

Pembrokeshire Marine Special Area of Conservation Summary Management Scheme

For public information



Pembrokeshire Marine SAC
Relevant Authorities Group



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For further information contact the SAC Officer:
c/o Milford Haven Port Authority,
Gorsewood Drive, Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire, SA73 3ER.
Tel: 01646 696108
sacofficer@pembrokeshiremarinesac.org.uk
www.PembrokeshireMarineSAC.org.uk

Produced by Sue Burton
on behalf of the Relevant
Authorities Group for the SAC,
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Milford Haven Port Authority



Pari Canoldiaethal
Silloedd Pembrokeshire
Pembrokeshire Coast
National Park



Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru
Countryside Council for Wales



Arianthau'r
Amgylchedd Cymru
Environment
Agency Wales



Dŵr Cymru
WELSH WATER



Trinity House



Photography: Blaise Bullimore,
Sue Burton, Rohan Holt, David Jones,
Tom Luddington, Pembrokeshire Coastal
Forum, Pembrokeshire County Council,
Mark Richards - Aurora Imaging,
Skomer MNR (CCW)
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What is the management scheme and why is it needed?



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part of local socio-economics for future generations. The consequent aim of the management scheme, agreed by the relevant authorities for the site, is:

“To secure and maintain the favourable conservation status of the Pembrokeshire Marine Special Area of Conservation by ensuring that human activities co-exist in harmony with the habitats and species of the site.”

Specifically, the management scheme has been developed to:

- Improve existing management and better co-ordinate work between management bodies
- Explore the major types of activities and developments likely to affect the conservation features
- Clarify where statutory responsibilities lie for different aspects of the site
- Identify where further information is needed and / or action is required to manage activities to minimise their impact in consultation with local interests
- Establish a programme to monitor both the wildlife and the activities occurring within the site
- Raise awareness about the site



The Pembrokeshire Marine Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is part of a network of conservation areas across Europe (the Natura 2000 network). These European sites have been designated under the Habitats Directive. The designation brings with it statutory responsibilities for public bodies to safeguard the nature conservation interests of the site. The UK Government needs to ensure that the requirements of the Habitats Directive are met and that suitable site management is delivered. This management scheme is a collective attempt by the relevant authorities for this site to fulfil their statutory obligations in relation to the SAC. Failure to adequately protect site features risks European Commission legal action against the UK Government.

Although the aim of the designation is to protect the internationally important features of the marine environment, this does not mean that we cannot continue to use and enjoy the area's natural resources. If properly managed, people should be able to benefit from the site without compromising its incredibly rich and varied marine life.

The vision for the Pembrokeshire Marine Special Area of Conservation is one of a quality marine environment, where the habitats and species of the site are in a condition as good as or better than when the site was selected, and where sustainable use of the marine environment within the Special Area of Conservation is an important and integral

The scheme is intended to aid decision-making and will continually evolve to take account of changes and new information about activities, issues, science, management practices and legal obligations. The management scheme will be formally reviewed as required and there will be an ongoing appraisal of the associated action plan.

The full management scheme is available from the SAC website www.pembrokeshiremarinesac.org.uk

Copies may be viewed in local libraries.

Who is responsible for the marine site's management?



The UK Habitats Regulations (the legislation under which the Habitats Directive is applied in the UK) make “relevant authorities” (those authorities which have powers or functions which have, or could have, an impact on the SAC) responsible for the conservation and management of the SAC. However, no single relevant authority can have overall responsibility for the site, since none has all the necessary powers. The ultimate responsibility for ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive in Wales, both generally and in relation to the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC, lies with the National Assembly for Wales and the UK Government.

The relevant authorities for the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC have formed the Relevant Authorities Group (RAG), a voluntary partnership. This Group has no additional powers but serves to ensure that all relevant authorities contribute to develop and implement the scheme. There are eight relevant authorities for this site as follows:

- **Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)**
- **Environment Agency Wales (EAW)**
- **Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW)**
- **Milford Haven Port Authority (MHPA)**
- **Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA)**
- **Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC)**
- **South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee (SWSFC)**
- **Trinity House Lighthouse Service**

Other bodies (termed “competent authorities” under the Habitats Regulations) that exercise legislative powers within the site have also been involved in the development of the management scheme. These include:

- **Crown Estate (CE)**
- **Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)**
- **Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA)**
- **Ministry of Defence (MoD)**

- **The National Trust (NT)**
- **Welsh Assembly Government (WAG)**

These competent authorities, along with other interested parties, sit on the SAC Liaison Forum. Information supplied by this group (and others) and the knowledge they can bring to the management scheme is essential for its successful implementation.



Conservation objectives for the site have been identified by the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and are at the core of the management scheme. Whilst it is the responsibility of the relevant statutory organisations to ensure that the conservation objectives are met, and the site's features are maintained in favourable condition, everyone with an interest in the site has been encouraged to contribute to the scheme's development. The scheme's success is dependent on all users of the area playing their part in its management. Voluntary codes and good practice, in addition to focused and enforced legislation (where available) by statutory bodies, can do much to prevent damage to our environment.

What is so special?



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The Pembrokeshire Marine SAC has the second highest number of features (fifteen) of all the marine SACs in the UK. It has been selected for (eight Habitats Directive Annex I) habitat types and seven (Annex II) species. The site is considered to be one of the best areas in the UK for:

Reefs

Large shallow inlets and bays

Estuaries

Grey seal - *Halichoerus grypus*

and to support a significant presence of:

Coastal lagoons

Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide

Sandbanks which are slightly covered by seawater all the time

Submerged or partially submerged sea caves

Atlantic salt-meadow

Allis shad - *Alosa alosa*

Twaite shad - *Alosa fallax*

River lamprey - *Lampetra fluviatilis*

Sea lamprey - *Petromyzon marinus*

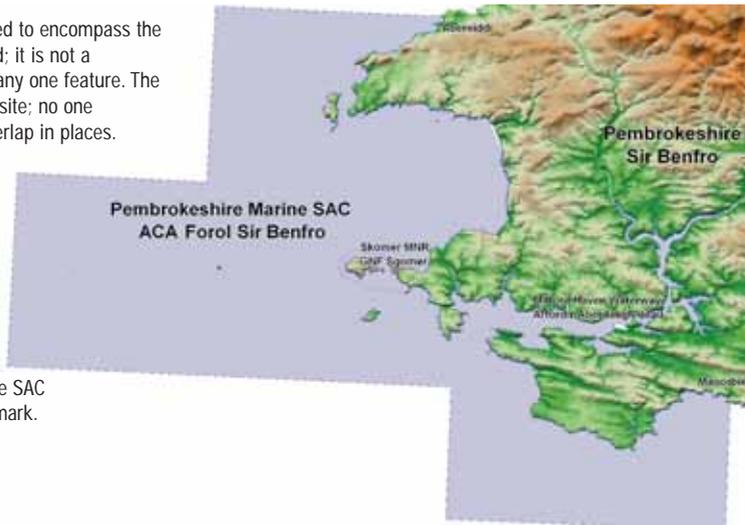
Otter - *Lutra lutra*

Shore dock - *Rumex rupestris*



The boundary of the site was determined to encompass the features for which the site was selected; it is not a representation of the precise extent of any one feature. The features are distributed throughout the site; no one occupies the whole site and several overlap in places.

The SAC extends from just north of Aberystwyth on the north Pembrokeshire coast to just east of Manorbier in the south and includes the coast of the islands of Ramsey, Skomer, Grassholm, Skokholm, the Bishops and Clerks and The Smalls. It also encompasses almost the entire Milford Haven Waterway. The landward boundary of the SAC mostly follows the extreme high water mark.



How does this management scheme affect marine site users?

The SAC's marine wildlife features may be affected by a wide variety of factors.

These include:

- **Changes to the tidal flows, waves, temperature, turbidity, sediments**
- **Changes to the water chemistry, for example through pollution (past and present)**
- **Physical disturbance or damage to habitats and species**
- **Collecting or removal of species**
- **Ecological knock-on effects due to changes in the food chain or through the spread of disease and genetic pollution (for example by introduced or 'alien' species)**



The marine and coastal environment of Pembrokeshire is recognised nationally and internationally for its remarkable wildlife and landscape. It is also of immense value to the people who live and work here and who visit the area for recreation.

The management scheme therefore has the challenging task of maintaining the important wildlife of the site whilst encouraging the site's use in a sustainable way, so as to meet the needs of its many users both now and into the future. Many activities have the potential to affect marine wildlife adversely, but should not do so significantly if kept at appropriate and sustainable levels and in suitable locations.

There is no intention to prevent all activities, only to identify and improve the management of those activities which are damaging. Many activities are unlikely to damage the wildlife for which the site has been chosen, and so will not be affected. Activities with the potential to cause damage but that are already appropriately managed in some way are also unlikely to be affected.



Many of the actions to be taken under the management scheme involve keeping the current situation under review or working with people to develop measures such as zoning or voluntary codes of practice. New management measures aimed at protecting or preventing damage to the interest features will only be introduced after consultation with interested parties. Information gathering will play a large part too.

The main activities with the current potential to affect the features of the SAC are summarised in the following sections. An attempt has also been made to summarise the major actions associated with each. It should be noted that generally these actions go beyond the existing ongoing current management already in place. Further detail can be found in the full technical management scheme document.

Ports, harbours and shipping



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Milford Haven is the biggest port in Wales and one of the largest in the UK. The presence of 2 oil refineries (Chevron and Murco), 1 oil storage unit (SemLogistics), Milford Docks, and the Port of Pembroke with its ro-ro Irish Ferry, general cargo, and MoD activity all result in a considerable amount of shipping; almost 11,000 movements were recorded in 2006. The addition of 2 LNG (liquid natural gas) terminals (South Hook LNG and Dragon LNG), a new marina at Pembroke Dock (Martello Quays), and also potential power stations will increase shipping movements and usage of the port considerably.

Management of shipping is generally the responsibility of the UK Government. Ships are required to adhere to a plethora of legislation, much of which has been laid down by the IMO ((International Maritime Organisation - a specialised agency of the United Nations), as well as UK legislation. Within the Milford Haven waterway, the Milford Haven Port Authority can use Harbour Orders and byelaws to manage the waters under its jurisdiction. Harbour development is additionally controlled by local planning control.

It should be noted that there is a common right to navigation; the Port Authority has a common-law obligation to conserve and facilitate the safe use of the harbour.

Whilst management within the Milford Haven waterway is at a high level, there are areas that could be improved with regard to the marine environment and nature conservation, both within and outside the Port Authority's jurisdiction. Those actions that are currently needed to address the issues of most potential current concern in terms of the SAC features include the following.

actions

Complete and implement a long-term dredging strategy for the waterway in which an holistic approach to capital and maintenance dredging can be fostered and any necessary dredging minimised from the outset.

Improve management of shipping anchoring and mooring within the SAC, including specifically the introduction and implementation of no-anchoring and no-mooring zones to protect areas of *Zostera* (eelgrass) and *Maerl* (chalky seaweed).

Improve and enforce the use of port waste reception facilities in order to reduce the potential for pollutants such as antifoulants, cleaning chemicals and oils to enter the water.

Find out more about, and review (with a view to minimising), the discharge of ballast water within the SAC in order to minimise the transfer of introduced 'alien' species which can be harmful to native wildlife.

Investigate systems to enable improved information of shipping movements outside of the Port Authority's jurisdiction.

Other issues connected to ports and shipping are dealt with in the other sections.

Living resources



This section encompasses activities such as hand gathering of animals and plants for consumption or other purposes (e.g. bait collection, fertiliser, curio collection), aquaculture, and most notably fishing. The Port of Milford Haven has been the centre of Pembrokeshire's fishing industry since the 17th Century. Although it has declined substantially since then, it still remains an important landing place for the offshore fleet (mainly Spanish flagship, French and Belgian vessels) and the indigenous inshore fleet. Local inshore boats fishing for a wide range of species, including bass, crabs, lobster, oyster and scallops are widely dispersed amongst the small harbours throughout the SAC.

Almost the entire SAC is within 6 nautical miles (nm) from the baseline and may only therefore be fished by vessels registered in the UK. Between 6-12nm certain other member states (locally France & Belgium) retain historical rights to exploit certain species. The conduct of all vessels is governed by the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) of the European Union. Additional UK legislation is applied to UK registered vessels in inshore (0-12nm) waters. In Wales, management of fisheries within 12nm waters is devolved to the Welsh Assembly Government. The Pembrokeshire Marine SAC lies within the South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee (SWSFC) district which is responsible for fisheries management between 0-6nm. The Environment Agency also has fisheries management responsibilities within rivers/estuaries and for some migratory fish species. Fisheries management in Wales is likely to change following Welsh Assembly Government review and the introduction of the Marine Bill.

It should be noted that common rights exist to make use of living resources for personal use.

Issues that are of most potential current concern in terms of the SAC features, and therefore considered to require the highest priority actions include the following.

actions

Seek to safeguard SAC features and minimise knock-on ecological effects by working to ensure that commercial resource exploitation within the SAC takes place within sustainable limits (without negative environmental effects to non-target species, impacts on stock, or impacts on habitat, thereby allowing the continuation of the activity for future generations). Ensure that fishing operations are as selective as possible (to minimise by-catch) and promote the use of environmentally-friendly gear and methods.

Review the use of trawls and dredges within the SAC and take action to avoid damage to SAC features. Of particular concern is activity in sheltered areas (the Waterway), in St Brides Bay, and over areas of reef. In particular, introduce 'no towed-gear zones' to protect areas of *Zostera* (eelgrass) and *Maerl* (chalky seaweed) from all dredge fisheries.

Work towards achieving a sustainable native oyster fishery within the Waterway.

Introduce the mandatory use of biodegradable latches on pots within 3 years in order to minimise effects to SAC features by lost gear (e.g. by 'ghost fishing').

Develop, promote, and enforce restrictions such as zoning or seasonal limitations to release pressure on current commercial bait collection 'hotspots' and to generally improve the management of bait collection throughout the SAC.

Push for improvements in the powers to properly manage intertidal hand-gathering of species, whether it be directly for consumption, for bait, or for use in aquaculture or ranching initiatives.

Better inform management of living resources within the SAC by collecting/collating activity information (where, what for and how much) and data to improve understanding of the interaction between use of living resources and the SAC features.

Other issues of concern can be found in other sections of the action plan and include the discharge from vessels of sewage, general refuse and litter, and maritime hydrocarbon pollution.

Water quality, pollution and waste disposal



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Pembrokeshire, with its high levels of agricultural and seasonal tourism activity, its industrial and shipping activity particularly centred on the Milford Haven waterway, and its westerly facing aspect washed by the Gulf Stream make it prone to many polluting inputs from both the land and the sea.

Although, in general, the use of the sea has increased during the last 50 years, the regulatory control of discharges into it has tightened considerably. There is now a plethora of international and European legislation; numerous EC Directives on water quality and pollution exist.

Water (and sediment) quality, pollution and waste disposal issues still however occur; although there is much regulation, the situation can always be improved. Those actions that are currently needed to address the issues of most potential current concern in terms of the SAC features include the following.



actions

Continue to review all discharge permissions, and identify, as necessary and applicable, revised limits. Although limits are set for individual point discharges, current survey information is showing unacceptably high concentrations of some pollutants within the waterway. In addition there are concerns that any significant salinity and temperature variations due to local industrial activity, and any increase in nutrient levels would have detrimental effects upon the SAC features.

Minimisation of agricultural diffuse pollution should be addressed through linking to management of the Cleddau Rivers SAC and land management improvements.

Develop, complete and implement the appropriate pollution response plans (including oil contingency) for the county, ensuring that the needs of the SAC features are met.

Seek ways to minimise the presence (and consequent effects) of litter on the SAC features, in particular by targeting offshore fishermen and general beach users.

Provide adequate onshore sewage reception facilities for vessels.

Improve upon existing knowledge of pollutants and their effects on the SAC features, specifically i) what pollutants, if any, are found off the open coast, and ii) research into the cumulative and combination effects of pollutants.

Water quality issues associated with vessels, ports and general development are also referred to in other sections of the management scheme.

Recreation



Most recreational activities in the county are based on the natural amenities of the coastal areas. Although many visitors and local residents simply enjoy the scenery, some activities relate directly to the wildlife and the area's natural characteristics; for example

seal (and cetacean and bird) watching, and water sports. These natural features are a valuable resource for a growing number of leisure users.

In general, since the opportunity for coastal recreation is largely determined by the physical nature of the local area, the majority of management approaches have been taken at the local level. Such approaches include zoning, speed controls, access restrictions and codes of conduct. Byelaws have been applied to manage recreational impacts in some circumstances (mainly relating to public safety).



There is no single relevant authority with statutory responsibility for controlling sea-based forms of recreation. Some organisations, for example, the Royal Yachting Association, British Canoe Union and others are recognised by government as representatives for certain activities. Currently there is little, if any, guiding primary legislation, other than that which applies to the protection of public health and access to the countryside. This situation may change with the introduction of a Marine Bill.

The preparation of the management scheme has identified several issues relating to recreational use of the site. Those recreational activities of most potential current concern to the SAC features and therefore requiring the most priority actions include the following.

actions

Ensure that recreation occurs within the SAC at sustainable levels (where any impacts on SAC features are minimised) by i) making sure that promotion of the local area for recreation takes account of the SAC features, ii) investigating recreational 'carrying capacity' for the area (aided by baseline information gathered through the Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum run 'recreation audit' project) and iii) supporting and promoting the work of the Pembrokeshire Marine Code and Pembrokeshire Outdoor Charter Groups.

Ensure promotion of appropriate sea angling codes and raise awareness of the problems caused by and need to minimise angler's litter and lost tackle. Support line recycling initiatives and clean-ups.

Seek to reduce reliance on wild bait. In particular, develop and introduce management measures at bait digging hotspots such as The Gann and Angle Bay in order to protect the mudflat communities found there.

Ensure that power craft users know of and follow the Pembrokeshire Marine Code and the Milford Haven Waterway Recreation Plan. Introduce further management if required to safeguard sensitive species and habitats (such as seals, otters, salt meadow, and intertidal mud and sandflats).

Improve management of recreational anchoring and mooring within the SAC, including specifically the introduction and implementation of no-anchoring and no-mooring zones to protect areas of *Zostera* (eelgrass) and *Maerl* (chalky seaweed).

Other general issues of concern, linked to recreational activity include littering and water quality and are referred to in other sections of the plan.

Miscellaneous activities



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This section includes coastal development, military activity, water abstraction, education and scientific studies, marine archaeology and animal welfare. Although coastal development is dealt with as a “plan or project” (see separate section), the effects of development can be so major as to deserve a mention here. Most coastal development within the SAC occurs within the lower and mid Milford Haven waterway. Activity has been particularly intense in the last couple of years with the building of two LNG terminals. Development is set to rise, with potential near future projects including the Martello Quays development off Pembroke Dock, possible extension of Milford marina, and proposed Pembroke power station. Proposals for alternative energy projects – wave and tidal power – are also being investigated off the coast near West Dale and St Justinian’s respectively.

Currently, local planning jurisdiction generally extends only to mean low water mark. Any subtidal development needs the consent of the Welsh Assembly Government and often various UK Government departments too. Various licenses and consents are also often required, such as a license from the Crown Estate for any permanent structure on the seabed. Many bodies are often consulted during a marine development application including, where appropriate, the Marine and Coastguard Agency, Milford Haven Port Authority, Environment Agency and Sea Fisheries Committee. The Countryside Council for Wales acts as nature conservation advisor to Government in such processes. The Marine Bill should allow for improved licensing and consenting

procedures and proper marine spatial planning which may help to alleviate the current piecemeal sectoral approach.

Issues that are of most potential current concern in terms of the SAC features, and therefore considered to require the highest priority actions include the following.

actions

Ensure that no plan or project is authorised (other than “for imperative reasons of overriding public interest”) that will consequently result in an adverse effect on site integrity. Care should be taken to note and minimise the cumulative effects upon the SAC of the constant development of the coast (including for example marinas and industrial sites), as these can be significant.

Ensure that any maintenance procedures and operational activities take into account and minimise any unfavourable effects on SAC features. For example, where possible using environmentally sensitive alternatives to harmful chemical agents when cleaning shoreline surfaces (steps, slipways etc.).

The effects of water abstraction upon the SAC features should be reviewed and, where appropriate, addressed through linking to management of the Cleddau Rivers SAC.

Resources, awareness & education, and information



actions

Seek to ensure that the appropriate tools for management (adequate powers and resources) are available to those who have the responsibility for looking after the SAC.

Raise the level of awareness of all users and regulators of the site regarding the impact they might cause to the SAC features and what actions they can take to reduce impacts.

Raise the level of awareness of general stakeholders and the public to enable understanding of the SAC and its management scheme.

Work to gain the appropriate information to help inform the management scheme (including activity information and information of the effects of activities on the SAC features). Less available information means a more precautionary approach to SAC management in order to meet the requirements of the SAC legislation.

Improve data collection and sharing amongst relevant bodies. In particular, develop and maintain a central GIS-based data system to store baseline information relevant to SAC management and decision making.



Plans and projects



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In addition to managing activities in the site through the management scheme, relevant authorities and others are required to assess “plans and projects” that might affect the features for which a site has been designated. Plans and projects are various types of operation that require a specific statutory consent of some kind (e.g. planning applications, discharge consents). Their assessment is separate to the development of the management scheme. Under the legislation, each plan or project has to be considered on a case by case basis. Put simply, a plan or project cannot go ahead if it cannot be determined that it will not have an adverse effect on the site’s features. Exceptions are made for proposals which are judged - by the National Assembly for Wales or relevant UK Government department - to be for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, which can include social or economic benefits.



How do we know if the marine site is doing well?



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The marine wildlife of the SAC has been observed and studied for many years and for a variety of reasons. This management scheme attempts to focus much of the regular and ad hoc research and monitoring work and has identified some new areas of study.

Monitoring is essential in order to measure the effectiveness of site management. Two particular types of monitoring are vital: compliance monitoring and condition monitoring. Compliance monitoring consists of repeated checks to see if management measures are being complied with (for example adherence to codes of conduct, or to pollution levels specified for licensed discharges). This type of monitoring is the responsibility of the relevant authority concerned with managing that particular activity in order to verify that it is not causing deterioration of the site interest features. Condition monitoring, which is largely the responsibility of Countryside Council for Wales, consists of repeated checks of “performance indicators” of the habitats and species of the site to see if they are meeting favourable condition targets.

Surveillance is required for certain activities or factors that may adversely affect the site’s features but for which detailed monitoring is not appropriate or yet established. It may be as simple as keeping a ‘watching brief’ on something, for example beach litter, climate change, and the introduction of non-native species.

The results of monitoring will help to determine whether the conservation objectives for the site are being achieved, and highlight where changes to management are necessary. Under the Habitats Regulations, the Countryside Council for Wales, as the statutory nature conservation agency in Wales, has the responsibility to report upon the condition of the site interest features to the European Union. This is done via the Welsh Assembly Government and the UK Government every 6 years.

