

Research and analysis: Approaches to maintaining knowledge on location of ephemeral features

Requirement R083

Requirement detail

An important component of managing impact is clarifying the presence of sensitive features. Traditional methods of determining the location of features provide a snapshot of distribution. For the majority of features, this snapshot remains representative for extended time periods.

Some features however, are characterised by high variability with spatially patchy distributions, temporal instability and/or large natural fluctuations in local populations such that they may be present at a location only for a short period of time (ephemeral). Examples include Sabellaria reef, blue mussel beds, pink sea fan and mobile habitats like sandbanks.

At present the MMO receives advice from statutory nature conservation bodies on a case by case basis. MMO can also receive or require information from developers in the form of an environmental statement or survey results if a need can be identified in advance. This generally requires reactive responses from applicants and managers.

High variability makes attribution of impacts challenging. The MMO therefore seeks approaches to provide and maintain up to date knowledge of the distribution of mobile and ephemeral protected features.