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Protection for Wildlife

Ramsey Marine Nature Reserve

Ramsey's underwater world is teeming with vibrant wildlife

Plumrose anemones growing on Queen's pier



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The Isle of Man's first Marine Nature Reserve

Designated in October 2011, Ramsey Marine Nature Reserve is the Isle of Man's first Marine Nature Reserve. It was established by the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture (DEFA) after discussions with the fishing industry and extensive public consultation. It is also part of the wider European network of Marine Protected Areas

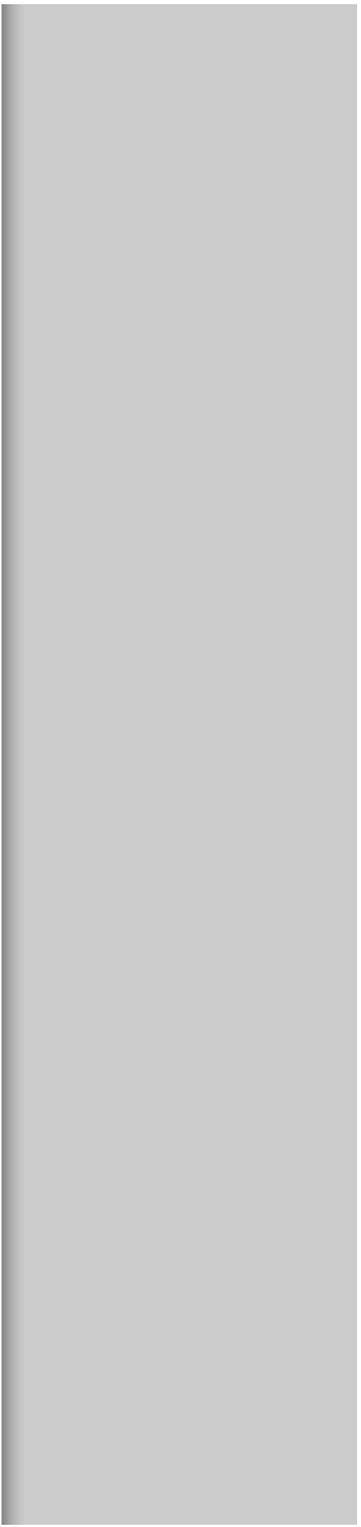
(MPAs), overseen by the OSPAR Commission.

Protection for Habitats and species and Sustainable Fishing

This area was selected to support sustainable fishing practices and to afford greater protection to three primary habitats considered priorities for conservation under International Conventions: horse mussel reefs, maerl beds and eelgrass meadows.

These habitats are in need of protection because they are some of the most diverse and productive ecosystems in the world. Each of these habitats provides numerous ecosystem services, such as food and shelter for a wide range of wildlife, particularly for juvenile fish species and scallops. However, they are also very slow growing and very sensitive to being damaged by human activities, such as dredging.

The Reserve covers a total area of 94.5km², of which around half is highly protected. Each of the highly protected zones have been established to protect the specific habitats of conservation importance. The shore up to the high water mark is included in the Reserve.





Name of Zone	Permitted	Not Permitted
All zones	Boating, diving, swimming, snorkelling, kayaking, rock pooling and a wide range of other activities.	Netting, long-lining, aggregate extraction, dredging, dumping of dredged material, littering, construction (unless licensed by DEFA).
Conservation zone	Potting, angling and bait collection.	Trawling, dredging, other extraction methods for king and queen scallops.
Horse Mussel Zone	Angling and bait collection.	Potting, trawling, dredging, other extraction methods for king and queen scallops.
Eelgrass Zone	Taking razorshells and lugworms is permitted from 1st October to 31st March in the intertidal only. Keep pots are permitted.	Potting, trawling, dredging, angling, any other extraction method for living resources. Extraction of lugworms and razorshells is prohibited from 1st April until 30th September.
Rocky Coast Zone	Potting, angling and bait collection.	Trawling, dredging, and other extraction methods for king and queen scallops.
Fisheries Zone	Only trawling, dredging and diving for king scallops and queen scallops that has been specifically licensed by DEFA in conjunction with the Manx Fish Producers' Organisation.	Trawling, dredging and diving for king scallops and queen scallops, unless specifically licensed by DEFA in conjunction with the Manx Fish Producers Organisation.

Conservation Zone



This zone protects maerl (*Lithothamnion corallioides*) beds, kelp forests and a range of other habitats. Kelp forests provide shelter, a surface to settle on and a food source for many species. Maerl is the habitat formed by several species of free-living coralline red algae that form small hard pink nodules that link together and form beds. It is fragile and slow growing (growing less than 1 mm per year), and needs protection from mobile fishing gear such as trawls and dredges. Maerl habitats are incredibly diverse, with hundreds of species of animals living in the matrix of nodules and is an important nursery ground for queen scallops, cod and other species.

Horse Mussel Zone



Horse mussels (*Modiolus modiolus*) are similar to the blue mussels, but are much larger, between 10-20 cm in length, and can be found at depths of over 40m. Horse mussels can form large reefs or mounds, from living and dead individuals, which stabilise the mobile sediments. They use strong byssus threads to attach themselves to rocks and each other. They create habitats for many species, such as soft corals, crabs, and brittle stars, increasing biodiversity. Horse mussel reefs are known to be an important nursery areas for many species, including whelks which are an important fishery species. Horse mussels are vulnerable to mobile fishing gear and other impacts so the zone is protected from any potting, trawling, or dredging.

Eelgrass Zone



Eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) (also known as seagrass) is a marine flowering plant, which unlike seaweeds has a full root system and is more closely related to land plants than to seaweeds. The plants stabilise the soft sediments and provide shelter and nursery grounds for many species of fish, shellfish and crustaceans, many of which are commercially important. Eelgrass is particularly susceptible to human activities, so this zone has the greatest protection and is a no-take zone for part of the year. No fishing or other removal of marine life is permitted in this area, except collection of lugworm and razorshells from 1st October – 31st March.

Rocky Coast Zone



This zone protects the important kelp forests and eelgrass meadows that grow along this rocky shoreline. This zone is a complex habitat, made up of boulders, crevices, steep cliffs, rock pools and platforms that provide differing levels of shelter for many species of animals and plants. Common species include plumose anemones, velvet swimming crabs, wrasse and urchins. This area is also important for seabirds, such as guillemots and puffins. Grey seals can be seen around this coast and use the inaccessible beaches at the bottom of the cliffs for pupping. The zone is protected from trawling and dredging for king scallops and queen scallops.

Fisheries Management Zone



This area is co-managed by the Manx Fish Producers Organisation (MFPO) and the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture (DEFA) and makes up half of the Marine Nature Reserve. The area is scientifically surveyed annually and a sustainable quota of king scallops (*Pecten maximus*) and queen scallops (*Aequipecten opercularis*) is agreed between the Manx Fish Producers Organisation and DEFA. The majority of the zone is left unfished and acts to protect habitats and species as part of the Marine Nature Reserve. This careful management produces a valuable, high quality seafood product, promotes the sustainability of surrounding fisheries and protects the environment.

The fishing that is carried out in the area is very tightly restricted and limited to a few days in each year. Initially the Bay was surveyed each year by DEFA to inform management, then joint surveys were carried out.

Last year for the first time, the Manx Fish Producers' Organisation carried out the survey of the area to inform the December fishery and the 2017 surveys are underway using new electronic callipers to allow them to do a lot more of the work themselves.

Visit Ramsey Marine Nature Reserve

Whilst in Ramsey why not visit one of the nine information boards that can be seen between the Point of Ayre lighthouse car park and Maughold Lighthouse car park. Each board gives you interesting information about Ramsey Marine Nature Reserve, including important information on what

activities are allowed in which areas.

The Information Boards can be found along Ramsey Bay at:

- Point of Ayre car park
- Old Grand Island car park on north promenade
- Mooragh promenade
- The swimming pool

- The Bowling Alley
- Queen's pier
- Port Lewaigue
- Maughold cliffs and Brooghs
- Maughold lighthouse car park



Benefits so far

Management of Ramsey MNR has taken an innovative approach in working closely with the fishing industry. Since its designation, this approach has been positive, both in terms of conservation and in terms of sustainable fisheries. For example, the seagrass in the Eelgrass Zone is extending further beyond the zone limit and initial results from surveys within the Fisheries Management Zone suggest there is an increase in abundance and size of the scallops.

An additional benefit of this strict management is the majority of the Fisheries Management Zone has not been fished since the area was designated in 2011, acting almost like another protected area, enabling some areas within the Fisheries Management Zone to start to recover. For example, small patches of maerl and horse mussels have been identified within this zone, along with a large brittle star bed. The benefits already seen in Ramsey Bay prove that the Marine Nature Reserve is working, both for the fishing industry and the marine environment, but there is still a long way to go.





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