

Voluntary Code of Conduct

This voluntary Code of Conduct has been developed by Sussex IFCA to support the management of Utopia MCZ, support the elasmobranch (sharks and rays) fishery and help achieve positive conservation outcomes for the site.

- **Consider practicing and promoting catch and release.**
Purpose: To support a sustainable fishery.
- **Use circle, barbless or de-barbed hooks when fishing.**
Purpose: To minimise injury to fish, improve unhooking efficiency and reduce post-release mortality.
- **Where fish are to be released, use a landing net, unhook fish carefully in the landing net and return them to the sea as quickly as possible.**
Purpose: To minimise handling damage and maximise the likelihood of survival.
- **Wet hands before handling fish. If photographs are taken, support the fish properly and minimise the length of time it is removed from the water.**
Purpose: To encourage good fish handling and unhooking practice and reduce unnecessary stress or injury to the fish.
- **If retaining fish, dispatch cleanly and humanely.**
Purpose: To promote good fish welfare practice.
- **Return egg-bearing female fish.**
Purpose: To allow eggs to hatch, supporting future recruitment and maintain healthy fish populations.
- **Consider drifting where conditions allow or use lower-impact anchoring methods where appropriate**
Purpose: To minimise damage to sensitive rocky reef habitats and seabed features.
- **Maintain a record of shark and ray captures. Further information on The Shark Trust website www.thesharktrust.org**
Purpose: To provide important information to help inform management.
- **Encourage other fishers to understand and support the voluntary Code of Conduct.**
Purpose: To share and promote best practice and support the objectives of the MCZ.

General Advice and Guidance

When undertaking any activity within the MCZ, please be conscious of the protected species and habitats within the site and act responsibly to prevent harm or damage.

UTOPIA

Marine Conservation Zone



Fisheries Management Measures Summary



01273 454407



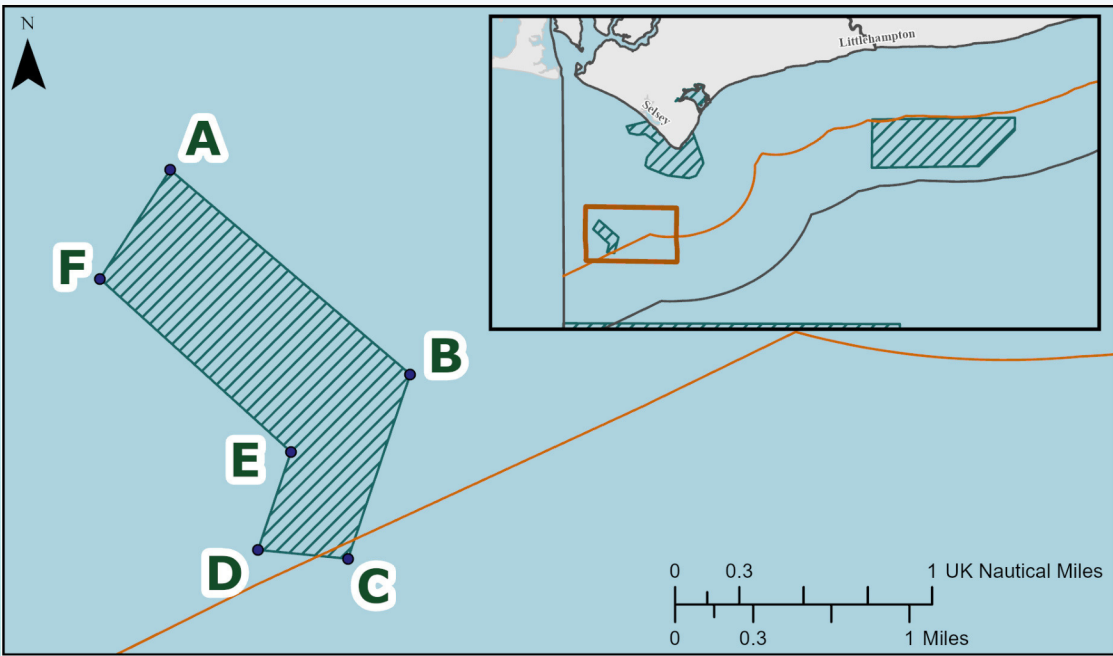
www.sussex-ifca.gov.uk

Scan for Byelaw
regulations and
guidance



Utopia Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) is part of the UK's network of Marine Protected Areas. The small inshore site covers 2.7 km² and is located around 10 km south of Selsey Bill and 20 km east of the Isle of Wight.

The site is a reef made up of bedrock and large boulders that support rich marine communities, including fragile sponges, sea fans, cup corals, anemones and other fragile reef-associated species. Many of the species present are large, slow growing and sensitive to disturbance, such as branching sponges with hard, crinkly 'petals' providing habitat for small fish, prawns and crabs. The area also provides habitat suitable for tope pupping.



Utopia MCZ

District

- 3 Nautical Mile Limit
- Sussex IFCA District

Designations

- Marine Conservation Zones

Sussex IFCA

Map created by Sussex IFCA, March 2026.
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Legal Requirements

Under the Sussex IFCA Marine Protected Area (MPA) Byelaw and associated Utopia MCZ management schedule, it is prohibited for any person to:

- fish with towed gear within the designated area.
- fish with towed gear within 0.5 nautical miles of the designated site without an approved vessel monitoring system fitted; or
- transit the area with towed gear that is not securely stowed.

Inspection & Enforcement Powers

Sussex IFCA officers have statutory powers under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 to board and inspect any vessel and inspect persons who may have been fishing.

Fishers are expected to cooperate fully with officers carrying out inspections. Failure to comply with a reasonable request made by an authorised officer may constitute an offence under fisheries legislation.

Designated Area Co-ordinates

Point	Latitude	Longitude
A	50° 39.93' N	00° 53.17' W
B	50° 39.12' N	00° 51.72' W
C	50° 38.37' N	00° 52.03' W
D	50° 38.41' N	00° 52.58' W
E	50° 38.81' N	00° 52.42' W
F	50° 39.51' N	00° 53.61' W

Anyone with information relating to suspected non-compliance within the site is encouraged to contact Sussex IFCA
www.sussex-ifca.gov.uk/report-illegal-fishing
Further information on current byelaws and MPA management is available from the Sussex IFCA website www.sussex-ifca.gov.uk/regulations