

REPORT

Meeting: **Highly Protected Marine Areas in English Waters Meeting with European Stakeholders**

Parties: **DEFRA, EU Stakeholders**

Date: **4 August 2022**

Location: **Teams**

Chair: **DEFRA (UK Administration)**

Rapporteur: **Tamara Talevska**

Background

The UK Government has launched a [public consultation](#) on five candidate Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs) in English Waters. These HPMAs will have the highest levels of protection in the sea around England. They would not allow any fishing activities or other extractive, depositional or destructive uses. By setting aside some areas of sea with high levels of protection, HPMAs will allow nature to fully recover, helping the ecosystem to thrive. HPMAs will complement the existing Marine Protected Area (MPA) network. To select candidate sites, we used a set of ecological, social and economic criteria, as well as ensuring sites had a geographical spread. Three of the candidate sites are in the 12-200nm zone and may affect European stakeholders.

DEFRA offered a meeting with EU Stakeholders to answer any questions arising about HPMAs, their selection process and the consultation. The meeting may cover the topics below however any additional issues would also be discussed.

- *The site selection process*
- *High level information on the candidate sites*
- *Fishing data and analysis*
- *Next steps within the public consultation period*

Correspondence

The NSAC Secretariat on behalf of the ExCom Chair responded to invitation with concern regarding the date of the meeting taking place during the holiday season and asked for postponement to a later date in September to allow participation of wider stakeholder groups.

Defra responded: We would like to meet stakeholders early in the 12 week consultation period as an opportunity to hear initial feedback. In this meeting, we will provide more information on Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs), how they may affect EU

stakeholders, the consultation and workshops, with sections open for questions and discussion. We will circulate the minutes. We can explore holding a further meeting in September with you as needed. We will also be running site based online workshops in September if there are any particular sites you have an interest in. In the meantime, we are open to answering any further queries or concerns you may have.

Report

The aim of the meeting was for the UK Administration to present its proposals for designation of HPMAs. Consultation on candidate sites is currently open and will run across summer.

HMPAs are areas of the sea that allow the protection and recovery of marine ecosystems. Any extractive, destructive and depositional uses are prohibited and only non-damaging levels of other activities allowed.

Key purpose of HMPAs is biodiversity protection and nature recovery. HMPAs will be complementary to other existing MPAs.

A whole site approach is taken meaning that everything within the site boundary is protected, including seabed, water column and water surface.

Consultation started on 6 July and closes in September after a 12-week period.

The aim of the consultation is to gather additional social and economic evidence from stakeholders to determine:

- Which sites
- Whether any boundaries should be changed
- Benefits and impacts of designations

HMPAs will be designated legally as Marine Conservation Zones.

This is a pilot process where sites shall be designated within 1 year of consultation launch (July 2023) and during which HMPAs will be evaluated to understand the process and impacts of designation.

Stakeholder engagement:

- Online consultation: [Consultation on Highly Protected Marine Areas \(HPMAs\) - Defra - Citizen Space](#);
- Stakeholder events (online meetings, site based and national workshops) planned in late August, early September 2022;
- Additional data and experience as submitted by stakeholders.

Process to date:

1. Excluded areas where there are existing activities that cannot relocate and/or cannot occur in an HPMA;
2. Nature conservation advisors applied ecological criteria and selected sites;
3. Defra and fisheries regulators developed social and economic criteria and combined it with evidence from nature conservation advisors. The criteria was then applied to potential HPMA sites.

Q&A

- Do you make baseline studies and monitor the development of the areas and potential improvements. How will you measure that?
Response: Ecological data and socio-economic baseline studies are being done. Baseline indicators are developed before the designation of sites. Evaluation will take place based on indicators.
- What coordination is foreseen with EU countries e.g. Specialized Committee for Fisheries?
Response: MPAs work best when they are part of ecological networks, that's why we are considering them alongside the existing MPAs. OSPAR network in NEA is also taken into account. For any introduced measures we need to work under the TCA and through SCF. We're looking to achieve good environmental status of the whole area.

Socio-economic analysis

Defra applied socio-economic criteria in the shortlisting process of sites;

Including the understanding of what economic activity occurs in potential sites that will not be permitted if it were to become a pilot HPMA; such sites were removed from consideration;

Factors such as economic dependency and revenue gain were considered;

4 different activity filters were applied:

- Levels of potential recreational angling;
- Levels of potential recreational anchoring;
- Levels of UK commercial fishing;
- Levels of Non-UK commercial fishing

The UK and non-UK fishing activities are treated equally in decision criteria were weighed equally in applying socio-economic criteria.

Fisheries analysis

Non-UK commercial fishing operations assessed using:

1. coverage of candidate HPMA location by fishing activity hotspots;
2. Number of VMS pings between 2016-2020;
3. Number of unique vessels between 2016-2020

Revenue assessment indicated that the overall revenue of UK fishers would be impacted more than non-UK fishers with the designation (77% vs 15%).

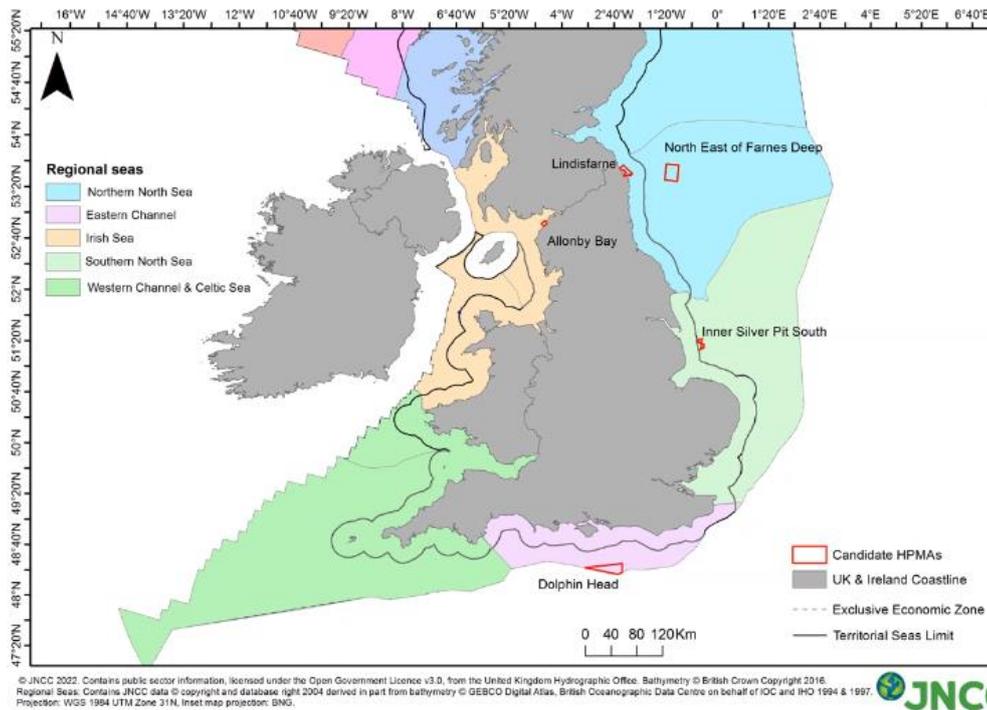
Q&A

- Referring to period 2016-2020 of fisheries analysis, why did Defra decide to reference 5 years instead of 10 years?
Response: the decision was taken because of the change in management measures (i.e. post trawling ban, before 2016 these would be overrepresented), geopolitical issues (i.e. Brexit, in 2016 and later the fishing activity in UK waters would have probably been misrepresented. The aim was to not overrepresent activities that previously took place in UK waters.

There are **five candidate HPMA**s, three of which would affect EU stakeholders:

1. North-East of Farnes Deep (relatively high biodiversity, fishing revenue: 300.000 GBP/year; could be displaced to other areas)
2. Inner Silver Pit South (relatively high levels of biodiversity important for key lifecycle stages, relatively degraded at current state, estimated fishing revenue: 2000 GBP/year)
3. Dolphin Head (overlaps with existing MPA, estimated revenue of EU vessels: 1,3 mio GBP/year, displacement possibility).

HPMA Candidate Sites



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Next steps

- Site-based workshops and evidence gathering;
- Consultation closes on 28 September 2022;
- Secretary of State to decide on sites and boundaries in end 2022
- Sites to be designated by 6 July 2023;
- Following designation of sites, management measures to be implemented to restrict fishing activities.

Q&A

- Where did Defra get the values for fishing activity/revenues?
Response: These are MMO data, from reports of EU to UK. Revenue data is split. Allocation of effort is assumed via VMS-data and movement of vessels. Revenues are not spatially accurate.
- Are recreational fisheries equally regulated, alongside commercial?
Response: Yes, any activities will be excluded, including offshore windfarms - not compatible with high protection.
- What revenue limits apply to allow fisheries to remain on the site?

Response: No limits, the likelihood that activity was highly dependent would score out a site. Internally, individual metrics looked at quintiles of the site, relative to other 29 sites. Fishing scores then went through decision matrix. This was true for shortlisting, but the designation takes into account the evidence from consultations and impacts they would have on various activities. However, no threshold limits for designation were set.

- Is it certain that the 5 sites will be maintained? Could they change/be given up?

Response: The purpose of the consultation is to gather evidence. It may be that not all of the sites are designated. Evidence can be sent through online consultation form or email to hpm@defra.gov.uk, if easier.

- Would it be possible to share shape files so that data from national VMS could be considered too?

Response: Yes, this could be provided.

Meeting concluded at 12.45 CEST.