

Date: 22 November 2022
Our ref: 407829
Your ref: AXE-MCZ-003



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BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Sarah,

Formal advice to D&S IFCA: Axe Estuary MCZ: Shore-based activities – Estuarine Rocky Habitats

Thank you for the above assessment, received by email on 26 September 2022.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

In 2012, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) announced a revised approach to the management of commercial fisheries in European Marine Sites (EMS)¹. The revised approach was subsequently extended to ensure fishing activities in Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) are managed in accordance with the provisions of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.

Assessments have been made of the effects of the following fisheries activities in the Axe Estuary MCZ:

- **Shore-based activities (Handworking – crab tiling and digging with forks): Estuarine Rocky Habitats feature, ref. AXE-MCZ-003**

Natural England has considered the assessment prepared by D&S IFCA for the purposes of making an assessment consistent with the provisions of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. Please accept this letter as Natural England's formal advice on the assessment and the conclusions it makes. We are content that the best available and most up to date evidence has been used to carry out the assessment by D&S IFCA officers, to determine whether management of an activity is required to conserve site features, and thus to ensure the protection of the features, from direct and indirect impacts from the collection of marine fisheries resources.

It is Natural England's view that, through their assessments, D&S IFCA has appropriately identified that the above stated activities are not likely to hinder the conservation objectives of the feature of the MCZ. Minor comments on this assessment can be found in Annex 1.

¹ Defra revised approach: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/revised-approach-to-the-management-of-commercial-fisheries-in-european-marine-sites-overarching-policy-and-delivery>

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or require further information.

Yours sincerely,

Liz Bailey

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Appendix 1

Minor comments on MCZ Assessment in relation to Axe Estuary MCZ and Shore-based activities (Estuarine Rocky Habitats)

- Natural England welcomes Devon & Severn IFCA's consideration of a new Hand Working Permit Byelaw to manage the use of crab tiles, bait digging and other hand gathering types of fishing activity. We suggest that it may be useful to include seaweed harvesting within this and would be happy to advise on this if the byelaw is taken forward in the future.