

Amendments to the Current Category One Permit Conditions – Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw

Torbay Marine Conservation Zone

Officers' Recommendation

That the current Category One Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions Annex 3a (Torbay MCZ) is amended to reduce the access area for demersal trawl gear, as previously agreed by the B&PSC.

1. Background

The delay implementing the new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022 (and associated permit conditions) has resulted in some previously agreed changes to management not being implemented in the current permit conditions.

To recognise the ongoing delay introducing the new Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaw 2022, in September 2024, the B&PSC was asked to consider changes to current Category One Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions. Although the substance of the changes had already been agreed by the B&PSC, the manner in how to apply them (in the existing permit conditions) needed to be clarified.

Although a series of changes were agreed by the B&PSC, officers did not highlight one other change that would be appropriate, and this relates to the protection of seagrass in the Torbay Marine Conservation Zone.

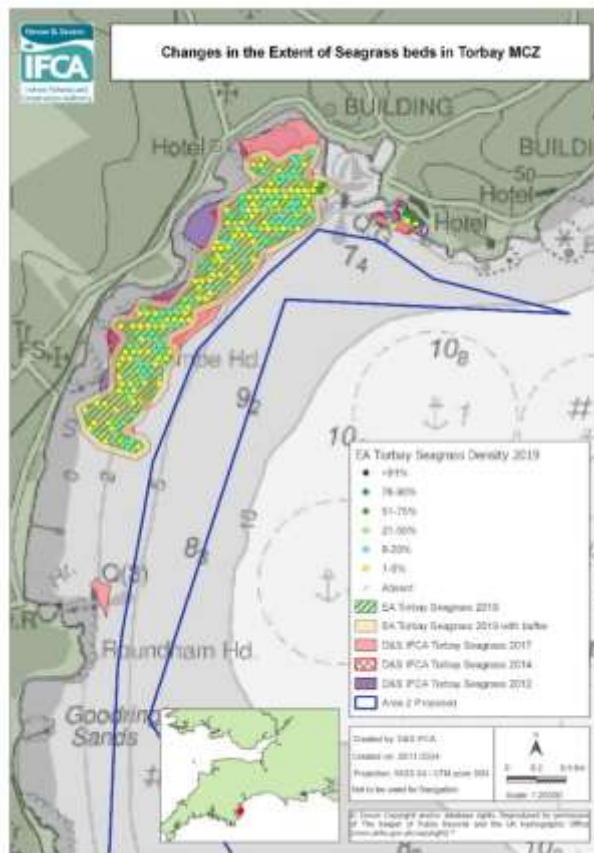
On 11th February 2020, during development of the replacement Byelaw (and permit conditions), the B&PSC discussed the protection of seagrass and changes to management. Members were made aware that in 2014, management measures were introduced in Torbay to prohibit demersal towed gear from interacting with sensitive reef habitat and in doing so afforded some protection to seagrass beds. It was also reported that further changes to the Category One Mobile Fishing Permit Conditions were introduced in 2017 to protect the sub-tidal mud feature and all known seagrass beds within the Torbay MCZ.

Members were provided with an officers' report explaining that the seagrass beds had extended beyond the boundary (closure) lines of the Annex that accompanies the Category One Permit Conditions. Members agreed that the additional areas of seagrass should be afforded the same protection by changing the management measures. This was recognised by officers in the drafting of permit conditions that went out to formal consultation (25th November 2022 to 20th January 2023). There were no objections relating to changes in access for demersal trawling in the Torbay MCZ.

2. Updated Information on Seagrass Beds

D&S IFCA officers undertook seagrass surveys in Torbay between 2012 and 2017. In 2019 the Environment Agency undertook a survey of the seagrass in Torbay. The 2019 survey was the last survey undertaken on the extent of Torbay MCZ's seagrass beds. The seagrass extent has changed over time as can be seen in the chart below. The seagrass beds in Torre Abbey, in particular, extend southwards and the change to the access area was proposed to account for the surveyed changes in extent. This also incorporates for an area towards Roundham

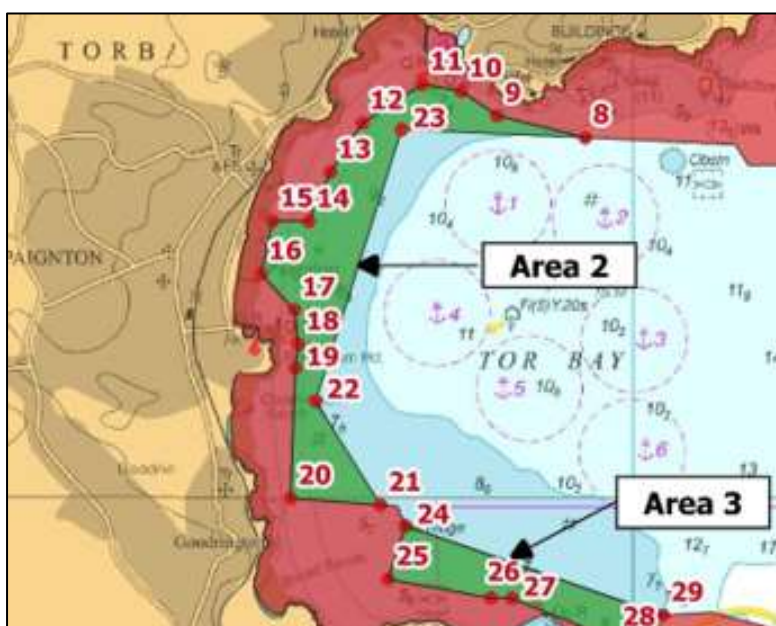
that has previously seen the presence of seagrass and could potentially support seagrass in this area in the future.



3. The Changes to Permit Conditions

The snips below show the change to be applied:

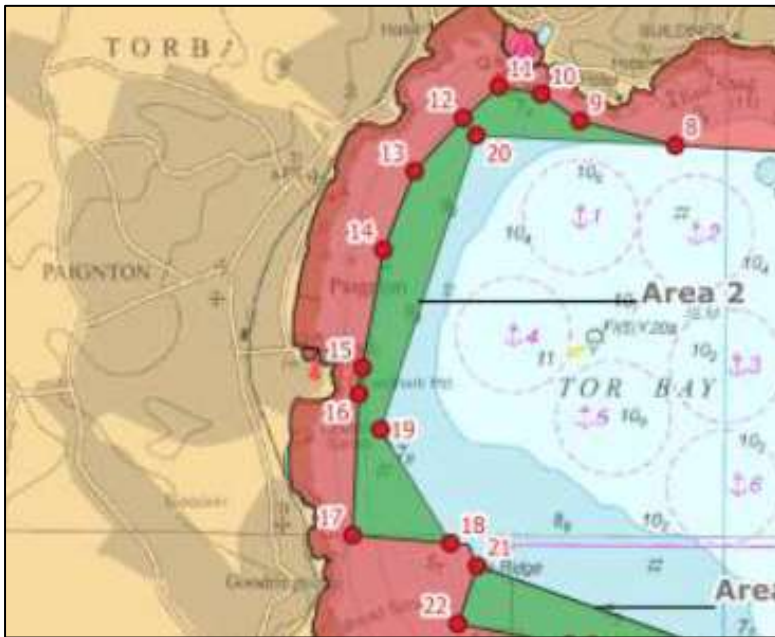
Snip of current Annex 3a



Left is a snip of the current Annex 3a, the access area for demersal trawl gear between 1st April and 30th June inclusive.

The access area (green) indents towards the shore between points 15 and 17.

Snip of Annex 3a – as per the formal consultation



Left is Annex 3a that was advertised during formal consultation.

The access area for demersal trawl gear is reduced to the east of Paignton – see points 14 and 15.

The access dates remain as between 1st April and 30th June inclusive.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers

B&PSC - Officers' papers and minutes of meetings – [Section B of D&S IFCA website Resource Library](#).

End.