

**From:** Beth Stoker  
**Sent:** 07 March 2011 08:45  
**To:** George, Louise (ESH - ECM)  
**Cc:** Jon Davies  
**Subject:** RE: HPMCZ Site Selection Guidance

Dear Louise,

Apologies for not replying on Friday, please find responses to your specific questions below – I am happy to discuss these with you.

Many thanks

Beth

**Bethany Stoker**  
MPA Adviser  
Marine Protected Areas Team  
Joint Nature Conservation Committee

- Consider and confirm agreement to the amended guidance. Where you are unable to agree to the amendments please provide a full explanation.

JNCC would like to make a suggested amendment to paragraph 33 which refers to the UK MPA Policy Board – this group is correctly titled the UK MPA Policy Group. Please can it be clarified as to whether engagement with this group, and more widely with other UK administrations will only be sought during Stage 9 of the process? JNCC would strongly recommend that engagement with this group and the other UK administrations is sought throughout the process from Stage 1 to Stage 9. As such we suggest that paragraph 33 and 34 are moved to a separately headed section as currently they fall only under Stage 9.

Within these paragraphs it may also be relevant to refer to the MPA Technical Group (nee Marine Natura Project Group), which is the inter-agency forum to discuss MPA issues.

We would also advise that reference should be made to the regional MCZ projects bordering Welsh waters (Finding Sanctuary and Irish Sea Conservation Zones) as although the timelines between these projects and the Welsh MCZ Project are now out of synch, the outputs of these projects should be considered by the TAG as part of their discussions to ensure Wales can contribute to forming a coherent network in the UK. On this note – I would be very happy to present the third iteration outputs from Finding Sanctuary and the Irish Sea Conservation Zones at the upcoming TAG meeting.

- Broadscale Habitats (paragraph 42 of the Guidance) - note that it has come to light that, as a result to the changes made to the list of broadscale habitats in developing the site selection guidance, subtidal macrophyte habitat (Subtidal plant-dominated sediment) has been lost from the list. The TAG is asked to consider whether this habitat should be reinstated to the list.

Yes – JNCC would recommend that this habitat is reinstated to the list, unless there is a clear justification for its removal.

- Site Size (paragraph 46 of the Guidance) - the guidelines for site size remains unclear and so the TAG is asked to reconsider and propose a redraft of the text. The underlying principle is that the size of a potential site is linked to what is appropriate to ensure the viability of the site. There is no stipulation for minimum site size (nor maximum site size) but instead the emphasis is on what is right and appropriate to ensure the viability of the site in question.

JNCC strongly support the principle that site size is linked to the features within the site, and that site size should consider the viability of those features. As such, we are concerned by the reference to a minimum site size of 5km<sup>2</sup> which does not account for the features within a site. Moreover, research conducted for development of the Ecological Network Guidance suggested a minimum site size of 25km<sup>2</sup> was appropriate

(<http://naturalengland.etraderstores.com/NaturalEnglandShop/NECR037>). However, we recognise that in some instances smaller sites will be viable. The Science Advisory Panel have recently provided additional advice to the regional MCZ projects on this topic, and I have attached their advice to this email.

The Ecological Network Guidance discusses the size of sites in Chapter 4.5 Viability, and Chapter 6.3 MCZ Boundaries. I have included the relevant guidelines below, but more detail can be found in the full document.

### **Viability**

1. MCZs for broad-scale habitats should have a minimum diameter of 5 km with the average size being between 10 and 20 km in diameter.
2. Patches of FOCI within MCZs should have a minimum diameter as specified in Table 7 and Table 8 (please refer to ENG). Where features occur in patches smaller than the minimum diameter, the whole patch or area of combined patches should be protected.

### **MCZ boundaries**

1. MCZ boundaries should follow feature extent (where appropriate) whilst:
  - Using a minimum number of straight lines;
  - Ensuring as compact a shape as possible;
  - Incorporating a margin (where appropriate) to ensure protection of features.
2. Where a feature is present in a number of separate but nearby locations, effort should be made to include all discrete occurrences within site boundaries.

3. For spatially dynamic habitats, boundaries should, where possible, encompass predicted changes in feature distribution to ensure their ongoing protection within MCZs.
  4. MCZs for species should be drawn around areas of regular/predictable species concentration, using the best available data. Where there is a clear functional link between the specific habitats and species distribution, habitats can be used as a basis for site delineation
- Note WAG's response to the 'other issues' that arose in response to the period of public comment.

Noted.