

Joint Recommendation regarding the protection of reef features within the Stanton Banks Special Area of Conservation under the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 under Article 11 and Article 18 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy (the Basic Regulation).

1. Summary of Proposal

This joint recommendation contains a proposal for the regulation of fisheries activity and is initiated by the UK and submitted to the European Commission jointly by the United Kingdom (UK) [and the following Member States, Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Spain, France, the Netherlands, Lithuania and Poland; being those Member States having a direct management interest affected by the joint recommendation].

This joint recommendation is made under article 11 and 18 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of The European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC.

These measures are proposed to protect reef habitat for which the Stanton Banks SAC was designated to represent in the Natura 2000 Network. Reef is a habitat listed in Annex 1 of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) as amended.

It proposes that the use of demersal mobile fishing gears as described in table 1 are prohibited in the 3 areas defined below.

It is the intention of the UK government (as the initiating Member State) to take forward measures in respect to fisheries activities exercised by all vessels including fishing vessels carrying the flag of other Member States of the EU.

2. The Recommendations to be Implemented

The following recommendations are proposed for adoption:

- the exclusion of demersal towed gears and dredges to protect Annex I reef feature within the site.

Table 1 : Demersal fishing gears to be prohibited

Gear types to be prohibited by the proposed measures	Habitat code	Gear code Annex XI in EU Regulation No. 404/2011	International standard Classification of Fishing Gears (ISSCFG)
Beam trawl	1170	TBB	TBB
Bottom trawl / otter trawl	1170	OTB, OTT, PTB, TBN, TBS, TB	OTB, OTT, OT, PTB, TB
Seine nets	1170	SDN, SSC, SX, SV	SB, SV, SDN, SSC, SPR, SX
Dredges	1170	DRB	DRB, DRH

All of the above co-ordinates are provided in WGS1984 datum. They are joined sequentially by geodesic lines, with the last co-ordinate for each area joining back to the first.

Table 2 : Co-ordinates of prohibited area 1

Point	Latitude	Longitude
A	56°26.467N	008°08.143W
B	56°24.844N	008°05.926W
C	56°25.330N	008°02.361W
D	56°22.849N	008°00.760W
E	56°22.586N	008°06.978W
F	56°21.920N	008°09.399W
G	56°21.265N	008°08.080W
H	56°19.518N	008°06.778W
I	56°18.866N	008°07.482W
J	56°19.154N	008°08.991W
K	56°18.807N	008°09.313W

L	56°17.801N	008°08.898W
M	56°17.182N	008°09.461W
N	56°15.480N	008°13.400W
O	56°16.224N	008°15.461W
P	56°17.793N	008°15.432W
Q	56°20.447N	008°12.916W
R	56°21.249N	008°14.252W
S	56°23.674N	008°14.204W
T	56°23.660N	008°12.037W
U	56°24.793N	008°11.278W
V	56°26.488N	008°11.242W
W	56°26.467N	008°08.143W

Table 3 : Co-ordinates of prohibited area 2

Point	Latitude	Longitude
X	56°20.106N	007°44.972W
Y	56°17.586N	007°42.735W
Z	56°19.206N	007°37.164W
AA	56°18.515N	007°33.934W
AB	56°16.432N	007°33.528W
AC	56°13.640N	007°35.157W
AD	56°04.996N	007°52.903W
AE	56°02.124N	007°53.722W
AF	56°02.595N	007°58.975W
AG	56°03.707N	008°01.658W
AH	56°02.933N	008°02.747W
AI	56°03.257N	008°06.360W
AJ	56°04.255N	008°08.287W
AK	56°03.643N	008°10.670W
AL	56°05.343N	008°10.634W
AM	56°05.311N	008°06.096W
AN	56°11.258N	007°56.837W

AO	56°16.346N	008°03.153W
AP	56°17.519N	008°01.805W
AQ	56°17.850N	007°59.823W
AR	56°19.036N	007°57.754W
AS	56°21.040N	007°48.439W
AT	56°20.106N	007°44.972W

Table 4 : Co-ordinates of prohibited area 3

Point	Latitude	Longitude
AU	56°21.579N	007°42.601W
AV	56°20.827N	007°43.811W
AX	56°21.89N	007°46.307W
AY	56°22.846N	007°44.432W
AZ	56°21.579N	007°42.601W

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Supporting Documentation

1. INTRODUCTION

2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Common Fisheries Policy

According to Article 11 of the Common Fisheries Policy (Regulation No 1380/2013 (The Basic Regulation)), Member States are empowered to adopt conservation measures that are necessary to comply with their obligations under Article 6 of Directive 92/43/EEC and Article 13(4) of 2008/56/EC. Where measures are required outwith waters where the member state has exclusive competence the European Commission shall be empowered to adopt such measures by means of delegated acts.

The initiating Member State shall provide the Commission and the other Member States having a direct management interest with relevant information on the measures required, including their rationale, scientific evidence in support and details on their practical implementation and enforcement. Member States shall consult the relevant Advisory Councils.

The initiating Member State and the other Member States having a direct management interest may submit a joint recommendation within six months from the provision of sufficient information. The Commission shall adopt the measures, taking into account any available scientific advice, within three months from receipt of a complete request (Reg 1380/2013, Articles 11 and 18).

The guidance document provides the basis for the present proposal. The 11 information items given in the guidance document, provides the structure of the present proposal. This document deals with the 11 information items from this current proposal.

The following chapters describe how the United Kingdom, as the initiating Member State, has taken the Commission's criteria for decision making into account – as well as the requirements for regional coordination in line with the new Basic Regulation.

2.2 Implementation of Natura 2000 in United Kingdom

The following regulations, as amended from time to time, provide the legal basis for the designation of Natura 2000 sites according to the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and the Birds Directive (2009/147) in the UK. These regulations also transpose the protective provisions of Article 6 of the EU Habitats Directive into UK law.

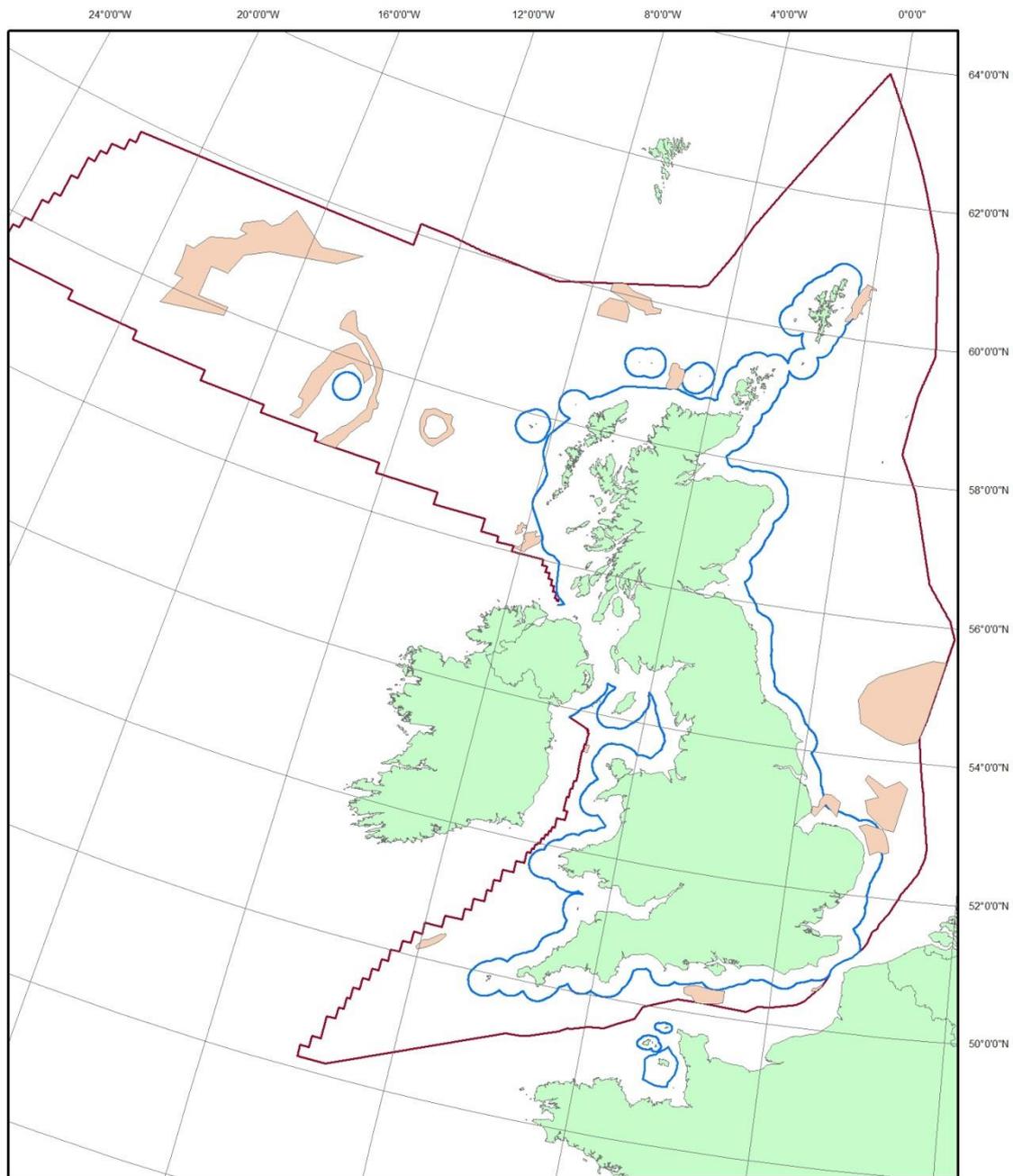
- The Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations 2007 (“the Offshore Regulations”) in relation to the offshore area around the UK (from 12 nautical miles to Continental Shelf Claim Limit).
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (“the 2010 Regulations”) in relation to the English and Welsh inshore region (from the coast to 12 nautical miles).
- The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (“the 1994 Regulations”) in relation to the Scottish inshore region (from the coast to 12 nautical miles).

2.3 Designation of Natura 2000 sites in United Kingdom

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are designated for habitats and species listed in the EU Habitats Directive. SACs with marine components are defined as those that contain qualifying marine habitats or species.

There are currently 108 SACs with marine components, covering 7.6% of the UK sea area. 88 of these SACs are completely in inshore waters, 16 are completely in offshore waters and there are four sites which have parts in both inshore and offshore waters. Those with offshore components are shown on the map below.

Figure 1: UK offshore Sites of Community Importance

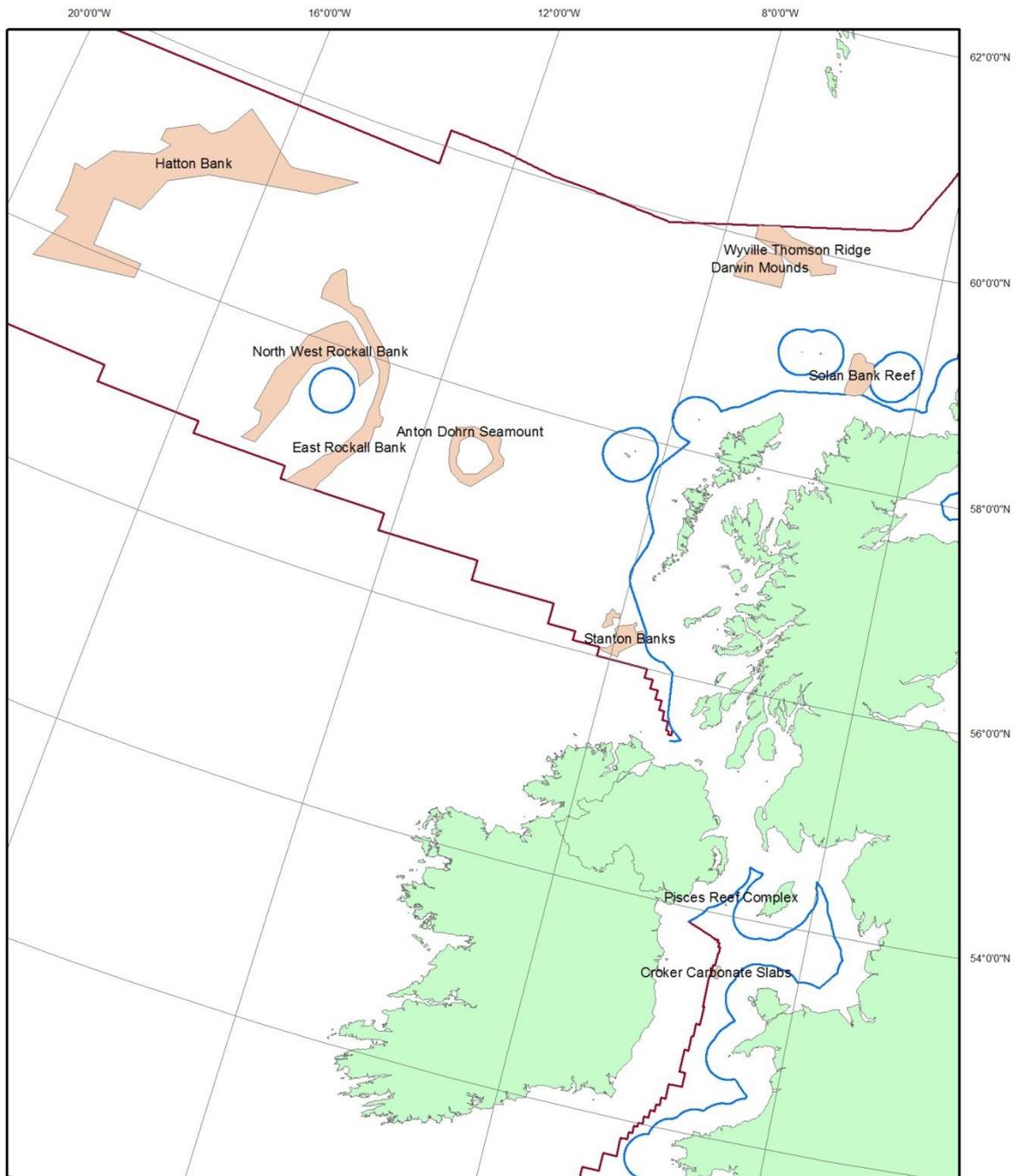


UK Offshore Sites of Community Importance (including candidates)

- europe
- UK offshore SCI (including candidates)
- UK Territorial Waters
- UK continental shelf claim limits

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 Projection: Lambert Azimuthal Equal Area Datum: ETRS 1989 Scale 1:8,000,000

Figure 2 : Offshore Sites of Community Importance on west coast of Scotland



UK Offshore Sites of Community Importance (including candidates)

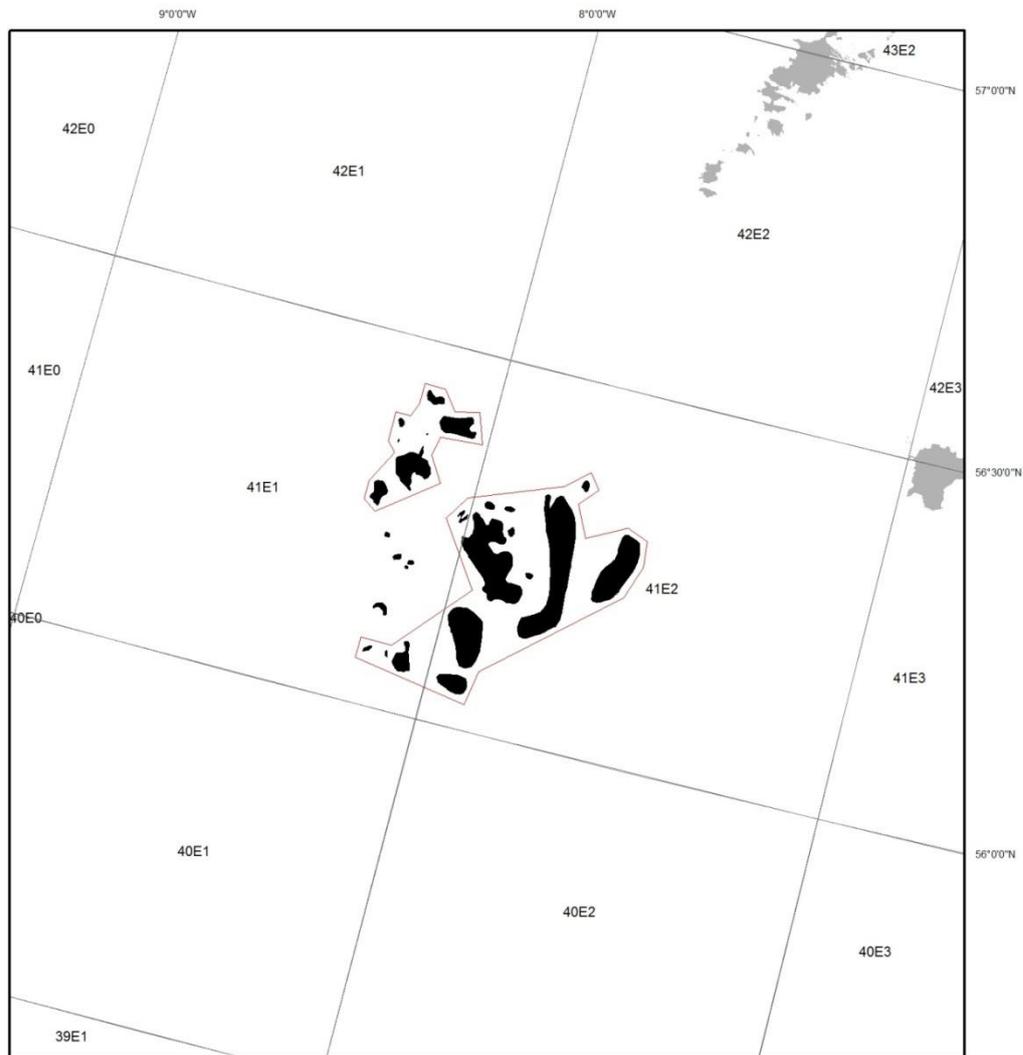
- europe
- UK offshore SCI (including candidates)
- UK Territorial Waters
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Stanton Banks, as shown on the map below, was submitted to the European Commission (EC) as a Candidate Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in August 2008 and adopted by the Commission as a Site of Community importance (SCI) on 22 December 2009. Member States have a maximum of 6 years from the site being adopted as a SCI to implement the necessary management measures and formally designate the site as a SAC. Stanton Banks was formally designated as an SAC in December 2015.

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Figure 3 – Stanton Banks Special Area of Conservation



Stanton Banks SCI

-  SAC Boundary
-  ICES rectangles
-  Annex 1 reef
-  Land

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 Reef habitat layer provided by JNCC.
 Projection: Lambert Azimuthal Equal Area Datum: ETRS 1989 Scale 1:750,000

3. Engagement

3.1 Stakeholder workshop

A stakeholder workshop was held in Glasgow in November 2011. This was undertaken as a pilot study of engaging fishermen in the design of measures. This pilot formed part of the Marine Protected Areas in the Atlantic Arc¹ (MAIA) EU interreg IVb project.

The participating fishermen had considerable practical environmental knowledge of the Stanton Banks area. The workshop identified three small areas with SAC boundary where vessels fished on the mud habitat. It was noted that the bedrock reef at Stanton Banks arises well above the surrounding sea floor meaning that the fishermen purposefully kept their fishing gear clear of it. These 3 areas will remain available to fishing industry if these measures are adopted.

3.2 Coordination and consultation with member states

[To be completed]

3.3 Involvement of the North Western Waters Advisory Council

Members of the North Western Waters Advisory Council participated in the workshop where the initial design of the measures was undertaken. In November 2013 the proposal was presented to Working Group 1 of NWWAC. The group concluded that the solution was pragmatic and achieved a good balance between conservation and continued access to fishing grounds.

3.4 Involvement of North West waters member state group

[To be completed]

3.5 Transparency

[To be completed]

¹ www.maia-network.org

3.7 Non-discrimination

[To be completed]

4. Information about Stanton Banks SAC

This section provides summarised information about the scientific case for inclusion of Stanton Banks in the Natura network, and the evidence base supporting a management intervention. Further information on the Stanton Banks SAC can be found on the site information centre on the JNCC website².

4.1 Scientific Basis

The information presented here is taken from the Stanton Banks SAC Selection Assessment (JNCC 2008) which was the basis for the Natura 2000 standard data form and provided the rationale for the site's selection. In some cases, more recent data has become available since the designation of the site and, where relevant, this is also provided.

4.2 The SAC boundary

The boundary for the Stanton Banks site has been defined using JNCC's marine SAC boundary definition guidelines (JNCC, 2008) and information provided during public consultation on this site in 2007-2008. The proposed boundary is a complex polygon enclosing the minimum area necessary to ensure protection of the Annex I habitat. Coordinate points have been positioned as close to the edge of the interest features as possible, rather than being located at the nearest whole degree or minute point.

The proposed boundary includes a margin to allow for mobile gear on the seabed being at some distance from the location of a vessel on the sea surface. The maximum depth of water around the feature is 190m; therefore, assuming a ratio of 3:1 fishing warp length to depth, the proposed boundary is defined to include a margin of 570m from the bedrock reef. The reef habitat feature extent is drawn from interpolated data from British Geological Survey (BGS) mapped at a scale of

² jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-6543

1:250,000 (Graham *et al.*, 2001). Refer to Conservation Objectives and Advice on Operations document written for Stanton Banks SA for more detail.

4.3 Area of habitat

The reef feature covers approximately 29,000 hectares (flat mapped extent) (Graham *et al.*, 2001). An estimate of the entire Annex I reef resource (bedrock, cobble and biogenic reef) in UK waters is 5,723,600 hectares (UK Favourable Conservation Status Reporting 2007). This site's feature falls within the '0-2%' bracket (extents less than 114,472 ha) for Area of Habitat and is graded C.

4.4 Conservation Objectives

The Conservation Objective for the Stanton Banks SAC is to restore the Annex I reef to favourable condition.

The conservation objective to "Restore" implies that the feature is likely to have been degraded to some degree. In the absence of direct evidence of damage or deterioration, where activities associated with pressures to which the feature is sensitive overlap the feature, they may need to be managed to reduce or eliminate potential negative impacts. Restoration in the marine environment generally refers to natural recovery to favourable condition through the reduction or removal of adverse impacts.

At the Stanton Banks SAC, there is no direct evidence of damage to or deterioration of the reef feature. However, best available evidence at time of selection indicated that the feature had been exposed to the use of fishing gear which can expose the features to pressures (physical disturbance or abrasion and biological disturbance by selective extraction of species) to which it is moderately or highly sensitive.

4.5 Representativity

The Stanton Banks SAC represents hard bedrock and boulder reef in full salinity, subject to intermediate coastal influence. They lie approximately 124km west of the UK mainland, 43km WSW of Tiree and 83km NNE of Malin Head (Ireland). The banks are of high to medium topographic complexity due to their fissured nature (Service and Mitchell, 2004).

Stanton Banks are a series of granite rises which outcrop from the seafloor south of the Outer Hebrides. The rocky outcrops rise from the seabed at 190m to approximately 62m from the sea surface, encompassing a vertical rise of approximately 130m. The inter-connecting gullies are filled with rippled coarse shell sand.

The faunal communities on these offshore rocky banks are characteristic of those present on exposed to moderately exposed circalittoral hard substrata in deep waters (Connor *et al.*, 2004). They consist largely of encrusting fauna such as red coralline algae, barnacles and serpulid worms, sponges (including small sponges crusts, cup-shaped Axinellid sponges (*Axinella infundibuliformis*) and massive sponges (*Mycale lingua* and *Pachymatisma johnstonia*)), robust hydroids and more mobile fauna such as featherstars and brittlestars (Service and Mitchell, 2004). The grade for the feature is A (excellent representativity). Refer to JNCC 2008 for more detail.

4.6 Conservation of structure and functions

At the Stanton Banks SAC, there is no direct evidence of damage to or deterioration of the reef feature. However, the feature is currently exposed to the use of static fishing gear, and may in future be exposed to mobile fishing gears, which the reef feature is moderately or highly sensitive to.

Previously, available VMS data and evidence collected from stakeholders suggested that demersal fishing has occurred over the Stanton Banks reef feature within the sites boundaries (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, 2008). There was no evidence to suggest that the activities occurring within the site impacted the physical structure of the reef. Therefore the structure of the feature is graded II: structure well conserved

Further evidence from stakeholders (Stanton Banks Management Workshop, 2011) and higher resolution VMS data indicates that mobile demersal gear effort within the site boundary does not overlap with the reef feature. Refer to section 8.2, figures 5 and 6, for more information.

The prospects of this feature maintaining its structure in the future (taking into account unfavourable influences and reasonable conservation effort) are excellent. Fisheries management should be realised through this proposal, and regulations are in place to ensure other potential activities are assessed in accordance with Article 6 of the EU Habitats Directive before being consented.

The banks are distant from terrestrial sources of pollution. The conservation of function of the feature is graded I: excellent prospects (JNCC, 2008).

Restoration of the biological communities on Stanton Banks would be possible accepting that restoration methods in the offshore area focus on the removal of potential impacts. The grade is II: restoration possible with average effort (JNCC, 2008).

6. Probable effects of human activity

6.1 Demersal towed gears (including scallop dredges, beam trawls and otter trawl)

Five small areas have been identified within the site that are regularly fished by demersal trawlers targeting *Nephrops* but do not contain Annex I reef features (see figure 2). It is not considered likely that fishing within these areas will have a significant effect on the Annex I features.

The remainder of the site is not currently fished by these gears but if fishing were to occur in the future, it is likely that there would be a significant effect: whilst it is unlikely that demersal towed gears can affect the long-term natural distribution of granite bedrock reef features, there is some evidence to indicate that the use of bottom contacting mobile gears can impact the structure and function of the habitat and the long term survival of its associated species.

The use of towed fishing gears is likely to cause damage or death of fragile, erect species, such as sponges and corals (Løkkeborg 2005, Freese et al. 1999). Other species such as hydroids, anemones, bryozoans, tunicates and echinoderms may also be vulnerable (McConnaughey et al. 2000, Sewell and Hiscock 2005). Recovery is likely to be slow (Foden et al. 2010). Where fragile, slow growing species occur, even low levels of fishing have the potential to change the structure and function of the habitats and may result in the loss of some characteristic species.

6.2 Demersal static gears (including gillnets, trammel nets, longlines, pots and traps)

Intensity of static gear fishing in this site is low and it is considered unlikely that this activity poses a significant risk to the long-term natural distribution, structure and functions of the habitats or the long-term survival of associated species. If fishing intensity were to increase to high levels in the future, there is a risk of significant impact to the structure and functions of the habitats.

Mechanical impacts of static gear (e.g. weights and anchors hitting the seabed, hauling gear over seabed, rubbing / entangling effect of ropes) can damage some species (Eno *et al.*, 1996). Other species appear to be resilient to individual fishing operations but the effects of high fishing intensity are unknown (Eno *et al.*, 2001). Recovery will be slow (Foden *et al.*, 2010) resulting in significant reduction or even loss of characteristic species. The individual impact of a single fishing operation may be slight but cumulative damage may be significant (Eno *et al.*, 2001, Foden *et al.*, 2010). Sensitivity to low intensity potting is considered low (Hall *et al.*, 2008) [JNCC and Natural England, 2011].

6.3 Other Human activities

There is a lack of detailed information on levels of exposure to human activities and their ecological impact on the feature at this site. Further information will be required to assess and monitor favourable condition of Annex 1 reef of this offshore SAC.

There are pressures associated with the activities of the Ministry of Defence; however there is insufficient information available to assess exposure and so vulnerability and risk of feature damage or deterioration from this activity is currently unknown (JNCC, 2012).

The reef features found within Stanton banks are sensitive to further pressures outlined within table 1 of Stanton Banks JNCC (2012).

7. Design of measures

7.1 Description of requirement

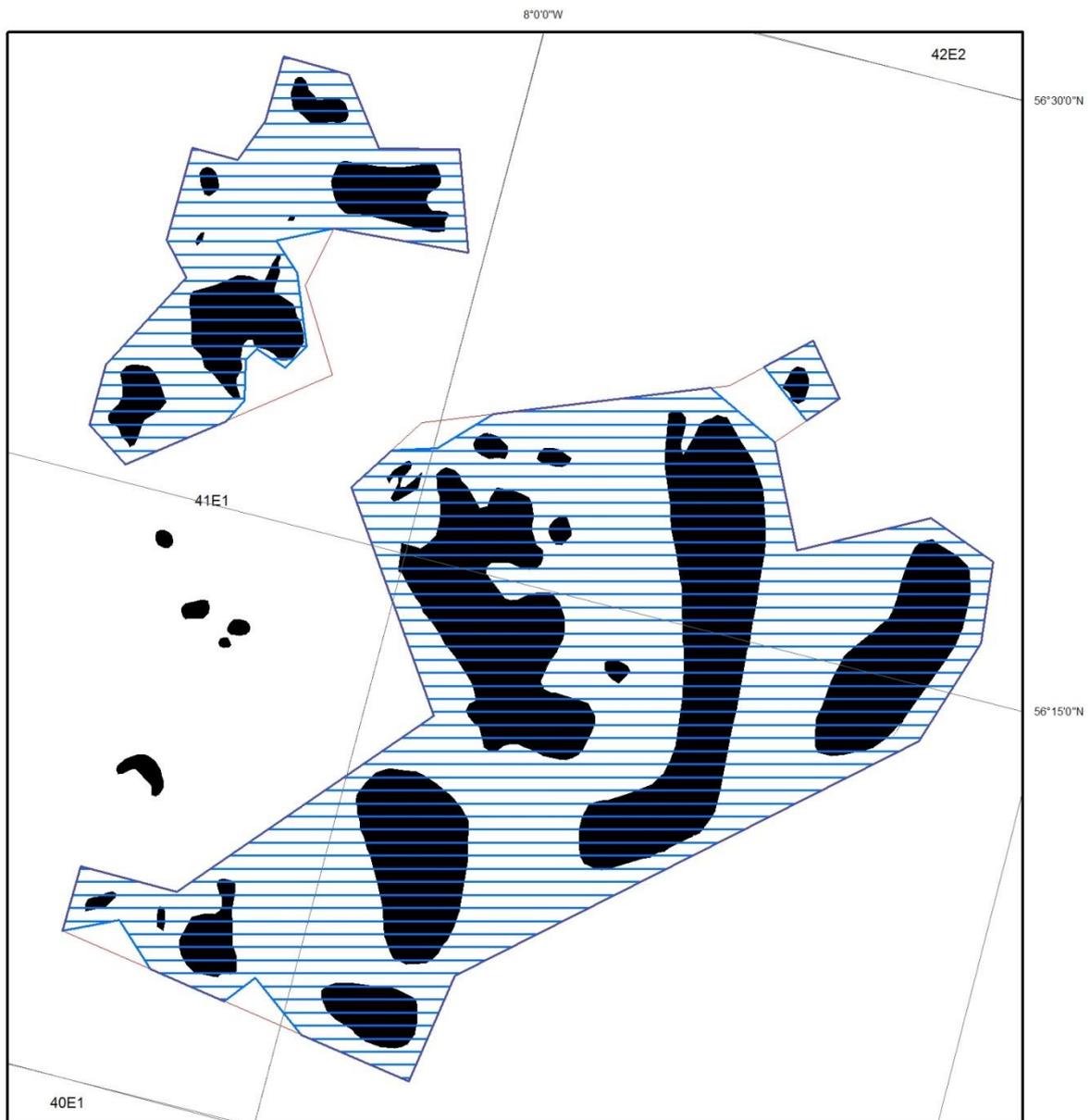
The following management measures will be required in order to achieve the conservation objectives of the site;

- Prohibition of fishing with bottom contacting mobile gears (as described in table 1) throughout the extent of Annex 1 features within the SAC as shown in the figure below hatched in blue.

- No additional restriction on demersal towed gears in areas where Annex 1 reef does not occur.
- No restriction on pelagic gears throughout the site.
- At present, no additional restriction on static gears (pots, gillnets and longlines are not currently used in the site) but continued monitoring of these fishing activities is required. If activity increases to high levels in the future, some restriction may be considered necessary.

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Figure 4: Stanton Banks SAC showing site boundary and the 3 proposed prohibited areas



Stanton Banks SCI

-  SAC Boundary
-  Management boundary
-  ICES rectangles
-  Annex 1 reef
-  Land

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 Reef habitat layer provided by JNCC.
 Projection: Lambert Azimuthal Equal Area Datum: ETRS 1989 Scale 1:250,000

7.2 Proportionality and the precautionary principle

The management measures proposed are designed to prevent any new demersal trawl fishing areas being developed. They will not prohibit the current and historic fishing grounds used by the UK and Republic of Ireland fleets. Consequently there is virtually no loss of established fishing opportunities to the fishing industry.

Given the topography of the area it is unlikely that new fishing grounds would be developed. Nevertheless measures are proposed on a precautionary basis to prevent the industry attempting to do so.

7.3 Displacement

There is virtually no loss of existing fishing grounds (<3% of the ICES rectangle effort – see section 8). Therefore this proposal has no displacement effect.

7.4 Control and Enforcement

No additional controls beyond the spatial measures are envisaged. The current two hourly reporting of Vessel Monitoring Systems is considered sufficient for remote monitoring purposes. Remote monitoring will be supplemented with aerial surveillance and fishery protection vessel patrols. These will be undertaken as required based on a risk analysis approach. As the measures proposed do not unnecessarily cut off access to productive fishing grounds a high level of compliance with the measures is envisaged.

7.5 Other measures considered

Other management options considered were:

- a) no additional management
- b) voluntary agreement
- c) closure of the entire area to mobile bottom contacting gears
- d) closure of the entire area to all gears

Options a and b were considered to pose a significant risk to the achievement of conservation objectives. Options c and d would reduce the risk to the lowest possible level but would place unnecessarily stringent restriction on the fishing industry.

8. Fishing activity in Adjacent waters

The Stanton Banks SAC is located in ICES rectangles 41 E1 and 41 E2. The following analysis uses UK data for 2009 to 2013.

This dataset is an amalgamation of logbook and landings data with Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) data. Logbook and landings data for ICES rectangles where there are protected areas is identified. The VMS data for each corresponding date and vessel in the logbook data is identified. It is filtered by speed (between 0 and 5 knots) to limit it to reports that are indicative of fishing activity. The two data sets are then merged giving each VMS report a notional economic value. Each VMS report is considered to be worth 2 hours of effort unless it is clear that the reporting frequency is much greater. In that circumstance adjustments are made.

There are some potential sources of error in this estimate. If the wrong rectangle has been recorded in the logbook then data will be omitted. The total catch value for the trip is divided in proportion with the daily logged amount for a species. Therefore it is impossible to account for possible variations in catch quality which in turn influences the actual daily value.

In some cases a vessel may have a reported position outside an area in consecutive reports. If the intervening time was spent inside an area then this is missed by the analysis. By the same token a vessel may have just entered the area before a VMS report meaning it is included in the analysis.

This resulting dataset is then plotted using a Geographic Information System (GIS) and VMS reports that would be affected by a particular management approach identified. These are then summarised into the tables below.

8.1 Value

The tables below set out the average value derived by over 15m UK vessels in waters around Stanton Banks in the years 2009 to 2013. Table 2 assesses the average value derived from the relevant ICES rectangles. Table 3 estimates the value derived within the Stanton Banks SAC boundary. Finally

Table 4 estimates the value that would be impacted by the proposed measures. The impact equates to less than 3% of the fishing value at ICES rectangle level.

Table 5 : average annual value (£000s) of UK fishery in ICES rectangles 41 E1 and 41 E2 (2009 – 2013)

rectangle	Bottom trawls	Bottom seines	Mechanical dredge	Pelagic	Static
41 E1	27	2	0	9	0.02
41 E2	96	41	2	0	80

Table 6 : average annual value (£000s) of UK fishery within Stanton Banks SAC (2009 – 2013)

Site name	Bottom trawls	Bottom seines	Mechanical dredge	Pelagic	Static
Stanton Banks	9	1	0	0	0.5

Table 7 : average annual value (£000s) of UK fishery within Stanton Banks SAC proposed management areas (2009 – 2013)

Management proposal	Bottom trawls	Bottom seines	Mechanical dredge
Stanton Banks	4	1	0

8.2 Effort

The tables below set out the average hours effort expended by over 15m UK vessels in waters around Stanton Banks in the years 2009 to 2013. Table 5 assesses the average effort expended from the relevant ICES rectangles. Table 6 estimates the effort expended within the Stanton Banks SAC boundary. Finally Table 7 estimates the effort that would be impacted by the proposed measures. The impact equates to less than 3% of the fishing effort at ICES rectangle level.

Table 8 : average annual hours effort of UK fishery in ICES rectangles 41 E1 and 41 E2 (2009 – 2013)

rectangle	Bottom trawls	Bottom seines	Mechanical dredge	Pelagic	Static
41 E1	238	6	0	2	0.5
41 E2	838	286	4	0	878

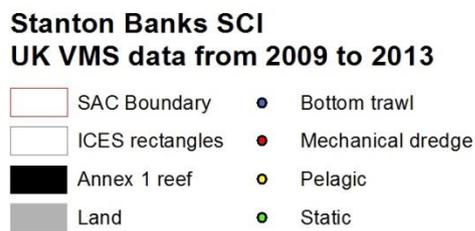
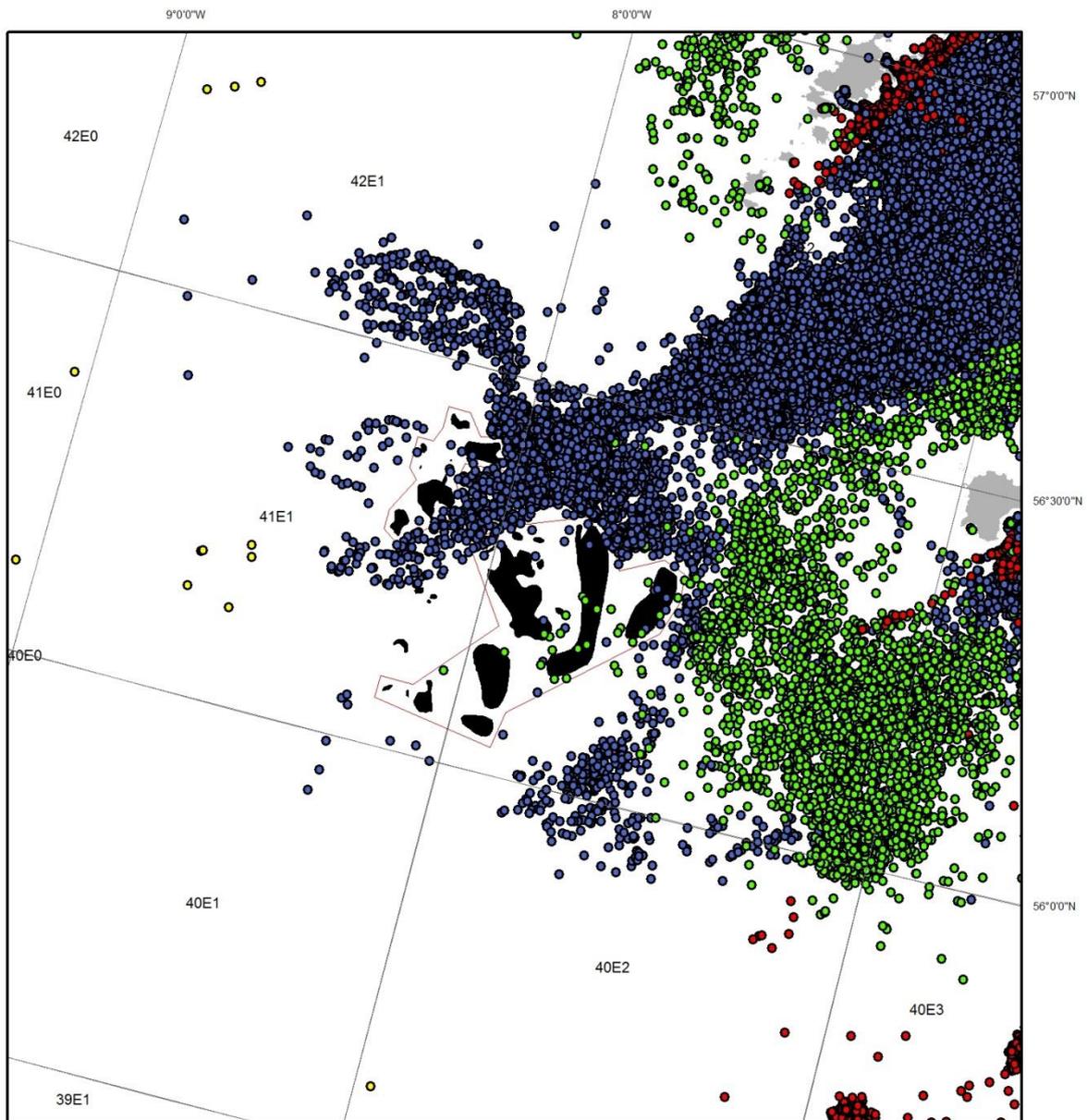
Table 9 : average annual hours effort of UK fishery within Stanton Banks SAC (2009 – 2013)

Site name	Bottom trawls	Bottom seines	Mechanical dredge	Pelagic	Static
Stanton Banks	66	8	0	0	9

Table 10 : average annual hours effort of UK fishery within Stanton Banks SAC proposed management areas (2009 – 2013)

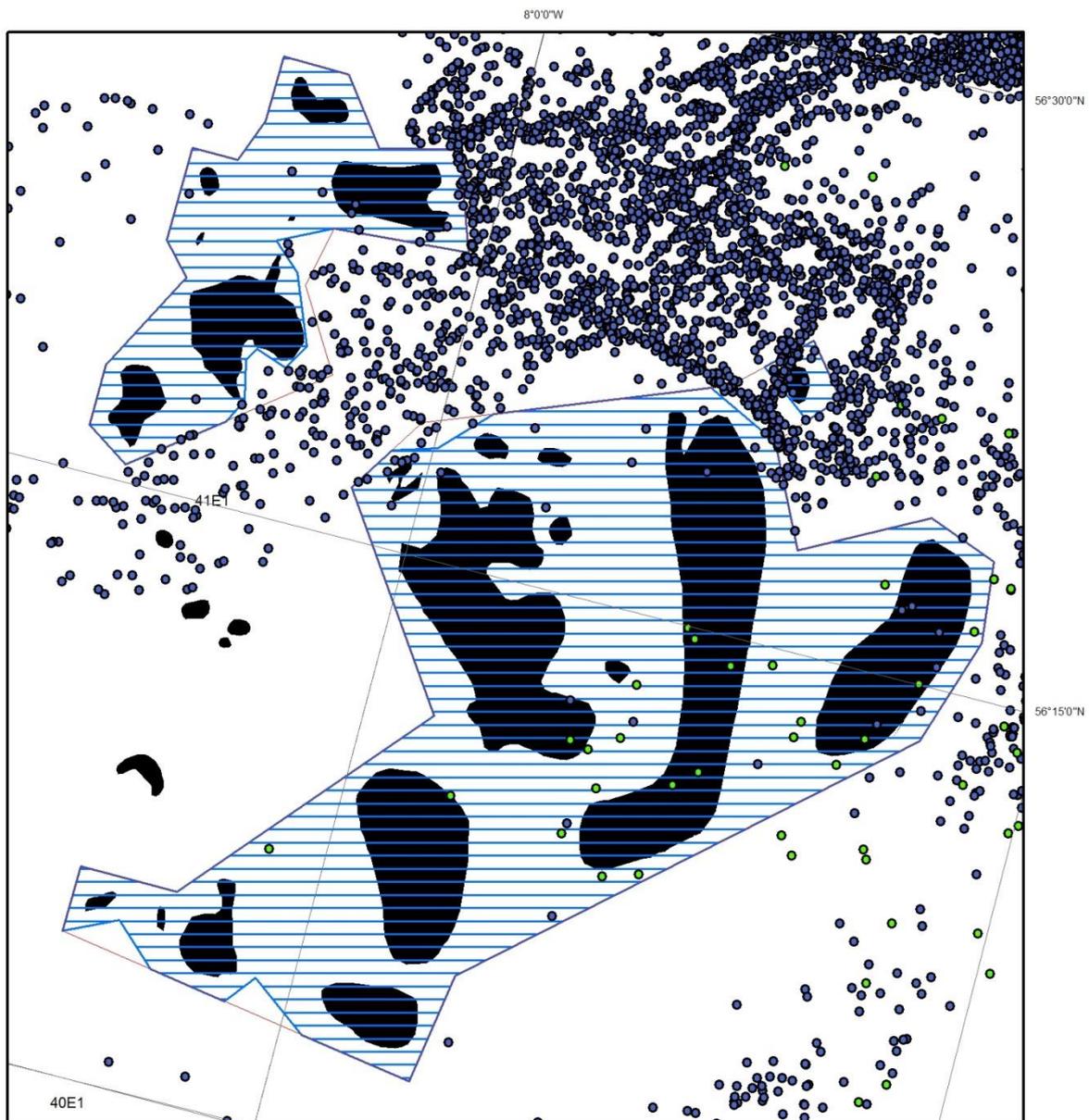
Management proposal	Bottom trawls	Bottom seines	Mechanical dredge
Stanton Banks	29	7	0

Figure 5 : UK VMS data (2009 to 2013) in waters adjacent to Stanton Banks SAC

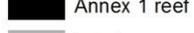


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 Reef habitat layer provided by JNCC.
 Projection: Lambert Azimuthal Equal Area Datum: ETRS 1989 Scale 1:750,000

Figure 6 : UK VMS data (2009 to 2013) at Stanton Banks SAC



**Stanton Banks SCI
UK VMS data from 2009 to 2013**

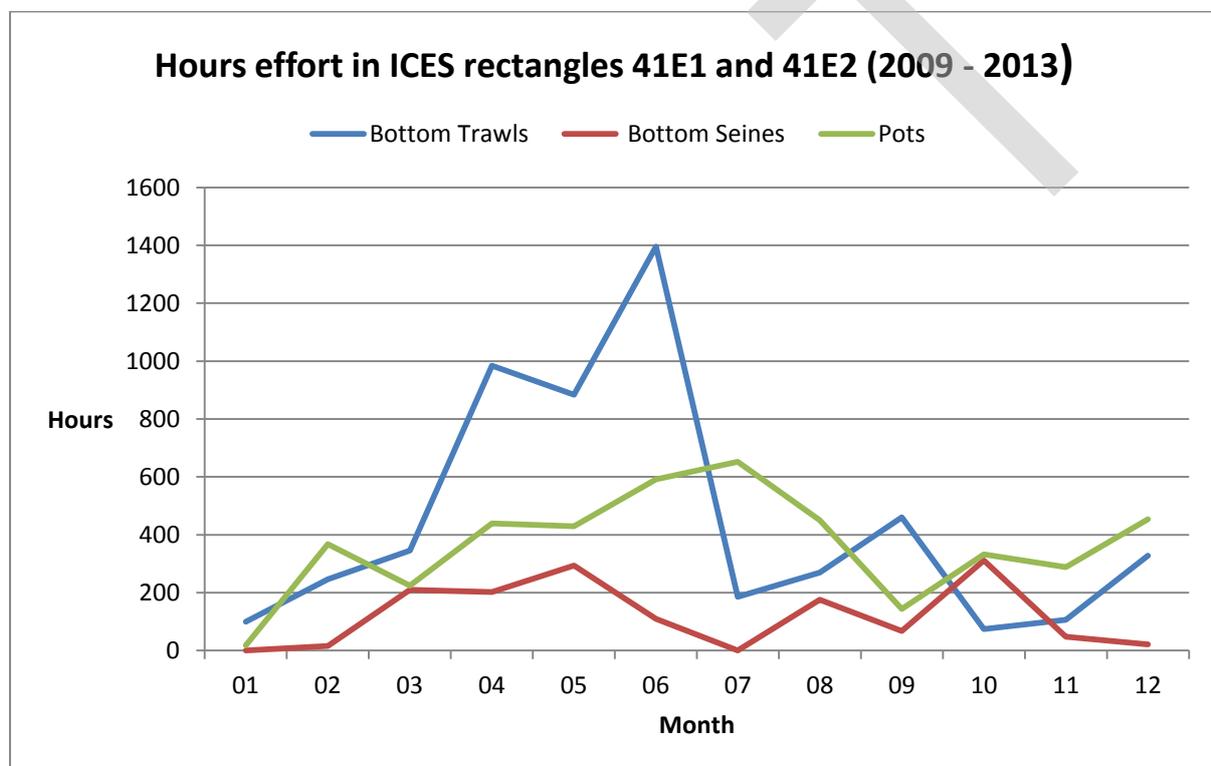
- | | |
|---|---|
|  SAC Boundary |  Bottom trawl |
|  Management boundary |  Mechanical dredge |
|  ICES rectangles |  Pelagic |
|  Annex 1 reef |  Static |
|  Land | |

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Reef habitat layer provided by JNCC.
Projection: Lambert Azimuthal Equal Area Datum: ETRS 1989 Scale 1:250,000

8.3 Seasonality

The creel fishery takes place all year round the ICES rectangles, whereas the seine net fishery appears to peak in spring and autumn. The bottom trawl fishery peaks in late spring / early summer. This is depicted in graph 1 below. Effort by pelagic methods and mechanical dredge is sporadic and therefore does not feature in the graph.

Graph 1 : Total monthly hours effort in ICES rectangles 41E1 and 41E2 from 2009 to 2013 by UK vessels



9. Site Monitoring

The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) is currently leading a research and development programme to develop an integrated system of monitoring for marine biodiversity across all UK waters. The programme aims to provide a coherent framework for biodiversity monitoring to meet the requirements of existing and future monitoring and assessment obligations including those under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Habitats and Birds Directives and the OSPAR Convention. Monitoring and assessment of protected sites constituting the UK network of Marine Protected Areas, including Natura 2000 sites, will be an integral part of this programme.

Monitoring within Natura sites in UK offshore waters will be based on the principles outlined in the JNCC's Common Standards Monitoring Guidance (JNCC 2004), which aim to:

- enable assessment of the degree to which current conservation measures are proving effective in achieving the conservation objectives;
- support the assessment of Favourable Conservation Status for relevant features and identify priorities for future action, and
- enable Government to undertake its national and international assessment and reporting commitments in relation to designated sites and help identify any areas of shortfall in implementation.

On-going work to develop monitoring options advice for Governments to meet these requirements for Natura 2000 sites will include:

- identification of a set of measurable characteristics, attributes or indicators that describe the condition of the feature either directly or indirectly, including elements which relate to habitat extent, structure, function, and typical species;
- setting of broad targets or target ranges for each of these attributes corresponding to favourable feature condition;
- identification of appropriate sampling methods and levels of sampling required to provide the statistical power necessary to detect change, and;

Development of a programme of surveys which can support assessment and reporting obligations under the Habitats Directive but also take into account the expected rate of response of features to management and that changes in condition may in some cases be inferred from the assessment of sites with similar characteristics and knowledge of the presence/absence of pressures to which the features are considered sensitive.

List of Annexes:

Annex A – References

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