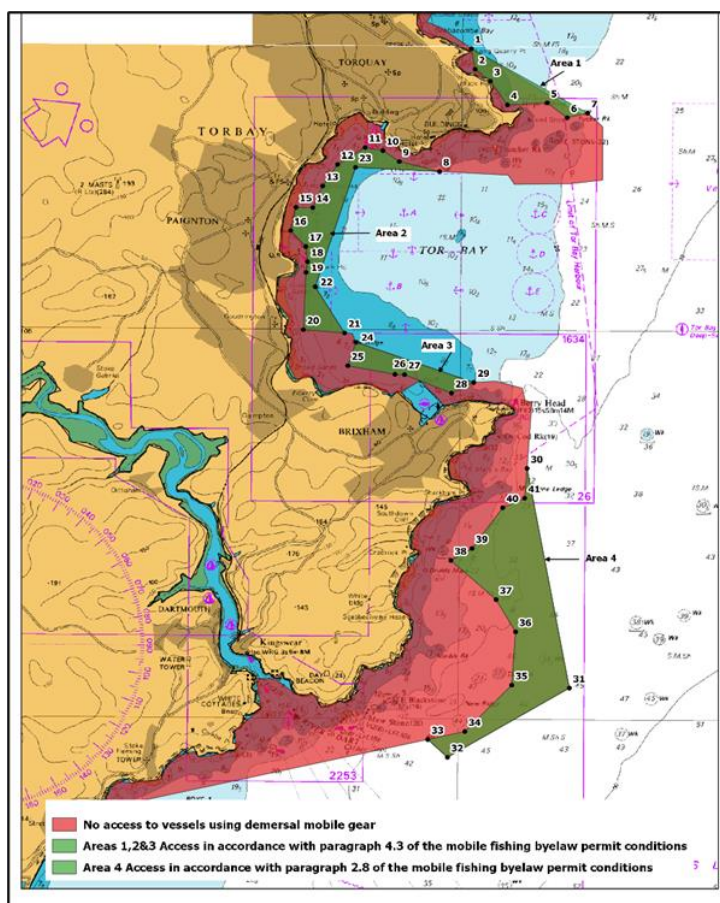


Torbay Marine Conservation Zone, Monitoring and Control Plan Review 2022: Towed (demersal) Trawl Gear on Subtidal Mud.



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Version control history			
Author	Date	Comment	Version
Lauren Parkhouse	30/12/2022	Initial Draft	0.1
LP	14/03/2023	QA by J Stewart & S. Clark. Report finalised.	1.0

Background of Monitoring and Control Plan

All IFCA's have responsibilities in relation to the management of fishing activities in Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ) as laid out in Sections 124 to 126 & 154 to 157 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. In order to document and determine whether management measures are required to achieve the conservation objectives of a MCZ, MCZ assessments are carried out for gear/feature interactions within a site.

Torbay MCZ has a number of qualifying features, including subtidal mud. This feature is the subject of this document, and the gear interaction is demersal trawling.

Version 1 of the MCZ assessment (2016) put forward the proposal to prohibit demersal trawling within the Torbay MCZ, much of which already had closures in place for the rock features and seagrass. After consultation, including an economic impact survey, it was concluded that part of the mud feature would continue to have access for demersal trawls for a limited time each year. There is access to part of the site from 1st April to 30th June each year to allow the inshore cuttlefish fishery to operate during the cuttlefish season. This is carried out in Area 2 of the access areas (see Annex 1).

The cuttlefish fishery is undertaken using otter trawls. There was a lack of literature on the impact of this method on the subtidal mud feature. A Before and After, Control and Impact Study (BACI) was carried out to try to address this evidence gap. The results suggested little detectable impact of the gear type. The [results of this study](#) fed into [Version 2](#) of the MCZ Assessment (2019), which concluded, with the temporal and spatial management measures in place, the activity would be unlikely to have a significant impact on the mud feature.

However, there was some uncertainty of the level of activity during the cuttle fishery, which led to a [Monitoring and Control Plan](#) (M&C Plan) being developed in 2019.

This report should be read in conjunction with [Version 2](#) of the MCZ Assessment, and the [M&C Plan](#).

A M&C Plan [baseline report](#) was compiled for the 2019 fishery using permit numbers and VMS data obtained from the MMO. Future yearly data going forward will be compared to this baseline. In 2019 there were 35 permit holders, and one vessel entered the area on one occasion for under 20 minutes.

M&C Plan Actions

1. Monitoring of Fishing Activity

The M&C Plan set out two actions to aid monitoring of the fishing activity at the site. The first action is to monitor the number of vessels, via the number of D&S IFCA Mobile Fishing Permits issued, which could potentially fish within the Torbay MCZ.

The second action is to monitor these vessels using Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) and Inshore VMS (iVMS). Monitoring was specified as including the number of vessels within the area in the open season, and the effort level of each of these vessels.

Permit numbers were established, and VMS and iVMS data were obtained from the MMO for the 2019 baseline document. In 2019 there were a total of 35 permit holders in the ports of Torbay that use trawls. Only one vessel entered the area being monitored on one occasion in 2019. More detail from the 2019 fishery can be read in the [baseline](#) report.

In 2022 there were 39 valid permit holders in the ports of Torbay which indicated that they use some form of trawl, up by 4 from the 2019 baseline. The maximum number of permits issued since monitoring was 43 in 2020. Of these 39 vessels, 21 are under 12m in length.

Although there are 39 vessels with the potential to trawl in the area, it should be noted that the vast majority would not, and instead fish further off the coast. To D&S IFCA Officers' knowledge few, if any, over 12m vessels operate in this area.

VMS data were obtained from the MMO for all demersal trawl vessels which entered the access area of the Torbay MCZ between 1st April and 30th June 2022, at speeds of 2 to 4 knots. During this time, two vessels entered the area (Figure 1). The vessels entered the area on one occasion each, Vessel 1 for a total of 6 minutes on the 05/04/2022, and Vessel 2 for just under 30 minutes on 19/04/2022. As shown in Figure 1, although Vessel 2 was in the site for just under 30 minutes, this was on the edge of the site.

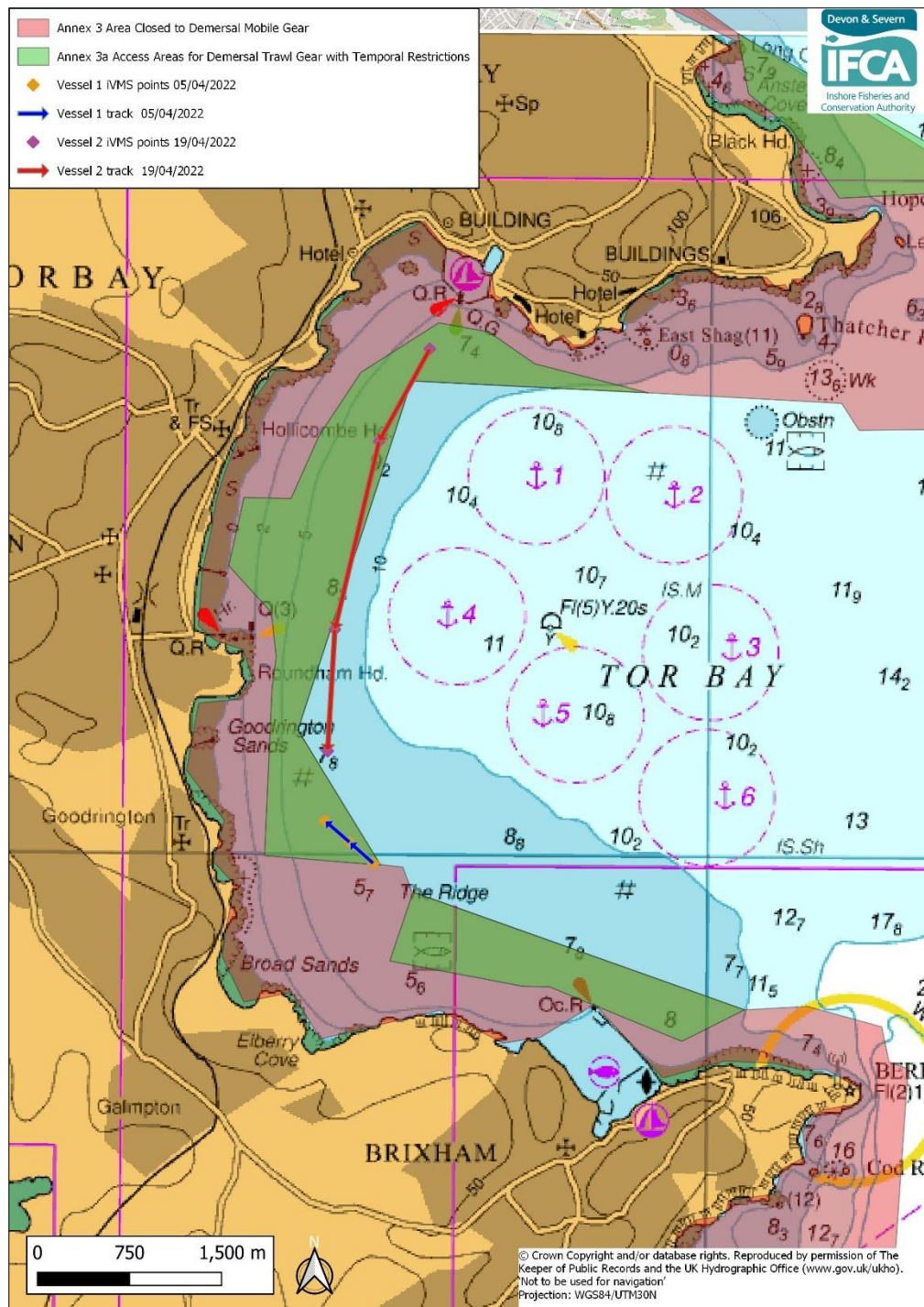


Figure 1 iVMS data within the open area between 1st April 2022 and 30th June 2022.

2. Changes to Access Areas

In 2022, D&S IFCA's Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee reviewed the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw and Permit Conditions and agreed to make the new Mobile Fishing Byelaw. As part of this review changes to Annex 3a of the permit conditions were agreed and consulted on. The changes will reduce the access area to demersal trawl gear in the Torbay MCZ to protect the full extent of seagrass in the Torre Abbey area. The finalised Byelaw together with its Permit Conditions will to be sent to the MMO for review in 2023, and then to Defra for sign off. It is expected that the remade Mobile Fishing Byelaw and Permit Conditions will be in place later in 2023, and that new Annex charts will be available for the 2023 review of the M&C Plan.

Summary

Due to the iVMS data indicating there was only two occasions when vessels entered the site, a review of the MCZ assessment is not appropriate at this time. The permit numbers and vessel activity will be reviewed again in 2023.

Annex 1- Access areas under the Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw

Annex 3a Tor Bay - Access area for vessels using demersal trawl gear in accordance with paragraphs 2.8 and 4.3 of the mobile fishing byelaw permit conditions

