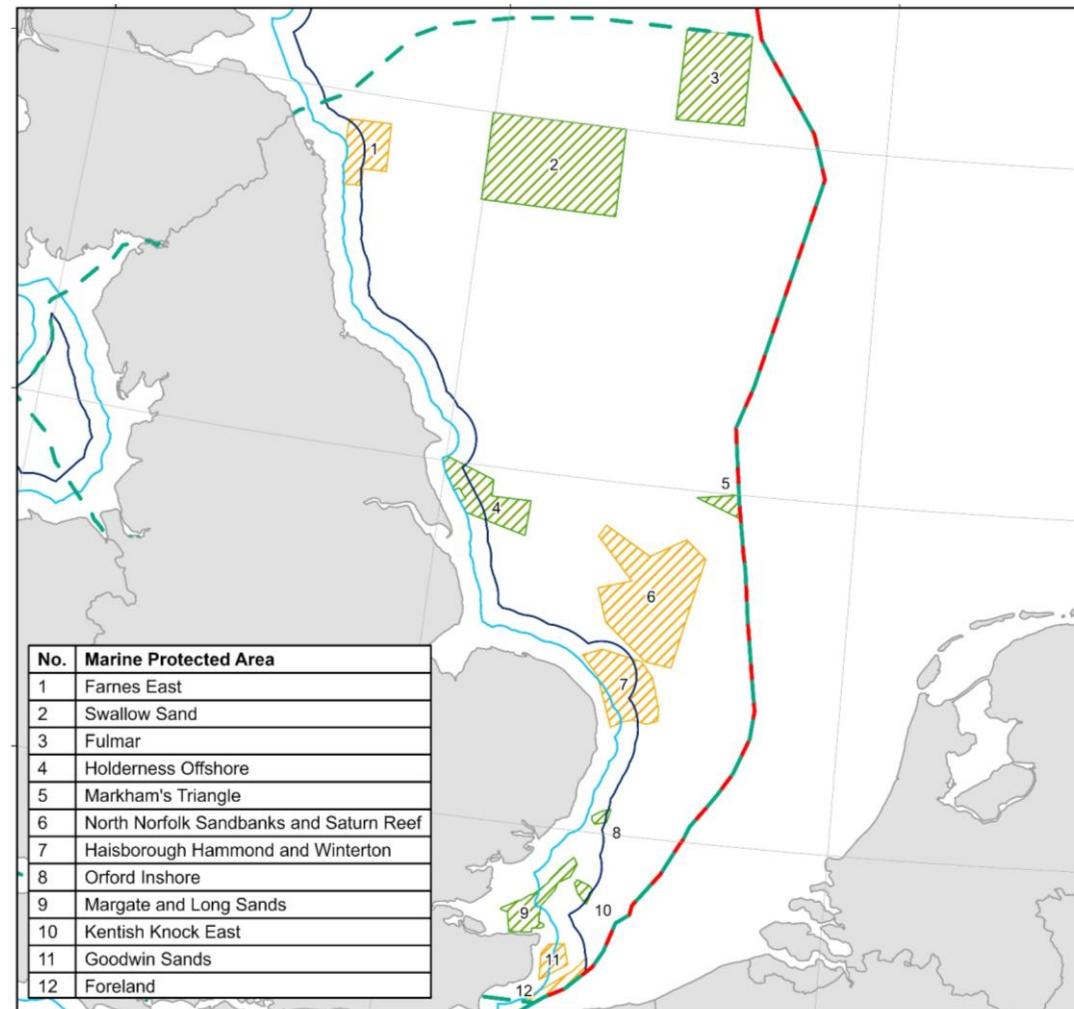
- Proposed management in 42 English offshore MPAs
- 4 regional byelaws

	Bottom towed gear	Traps	Bottom set nets and lines	Spiny lobster
MPA count	36	5	2	1
Area (km ²)	30,000	860	300	14

North Sea Marine Protected Areas Fishing Gear Byelaw 2024

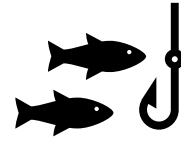
New prohibitions for 12 MPAs

- 12 for bottom towed gear
- 3 for traps
- 1 for bottom set nets and lines





Stage 4 MPAs



5 MPAs designated for highly mobile species: harbour porpoise and marine birds.

Since [Call for Evidence](#) in 2024, updated site assessments and impacts evidence documents

Focus of Stage 4 currently harbour porpoise bycatch.

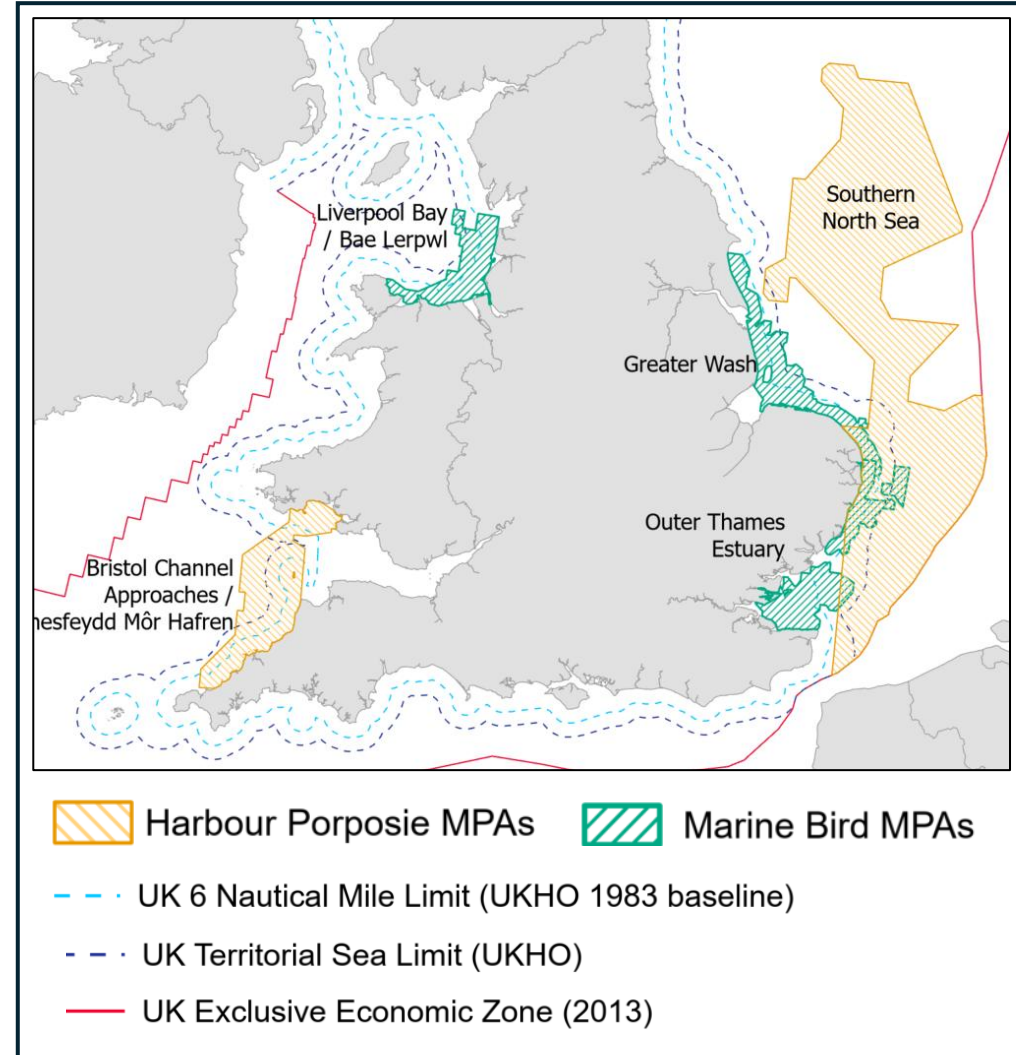
While **no management decisions** have been made, best available evidence suggests bycatch from gillnets is a concern that may need to be managed.



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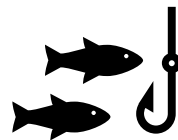


© Terry Carne





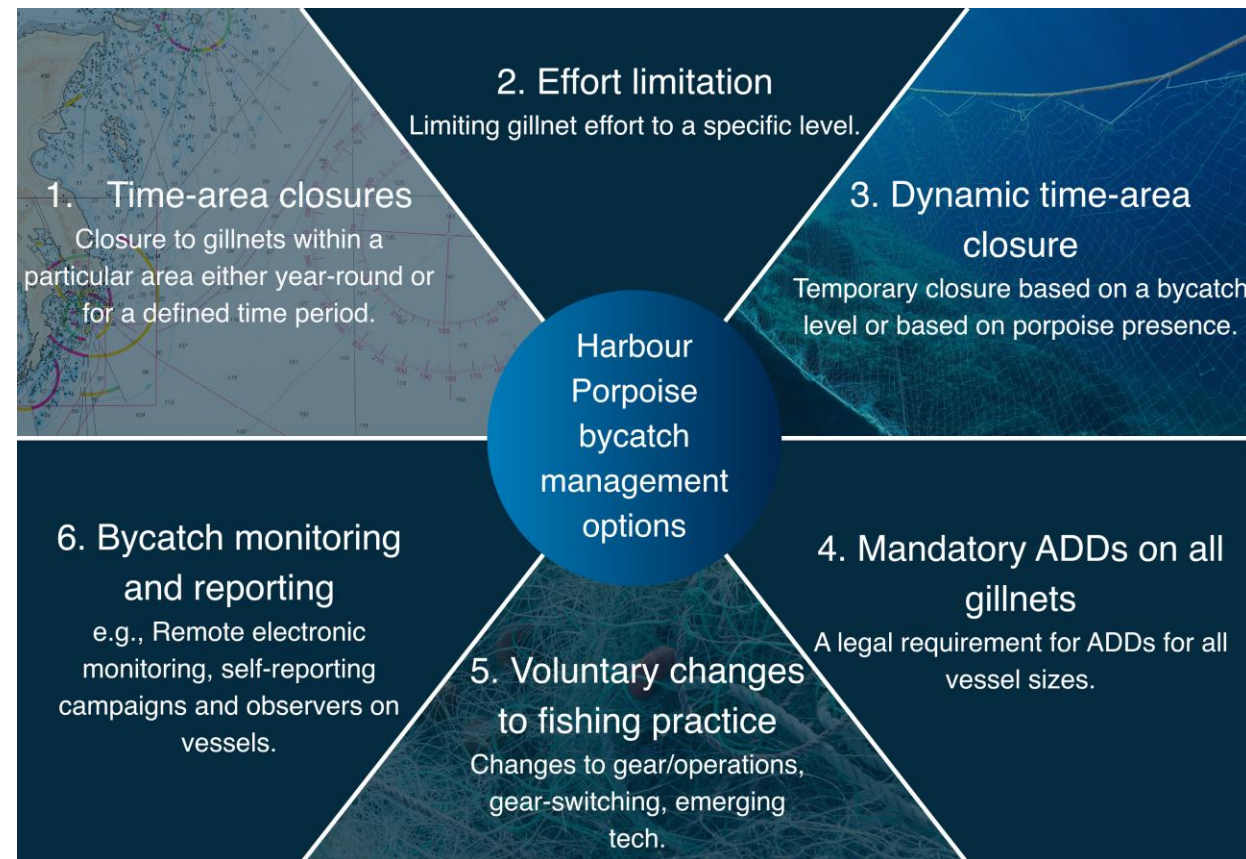
MPA Responsibilities



STAGE 4

Conducted informal engagement Autumn/Winter 2025 (in-person and virtual) to gather more data/evidence on harbour porpoise bycatch and early views on six potential management measures

- In-person workshops with fishers in Harwich, West Mersea, Ramsgate
- Virtual workshops with NGOs, UK and non-UK fishing industry
- Now working through engagement feedback and updating management options documents
- [Managing harbour porpoise bycatch in English waters - GOV.UK](#)





Marine non-licensable activities in MPAs



98 MPAs that require mNLA assessment – currently developing impacts evidence documents and working on site assessments

2026 North Sea MPAs: The Wash and North Norfolk SAC and Cromer Shoals MCZ

- Held engagement events in March 2026
- Proposed management in Cromer MCZ – removal of a reported anchorage on the chalk beds
 - Working with UKHO and MCA and having conversations around divers retrieving abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear
- Proposed management in The Wash SAC – removal of a designated anchorage over the Sabellaria reef.
 - Working with King's Lynn harbour authority.
 - Also looking at working collaboratively with local stakeholders to reduce marine-based disturbance to seals



Flamborough Head European Marine Site

(Flamborough Head SAC and Flamborough and Filey Coast SPA)

- **Visitor pressure continues to be an issue.** Recreational activities can disturb our breeding seabird colony and non-designated features, such as seals. Trampling and degradation of SSSI grassland associated with seal watching from the cliff-top is also becoming an issue.
- **The current management plan requires reviewing this year,** however there are resource challenges with this. There is also a lack of clarity around how the emerging Yorkshire Wolds National Landscape (AONB) should (or shouldn't) be incorporated.
- **There are inconsistencies in the application of S106 through the planning process,** which we are working with partners to resolve. We're also exploring more strategic options for managing recreational pressures across designated sites.

Holderness Inshore Marine Conservation Zone

- **Natural England are exploring a Protected Sites Strategy,** focused on the MCZ (boundaries tbc). A workshop was held in March to share this idea with stakeholders and discuss what a PSS might look like. Further engagement events are likely in 2026 / 2027, subject to funding.



Humber Nature Partnership

- Most of the work in 2025 has been prep work for the next 5 years ahead.
- Recently approved our Humber Management Scheme Action Plan 2026-31 – covers what actions we aim to progress over the next 5 years.
 - The document is currently a relevant authority focused document, but we are looking at making a "glossy" version for public consumption.
- Been looking at what the pressures are on the Humber Estuary.
 - We are looking at creating a "risk register" for the Humber, whereby pressures are listed from "most concern" to "least concern"
- Attempting an audit to understand what data are being collected and where there are potential gaps that can be plugged.
- Recently held a Marine Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) Workshop.
 - The purpose was to see whether stakeholders on the Humber thought a Marine Biosecurity Plan would be worthwhile.
 - The workshop looked at avenues of spread and discussed what processes are currently in place should INNS be found.
 - The response was a resounding "yes" to a Marine Biosecurity Plan being developed.



Noise pollution

Noise limits for offshore windfarm construction

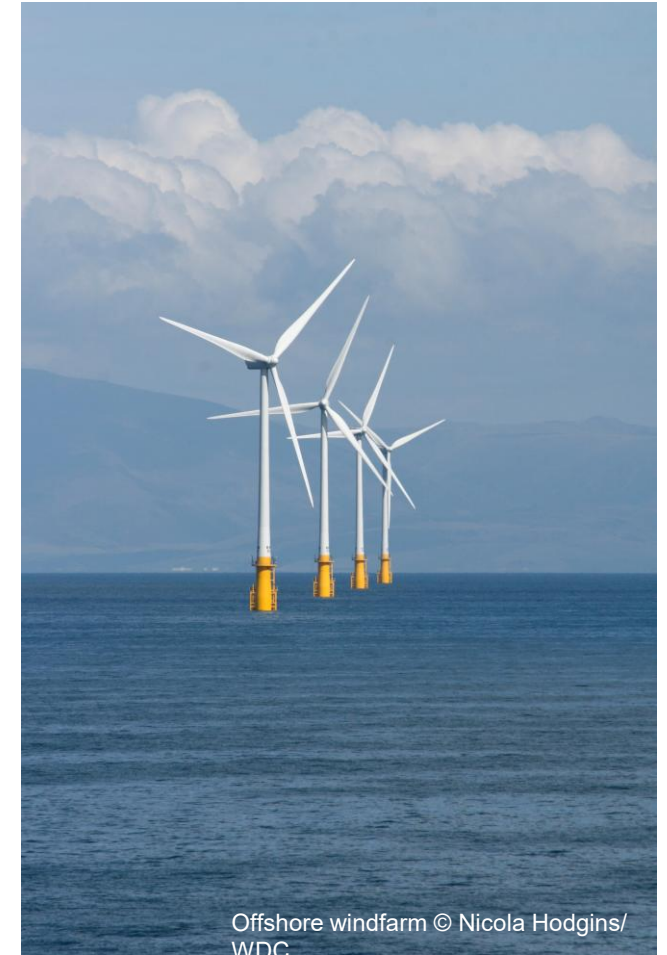
- WDC welcome the proposed noise limits, especially due to the noise levels in the SNS SAC
- Working with key stakeholders to ensure limits are suitable.
- Running Quiet Seas Please campaign

Marine recovery fund

- Engaging with stakeholders on projects this will fund.
- Calling for it to fund projects that will protect the MPA network

Compensatory measures

- Engaging with stakeholders on suitability of CM for cetaceans.
- Concerned that any measures delivered to compensate for impacts on MPAs could have an impact on overlapping or neighbouring MPAs.



Bycatch

Fishing in MPAs

- Continuing to push for bottom-trawling ban to be extended to all MPAs.
- Engaging on consultations on fishing activity around the UK.
- Analysing extent of different fisheries in MPAs and their management.

Working with fishing industry

- Working with fishers to trial new gear types.
- Undertook a survey to understand fishers views on switching to alternative gears, report about to be published.
- Looking for funding so we can contract a consultant to undertake economic valuation of cetacean MPAs, with a focus on value to fisheries.



Assessing fisheries in MPA's

- Conducting Habitats Regulations Assessments of “Amber/Green” gear/feature interactions in 21 MPAs
- 3 Assessments now signed off by Natural England
 - Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge SAC
 - Alde and Ore Estuary SPA
 - Orfordness-Shingle Street SAC
- Assessment for Deben Estuary SPA currently with Natural England for final review
- 4 others currently being updated following Natural England’s initial advice
 - Alde, Ore and Butley Estuary SAC
 - Breydon Water SPA
 - Gibraltar Point SPA
 - Haisbrough, Hammond and Winterton SAC
- The remaining 13 are at various stages of completion depending on their size and complexity.
- Annual HRAs being completed for major cockle, mussel, brown shrimp and whelk fisheries in The Wash



Cromer Shoal MCZ

- Adaptive Risk Management approach taken to inform management with evidence
- Research projects include:
 - Conducting Multibeam, side scan and ROV surveys to chart extent of vulnerable rugged chalk features
 - Utilizing trackers and iVMS to plot fishing activities in the MCZ
 - Capturing ROV video data to inform a Rates of Damage Assessment
 - Considering gear adaptations to reduce impacts to chalk
 - Researching the financial and social importance of the rugged chalk areas to the fishery
 - Undertaking a Natural Disturbance Study to understand potting damage against backdrop of natural disturbance



Condition Assessments 2025 /2026



The Wash SPA

Dunlin (non-breeding)	Favourable
Curlew (non-breeding)	Favourable
Gadwall (non-breeding)	Favourable
Turnstone	Favourable
Shelduck	Unfavourable declining
Pintail	Unfavourable declining

The Wash and North Norfolk Coast SAC

Harbour seal	Unfavourable declining
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Thank you to all involved in the Marine Protected Area Community of Practice!

Any questions?

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