



**Ecological assessment of the consequences of removing  
the Special Management Area overlapping the West of  
Scotland MPA**

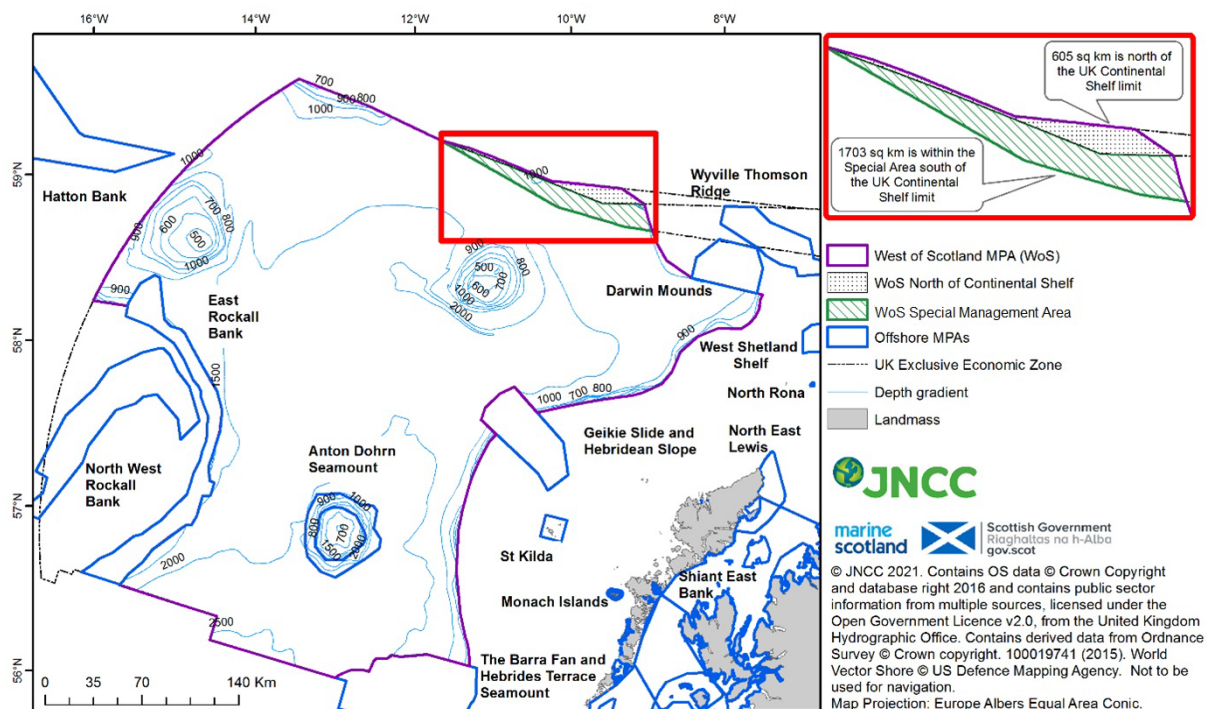
November 2021

## 1. Background

Work undertaken by JNCC, in collaboration with Marine Scotland Science (now part of Marine Directorate), resulted in the development of a proposal for an MPA to the far west of Scotland that was formally designated on 25 September 2021. The site is known as the West of Scotland MPA and is 107,718 km<sup>2</sup> in size. It covers a diverse marine landscape to the west of Scotland; from the steep gradient of the continental slope across the sediment plains of the Rockall Trough, to the slopes of George Bligh Bank and Rockall Bank with two isolated seamounts. Further information about the West of Scotland MPA and its protected features is available on JNCC's published [site information centre](#).

## 2. Overlap of West of Scotland MPA with the Special Management Area

A portion of the north-east of the site occurs outside the UK Continental shelf limit and a further proportion overlaps with the Special Management Area, as defined by the [UK/Denmark: Protocol to agreement with Faroe Islands on maritime delimitation](#): 605 km<sup>2</sup> and 1,703 km<sup>2</sup> respectively (see **Figure 1**). If the site boundary was re-drawn to exclude this overlap and to align with the UK Continental Shelf limit, this would reduce the site size by a total of 2,307 km<sup>2</sup> (a 2.1% reduction).

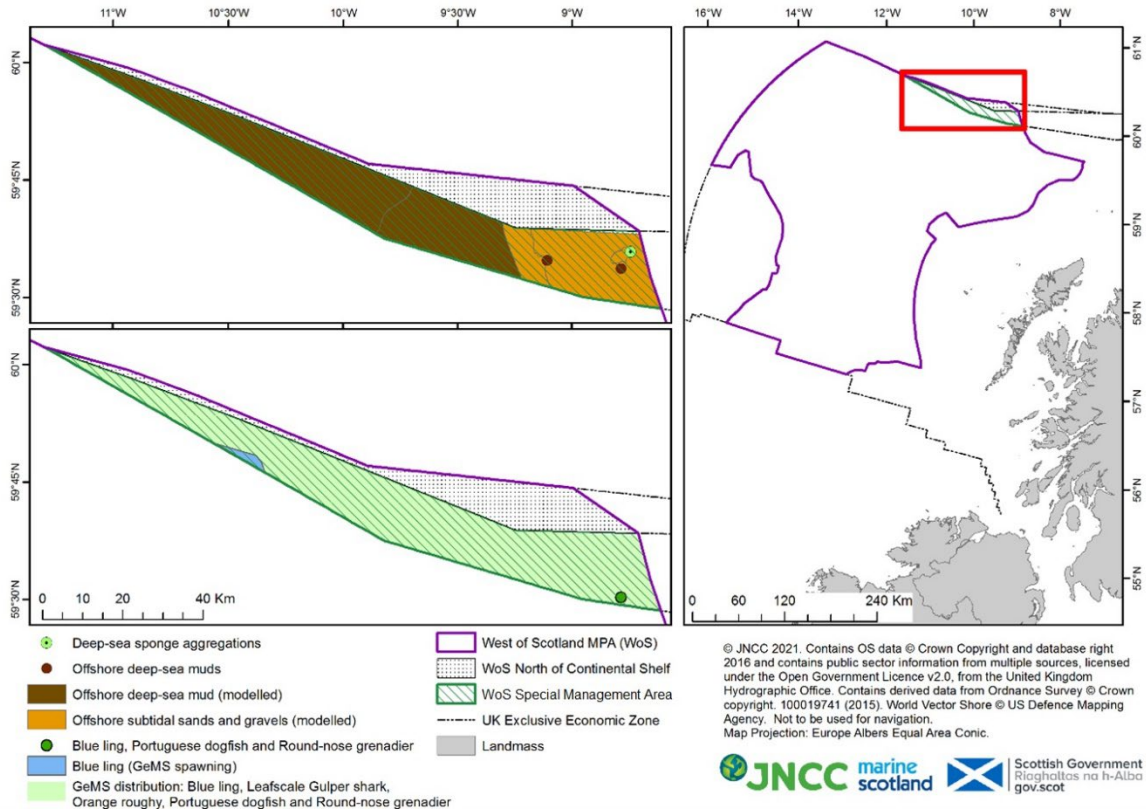


**Figure 1:** Location and boundary of the West of Scotland MPA boundary in relation to the Continental shelf limit and UK Exclusive Economic Zone.

## 3. Ecological assessment of Special Management Area overlapping with the West of Scotland MPA

An investigation into the biodiversity data JNCC is aware of within the Special Management Area shows that the area largely comprises deep-sea sedimentary habitats. This is primarily

based on modelled seabed habitat data, three habitat record data points (two for offshore deep-sea muds and one for deep-sea sponge aggregations) and three species point records (one each for blue ling, roundnose grenadier and Portuguese dogfish). These records are shown in **Figure 2**, with further information on the feature data available in **Table 1**.



**Figure 2:** Map showing MPA feature records occurring within the Special Management Area of the West of Scotland MPA.

**Table 1:** Data on MPA feature records occurring within the Special Management Area of the West of Scotland MPA

Feature	Modelled data	Number of records
Offshore deep-sea muds	UK SeaMap 2018 habitat map	2 Particle Size Analysis records
Offshore subtidal sands & gravels	UK SeaMap 2018 habitat map	-
Deep-sea sponge aggregations	-	1 bycatch record from Marine Scotland Science trawl survey
Blue Ling	-	1 bycatch record from Marine Scotland Science trawl survey
Round-nose grenadier	-	1 bycatch record
Portuguese dogfish	-	1 bycatch record

The Special Management Area that intersects with the site does not overlap with Key Geodiversity Areas, but does overlap portions of the Geological/Geomorphological features of 'Marine Geomorphology of the Scottish Deep Ocean Seabed' and 'Submarine Mass Movement' feature.

#### **4. JNCC's conclusion**

Should the West of Scotland site boundary be re-drawn to exclude the overlap with the Special Management Area, it is JNCC's scientific opinion that this will not adversely affect the ecological integrity of the West of Scotland MPA, due primarily to the relatively small scale in site size reduction and the relative sparseness of feature records in the area.