



Sussex Marine Protected Areas Byelaw 2023 – Additional Schedule 5 Beachy Head East MCZ

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is Sussex IFCA introducing this additional Schedule 5 Beachy Head East MCZ to the MPA byelaw?

The Sussex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) has a Statutory duty under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MaCAA) to ensure that the Conservation Objectives of any Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) within the Sussex IFCA district are furthered. As a fisheries regulator, the IFCA must manage fishing activities within the MCZ to ensure that the specific features (species and habitats) within the site are protected.

Beachy Head East MCZ was designated by Defra in 2019 for a range of important features, including; sandstone and chalk reef systems and associated communities, ross worm reefs (*Saballeria spinulosa*), short-snouted seahorse (*Hippocampus hippocampus*), high energy and moderate energy circalittoral rock and peat and clay exposures. Many of these features are globally rare, and the site contains some of the largest underwater chalk seascapes in the UK. The site is also considered an important nursery area for fish, including commercially important species such as Dover sole, plaice and herring.

Since the site was designated, Sussex IFCA have been working on developing management with the aim of minimising interactions between designated features and the fishing activities to which they are most sensitive, delivering the Conservation Objectives of the site whilst minimising disruption to important fisheries.

Who does the Marine Protected Areas byelaw apply to?

The byelaw applies to anyone intending to harvest sea fisheries resources within Beachy Head East MCZ, or any of the four further MCZ's for which there are previously existing schedules within the byelaw (Kingmere, Pagham Harbour, Beachy Head West and Utopia MCZ's).

What are the fishing gears that have been restricted?

Towed fishing gear has been excluded from a large part of Beachy Head East MCZ; 'Zone 1' – this means any trawls, seines, dredges, or similar types of fishing gear, including trawls towed on or very close to the seabed, which are actively moved in the water by one or more fishing vessels or by any other mechanised system and in which any part of the gear is designed or rigged to operate on, and be in contact with the seabed in order to take any sea fisheries resources.

Other fishing activity within the site will continue, and Sussex IFCA have an ongoing commitment to monitoring activity and evaluating impacts of fishing activities on the site.



What fishing activity takes place within Beachy Head East MCZ?

Historically, a range of fishing activities have taken place within the Beachy Head East MCZ site, such as mobile gears, including trawling (otter, beam, small pelagic) and dredging (scallop). There are also static/passive gears, like netting (trammel, gill), and potting (lobster, crab, whelk, prawn/shrimp), as well as cuttlefish traps during the spring and summer months. Shore-based activities also occur in the intertidal zone, such as hand gathering and angling.

Information on fishing activities is gathered via consultation and engagement with fishers, inspections conducted at sea and on the shore by IFCA officers, sightings data collected by IFCA officers on patrols in the district, remote monitoring (VMS, AIS), and catch returns and landing data collected by Sussex IFCA and the MMO.

How was the management developed?

Natural England, as the Statutory Nature Conservation Body (SNCB) for the site, are responsible for surveying and identifying the features of the site, assessing their condition and setting the Conservation Objectives. Sussex IFCA must then consider and assess these features and Conservation Objectives, and as the fisheries regulator, assess the type, location and intensity of fishing activities to identify where these will hinder the site from reaching its Conservation Objectives. Where conflicts between fishing activity and the Conservation Objectives are identified, proposed management options must be developed.

In February 2023, Sussex IFCA led Informal Consultations with local groups in key locations (Eastbourne, Bexhill, and Hastings), as an opportunity to engage with fishers and wider stakeholders to understand and influence future management of the site. The first workshop provided background information, including a film using footage of fishermen and wider community collected over the last 10 years from the local area, and asked local people's views on their hopes for the local area. The second workshop focused on the proposed fisheries management options and allowed commercial fishermen to comment and feedback their expert knowledge and opinions.

On the basis of this stakeholder feedback and the evidence gathered through the impact assessment process, the preferred management option was formalised and formal statutory consultations were held in August 2023 and March 2024, before the final byelaw was submitted to the MMO and Defra for quality assurance and consideration for approval.

How will the effect of the management be monitored?

Surveys are carried out by Natural England to establish the condition of each feature within a site. This results in the publication of 'Conservation Objectives' which help inform the development of the MCZ Assessments, Impact Assessments, and proposed management measures for the site. The Conservation Objectives for each site state whether the protected habitats and species should be either maintained in favourable condition or recovered back into favourable condition if not already in favourable condition. Sussex IFCA will continue to work with Natural England to support monitoring of the sites features and condition, including the monitoring of fishing activity on the site.

What about the small part of the MCZ that falls outside of the IFCA district?

The byelaw does not apply to the part of the Beachy Head East Marine Conservation Zone that lies outside the Sussex IFCA District. This small part (less than 3 km²) lies within the jurisdiction of the Marine



Management Organisation. Management of this 'offshore' part of the MCZ was under development by the MMO in 2025. For further information refer to the Marine Management Organisation guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/marine-protected-areas-mpas>

What about other Marine Protected Areas in the Sussex IFCA district?

After its designation in 2019, Beachy Head East was the final Marine Conservation Zone awaiting the introduction of appropriate fisheries management. Kingmere, Beachy Head West, Pagham, and Utopia Marine Conservation Zones were all afforded protection under the Authority's Marine Protected Areas Byelaw 2017. This has now been replaced by the Marine Protected Areas Byelaw 2023, which retains the schedules specific to each of these sites but introduces a new schedule for Beachy Head East MCZ, ensuring the continued protection of all of these MCZ's.

How will the byelaw be enforced?

Sussex IFCA have a dedicated compliance and enforcement team responsible for actively ensuring compliance with all regulations within the district. Sussex IFCA maintains a fleet of three fisheries patrol vessels, and enforcement activities range from sea, shore and drone patrols, boarding inspections at sea and landings inspections. Where offences are detected enforcement outcomes will depend on the severity of the offence but range from official warnings to fixed administrative penalties (to a maximum of £10,000) to court prosecution. We have a published compliance and enforcement plan available which provides more information here: <https://www.sussex-ifca.gov.uk/compliance>

Where can I read the full byelaw?

The full byelaw can be found on our website www.sussex-ifca.gov.uk/regulations.

What should I do if I don't understand the byelaw or any information?

In the first instance refer to our web pages for information, at www.sussex-ifca.gov.uk, and if you still require help then call and speak to one of our enforcement officers on 01273 454407.

How do I report non-compliance?

You can report non-compliant fishing activity for this byelaw or any Sussex IFCA byelaw directly through our website on our dedicated Report Illegal Fishing page: <https://www.sussex-ifca.gov.uk/report-illegal-fishing>

Alternatively, you can report via phone (01273 454407) or email (admin@sussex-ifca.gov.uk). When reporting non-compliance, please include the following information:

1. Who is conducting the activity?
2. What activity is occurring?
3. When is the activity occurring?
4. Where is the activity taking place?
5. How are they carrying out the activity?