

Background to JNCC's formal conservation advice for offshore Marine Conservation Zones

March 2025



jncc.gov.uk

What the conservation advice package includes

The information provided in this document offers background information on JNCC's formal conservation advice for offshore Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs).

This document forms part of JNCC's formal conservation advice packages for offshore MCZs and must be read in conjunction with:

- The **Conservation Objectives and Management Advice** document - setting out the broad ecological aims for the MCZ and JNCC's advice on;
 - protected feature condition;
 - conservation benefits that the MCZ can provide if managed effectively; and
 - conservation measures that JNCC consider are required to support achievement of the conservation objectives stated for the protected features of the MCZ.
- The **Supplementary Advice on Conservation Objectives (SACO)** - providing more detailed and site-specific information on the conservation objectives of the protected features of the MCZ; and
- The **Advice on Operations** - providing information on those human activities that, if taking place within or near to the MCZ, could impact it and hinder the achievement of the conservation objectives stated for the MCZ.

Where to find the most up-to-date conservation advice package for a MCZ

The most up-to-date conservation advice for a MCZ can be downloaded from the conservation advice section in the Site Information Centre (SIC) accessible on JNCC's [Offshore Marine Protected Areas webpage](#). By clicking on the MCZ site name in the table provided, you will be directed to the SIC and then by clicking on conservation advice listed in the contents table, you will be directed to the conservation advice available for the MCZ.

JNCC's role in providing conservation advice

Under Section 127 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, JNCC may give advice and guidance as to:

- the matters which are capable of damaging or otherwise affecting any protected feature or features;
- the matters which are capable of affecting any ecological or geomorphological process on which the conservation of any protected feature or features is (wholly or in part) dependent;
- how any conservation objectives stated for a MCZ may be furthered, or how the achievement of any such objectives may be hindered.

The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 provides the legal mechanism to help ensure clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas by putting in place a system for improved management and protection of the marine and coastal environment.

The conservation advice package supports JNCC's delivery of the obligations under Section 127 listed above and specifically individuals who are:

- proposing to undertake an activity, within or near a MCZ, that may affect protected feature or features within it;
- preparing or providing information for an impact assessment; and
- considering the need to implement measures to manage human activities within or near a MCZ.

How the advice package has been prepared

Conservation advice packages for MCZs have been developed using the best available evidence and expert interpretation in accordance with [JNCC's Evidence Quality Assurance Policy](#), following best practice as set out in [Defra's 2012 Habitats Directive Implementation Review recommendations](#) and the [European Commission's 2012 Guidance Note on setting conservation objectives](#).

When to refer to the site's conservation advice package

You must refer to the conservation advice package for a MCZ if you are:

- intending to carry out any licensed activity in or near a MCZ and need to find out how to operate within the law;
- an authority providing advice on specific proposals;
- an authority responsible for putting management measures in place.

You may also find it useful to refer to the conservation advice package for a MCZ if you are intending to carry out an activity in or near a MCZ that does not require a license.

Using the advice package

It is important that you use the most up-to-date conservation advice. Our scientific understanding of the ecology and status of a MCZ will change over time and the advice will be periodically updated as required to reflect this. Updates to the conservation advice package for a MCZ will be delivered on the conservation advice section in the Site Information Centre, accessible via JNCC's [Offshore MPAs webpage](#). Users must always refer to JNCC's website for the most up-to-date version of advice, rather than using previously downloaded (or printed) advice.

The advice package supports you in deciding whether a planned activity will have an impact on the protected feature or features of a MCZ and in doing so, hinder the achievement of its stated conservation objectives. To assess if your activity, or one which you regulate, is going to impact a MCZ, either in isolation or in combination, you should:

- consider the evidence shown in the map for the MCZ on [JNCC's Interactive Marine Protected Area Mapper](#) to help you determine if the planned activity or other ongoing activities are located in or near the site. You can also access the map for a MCZ through the relevant SIC;
- use the advice on operations to determine which pressures activities can cause that could harm a MCZ's protected feature or features and hinder the achievement of the conservation objectives;
- screen those aspects into or out of an assessment;

- use the conservation objectives and SACO to assess the impacts of the planned activity on the important attributes of the protected features;
- refer to the conservation benefits to understand how any impacts may affect the site's ability to deliver wider benefits to the marine environment to understand what measures JNCC consider are required to support achievement of a MCZ's conservation objectives; and
- bring this together in an assessment of the overall impacts on the site.

Queries or site-specific information

Should you have any queries regarding the conservation advice for a MCZ, know of any information pertinent to a MCZ that JNCC should be aware of, please contact JNCC at OffshoreMPAs@jncc.gov.uk or if you have queries about what evidence is available for a MCZ, please contact JNCC at OIA@jncc.gov.uk.