



Wildlife Trusts Wales

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Marine Conservation Zones



The Marine Act presents Welsh Government with the opportunity to introduce new MPAs to protect nationally important features.

Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) are new sites introduced under the Marine Act which aim to protect nationally important habitats and wildlife. In 2012, the Welsh Government opted to only consider the introduction of a small number of highly protected Marine Conservation Zones – within these sites no extraction of resources nor deposition would have been allowed and all other damaging or disturbing activities will be banned. However, Wildlife Trusts Wales believes that normal well managed MCZs are needed to help Wales achieve a Good Environmental Status (GES) required under the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). A GES is the environmental status of marine waters where these provide ecologically diverse and dynamic oceans and seas which are clean, healthy and productive within their intrinsic conditions, and the use of the marine environment is at a level that is sustainable, thus safeguarding the potential for usage and activities by current and future generations.

MCZs would complement the existing MPA network in Wales, creating a series of marine wildlife havens around Wales. In order to decide where new MCZs should be located, ecological, social and economic criteria will be applied to Welsh inshore waters. In December 2014, the Welsh Government enacted Part V of the Marine Act and designated Skomer as Wales' first MCZ. This also enables the Welsh Government to designate further MCZs in Welsh waters.

Currently there are 28 MCZs in the UK located in England and Secretary of State Waters (waters outside countries e.g. Wales territorial waters but inside the wider UK marine area) that were designated through tranche 1 of the DEFRA MCZ process. 23 MCZs are currently being consulted on in tranche 2. This includes three offshore waters (between 6 and 12 nautical miles) in Wales.

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