

Date: 25 May 2022
Our ref: 388354
Your ref: MP-MCZ-006 - Morte Platform MCZ



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BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Sarah,

RE: Marine Conservation Zone: Morte Platform MCZ UKMCZ0063 – Towed Demersal Gear (trawls and dredges)

Thank you for the above assessment, received by email on 5 April 2022.

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.

The effects of the following fisheries activities in **Morte Platform MCZ** have been reviewed:

- **Towed Demersal Gear (Trawls and Dredges)**

Natural England has considered the assessment prepared by Devon and Severn 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 to determine whether management of an activity is required to ensure the protection of site features from direct and indirect impacts from the collection of marine fisheries resources.

It is Natural England's view that through their assessments, Devon and Severn IFCA appear to have appropriately identified those activities that are likely to hinder the conservation objectives of the feature(s) of the MCZ

Natural England does have some comments relating to the Morte Platform MCZ assessment (Annex 1: comments on MCZ assessment) but this does not alter our views on the overall validity of the conclusions drawn.

We believe that Devon and Severn IFCA's ongoing commitment to monitoring this fishery, together with the application of the current thinking on Adaptive Risk Management, provides a robust mechanism for re-assessing any risk or harm to designated sites. This view is based on current knowledge of the impact of relevant fishing activities on site features.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further information.

Yours sincerely,

J. Boyle

Jay Boyle
Marine Lead Adviser

Annex 1: NE comments on MCZ Assessment for Morte Platform MCZ – (Towed Demersal Gear (Trawls and Dredges))

1. The assessment draws the conclusion of reviewing the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw to bring in the appropriate management. However, it is not clear what this management measure will look like. We have assumed that in the examples of Towed Gear vs Rock and Dredges vs Sediment, the appropriate management would be to prohibit these activities, but that is not explicitly stated. It would be useful to clarify what is meant by 'appropriate management' for each gear/feature interaction within the assessment.
 2. The assessment demonstrates that the activity within the Morte Platform is minimal. However, the Subtidal Coarse Sediment feature has a General Management Approach of Recover. If levels of activity over this feature were to increase, Natural England would need to reassess whether this interaction is hindering the conservation objective of the feature.
 3. The evidence shows that there is no scallop dredging occurring in the site, but there is evidence of demersal trawls (Figure 3). It would be useful to be clearer regarding the various levels of activity in the conclusion e.g., low levels of demersal trawls (vessels 1 & 2) and no dredging. Currently the assessment concludes both activities as being 'none'. Although the levels are very low, this should not be seen as no activity at all.
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