

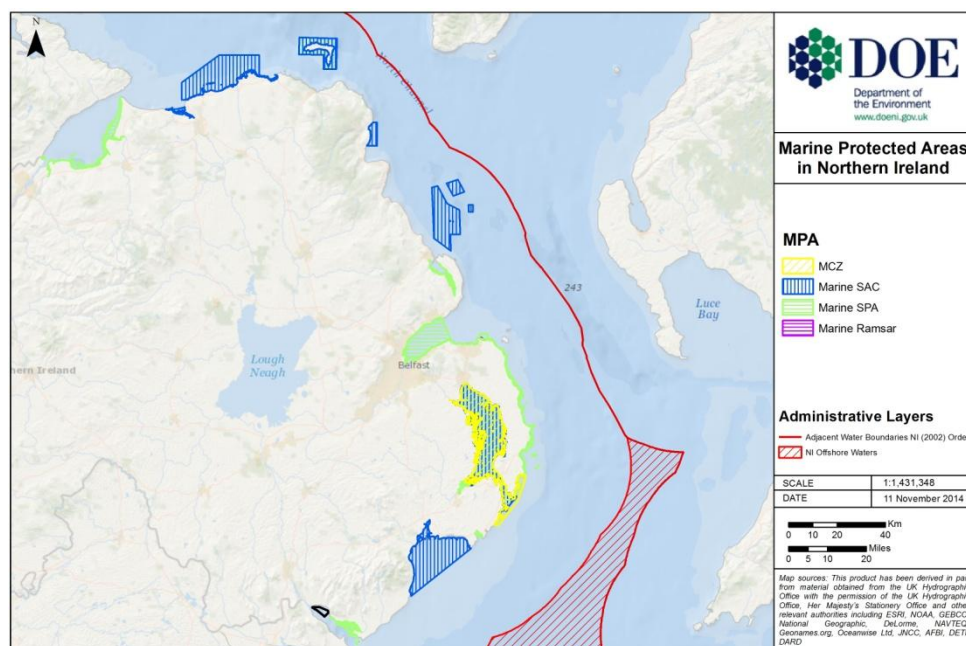
What are Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)?

A marine protected area is defined by the International Union for Conservation (IUCN)¹ as:

'Any area of the intertidal or subtidal terrain, together with its overlying water and associated flora, fauna, historical and cultural features, which has been reserved by law or other effective means to protect part or all of the enclosed environment.'

In Northern Ireland, MPAs consist of **Ramsar** sites, marine Special Areas of Conservation (**SACs**), Special Protection Areas (**SPAs**), Areas of Special Scientific Interest (**ASSI**), and Marine Conservation Zones (**MCZs**).

Together, these sites are Northern Ireland's contribution to the UK commitment of establishing an ecologically coherent network of MPAs.

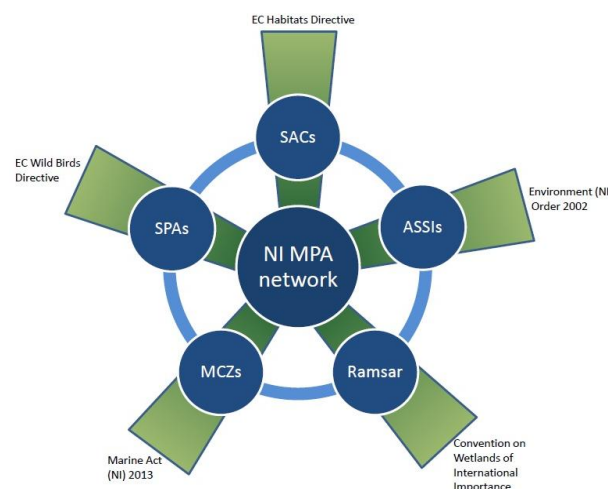


Northern Ireland's Marine Protected Area network

The diagram below outlines Northern Ireland's MPA network and the various legislative drivers.

What is a Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)?

The Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 provides the mechanism for the Department to establish a new type of MPA, called Marine Conservation Zone (**MCZ**), in the Northern Ireland Inshore Region. MCZs are designated to protect nationally important habitats, species and geological features, while fully taking into account any economic, cultural or social consequences of doing so.



What will an MCZ protect?

The Department has developed three lists of Priority Marine Features (PMF); these are habitats, species (low/limited mobility and highly mobile) and geological/geomorphological features important in our seas. These have been refined for Northern Ireland from existing national and international conservation lists. From these PMF lists we have identified the features which are being proposed for the designation of MCZs (pMCZ features) and these are shown in the following tables. Further information on this process can be obtained from the 'Justification Report for selection of pMCZ features' (www.doeni.gov.uk/marine-conservation-zones.htm).

pMCZ Habitats	Examples of Component (sub-scale) Habitats	Potential Locations
Deep sea bed	• Cold water coral reefs ²	• Rathlin
Low energy circalittoral (subtidal) rock	• Estuarine rocky habitats	• Strangford
Sublittoral (subtidal) biogenic reefs	• Horse Mussel (<i>Modiolus modiolus</i>) beds • Blue Mussel (<i>Mytilus edulis</i>) beds • Brittlestar beds	• Lough Foyle • Outer Ards • Strangford Lough
Sublittoral (subtidal) muds	• Mud habitats in deep water • Sea-pen and burrowing megafauna communities • Blue Mussel (<i>Mytilus edulis</i>) beds	• Carlingford Lough • Strangford Lough
Sublittoral (subtidal) sand	• Circalittoral sand and gravel communities • Tide-swept channels • Native oyster (<i>Ostrea edulis</i>) beds • Brittlestar beds	• Outer Ards • Rathlin • Strangford Lough
Sublittoral (subtidal) mixed sediments	• Brittlestar beds	• Belfast Lough • Outer Ards • Strangford Lough

pMCZ Limited/low mobility species	Potential Location
<i>Arctica islandica</i> (Ocean quahog)	• Belfast Lough
<i>Atrina fragilis</i> (Fan mussel) ²	• Rathlin

pMCZ Highly mobile species	Potential Location
<i>Dipturus batis</i> (Common skate)	• Rathlin • The Maidens
<i>Cephus grylle</i> (Black guillemot)	• Rathlin

pMCZ Geological/geomorphological feature	
Glacial process features ^{2,3}	Features indicating past change in relative sea level ³ (Rathlin)
Marine process features ^{2,3}	Geological process features ^{2,3}
Mass movement features ^{2,3}	Seaward extension features ^{2,4}



Sea-pen

Ocean quahog

Black guillemot



To designate MCZs the Department will be following 7 design principles as outlined by OSPAR⁵:

- Representativity
- Replication
- Adequacy
- Viability
- Connectivity
- Management
- Best available evidence

The UK target is to have a coherent network of well managed MPAs by 2016. However, if additional sites or features are discovered after 2016, an assessment will be undertaken to determine if it should be added to the network.

What is the process for selecting and designating an MCZ?

- Collation of robust scientific information on habitats, species and geological features (including locations and distributions) to identify potential Areas of Search and potential boundaries.
- Working closely with stakeholders, industry representatives and other governmental departments to gather and assess information on how the sea is used. This will be through a series of stakeholder workshops and bilateral meetings.
- Production of Socio-Economic Impact Assessments for each proposed MCZ to determine the estimated social, economic and environmental costs and benefits of designation.
- Development of management plans, where necessary, based on conservation objectives for the proposed features.
- Public consultation on all pMCZs.

Process update

Strangford Lough was automatically designated as Northern Ireland's first Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) under the introduction of the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013.

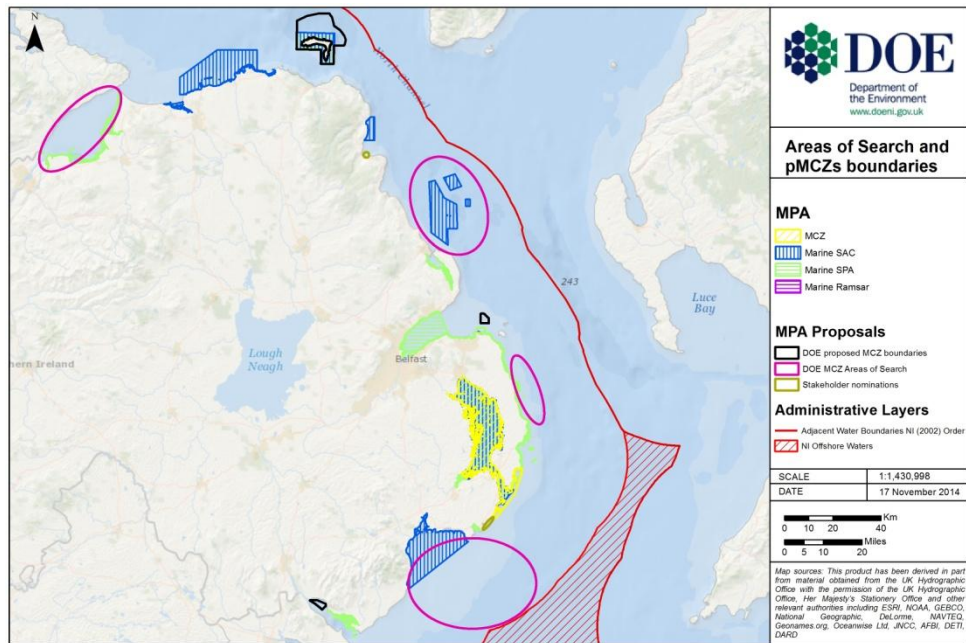
DOE has identified areas of search selecting the best location for the PMFs outside of the current MPA network. Based on the best available evidence and the identification of pMCZs features from PMFs lists, the Department has proposed the following MCZ boundaries and remaining areas of search:

DOE pMCZ	DOE Areas of Search
Rathlin	Lough Foyle
Outer Belfast Lough	The Maidens
Carlingford Lough	Outer Ards
	Dundrum Bay

Third party nominations in progress include:

Stakeholders pMCZ	pMCZ Feature
Ardglass	Features indicating past change in relative sea level
Red Bay	Seagrass

Whilst it is our intention to establish an ecologically coherent network of MPAs by December 2016, we acknowledge that sites such as Lough Foyle will be unlikely to be designated by that date due to jurisdictional issues. Dundrum Bay mud MCZ is also delayed due to full socioeconomic assessment of mud MCZ in the west Irish Sea. The Outer Ards Area of Search is linked to the Strangford Lough biogenic reef restoration plan. Ardglass Gullies will be added to the Strangford Lough MCZ feature's list.



Further details on the process used to designate MCZs can be obtained from the 'Guidance on selection and designation of Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) in the Northern Ireland Inshore Region' produced by the Department. Please email MarineDivision.InfoRequests@doeni.gov.uk for more information on how you can get involved.

www.doeni.gov.uk/marine-conservation-zones.htm
www.doeni.gov.uk/marine_protected_areas.htm

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References:

- ¹ 'Marine protected areas, why have them?'. IUCN. 2010-02-01
- ² No sites for the location of this feature have yet been determined
- ³ Adopted from 'The Marine Conservation Zone Project: Ecological Network Guidance' JNCC and Natural England. 2010
- ⁴ Adopted from 'Marine Protected Areas in Scotland's Seas: Guidelines on the selection of MPAs and development of the MPA network' Marine Scotland, Scottish Government, SNH and JNCC. 2011
- ⁵ 'Guidance on developing an ecologically coherent network of OSPAR marine protected areas' OSPAR Commission Report 2006-03

Image credits:

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MARINE CONSERVATION ZONES
IN THE NORTHERN IRELAND
INSHORE REGION

'Clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas'

The shared UK Administration's vision for the marine environment

With this new type of Marine Protected Area we want to achieve maximum ecological benefit while minimising social and economic costs

