

# Consultation on Marine Protected Areas

News story

Formal consultation on four of England's 40 offshore Marine Protected Areas ends on 28 March.



There is still time to put forward your views on the draft assessments and management measures proposed for:

- Dogger Bank Special Area of Conservation
- Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge Special Area of Conservation
- South Dorset Marine Conservation Zone
- The Canyons Marine Conservation Zone

The Government has ambitious plans for a 'Blue Belt' of marine protected areas around the UK's seas. Following the UK's exit from the European Union, new powers to implement evidenced-based marine management measures will help ensure our seas are managed sustainably, protecting both the long-term future of the fishing industry and our precious wildlife and habitats.

Any new measures for the first four MPAs will be in place this year. The intention for the next phase is to assess all remaining MPAs and apply the appropriate measures within three years. This will be done in consultation with the fishing industry and other stakeholders. Scientific evidence and advice will support the assessments.

Marine Protected Areas are designated areas of the ocean which include habitats and species essential for healthy, functioning marine eco-systems. The purpose of a Marine Protected Area is to protect and enhance rare, threatened and representative habitats and species from damage caused by activities that take place within it.

These first four Marine Protected Areas were chosen as a priority to help protect their vibrant and productive undersea environments, and include the Dogger Bank Special Area of Conservation, which has the largest shallow sandbank in British waters and supports commercial fish species such as cod and plaice, as well as sand eels that provide an important food source for

kittiwakes, puffins and porpoises.

The Dorset Coast Forum will be hosting a virtual engagement event on Thursday, 25 March, to share information about our work in Studland Bay Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) and to discuss next steps and proposed management measures.

The area is designated for its sensitive seabed features including seahorses and seagrass meadows and is also popular among recreational users.

[Find out more](#) on attending the session and how to have your say.

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