The Barra Fan and Hebrides Terrace Seamount Marine Protected Area

A diverse mix of geological and biological features

The Barra Fan and Hebrides Terrace Seamount Marine Protected Area (MPA)

To the west of Scotland, adjacent to the boundary with Irish waters, the Barra Fan and Hebrides Terrace Seamount MPA follows the seabed as it descends into the deep Rockall Trough. The 'Fan' was created when a large build-up of sediments underwent a series of submarine landslides. They have subsequently been modified by water currents, and were long ago gouged by icebergs grounding on the seabed during past ice ages.

The MPA includes the Hebrides Terrace Seamount – a remnant of an ancient volcano. The seamount supports a diverse range of marine life, including coldwater corals, deep sea sponges, and fish such as orange roughy.



Boundary of the Barra Fan and Hebrides Terrace Seamount MPA with the inset image showing the relief of the seabed

Location: 56° 34.884' N 9° 41.793' W



Sand and gravels are just one of the habitats found within the MPA

Protected Features & Conservation Objectives

The aim is to conserve the burrowed mud. offshore subtidal sands and gravels, offshore deepsea mud, orange roughy, seamount communities. continental slope and the seamount within the MPA. The Quaternary of Scotland, Submarine Mass Movement, Marine Geomorphology of the Scottish Deep Ocean Seabed, and Cenozoic Structures of the Atlantic Margin geodiversity features will also be conserved.

The eastern part of the MPA comprises the edge of the continental shelf and the continental slope leading down into deep abyssal waters On the continental slope, mud, sand and gravel habitats are home to worms and other creatures that have adapted to living buried in and on the seabed.

The Hebrides Terrace Seamount in the west of the MPA rises to a height of almost 1km above the surrounding seabed. The seamount is thought to be significant to the health of Scotland's seas due to the effect it has on the movement of underwater currents, which bring a good supply of food to the area. The resulting rich diversity supports many fish species, which in turn attract larger marine animals, such as sharks and whales.

Further Information

Further information on Nature Conservation MPAs, the wider network and protected areas management is available at www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork

For Nature Conservation MPA site documents and more information about the fascinating range of marine life found in Scotland's seas, please visit

www.jncc.defra.gov.uk/scottishmpas - for offshore waters

www.snh.gov.uk/mpas - for territorial waters



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Orange roughy are a deep water fish that can live to be over 100 years old

