



# **A review of closed areas in the United Kingdom Exclusive Economic Zone**

**S. I. Rogers**

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Number 106

**A REVIEW OF CLOSED AREAS IN THE  
UNITED KINGDOM EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE**

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formerly the Directorate of Fisheries Research*

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Many areas around the UK are closed to fishing activity for a variety of reasons, from the need to either protect high security Royal Navy ports, ensure safety near oil and gas installations, or to protect natural populations that may be at risk. Where these closed areas provide protection for fish stocks and benthic fauna and flora, they might also provide either control areas for comparison with sites where normal fishing activity occurs, or experimental sites which can be manipulated. This Report lists all the closed areas in the UK Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) which prohibit access to fishing vessels for 12 months a year, and which may also regulate access to particular gears. There are other local and national seasonal restrictions on access by vessels which are beyond the scope of this report, but it should be noted that where such short term bans regulate access to a seasonal fishery, they can in effect constitute a 12 month closure. Areas are grouped according to whether the closure applies to (a) a particular form of fishing (interpreted as a gear type or target species), (b) all forms of fishing activity, (c) all seabed extraction activities, and (d) all forms of human activity.

## 1.1 Sources of information

A wide range of sources have been consulted to obtain information on the restrictions that apply to fishing activity. The areas included are those where access is regulated and enforced by a specific byelaw, Order or Statutory Instrument, or where existing EC or national

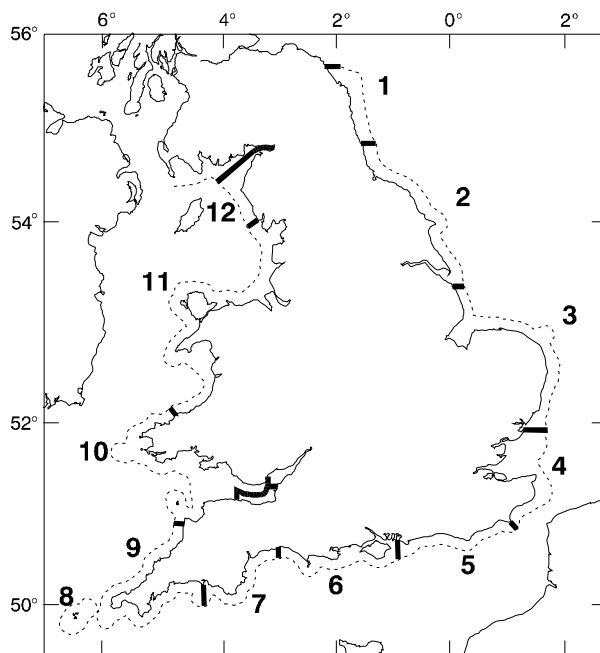
legislation is in force. Areas marked on Admiralty Navigation Charts which warn of hazards on the seabed, but which are not supported by such legislation, for example the area of seabed close to cables and gas and oil pipelines, are not included in this study. In addition to the three statutory Marine Nature Reserves (MNRs) in the UK, there are a variety of other non-statutory designations used for coastal nature conservation, including Voluntary Marine Nature Reserves and Parks (e.g. the Seven Sisters, Wembury, Isles of Scilly) which, although often respected by fishermen, are not included here. Estuarine and coastal areas of conservation importance also receiving protection are UK Coastal Wetlands (Ramsar sites), and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the EC Birds Directive. The EC Habitats and Species Directive (92/43/EEC), introduced in 1992, will soon lead to the introduction of further protection of marine sites by means of Special Areas of Conservation. A summary of all Marine Protected Areas in the UK has been prepared by Gubbay (1993). References to specific legislation and addresses of those organisations involved in implementing closed areas are provided, by section, in Appendix 1.

## 2. CLOSED AREAS

### 2.1 Regulatory Authorities

The Commission for the European Community devolves authority to regulate fisheries within the territorial waters of England and Wales to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF). The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) not only sets the framework for the allocation of fisheries resources amongst member States and their rights of access to Community waters, but also allows the introduction of technical measures for the conservation of fisheries resources. It is through this EU Regulation dealing with technical measures (No. 3094/86), and corresponding UK legislation under the Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1967, that much of the prohibition and restriction of fishing vessel access to inshore areas is implemented.

In addition, some authority for fisheries management is devolved to regional bodies, such as the local Sea Fisheries Committees (SFCs) and the Environment Agency (EA) in England and Wales, which are responsible for coastal and estuarine stocks within 6 miles of baselines (Figure 1). Amongst the wide range of technical measures implemented by SFCs to conserve local fish stocks are those which govern the access to specified parts of the coast. Despite the recent extension of the seaward limit from 3 to 6 miles, SFCs must reapply for those byelaws which they would like to have extended from 3 miles to the new limit. This process is now taking place in some districts, particularly in relation to byelaws which affect the size of vessel which can enter local waters.



**Figure 1. Limits of jurisdiction of the 12 Sea Fisheries Committees around the coast of England and Wales, with the 6 mile limit shown by the dotted line**

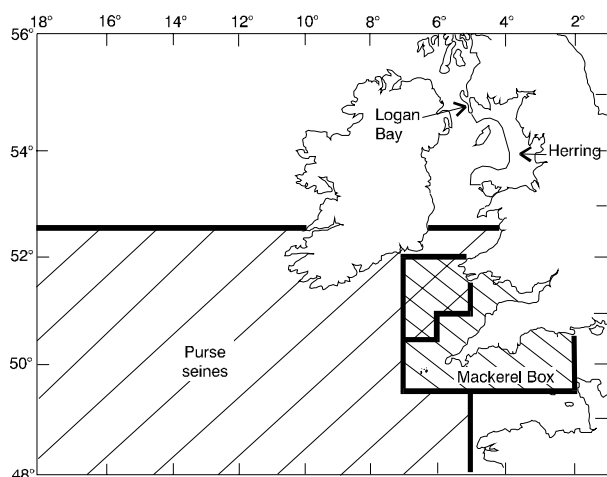
Regulation of the other inshore fisheries of the UK are under the direct control of the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland (DANI) and the Scottish Office Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries Department (SOAEFD).

## 2.2 Areas closed to certain forms of fishing

This section includes those UK fisheries controlled by EC regulations. It does not include regulation of mesh size, vessel or gear size, size or sex restrictions on landing of molluscs and crustacea, or head-line depth and placement of fixed engines.

### 2.2.1 EC Council prohibition of fishing regulations

Since the collapse of the northern Irish Sea herring stocks in 1980, management of the fishery in this area has included closures of both spawning and nursery grounds. In order to protect areas where juveniles are abundant, fishing for herring is not permitted at any time in Logan Bay, or within the UK 12-mile limit of the north-east Irish Sea (Figure 2). Other closures that apply to herring spawning grounds in the western Irish Sea and south-west of the Isle of Man, north west Scotland and off the north-east coast of England are all seasonal.



**Figure 2.** Areas in the Irish Sea, within the 12 mile limit, where fishing for herring is not permitted. The area closed to purse seines and the mackerel box are also shown

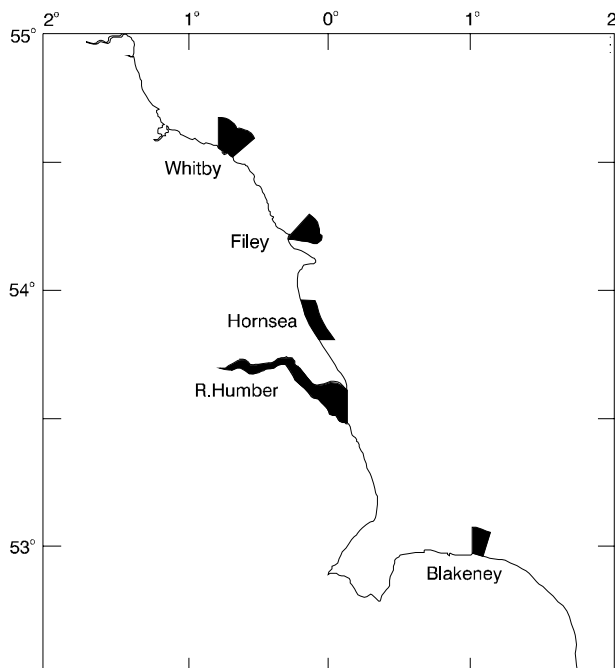
Other EC Council regulations limit the mesh size of nets that can be used in seasonal fisheries for sprat on the north-east coast of England, and in the Moray Firth and Firth of Forth, although they are not described in detail here. Off the north-east coast of Scotland, restrictions on mesh size and percentage of catch apply to the Norway pout.

In 1981 a closed area was established on the south-west coast of the UK to protect overwintering populations of juvenile mackerel, and in 1989 the boundaries were extended to form the current 'mackerel box' (Figure 2). Within this area it is not permitted to retain on board mackerel which comprise over 15% by weight of the total catch, and which have been caught with any gear other than gill net or hand line. This legislation excludes vessels using towed gears or Danish seine nets, provided that mackerel comprises only a small (15% by weight) proportion of the catch.

In addition to these species-specific regulations, there are also bans on the use of purse seines to catch herring and demersal fin-fish in the area between the coasts of Wales and Ireland (Figure 2).

### 2.2.2 Areas closed to trawls (all towed gears)

All trawling (for sea fish but excluding salmon, eels and freshwater species) is prohibited along specific parts of the UK coast. In the North Eastern District, no trawling is permitted out to 3 miles at Whitby and Filey (Figure 3) and these restrictions have been in place for at least 60 years. Their purpose is to limit fishing activity in the inshore areas where juvenile gadoids (mainly cod) gather before moving into deeper water, and also to provide a protected area to set pots and long lines.



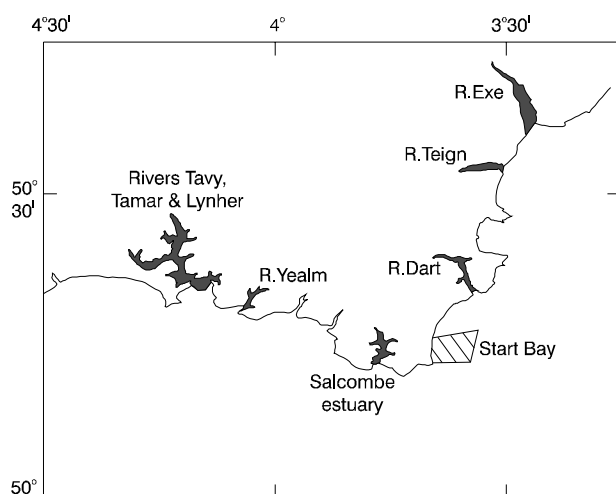
**Figure 3.** Areas on the north-east coast of England closed to trawling. No fishing for salmon and sea trout with any gear other than approved 'T' or 'J' nets is permitted by the EA at Whitby Harbour and in the River Humber



These areas are routinely enforced and local fishery officers are convinced of their value to local fisheries. A similar closed area at Hornsea, in force since 1988 and extending to 1.5 miles, protects juvenile lobsters released during the CEFAS lobster release programme of the late 1980s (Figure 3).

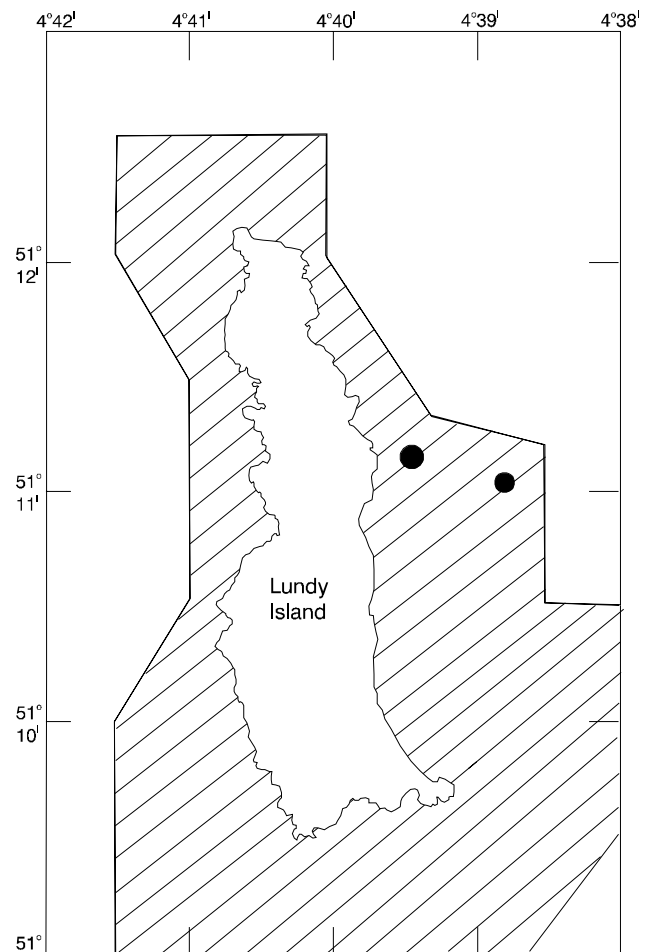
In the Eastern District, no trawling is permitted within the area of the North Norfolk coast at Blakeney except using midwater trawls in winter (Figure 3). This byelaw has been in its current form since 1980, but some regulation of trawling in this area to protect crab and lobster stocks has been in force since 1902.

Neither trawling nor fixed net fishing is permitted within the estuaries of the Rivers Exe, Teign, Dart, Yealm, at Salcombe, and within the breakwater at Plymouth Sound including the estuaries of the Rivers Tavy, Tamar and Lynher (Figure 4). This byelaw has been in force since at least the 1940s to manage the exploitation of a range of commercial species, particularly salmonids. In the River Tamar and its estuaries, the River Plym and the River Yealm, there is additional bass nursery area legislation in force which prevents all fishing for bass from vessels. The southern part of Start Bay in Devon has been closed to trawling for at least 50 years to protect the crab population (Figure 4).

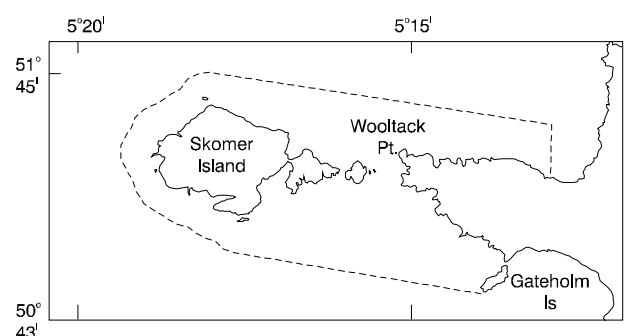


**Figure 4.** The area in Start Bay where trawling is prohibited, and other restrictions on trawling and fixed net fishing in estuaries of the south-west

Lundy Island in the Bristol Channel is one of three statutory MNRs in the UK designated under the Marine Nature Reserve (MNR) provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). Legislation introduced in 1986 for marine conservation and marine archaeology purposes prevents use of towed gears within certain zones (Figure 5). Fixed nets are also not permitted in this area, except by permit within a small area on the south-east coast. On another MNR, Skomer Island in



**Figure 5.** Areas around Lundy Island within the hatched area where no towed gears are permitted. All fishing is prohibited within 100 m of two archaeologically important wrecks sites (●)

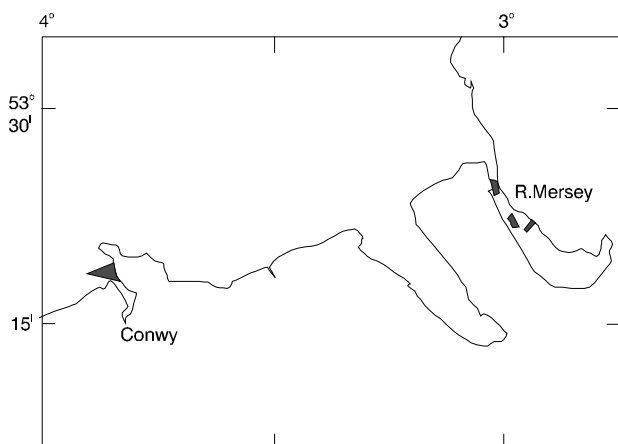


**Figure 6.** The Skomer Marine Nature Reserve where no fishing with dredge or beam trawl is permitted within the broken line

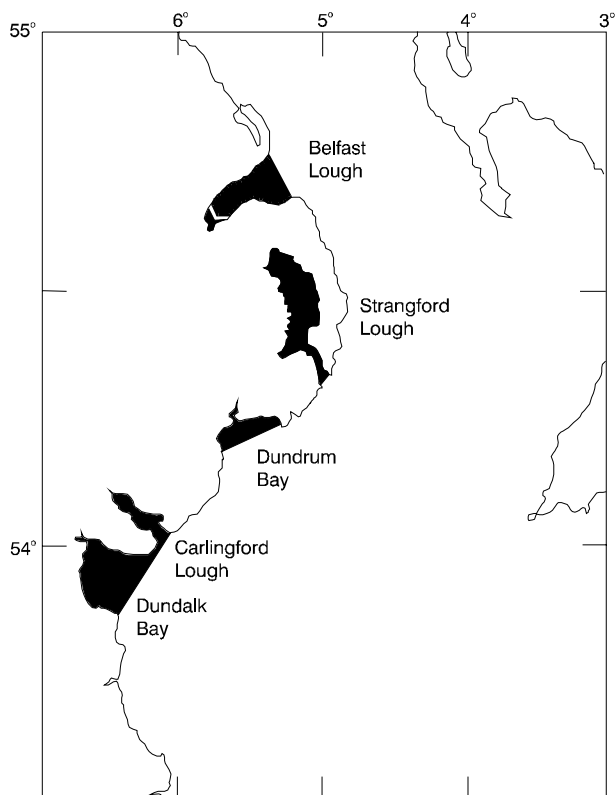
Pembrokeshire, local SFC byelaws introduced in 1990 prohibit fishing for any sea fish with either a dredge or a beam trawl (Figure 6). Both these closures are considered to be effective at minimising damage to the ecosystem, as the reserves each have a management plan and permanent staff to ensure enforcement of the regulations.

In the Conwy estuary, no trawling is permitted on the mussel beds, and where transplanted mussels are found (Figure 7). This fishery has been the subject of extensive research and monitoring by CEFAS staff at the Conwy Laboratory during the 1970s, and subsequently by the North Western and North Wales SFC.

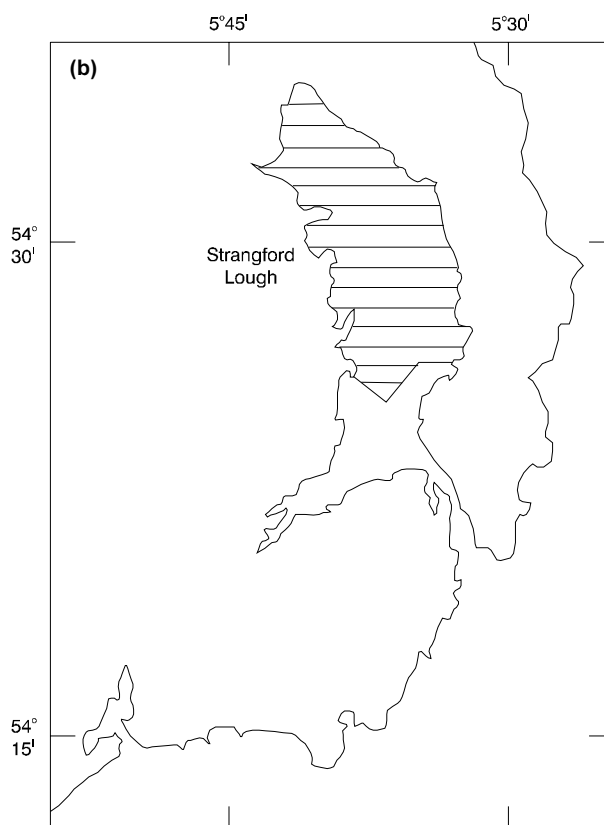
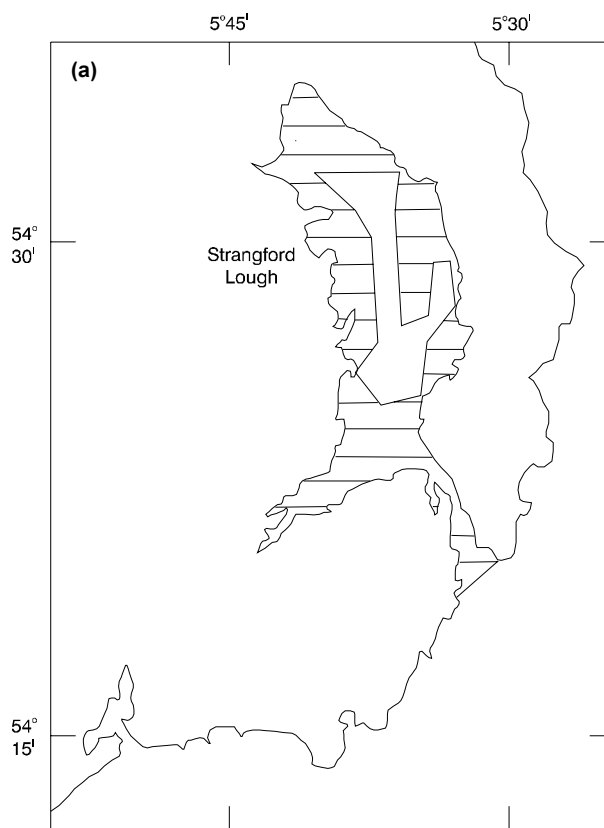
On the coast of Northern Ireland, no trawling is permitted in Dundalk Bay or Carlingford Lough, in Dundrum Bay or in Belfast Lough (Figure 8). Strangford Lough is the third MNR in the UK, and there are a number of specific



**Figure 7.** *The area in the Conwy estuary where no trawling is permitted, and parts of the River Mersey where no fishing is permitted*



**Figure 8.** *Loughs and bays on the east coast of Northern Ireland where no trawling is permitted. No seine net fishing is permitted in Dundalk Bay, Carlingford Lough, Dundrum Bay or in the inner part of Belfast Lough*



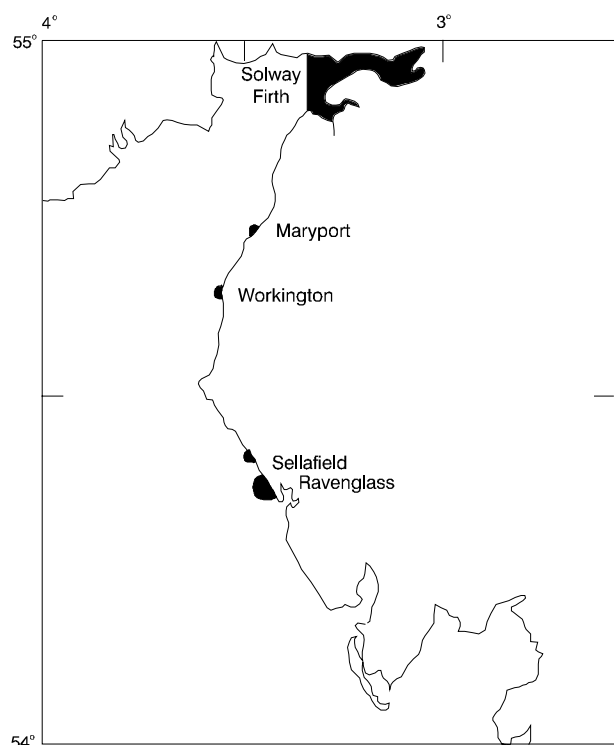
**Figure 9.** *The Strangford Lough Marine Nature Reserve, where no trawling is permitted within the shallow area (Figure 9(a)), and no scallop dredges are permitted within the northern part (Figure 9(b)). No hydraulic suction dredging is permitted within the Lough*

exclusions in force, mainly to protect the horse mussel (*Modiolus modiolus*) beds from damage during the queen scallop fishery. The use of trawls is not permitted in the shallow parts of the Lough (Figure 9(a)), and all fishing for horse mussel is banned. No beam trawling is allowed anywhere in the Lough, and dredges may not be used for harvesting scallops inside the hatched area (Figure 9(b)). The value of these exclusion areas is currently the subject of study by DANI.

### 2.2.3 Areas closed to seine nets (encircling gears)

The North Western and North Wales SFC does not permit the use of Danish and Scottish seines throughout the District. This byelaw, in force since the 1960s, excludes these gears as they require a lot of sea room, to the exclusion of local trawlers.

The use of these gears is also prohibited in the North Eastern and Northumberland SFC Districts. More specific bans apply on the coast of Cumbria, where drift nets or beach seine nets are not permitted within a 1 mile radius of river mouths at Maryport, Workington, Sellafield and Ravenglass, or in the upper Solway Firth, unless licensed by the EA to catch salmon (Figure 10). On the coast of Northern Ireland, no seine net fishing is permitted in Dundalk Bay, Carlingford Lough, Dundrum Bay or in the inner part of Belfast Lough (Figure 8).

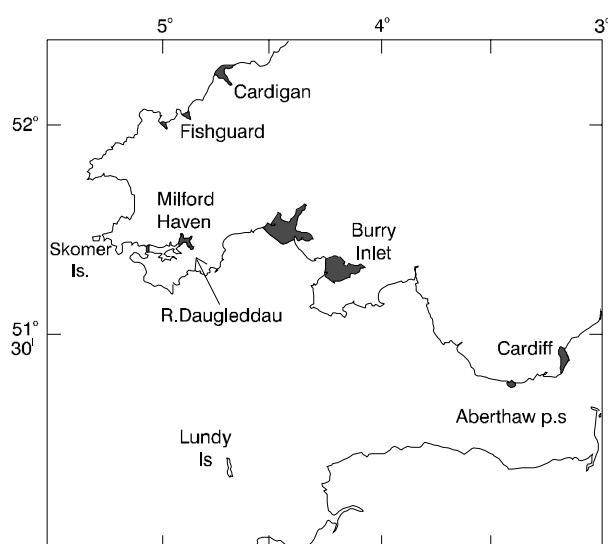


**Figure 10.** Areas on the Cumbrian coast at Maryport, Workington, Sellafield, Ravenglass and the upper Solway Firth where drift nets or beach seine nets are not permitted unless licensed by the EA to catch salmon

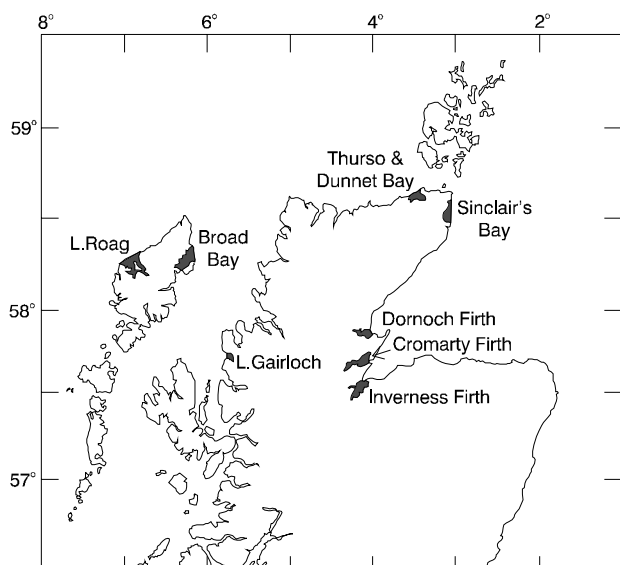
### 2.2.4 Areas closed to all mobile gears (all towed gears and all seine nets)

In the South Wales District there is a ban on trawling and Danish seine netting within the Milford Haven and associated estuaries, to protect a number of commercial stocks in the estuary. In 1984 a byelaw was introduced to allow, by permit only, some oyster dredging in the Haven, but only within the estuary of the River Daugleddau (Figure 11).

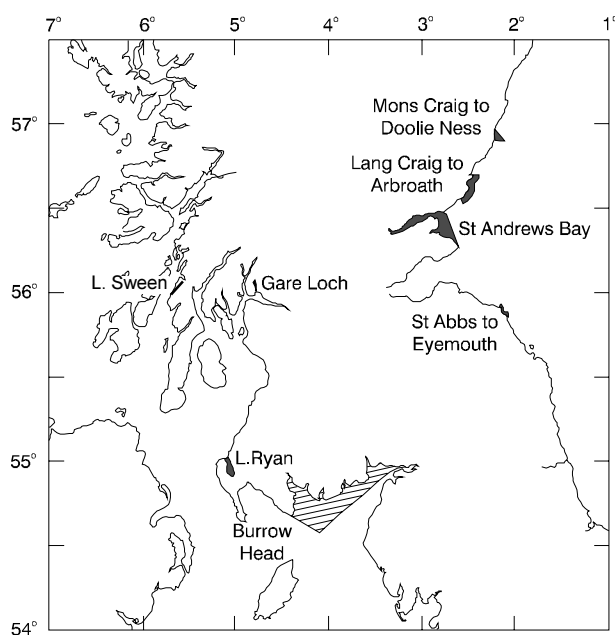
The Inshore Fishing Order (1989) forbids use of all mobile gears (trawl, Danish seine, purse seine, ring net or dredge) in a number of lochs, estuaries and coastal areas of Scotland (Figures 12 and 13). In Broad Bay, Thurso Bay, Dunnet Bay and Sinclair's Bay, these restrictions are thought to protect flatfish spawning and nursery grounds, mainly those of plaice, and have been in force for some considerable time. In Loch Roag, Loch Gairloch and St Andrews Bay, and in the coastal areas at Mons Craig, Lang Craig (to 2 miles from low water) and at St Abbs Head (to 1 mile from low water), the ban on mobile gears allows the important creel fisheries for lobster, crab and *Nephrops*, and some gill netting, to take place unhindered. In Gare Loch, spawning and nursery grounds for demersal species are similarly protected (Figure 13). All these closures are strictly enforced by local fishery officers, and appear to offer genuine protection to demersal fauna from all towed gears.



**Figure 11.** No fixed gears are permitted in the Teifi estuary at Cardigan, no fixed nets or drift nets are permitted in Fishguard Bay or Cardiff Bay, and no drift nets are permitted in the Burry inlet. There is a ban on trawling and Danish seine netting within the Milford Haven and associated estuaries, and restrictions on bass fishing within a 1 mile radius of Aberthaw Power Station. The positions of the Skomer and Lundy Island MNRs is shown



**Figure 12.** All mobile gears (trawl, Danish seine, purse seine, ring net or dredge) are prohibited in the shaded areas. In Dornoch Firth, Cromarty Firth and Inverness Firth only dredging may only be undertaken for mussels and cockles, and not by suction dredging



**Figure 13.** All mobile gears (trawl, Danish seine, purse seine, ring net or dredge) are prohibited in the shaded areas. No hydraulic suction dredging is permitted in Loch Sween. In Loch Ryan only dredging for mussels and oysters is permitted. No cockle fishing by motorised vessel is permitted in the Scottish coastal waters of the Solway Firth east of Burrow Head and out to the median line

## 2.2.5 Bass nursery area closures

Legislation introduced in 1994 to protect juvenile bass applies all year round at several coastal sites. Fishing for bass from a vessel is not permitted close to the Isle of Grain and Kingsnorth Power Stations in the Medway, in the Fleet, Dorset, and within a 1 mile radius of Aberthaw Power Station, South Wales (Figure 11).

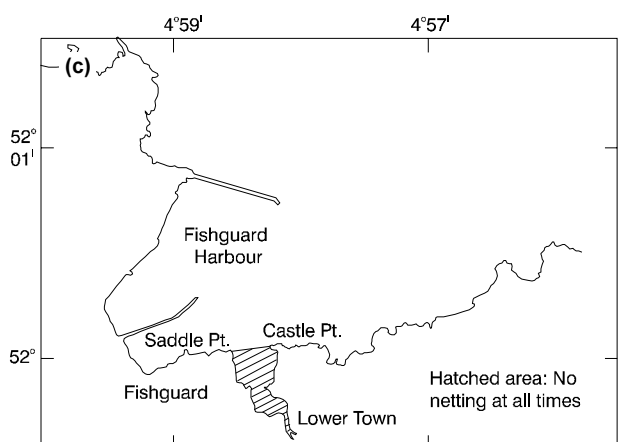
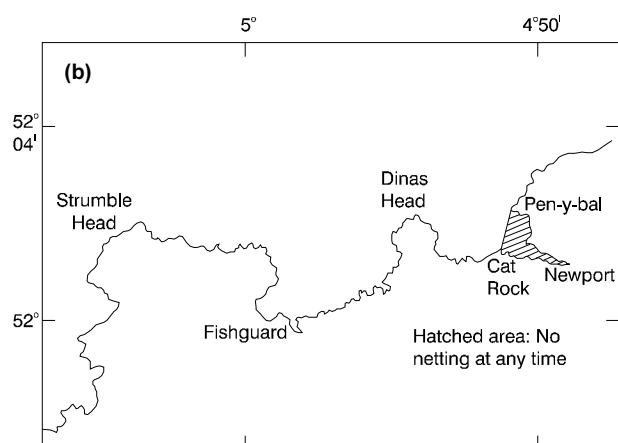
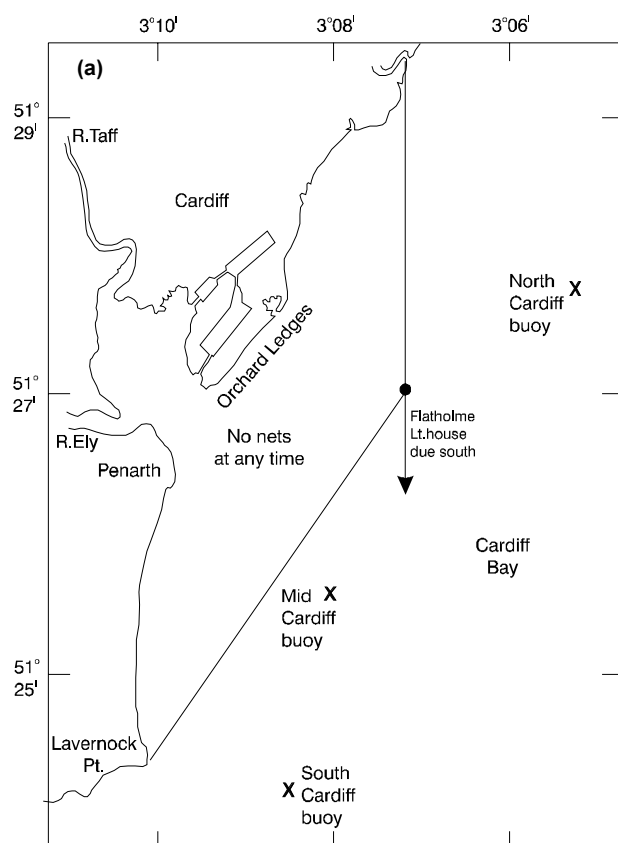
## 2.2.6 Areas closed to fixed nets and drift nets

No fixed gears are permitted in the Teifi estuary, Cardigan (Figure 11), and no fixed nets or drift nets are permitted in Cardiff Bay (Figure 14(a)), Newport Bay and Fishguard Bay (Figures 11, 14(b), 14(c)). No drift nets are permitted in the north of Carmarthen Bay close to the Towy estuary and to the east in the Burry Inlet (Figure 15(a)). No fishing for salmon and sea trout with any gear other than approved 'T' or 'J' nets is permitted by the EA in specific parts of the Northumbrian and Yorkshire coast, from Amble Harbour to the River Tees (Figure 15(b)), and at Whitby Harbour and in the River Humber (Figure 3).

## 2.2.7 Areas closed to various forms of shellfish harvesting

Inshore shellfisheries within SFC Districts are regulated by a combination of SFC byelaws and Regulating Orders. Byelaws can apply to all species of fish and shellfish, but at present Regulating Orders apply only to mollusc fisheries. Regulating Orders require fishermen to obtain licences specifying the permitted gear, fishing season, catch limits, and other access and harvesting arrangements within the area of the Order. Byelaws can specify vessel size, gear, season, area, species, catch limits, and minimum landing size for the SFC District. In addition, Several Orders restrict the rights of fishing for mollusc species to named individuals or groups fishing with particular gears in specified areas, and from which the public right of fishery has been removed in order to secure the benefits of improved management.

Some vessel size and gear restrictions are designed to reduce conflicts of interest between fishermen using small boats, and who are dependent on areas easily overexploited by larger vessels. Other byelaws and Regulating Order restrictions are designed to limit the rate of harvesting by controlling the spread of methods which are either very efficient (i.e. the suction dredging method of cockle harvesting), or which may damage the seabed (i.e. harvesting cockles by 'blowing out' with the vessels' propeller). Harvesting cockles by this method is banned in The Wash.



**Figure 14. No fixed gears are permitted in (a) Cardiff Bay, (b) Newport Bay and (c) Fishguard Bay**

No suction dredging is permitted within the Districts of the North Eastern, Eastern, and North Western and North Wales SFCs, in Strangford Lough (when targeting mussels) or in Loch Sween. In Loch Ryan only dredging for mussels and oysters is permitted, and in Dornoch Firth, Cromarty Firth and Inverness Firth only dredging for mussels and cockles is permitted (but not by suction dredging) (Figures 12 and 13).

The Conwy mussel Regulating Order and the River Fal oyster Several Order forbid fishing from motorised vessel, and no cockle fishing by motorised vessel is permitted in the Scottish coastal waters of the Solway Firth east of Burrow Head out to the median line (Figure 13).

The Burry Inlet Cockle Fishery Order, 1965 only permits gathering by hand, using a hand rake, or by another approved appliance, and forbids any activity which disturbs or damages the seabed within the area (Figure 15(a)). In particular this is aimed at the digging of lugworm for bait. This Regulating Order was initially administered by MAFF in the 1960s and enforcement and monitoring continues under the authority of the local SFC.

## 2.3 Areas closed to all fishing

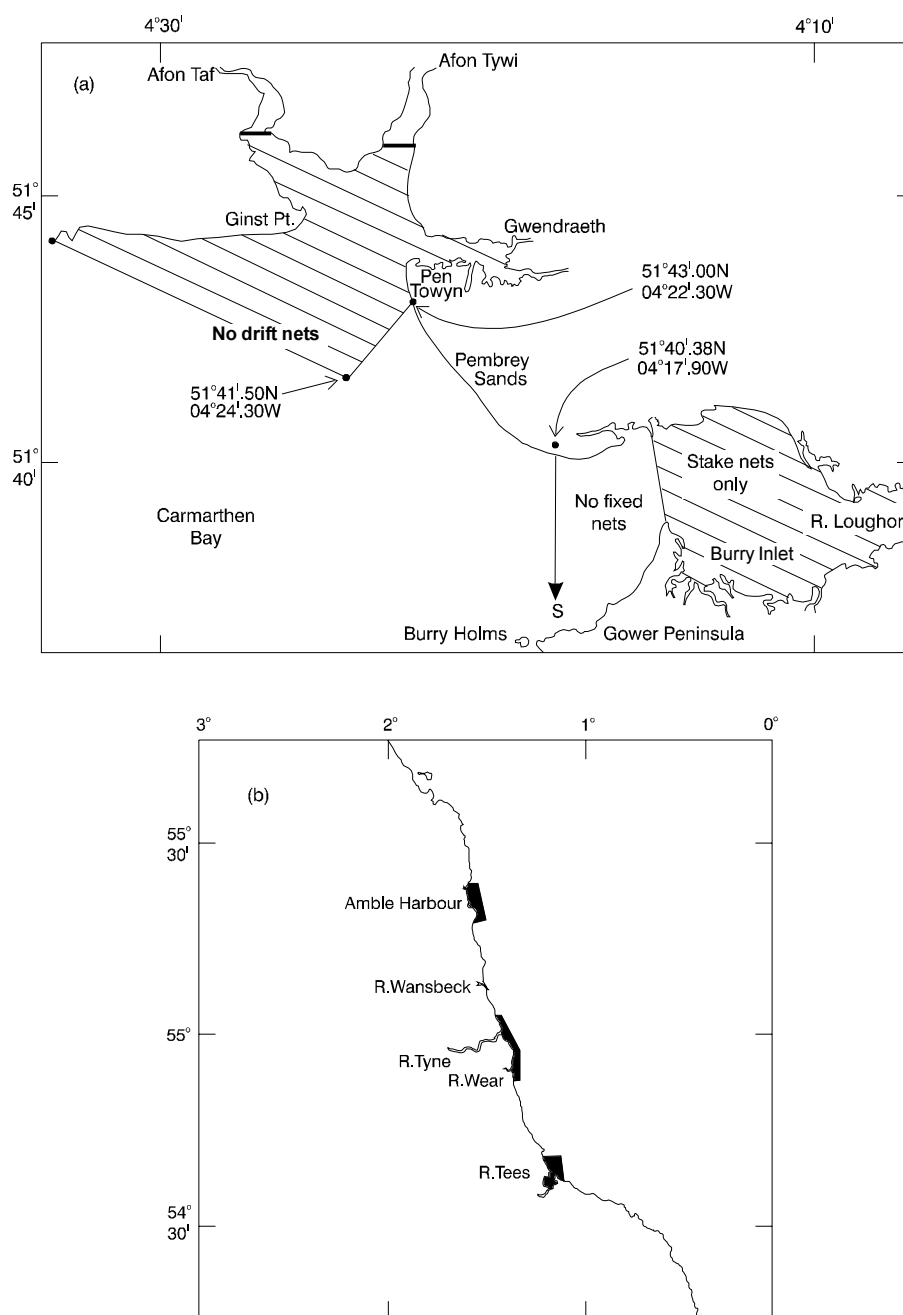
No EC legislation or SFC byelaw specifically prohibits all forms of fishing in UK territorial waters.

### 2.3.1 Marine Nature Reserves

All MNRs permit various forms of exploitation either by permit or seasonally, and only the Lundy Island Marine Reserve forbids all fishing within 100 m of two archaeologically important wrecks sites (marked on Figure 5). These sites, although small (63 ha), are closely monitored and are likely to be genuinely free of all fishing impact, at least since 1986 when the site was designated.

### 2.3.2 Royal Navy ports, artillery ranges and explosives dump sites

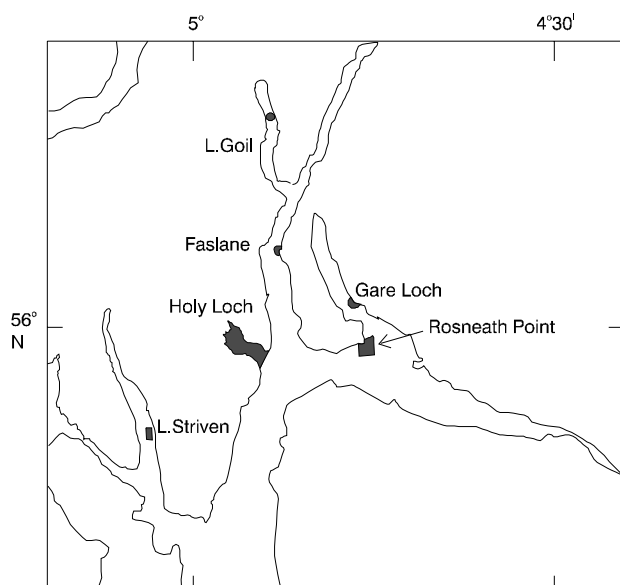
Ports which are occupied by the Royal Navy often exclude all fishing activity from areas close to anchorages and navigation channels, and these are marked on Admiralty Charts. For example, there is no access to the area close to Rosyth in the Firth of Forth. In the Clyde, the Holy Loch is closed to all fishing activity, there is no access to an area of radius 170 m around the jetties at Faslane, there is no access to the exclusion area at Rhu in the Gare Loch, and no access to the 170 m radius exclusion zone around the NATO fuel jetty in Loch Striven (Figure 16). In Loch Goil there is an exclusion zone around fixed arrays of transducers and other electronic equipment, and there is no access to



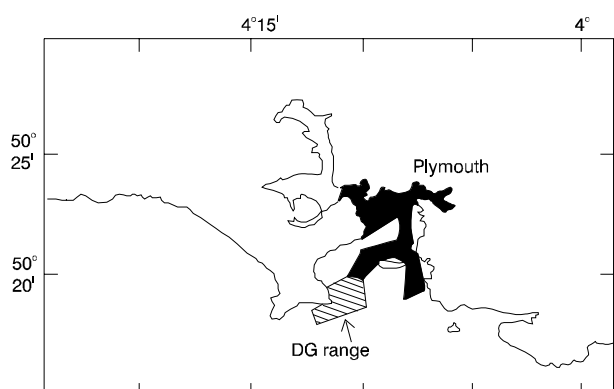
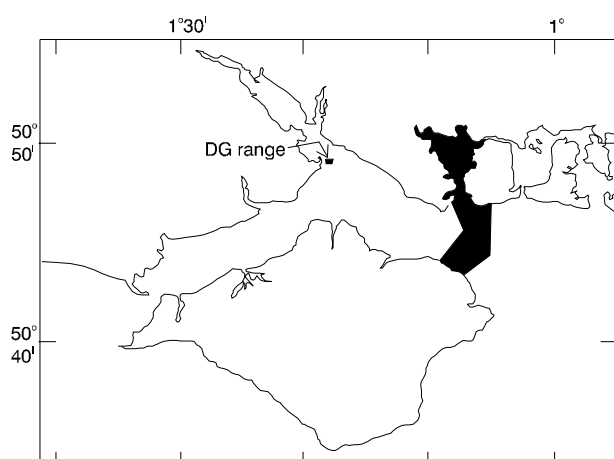
**Figure 15. Only hand gathering of cockles, or using a hand rake, or by another approved appliance, is permitted in the Burry Inlet Cockle Fishery Order (Figure 15(a)). No drift nets are permitted in the hatched area. No fishing for salmon and sea trout with any gear other than approved 'T' or 'J' nets is permitted by the EA in parts of the Northumbrian and Yorkshire coast, from Amble Harbour to the River Tees (Figure 15(b))**

vessels within the degaussing range at Rosneath Point (Figure 16). Several of these 'ranges' can be found on the coast near to important navigation routes and are used to determine the magnetic signature of vessels (Figure 17). They can disrupt the electronics onboard and it is not therefore considered safe to enter. Parts of the Gare Loch are currently the subject of research into trawl impact undertaken by SOAEFD. Portsmouth Harbour and part of the Solent, and much of Plymouth Sound, are also closed to fishing activity by Statutory Instrument within the jurisdiction of the appropriate Dockyard Port (Figure 17).

All artillery ranges operated by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) have byelaws which exclude access by fishing vessels while the range is in use, however, there is no evidence that any of them prevent access during periods when the range is not used. Marine disposal of surplus munitions has been widespread in the coastal waters of the British Isles. Although recent dump sites are clearly marked on Admiralty charts, there is no statutory regulation of access and indeed some are regularly fished. The nearest site for the disposal of radioactive waste is outside territorial waters in the Hurd Deep, western English Channel.



**Figure 16. Areas on the west coast of Scotland closed to all fishing activity**



**Figure 17. Portsmouth Harbour and part of the Solent, and much of Plymouth Sound, are closed to fishing activity. Degaussing (DG) ranges are marked by shading**

In addition to these restrictions at Royal Navy ports, there are a variety of small areas within the navigation channels of some commercial ports and harbours throughout the UK where no fishing is permitted. A comprehensive summary of these has not been prepared, however an example of the areas within the Mersey Estuary closed to fishing, and under the jurisdiction of the Dockyard Port of Liverpool, is shown in Figure 7.

### 2.3.3 Historic wrecks

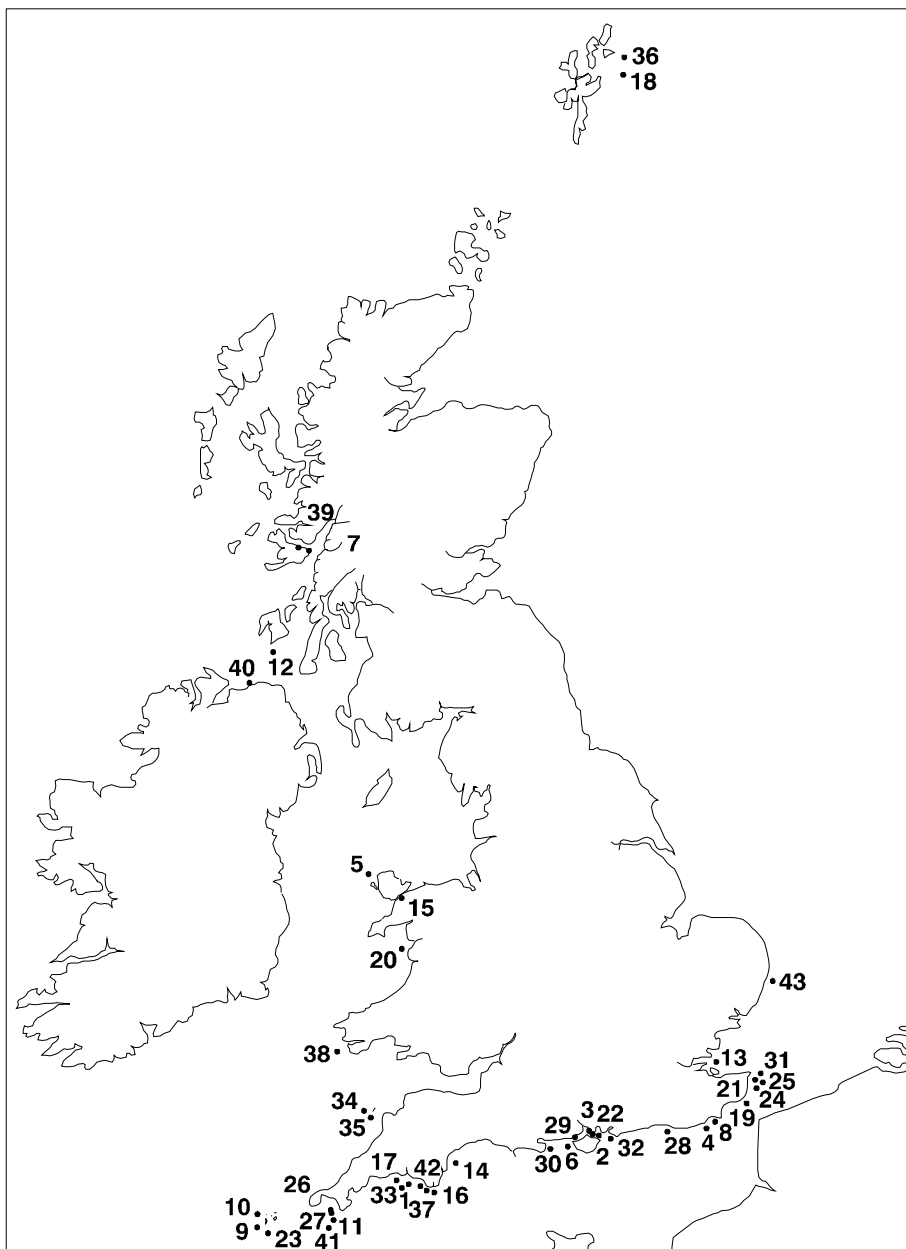
Historic wrecks are designated under the Protection of Wrecks Act (1973), where a site is considered to need protection from unauthorised interference because of historical, archaeological or artistic importance. There are 41 such sites in UK waters which are currently designated (Figure 18). The Act specifies the site and the geographic extent of the 'restricted area' where certain activities are prohibited. Although the use of towed fishing gears is not specifically listed as a prohibited activity, it is included under the general heading of any activity which causes damage to the wreck within the prohibited area.

The majority of sites are relatively small (less than c. 30 ha) and are not identified by buoys, although they are marked on the Admiralty chart and Notices to Mariners are issued.

At some sites on the south coast of England there have been reports of damage to wrecks by both pots and dredges, even where the wrecks are marked by buoys. While these restricted areas can notionally be considered as areas closed to all fishing, enforcement of the legislation is difficult as it is necessary to prove evidence of damage to the wreck, rather than merely entry within the restricted area. As a consequence, there have been no prosecutions. In general, fishermen will tend to avoid contact with all wrecks, but fish as close to them as safely possible, whether they are protected or not.

### 2.3.4 Oil and gas installations

The Petroleum Act, 1987 allowed the creation of two types of safety zones relating to oil and gas installations offshore, those affecting surface installations and those affecting all subsea structures (not pipelines). Under this legislation, a zone of radius 500 m (area 78 ha) is automatically created when all new surface structures become operational. All subsea installations are also protected by safety zones of similar size, but these must be established individually by Order. All subsea and surface safety zones in the Irish Sea, and those of the east coast of England are within territorial waters (Figure 19(a-c)). These zones are normally patrolled by support vessels, and all fishing operations can be monitored from the installations themselves, so it is likely that the exclusion zones do genuinely represent areas where no fishing activity occurs.



1. Cattewater
2. Mary Rose
3. Grace Dieu
4. Amsterdam
5. R.Y. Mary\*
6. Assurance
7. Dartmouth\*\*
8. HMS Anne
9. HMS Romney
10. HMS Colossus (revoked)
11. Rill Cove Wreck
12. Rinny of Islay (revoked)
13. South Edinburgh Channel

14. Church Rocks Wreck
15. Pwyll Phanog\*
16. Moor Sands
17. Coronation (No. 1)
18. Kennermerland\*\*
19. Langdon Bay
20. Tal-y-Bont\*
21. Stirling Castle
22. Invincible
23. Bartholomew Ledge
24. Northumberland
25. Restoration
26. St. Anthony

27. Scheidam
28. Brighton Marina
29. Yarmouth Roads Wreck
30. Studland Bay
31. Admiral Gardener
32. HMS Hazardous
33. Coronation (No. 2)
34. Iona II
35. Gull Rock Wreck
36. Wrangels Palais\*\*
37. Erme Estuary
38. Smalls Wreck\*
39. Duart Point\*\*

40. The Girona
41. Royal Anne
42. Erme Estuary (Ingot)
43. Dunwich Bank

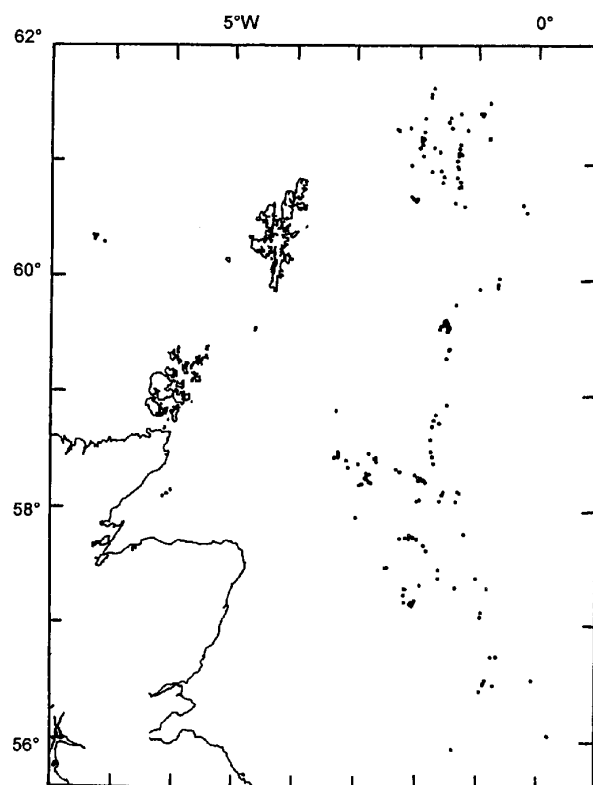
*Responsibility for all sites lies with the Secretary of State for National Heritage except those marked:*

- \* responsibility lies with the Secretary of State for Wales  
 \*\* responsibility lies with the Secretary of State for Scotland

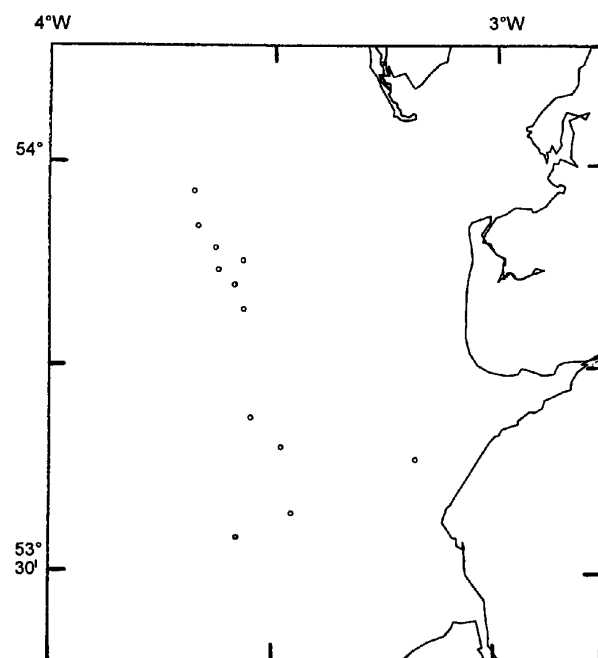
**Figure 18. Sites of historic wrecks in UK waters where all activity which causes damage to the wrecks is prohibited**



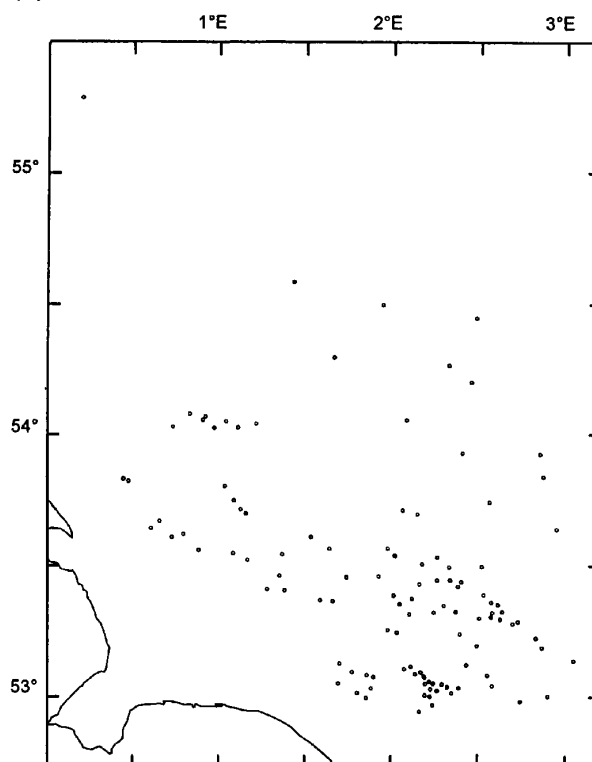
(a)



(b)



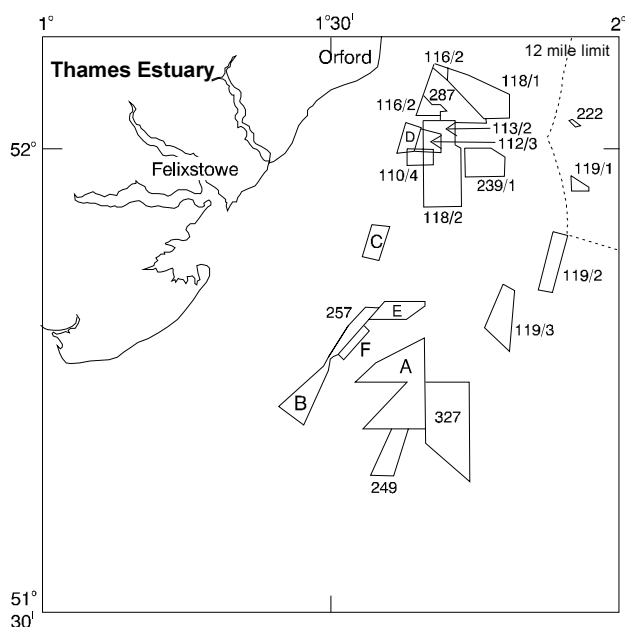
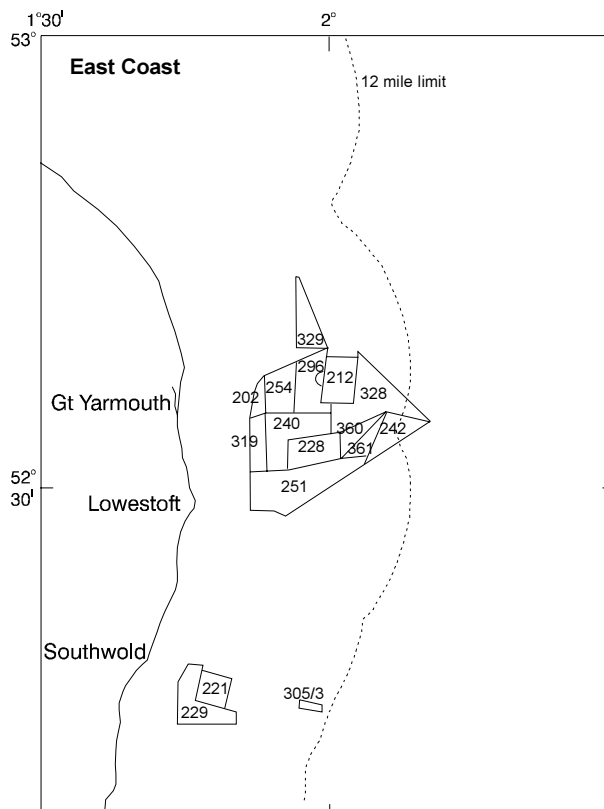
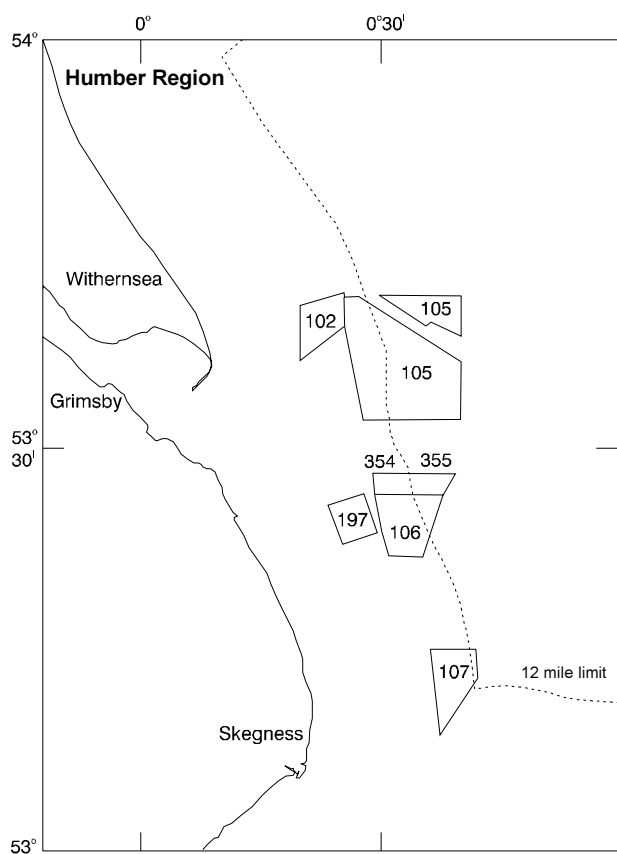
(c)



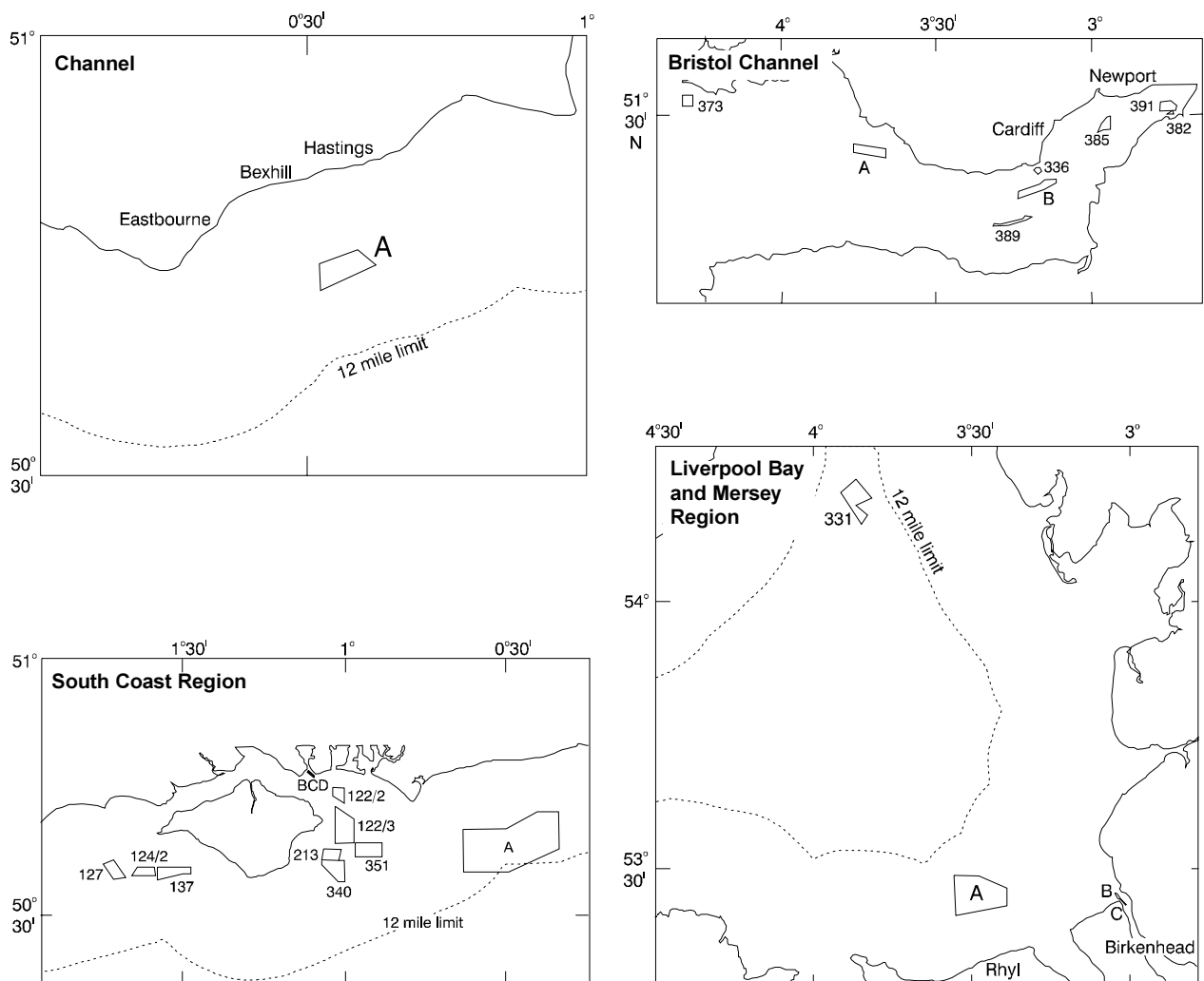
**Figure 19. Sites of all surface structures and subsea installations protected by safety zones of 500m radius. All subsea and surface safety zones in the Irish Sea, and those of the east coast of England are within territorial waters (Figure 19(a-c))**

## 2.4 Areas closed to fishing because of extractive activity

There are several areas around the coast of the UK where fishing activity is temporarily prohibited during extractive activity such as dredging for marine aggregate (Figure 20). Normally these sites are close to the coast in 20-30 m water depth, and their location is primarily governed by the distribution of aggregate resources in inshore waters. There are many other parts of the seabed where dredging does not take place because of the presence of unsuitable terrain, pipelines, dumps, cables, etc. During the licensing process for marine aggregate extraction and offshore oil and gas exploration, certain areas (such as herring spawning grounds) can be identified as sensitive to disturbance and can be avoided, or mitigation measures implemented. Areas licensed for extraction can be worked for over 10 years and the degree of extractive activity depends on the market demand. Interruption to fishing activity is sporadic and difficult to predict, but normally covers a small proportion of the licensed area at any one time.



**Figure 20. Areas licensed for marine dredging activity by The Crown Estate (figures provided by The Crown Estate), with the reference number of each block shown**



**Figure 20. (continued)** Areas licensed for marine dredging activity by The Crown Estate (figures provided by The Crown Estate), with the reference number of each block shown

## 2.5 Areas closed to all forms of human activity, including boats passing through

Very few of these areas exist in UK coastal waters. The only one that is known is the wreck of the vessel ‘*RICHARD MONTGOMERY*’, which is recognised as a major hazard as it contains 4.6 kt of explosives and is less than 5 km from the Isle of Grain Oil Terminal in the River Thames. It has been declared to be in potentially dangerous condition under the UK Protection of Wrecks Act, 1973, and the area around it is closed to all navigation.

## 3. CONCLUSION

No EC legislation or SFC byelaws specifically prohibits all forms of fishing in any part of UK territorial waters. However, by closing a particular area to the predominant fishing activity, such as fixed nets or trawls, the impact of fishing on the environment and on target species is considerably reduced.

Where an exclusion area is in place, its effectiveness will only be as good as the way it is enforced, and in this respect the MNRs have a suitable infrastructure in place and staff and vessels on site to regularly monitor the area. Many of the SFC byelaws which prohibit access to particular gears (i.e. those areas closed to trawling on the north-east coast) are taken seriously and enforced, and so they are probably effective. The best enforcement of closed areas is likely to be near sensitive sites within the jurisdiction of the armed forces, particularly in the Clyde.

Some areas may be more protected from fishing activity than others because of a number of overlapping restrictions which apply to a single area. Examples of this can be seen in Plymouth Sound and in Milford Haven where a number of different regulations (EA, Dockyard Port Orders, SFC byelaws, bass legislation) all overlap.

## 4. REFERENCES

GUBBAY, S., 1993. Marine Protected Areas in European Waters; The British Isles. Part of the BIOMAR project, Marine Coastal Zone Management; Identification, description and mapping of biotopes (LIFE 92-1/IRL/001). The Marine Conservation Society. 160pp.

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## APPENDIX 1. Organisations involved in implementing closed areas

### 2.1 Regulatory Authorities

European Commission  
Rue de la Loi 200  
B-1049 Brussels  
Belgium

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food  
Fisheries Department  
Nobel House  
Smith Square  
London  
SW1P 3JR

Northumberland Sea Fisheries Committee  
Sun Alliance House  
35 Mosley Street  
Newcastle Upon Tyne  
NE1 5JY

North Eastern Sea Fisheries Committee  
County Hall  
Beverley  
North Humberside  
HU17 9BA

Eastern Sea Fisheries Committee  
2nd Floor  
10 Tuesday Market Place  
Kings Lynn  
Norfolk  
PE30 1LD

Kent and Essex Sea Fisheries Committee  
County Hall  
Maidstone  
Kent  
ME14 1XQ

Sussex Sea Fisheries Committee  
106 Station Road  
Hailsham  
East Sussex  
BN27 2EG

Southern Sea Fisheries Committee  
64 Ashley Road  
Poole Dorset  
BH14 9BN

Devon Sea Fisheries Committee  
Office No. 9  
Fish Market  
The Quay  
Brixham  
Devon  
TQ5 8AW

Council of the Isles of Scilly  
Town Hall  
St. Marys  
Isles of Scilly  
TR21 0LW

Cornwall Sea Fisheries Committee  
County Hall  
Truro  
Cornwall  
TR1 3AY

South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee  
Queens Buildings  
Cambrian Place  
Swansea  
SA1 1TW

North Wales and North Western Sea Fisheries  
Committee  
Lancaster University  
Lancaster  
LA1 4XY

Cumbria Sea Fisheries Committee  
6 Duncan Square  
Whitehaven  
Cumbria  
CA28 7LN

Environment Agency  
Rio House  
Waterside Drive  
Aztec West  
Almondsbury  
Bristol BS12 4UD

Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland (DANI)  
Fisheries Division  
Castle Grounds  
Stormont Estate  
Belfast  
BT4 3PW

The Scottish Office Agriculture, Environment and  
Fisheries Department (SOAEFD)  
Pentland House  
47 Robb's Loan  
Edinburgh  
EH14 1TY

#### **2.2.1 EC Council prohibition of fishing regulations**

EC Council Regulation 3094/86  
Official Journal of the European Communities  
L288 Vol. 29 1986.

### **2.2.2 Areas closed to trawls (all towed gears)**

Marine Nature Reserves  
Countryside Council for Wales  
Dyfed and Mid Wales Region  
Plas Goerddan  
Aberystwyth  
Dyfed  
SY23 8EE

### **2.3.2 Royal Navy ports, artillery ranges and explosives dump sites**

Defence Estate Organisation (Lands)  
B4/3, Leatherhead Road  
Chessington  
Surrey  
KT9 2LU

The Hydrographer of the Navy  
Hydrographic Office  
Taunton  
Somerset  
TA1 2DN

### **2.3.3 Historic wrecks**

Archaeological Diving Unit  
Scottish Institute of Maritime Studies  
University of St. Andrews  
Fife  
KY16 9AJ

Advisory Committee on Historic Wreck Sites  
Heritage Division  
Department of National Heritage  
3rd Floor  
2-4 Cockspur Street  
London  
SW1Y 5DH

### **2.3.4 Oil and Gas installations**

Hydrographic Office  
Taunton  
Somerset  
TA1 2DN

### **2.4 Areas closed to fishing because of extractive activity**

The Crown Estate  
Marine Estates  
16 Carlton House Terrace  
London  
SW1Y 5AH





The Centre for Environment, Fisheries & Aquaculture Science  
Lowestoft Laboratory, Pakefield Road  
Lowestoft, Suffolk NR33 0HT UK  
Tel: +44 (0) 1502 562244  
Fax: +44 (0) 1502 513865  
<http://www.cefass.co.uk>

A review of closed areas in the United Kingdom Exclusive Economic Zone