

7.3 Bideford to Foreland Point MCZ

Officers' Recommendation

To maintain access for the use of demersal towed gear in the green area of the Bideford to Foreland Point MCZ, as shown on Figure 1

Background

At the B&PSC meeting on 15th August 2019 a decision was made to prohibit the use of demersal towed gear on the rock features of the Bideford to Foreland Point MCZ (red area in Figure 1). At the same meeting, Officers summarised [the MCZ Assessment](#) undertaken on the interaction of towed demersal gear on the sediment features of the site. Officers concluded, due to the low level of fishing activity (three vessels), the environmental conditions of wind, wave direction and Atlantic storms and the mobile sediments in this area of the site, that trawling is unlikely to have a significant impact on the sediment feature of the site. D&S IFCA Officers also concluded that scallop dredging did not occur within the site and therefore there is no significant risk to the conservation objectives. Natural England (NE)'s [Formal Advice](#) indicated agreement with this conclusion but highlighted that habitat data from an Environment Agency's sediment grab survey would provide more evidence on the subtidal sediment distribution, and together with IVMS fishing effort data, would help confirm that there is no significant impact on the achievement of the conservation objectives of the MCZ.

The B&PSC's decision, relating to the use of demersal towed mobile gear on other features of the Bideford to Foreland Point MCZ, was deferred as further data were awaited from habitat surveys undertaken in the MCZ by Environment Agency (EA) on behalf of Natural England (NE).

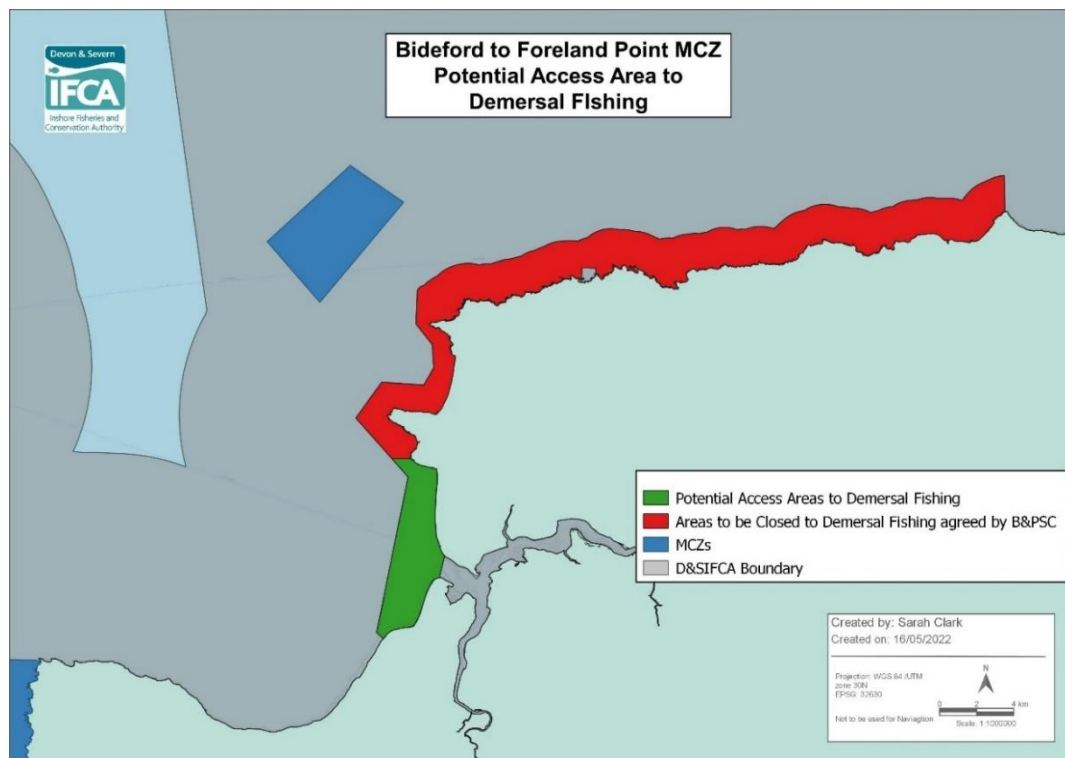


Figure 1 - Area showing areas to be closed to demersal towed fishing and the potential access areas.

The results of the EA survey have been reviewed by D&S IFCA Officers, and a [Revised MCZ Assessment](#) was undertaken. The new survey data did not change the broad scale habitat map for the area where the trawl fishery takes place. Conclusions of the revised MCZ Assessment remained the same as in the first MCZ Assessment that trawling is unlikely to have a significant impact on the sediment features of the site. NE provided further [Formal Advice](#) in 2022 on the revised assessment and once again agreed with D&S IFCA's conclusion.

Officers' Comments and Rationale for the Recommendations:

- *D&S IFCA has previously made the decision to allow access to demersal trawling, through its Mobile Fishing Permit conditions, in parts of MPAs where the assessment indicates a significant impact is unlikely.*
- *Fishing activity levels in the green area (Figure 1) are low.*
- *Due to environmental conditions and the mobile nature of the sand and sediments, the designated features are more resilient to trawling.*
- *D&S IFCA's MCZ assessment concluded no significant impact of demersal gear impact on the sand and sediment features of the site.*
- *No scallop dredging takes place in the site.*

Background Papers & Hyperlinks

[B&PSC Minutes 19th August 2019](#)

[MCZ Assessment Demersal Towed Gear V 1.0 2019](#)

[Natural England's Formal Advice July 2019](#)

[Revised MCZ Assessment V1.1 March 2022](#)

[Natural England's Further Formal Advice March 2022](#)