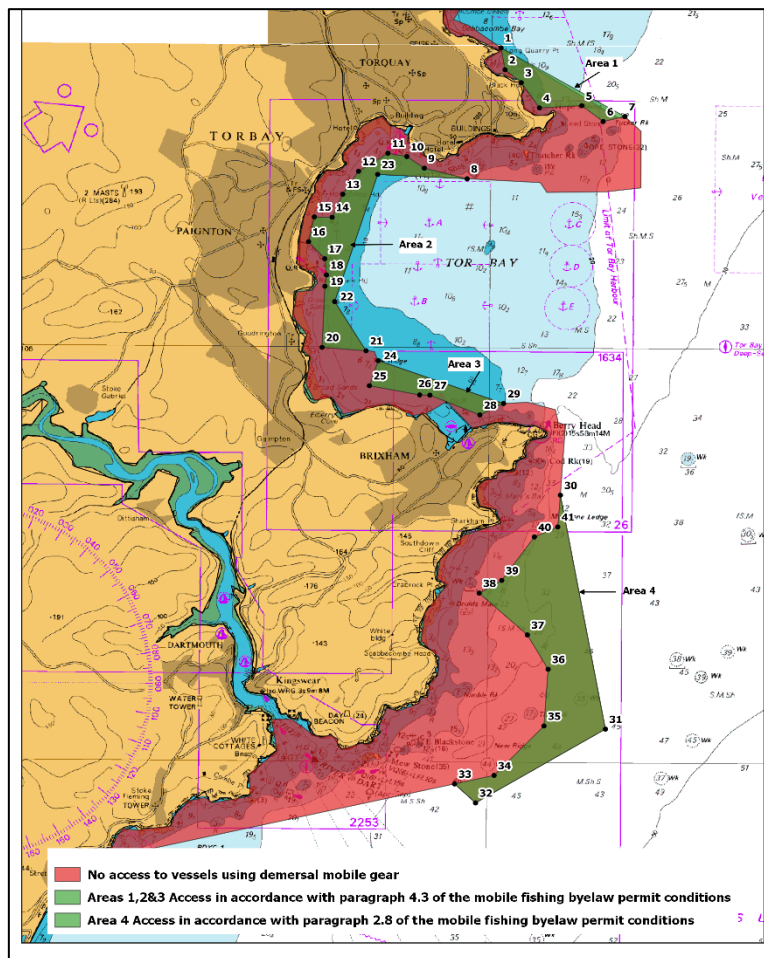


Torbay Marine Conservation Zone, Monitoring and Control Plan Baseline Document for 2019: Towed (demersal) Trawl Gear on Subtidal Mud.



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Version control history			
Author	Date	Comment	Version
Lauren Parkhouse	07/2020	Initial Draft	0.1
	25/08/2020	Amendments to initial draft by James Stewart	0.2
	13/03/2021	Review of v0.2 by Sarah Clark	0.3
	18/03/2021	JS: Finalised following addition of links to Natural England advice	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 uses otter trawling. 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. This M&C Plan was created in 2019.

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

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 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.

The number of permit holders that could potentially fish the area was established via the D&S IFCA Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw. In 2019 there were 35 permit holders in the ports of Torbay which indicated that they use some form of trawl; 20 of these vessels are under 12m in length. Although there are 35 vessels with the potential to trawl in this 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 12 m 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 2019, at speeds of 6 knots or under.

During this time, only one vessel entered the area on one occasion, for under 20 minutes (Figure 1). There was no other activity carried out in this area by demersal trawl vessels.

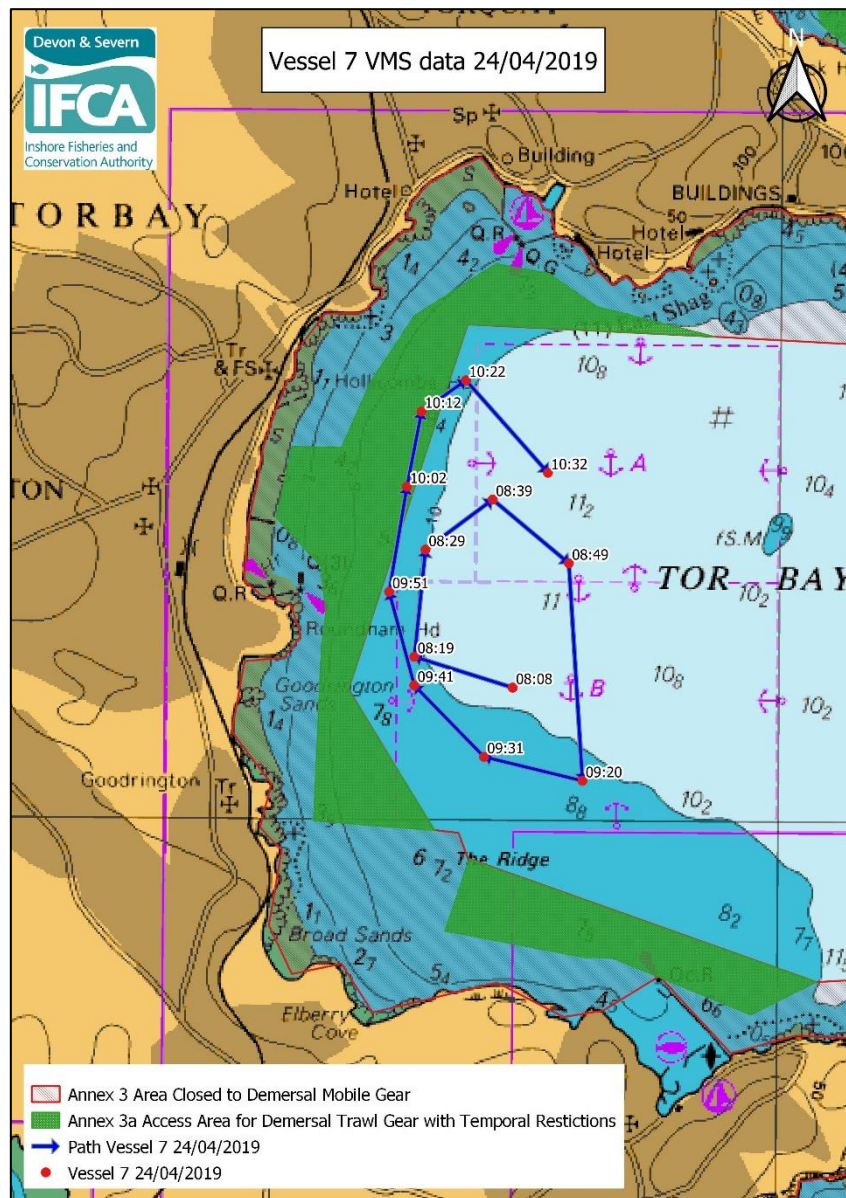


Figure 1 VMS data 24th April 2019

Summary

Due to the very low level of trawling activity indicated by the VMS data, a review of the MCZ assessment is not appropriate at this time. The permit numbers and vessel activity will be reviewed again in 2021.

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

