Blackwater, Crouch, Roach and Colne MCZ

Essex Coastal Forum

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London Gateway

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Marine Protected Areas Overview

The UK is establishing a network of Marine Protected Areas. These include sites designated at both a national and international level under either national or European legislation.

European – Habitat Regulations or Bird Directive (N2K Sites)

- Special Protection Area's (SPAs)
- Special Area's of Conservation (SACs)

National - Marine and Coastal Access Act (2010)

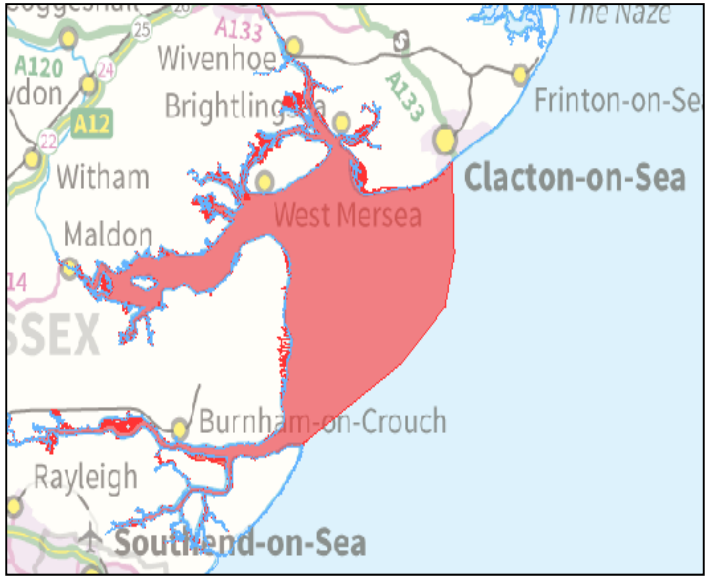
- Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs)

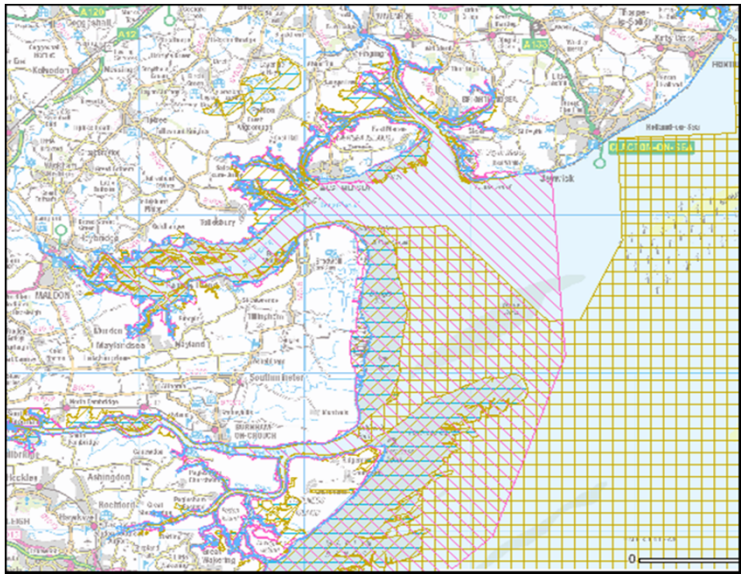
Blackwater, Crouch, Roach and Colne MCZ

- Site designated in 2013 under the Blackwater, Crouch, Roach and Colne Estuaries Marine Conservation Zone Designation Order.

- It's the largest inshore MCZ covering an area of 284 km2.

- This is an especially complex site with many different overlying designations.





Blackwater, Crouch, Roach and Colne MCZ: Protected Features

- **Intertidal Mixed Sediment** – Maintain at favourable condition
- **Clacton Cliffs and Foreshore** – Maintain at favourable condition
- **Native Oyster (*Ostrea edulis)*** – Recover to favourable condition
- **Native Oyster (*Ostrea edulis*) Beds** – Recover to favourable condition

Blackwater, Crouch, Roach and Colne MCZ: What is Favourable Condition?

Native oyster beds and intertidal mixed sediments (as a habitat) :

'Its extent is stable or increasing and its structure, functions, quality, composition of characteristic communities are such to ensure it's healthy and not deteriorating'.

Native oysters (as a species):

'The quality and quantity of its habitat and the composition of its population in terms of number, age and sex ratio are such to ensure the population is maintained in numbers which enable it to thrive'.

MPA Conservation Advice Packages

Why do we produce these packages:

1. Statutory responsibility to produce Regulation 35 Advice for SPAs & SACs
2. Ramsar Convention – UK policy to treat same as European sites
3. **Marine & Coastal Access Act (Section 127) – we must provide advice when asked**

What does it allow us and marine managers to do?

1. Informs pro-active management (e.g. fisheries/ recreational)
2. Provides a framework for assessing development (e.g. determining LSE, AAs for Habitat Regulation Assessments/MCZ assessments)
3. Identifies where there are evidence gaps and informs our monitoring programme

Conservation Advice: Why It Matters

1. Conservation Objectives & Supplementary Advice Tables define what condition we want protected features to achieve (i.e. defines NE's advice on 'favourable condition')

2. Where possible, it will communicate our understanding of current condition of the protected features

3. It identifies the pressures that activities cause that features are sensitive too

4. It identifies the evidence that we have, our confidence in it, and where there are gaps

Conservation Advice: Status of the Blackwater, Crouch, Roach and Colne MCZ Package

Natural England plan to publish their **draft package** in September 2015. This will include:

- Information on the features (presence and extent)
- The conservation objective of each feature
- The current condition of the feature
- Advice on operations – setting out pressures and activities which are likely to have a significant effect.

Once published, there will be a minimum of **20 days** 'informal dialogue' to check evidence used. The draft will be used a basis for informing management and casework responses as reflects the most up-to date evidence held.

The **final** conservation advice for this site in **December 2015**. Once the final package has been published, the advice becomes statutory.

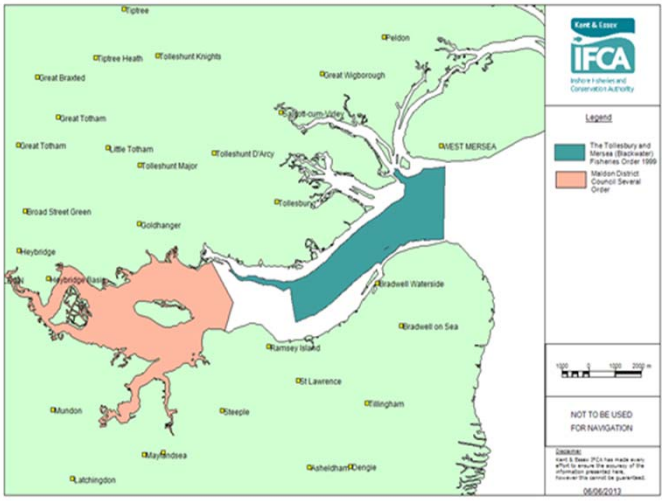
Conservation Advice: Native Oysters and their beds

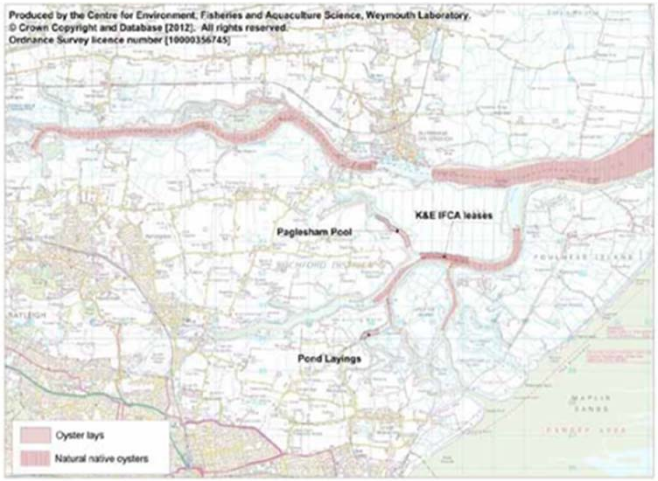
- Whilst private grounds are included in the MCZ, the draft conservation advice **does not** apply to the private grounds

- Oyster beds within private grounds are not representative of a “wild population”

- General management approach is to “Recover” the wild populations and as such there are certain management principles required which may not be compatible with the private grounds e.g. limits on harvesting

- Although the private grounds will not be covered directly by the conservation advice, there will be default protection of those grounds through advice we give on the wild populations e.g. water quality issues





Conservation Advice : Blackwater, Crouch, Roach and Colne MCZ Package

Clacton Cliffs and Foreshore

Clacton Cliffs and Foreshore is a geological feature in the south-eastern corner of the Tendring Plateau at Clacton-on-Sea. Its Pleistocene geology is internationally important for its notable stratigraphy (rock strata), Palaeolithic animal and plant fossils, and for providing an insight into the areas environmental past (Bridgland, 1994). The Clacton Channel Deposits, a curved channel cut into Palaeogene London Clay between Jaywick Sands in the west to the West Cliff in the east, are attributed to the pre-diversion Thames system (Bridgland, 1994; Bridgland et al., 1999). They are richly fossiliferous strata of Hoxnian age (Bridgland et al., 1999) with freshwater and estuarine flora and fauna. The deposits have yielded molluscan, mammalian, plant and pollen fossils with the recorded mammalian assemblage including beaver *(Castor fiber)*, lion *(Panthera leo)* and the straight-tusked elephant *(Palaeoloxodon antiquus),* which inform debates on our interglacial history. It provides evidence of early human activity with recorded occurrences of early Stone Age artefacts (Bridgland, 1994) including a wooden spear-tip, the oldest wooden artefact in Britain (Bridgland et al., 1999). The MCZ extends the protection afforded by the SSSI designation into the subtidal environment, to include exposures occurring at extreme low tides and the subtidal buried feature.

Attribute	Targets	Supporting and/or explanatory notes
Extent: extent of geological feature	Maintain the total extent of finite buried interests and coastal exposures.	There should be no measurable net reduction (excluding any trivial loss) in the extent of this feature. The MCZ boundary partially overlaps with the existing Clacton Cliffs and Foreshore Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) boundary, west of Clacton Pier, and extends approximately 8km into the marine environment. The majority of the feature is regarded as a finite buried interest, especially below mean low water into the marine environment. The extent has not been well documented owing to the difficulties of surveying a buried geological feature. Coastal exposures are known to occur at extreme low tides (Bridgland et al., 1999), with a record at Jaywick Sands (adjacent to the existing SSSI) where some exposure of Clacton Channel Deposits has been recorded previously (Balanced Seas, 2011). However these interests can be concealed by dynamic processes and may be buried by beach shingle. There therefore may be acceptable variations in extent of exposure through natural fluctuation. Quantified extent measurements for both finite buried interests and costal exposures are not available. This may be updated in the future to reflect any new information.

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