



REPORT
Focus Group meeting
Potential Marine
Conservation Zone 8
North Euston Hotel
Fleetwood
June 15th, 2011

The following is a summary of the Focus Group meeting for potential Marine Conservation Zone 8, held at the North Euston Hotel in Fleetwood, Lancashire on June 15th, 2011.

Attendance

The list shows all invitees. Those in bold attended on the day. The attendees represented a good balance of interests in the area of pMCZ 8 in terms of commercial fishing, recreation (sea angling), industry (subsea cables), marine management and nature conservation.

Billy McGough	Fishing – Fleetwood
Brian Fletcher	Fylde Boat Angling Club (club secretary)
Cheryl Nicholson	The Wildlife Trusts
Chris Lumb	Natural England
Dave Garner	Dong Energy
Dave McAleavy	Sefton Coastal Partnership
Frank White	Blackpool Boat Angling Club
Gary Mitchinson	Fishing – Fleetwood
Gero Vella	Centrica
Jane Lister	Marine Management Organisation
John Law	Southport Boat Angling Club
Nik Sturbaker	Kendal Fisheries
Ron Graham	Fishing – Whitehaven
Ron Morris	Southport Boat Angling Club
Peter Scott	Wyre Boat Angling Club
Paul Sumner	Fishing – Lytham
Peter Jamieson	Subsea cables
Steve Brown	IFCA
Steve White	IFCA
Rob Whitburn	Natural England

Introduction

At the start of the meeting and throughout it the project team emphasized that:

- The objectives for the day were to
 - Let people know about the existence of pMCZ 8
 - Discuss and record what activities take place in the area of pMCZ 8
 - Come up with an option or options for the size, shape and location of pMCZ 8, along with comments on the options, which would be taken to the Regional Stakeholder Group to help it make a final recommendation. The options should aim to give good ecological coverage as indicated by records of bivalves, while taking into account local interests (eg, commercial fishermen and sea anglers).
- Responsibility for making the final recommendation lies with the Regional Stakeholder Group.
- According to current information and expectations, no activities currently going on in the area of pMCZ 8 would need additional management.

Site summary

The meeting was given the size, shape and location of the existing pMCZ 8 as a starting point for their discussion.

It was made clear that the meeting could suggest entirely new options.

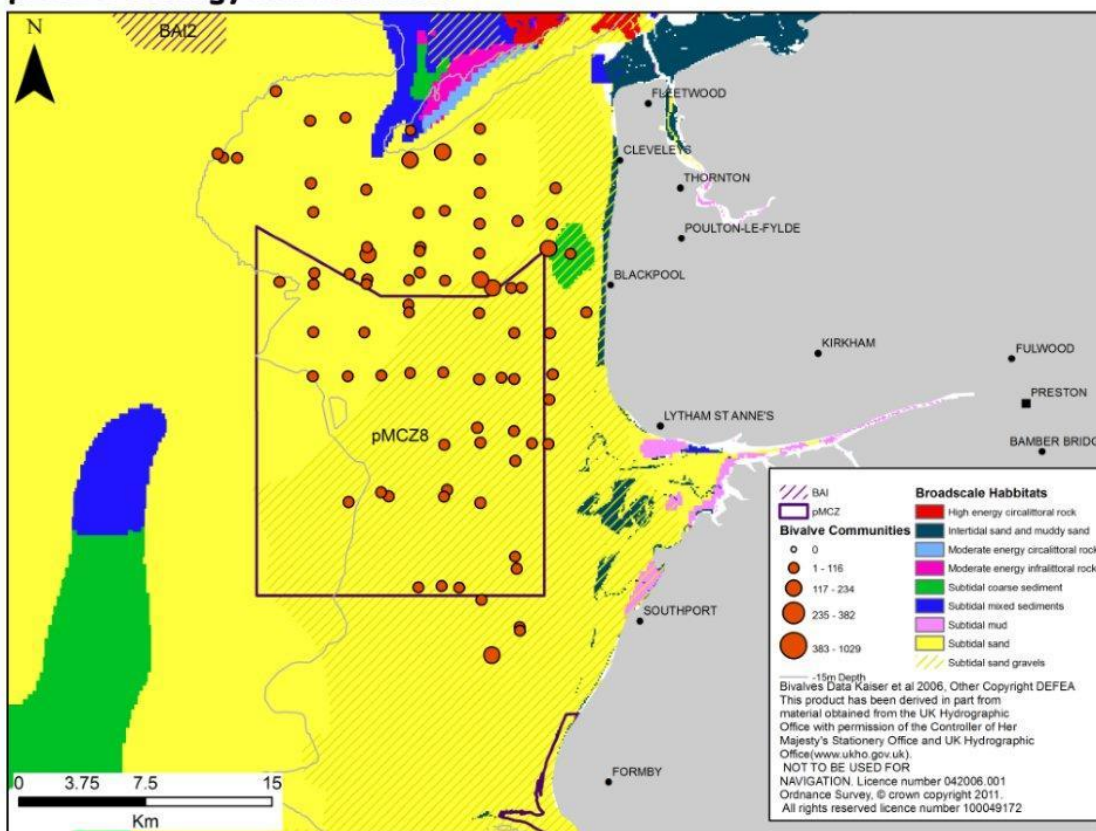
However, the discussion focused on potential changes to the boundaries of the existing site. A summary of the site at the start of the meeting is below:

- **Location:** pMCZ 8 is located in Liverpool Bay, approximately 3.6 km (1.8 nm) off the Fylde coast.
- **Size:** 321.6 Km² (32157.6 Ha).
- **Depth range:** The depth of the seabed within the site ranges from almost being exposed on a low tide (0.35 m) to 22m.
- **Broadscale habitat feature:** subtidal sand *only* (covers area of 321.6 Km²).
- **Habitat of conservation importance:** pMCZ8 is being designated for **subtidal sands and gravels** *only* (covers area of 286.59 Km²).
- **Additional ecological importance:** area of high biological productivity (i.e. supports a lot of life). This is not a designated feature but is extremely beneficial to the ecosystem as a whole.
- **Associated protected areas:** Liverpool Bay Special Protection Area (SPA), Shell Flats Special Area of Conservation (SAC).
- **Activities on site:** very low fishing pressure, angling, and cables.
- **Conservation objectives:** MAINTAIN at a favourable condition, therefore, current activities are NOT likely to be restricted.

The map below was provided as a starting point for discussions

The dots on the map represent records of bivalve communities

pMCZ 8 Ecology and Habitats.



Summary of options for pMCZ 8

During discussions a number of options were identified for changes to the boundaries of pMCZ 8 and these are summarised below. Word for word notes on the discussions are in Appendix A.

Northern boundary – no options for changes recorded:

The option of moving the northern boundary further north was discussed in general but no specific changes were put forward.

The point was made that the northern boundary abuts onto Shell Flats SAC, so moving it any further north would move it into the SAC. However, government guidance is that Marine Conservation Zones should not be used to deliver conservation measures that are required under the EC Habitats and Birds Directives and for which Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are appropriate.

Shell Flat SAC is designated for its subtidal sandbank and already provides a high level of protection for the subtidal sand broadscale habitat within the site. Hence overlapping pMCZ8 with the SAC would be inappropriate, unless the overlapping area was being proposed as a Reference Area.

Southern boundary – no options for changes recorded:

The option of moving the southern boundary further south was discussed in general, but no specific changes were put forward.

It was noted that most of the records of bivalves are in the north of the site so moving the southern boundary further south would not provide significantly more coverage of these records. These records indicate the productivity of the area and were highlighted by the SAP. The RSG asked that the records be well covered by the zone.

Western boundary – one option for a change recorded:

It was proposed that the western boundary could be moved eastwards to align with the boundary of Liverpool Bay SPA. A number of advantages were noted:

- Clearer on nautical charts so easier for people to be aware of the boundary
- Less confusing
- Easier to manage
- Would remove the slight encroachment into international waters (beyond 12nm), which would make introducing any potential management easier.

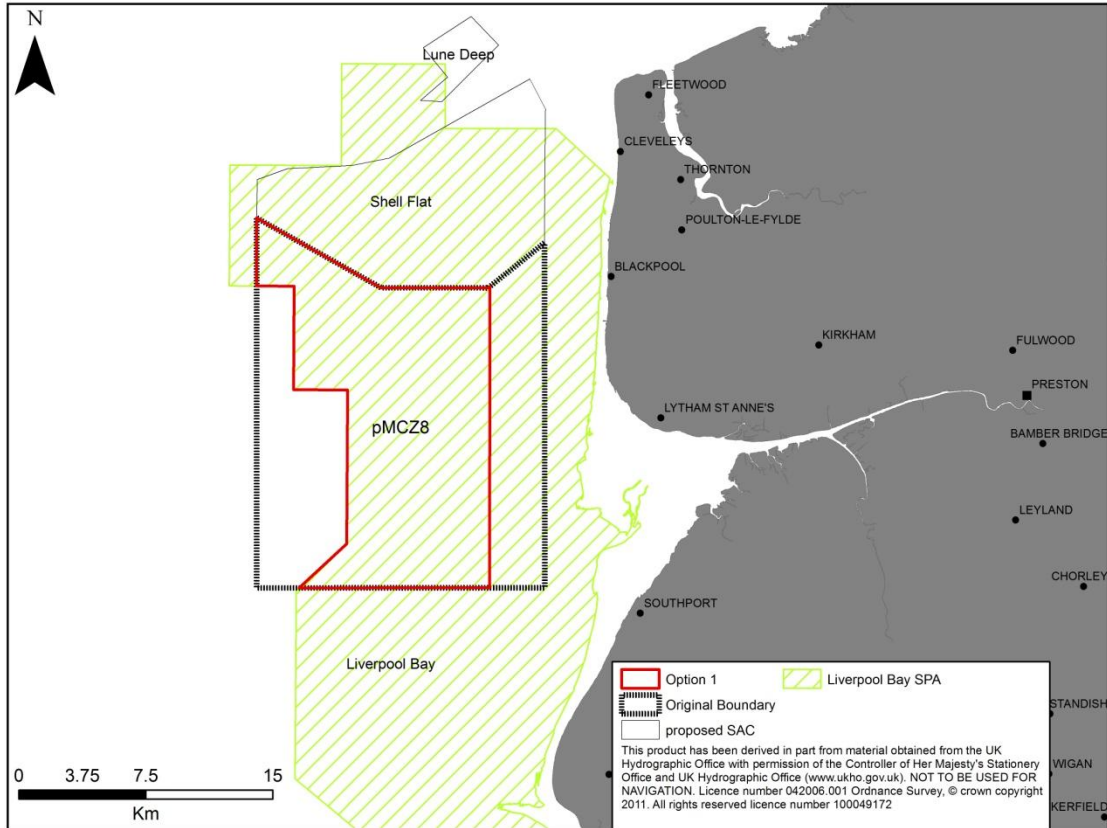
No objections were recorded about changing the western boundary to align with SPA boundary.

This change to the western boundary is shown on the three maps below.

Eastern boundary – three options recorded:

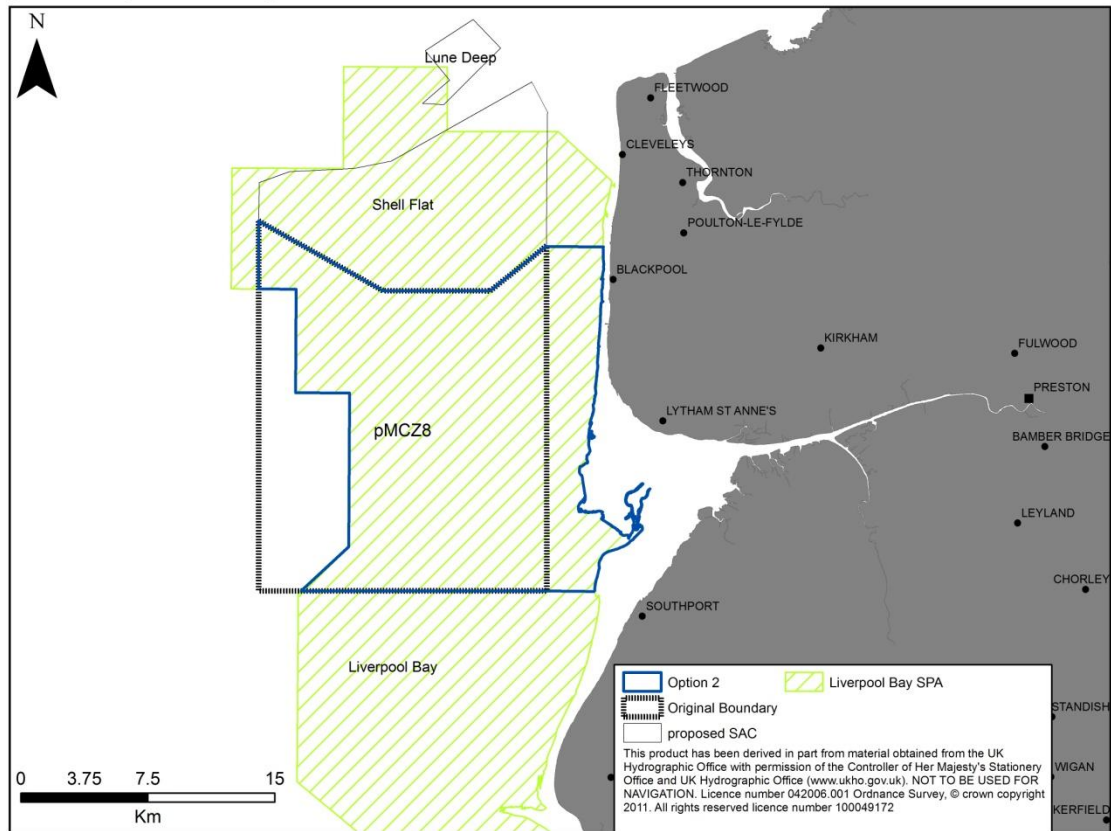
Option 1 – move the boundary seaward to shift it further away from the local inshore fishing activity. However, it was noted that local fishing activity only enters the current zone in one small area (southeastern corner of the site) and that the project's current understanding is that local fishing activity is unlikely to be affected by the zone.

pMCZ 8 Option 1 – Align Western Boundary with SPA, Reduce Eastern Boundary

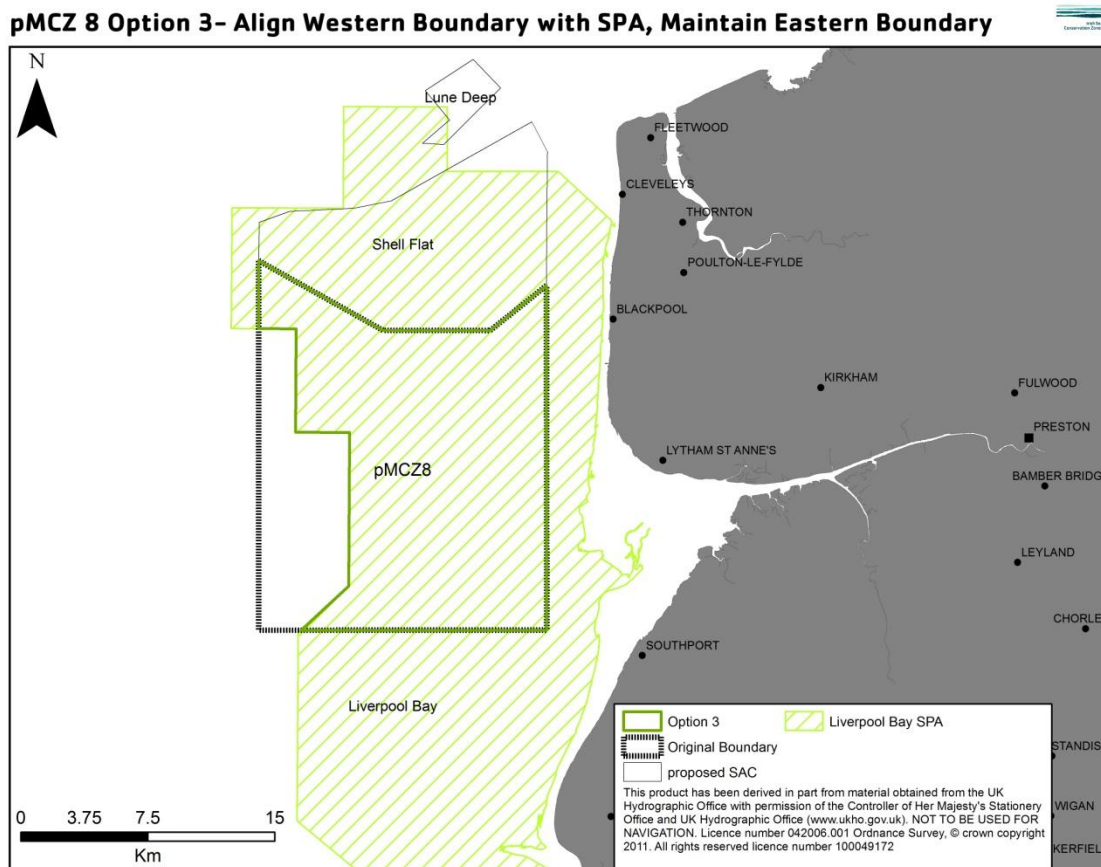


Option 2 – move the boundary inshore to align with the boundary of Liverpool Bay SPA. It was noted that the inshore areas have a richer ecology, and that it would make navigation and management easier. However, although no current activities are expected to need additional management, it was also noted that moving the eastern boundary further inshore would move it into the area used by local inshore fishermen.

pMCZ 8 Option 2- Align Western and Eastern Boundaries with SPA,



Option 3 – leave the eastern boundary where it is. This was suggested as a good compromise between the previous two options.



Additional requests

Sea angling representatives on the Focus Group requested that the Regional Stakeholder Group include a written statement about impacts on activities in the next report to the SAP. This statement should confirm the expectation that current activities, including sea angling, would not require additional management in pMCZ 8.

Representatives from the IFCA requested that the RSG consider the fact that commercial fishing is at a historic low in the pMCZ 8 area and could increase again in the future. The project team agreed to take historic data from the IFCA and make it available for the Impact Assessment.

Appendix A

pMCZ8 Focus Group Meeting, Fleetwood. June 15th 2011.
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Grp 1: (Matthew)

- Could be a return of fishing activities to the area as it is at historic lows for a variety of reasons e.g. cyclical. Different fisheries could return such as Sole, and this could lead to significant increase in fishing activity.
- No heavy trawling in the area from Lytham.

Grp 2: (Chris)

- Makes sense to adjoin Shell Flat.
- Move boundary further off shore.
- Is it possible to move south?
- Local fisherman does not want zone within 12nm.
- Belgian fishermen do more damage offshore (>12nm)
- Concern over future changes once zone established.
- SW boats traditionally fished this area (sole)
- Area controlled by regional management.
- Buffer zone between fishing area and MCZ.
- Seas do more damage than fishing ever could.
- No infringement into Shell Flat.
- Age of data doesn't ensure bi-valves still present.
- Inshore fished only on spring tides and left alone rest of month.
- Concerns over future management and more restriction.
- Only one fisherman operating this area – 50 days last year because of weather.
- Cut off eastern edge to provide contentment with local fishermen.

Grp 3: (Greg)

- Very low fishing pressure in the area
- North eastern edge of boundary not vulnerable to dredging as seabed is rock, therefore no need to move eastern edge seaward.
- Good fishing area in boundary area between Shell Flat and pMCZ8, diverse.
- Increase area of pMCZ8, international commercial fishers do more damage.
- No need to align western boundary with SPA boundary
- Maybe also extend area south

Q & A:

- Collect fisheries data – Steve Brown
- i.e. historical data to help with IA. Feed this back to RSG.
- Try to keep west of Gut Buoy – Lytham fishers.

Plenary:

Move Eastern boundary seaward to act as a buffer zone for fishing area. Also worried re: future management changes.

General consensus that for fisheries moving the Eastern boundary seaward is beneficial for Lytham fishers.

Stipulated that northern boundary that abuts onto Shell Flats cannot move further north and overlap like the SPA as the SAC is totally separate initiative. However, Chris Lumb said could maybe achieve a double designation if have it as a Reference Zone.

Maybe move southern boundary further south. However, in terms of productivity, not nearly as good as northern aspect of the site.

Again, interest to alter eastern boundary (move further seaward). May not be necessary as only local fishers and they exert a very low pressure.

Consider aligning western boundary with SPA boundary.

Move eastern boundary seaward so boundary now sits 6.7km from coast (previously 3.6 km, 1.8nm).

Move Eastern boundary east (inshore) so aligns with SPA as this area very bio-diverse. The management assumption is the activities are very low impact and will therefore be able to continue.

The original pMCZ boundaries are a good compromise between the other two boundary proposals.

Reassurances for the future for Anglers that they will have access to the MCZ and be allowed to fish. - they would like a written statement. Also need well documented audit trail.

Vulnerability assessment for pMCZ8: the site does not need to recover. The C.O. is set to maintain. All activities occurring in the site are considered very low impact. All this collected information is presented to the government; it's for them to decide what management initiatives to be made, if any.

Commercial fishers also need such reassurances, they are very concerned re: future management changes.

We (ISCZ) are at a stage in the process where we can be more certain of management initiatives. Reiterated conservation objectives and unlikely to need any management within the MCZ. We can only work with present information on current activities and base management recommendations accordingly. Unable to give future projections.

Western boundary: Align with SPA boundary for ease of management, limits confusion of where boundaries are and what it means. Clear on nautical charts. By aligning the boundary also moves the pMCZ out of international waters. If left in said waters, massive managerial ramifications.

If move the western boundary further west the management objectives would also change e.g. ban scallop dredging. Therefore, stakeholder support would plummet.

Important to remember that the biodiversity is greater in the inshore area.

Lytham fishers (Paul) Fish in south east region of pMCZ8. Therefore beneficial to them if move eastern boundary seaward – help secure his fishing ground.

If problems arise in the future, how will they be dealt with? Reiterated that not ISCZ team but DEFRA and MMO who will be responsible for managing designated MCZs.