

## Marine Conservation Zone - Update

Defra has now embarked on Tranche 3 (the final tranche) of the Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) designation programme. The aim of this Tranche is to complete the Blue Belt, an ecologically coherent network of well-managed Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) around England. Through this process, Natural England's role will be to provide evidence-based scientific advice. Most of the MCZs under consideration are Regional Project recommended MCZs, however a small number of new site options, boundary amendments and third party proposed highly mobile species MCZs are also being considered to ensure the goal of ecological coherence is met.

The final list of sites and features to be formally considered will not be announced until the formal consultation period begins in late summer/autumn 2017. However, in the coming months, Defra, Natural England and JNCC will work together to ensure that these sites meet certain criteria and evidence standards. Natural England and JNCC will deliver their pre-consultation advice to Defra in February 2017 and post-consultation advice on any additional evidence and submissions received through the formal consultation. The Minister will use this advice, along with socio-economic information, to make their final decisions. Sites will be designated in 2018 (within 1 year of the start of the public consultation). More information on Defra's approach in Tranche 3 can be found here: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/492784/mcz-update-jan-2016.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/492784/mcz-update-jan-2016.pdf).

There are three MCZs under consideration for consultation in the Solent: Yarmouth to Cowes, Norris to Ryde and Bembridge. If you would like more information on these sites or the broader process, we're holding a number of locally focused 'drop-in' sessions in March 2017. To ensure we can respond effectively to the individual concerns of specific sectors, some of these sessions will be focused on recreational sailors and fishers – invitations to these events will be sent out by the Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (SIFCA) and the Royal Yachting Association (RYA). In addition, we're also hosting general community focused sessions. The details of the session being held in the Solent area is provided below.

- **22<sup>nd</sup> March 2017** 14:00 – 19:00 Riverside Community Centre, Newport, IoW

These events will provide an opportunity to ask questions, raise concerns and receive more information. In the meantime, if you have questions about any of these events, please contact the local Natural England MCZ team on [NE Dorset Hants IOW Marine@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:NE Dorset Hants IOW Marine@naturalengland.org.uk).

If you are unable to attend either of the dates above, and would like to attend one of the Solent fishing or sailing events or one of the two general community events planned in the Dorset area instead, please contact us via the email address above to find out more details.

Please come along and get involved!