

**Scottish MPA Project
Management options**

HATTON ROCKALL BASIN POSSIBLE MPA

This is a working draft which has been produced to support early discussions with stakeholders about management.

Following a decision by Scottish Ministers this site may be subject to formal consultation, at which point it will become a possible MPA. This document is largely aimed at supporting discussions during the formal consultation process and therefore we have used the term 'possible MPA' throughout.

Document version control

Version	Date	Author	Reason / Comments
Version 0.1	05/03/2013	Beth Henshall	First draft
Version 0.2	11/03/2013	I Marengo	Instalment of first maps
Version 0.3	19/03/2013	D Tobin	Fisheries input
Version 0.4	25/03/2013	Beth Henshall	Addition of sensitivity and management option text
Version 0.5	09/04/2013	Beth Henshall	Amendment to reflect new template
Version 0.6	10/04/2013	Pete Chaniotis	Review
Version 0.7	15/04/2013	Beth Henshall	Changes to reflect MS comments
Version 1.0	16/04/2013	Beth Henshall	Version for MPA Sub Group information
Version 1.1	13/05/2013	Beth Henshall	Inclusion of Sub Group comments and template update
Version 1.2	14/05/2013	Pete Chaniotis	Review of document
Version 1.3	5/05/2013	Beth Henshall	Incorporation of comments
Version 1.4	17/05/2013	Holly Niner	Review of licensed activities text
Version 1.5	23/05/2013	Tom Blasdale	Review of fisheries options
Version 1.6	24/05/2013	Beth Henshall	Incorporation of comments
Version 1.7	05/06/2013	Beth Henshall	Update to template
Version 1.8	13/06/2013	Megan Linwood	Review of Document
Version 1.81	14/06/2013	Declan Tobin	Update of document
Version 1.82	17/06/2013	Beth Henshall	Incorporation of comments

Distribution list

Format	Version	Issue date	Issued to
Electronic	1.0	16/04/2013	MPA Sub Group
Electronic	1.82	18/06/2013	Michael McLeod

DEVELOPMENT OF MANAGEMENT OPTIONS FOR THE HATTON-ROCKALL BASIN POSSIBLE MPA

Management Options Summary

The following table summarises the management options for the Hatton Rockall Basin possible MPA. The options are being considered in order to eliminate or manage the risk of not meeting the conservation objectives for the proposed protected features within the possible MPA. For more detail on these options, please read the full Management Options Paper. It is recommended that discussions take place between sea users, scientists and managers to determine which of these management options is the most appropriate.

Activity	Management options for consideration
Fishing activity: All bottom contact gears	<p>No additional management: There is a risk of not achieving the conservation objective for offshore deep sea muds. The conservation objective would not be achieved for deep sea sponge aggregations and it is recommended that this option should not be applied in areas where deep sea sponge aggregations occur.</p> <p>Reduce/limit pressures: This option would reduce, but not entirely eliminate, the risk of not achieving the conservation objective for offshore deep sea muds. Appropriate management could include closure of a proportion the site to damaging gears. The location of areas to be covered by management restrictions would be decided in consultation with fishers. The conservation objective would not be achieved for deep sea sponge aggregations and it is recommended that this option should not be applied in areas where deep sea sponge aggregations occur.</p> <p>Remove/avoid pressures: This option would reduce the risk of not achieving the conservation objective for offshore deep sea muds to the lowest possible levels. This is the only option that would allow the conservation objective to be met for deep sea sponge aggregations and it is recommended that this option should be applied.</p>
Telecommunication cables	<p>Early discussions with the operator would be welcomed for all plans relating to cables within the possible MPA, including installation, maintenance and removal. It is recommended that a voluntary Environmental Impact Assessment is undertaken to support plans for any new cable installation to assess the impacts of the associated activities on the proposed protected features present. Industry best practice should be used to avoid the most sensitive areas within the possible MPA where feasible.</p>

Introduction

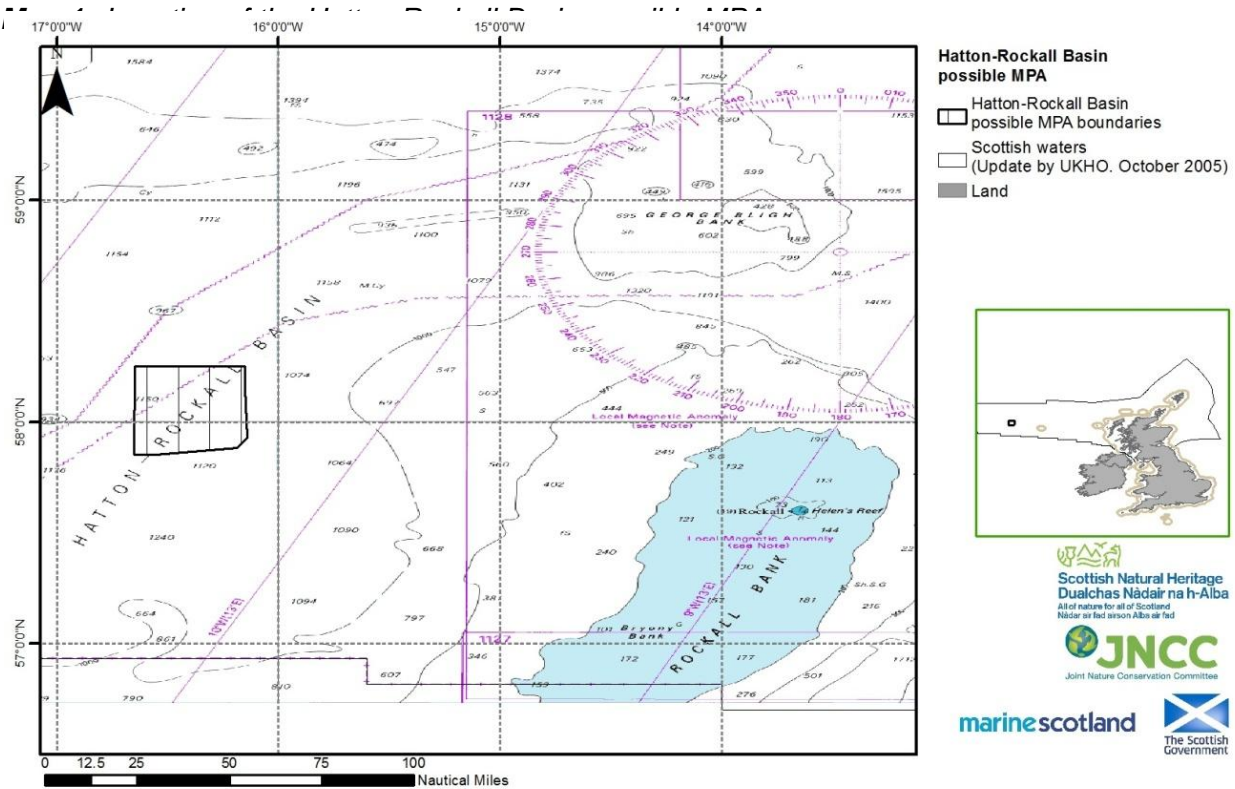
The Hatton Rockall Basin possible Marine Protected Area (MPA) is located in the far west of Scotland's offshore waters. At about 1.1km depth, the muddy basin hosts a range of animals adapted to living in the deep sea. The seabed within this area is criss-crossed with unique examples of polygonal faults, creating an unusual relief on the seabed that provide habitat for deep sea sponges. The area of the Hatton Rockall Basin possible MPA is 1,265 km².

Further details of the possible MPA can be found in the Hatton Rockall Basin possible MPA site summary document.

Limited activity takes place within the possible MPA, mostly as a result of its location and depth. The possible MPA lies outside of UK fishery limits and therefore VMS data is managed by the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC). Due to the poor resolution of the data available, there is little evidence of fishing activity overlapping the possible MPA. However, non-UK fishing vessels are known to be present in the broader area and thus management options are presented on the basis of potential rather than documented activity. One telecommunication cable currently intersects the possible MPA.

This document has been produced to provide background information on the development of management for the Hatton Rockall Basin possible MPA. It will be used during discussions as part of the formal consultation. The aim of these discussions is to explore current and future activities and the potential interactions that these may have with the proposed protected features.

The document describes the known location and extent of proposed protected features and the current knowledge of where activities take place. It also presents the management options for each of those activities that are considered capable of having an effect on the proposed protected features. The document provides those with an interest in the area a chance to input into the early stages of developing appropriate management of activities to ensure that the Hatton Rockall Basin possible MPA makes a genuine and long-lasting contribution to the protection of Scotland's marine environment.



Roles

The role of JNCC is to advise Scottish Government on management options for the Hatton Rockall Basin possible MPA. In doing this, we aim to ensure that the conservation objectives for the proposed protected features are met.

Marine Scotland will lead the discussions on management with stakeholders. They will consider JNCC's advice and will lead on the development of specific management measures. They will be responsible for making recommendations to Scottish Ministers on these measures. Scottish Ministers will decide whether to implement these measures.

Stakeholders can provide additional evidence to support the development of management options including local knowledge of the environment and of activities. Discussions with stakeholders will be one way of highlighting the implications of any management options to both JNCC and Scottish Government. This will contribute to the development of well-designed and effective management measures.

Proposed protected features and conservation objectives

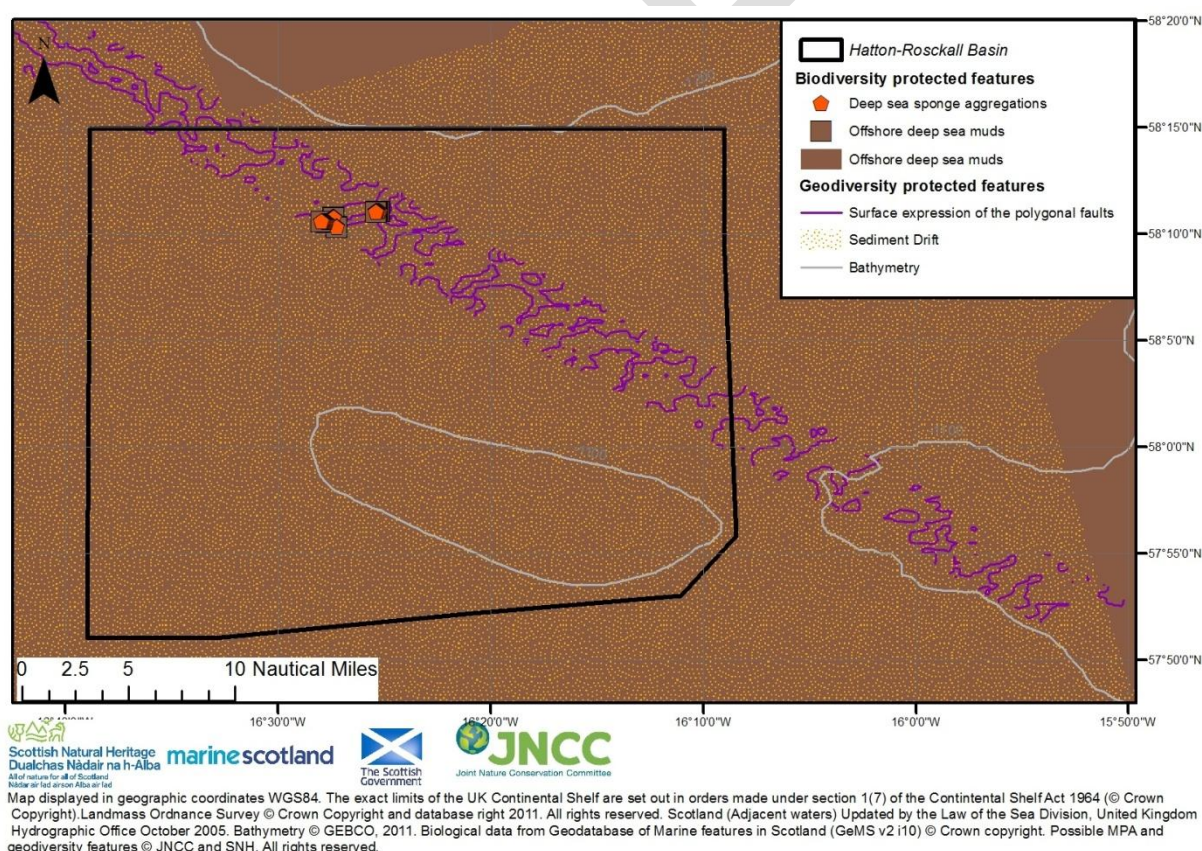
The Hatton Rockall Basin possible MPA is being considered as part of a network of new Nature Conservation MPAs. These are being established to help conserve a range of Scotland's important marine habitats, wildlife, geology and landforms. The Hatton Rockall Basin possible MPA is being considered for the following proposed protected features, as shown in map 2:

- Deep sea sponge aggregations
- Offshore deep sea muds
- Geodiversity features - Sediment drifts and polygonal fault systems*

* The geodiversity features are considered to have a low sensitivity to the pressures associated with marine activities taking place within the possible MPA¹. As such, there is not considered to be a significant risk to the features achieving their conservation objectives and so the features have not been considered further in the context of the management options presented below.

Conservation objectives set out the desired quality of the proposed protected features within each Nature Conservation MPA. They will form part of the designation order for Nature Conservation MPAs and will therefore be in place at the time that a site is formally designated. It has been recommended that the conservation objectives for the proposed protected features within the Hatton Rockall Basin possible MPA are ‘conserve’ for all features. The condition of the proposed protected features has not been verified so the conservation objectives are uncertain, in acknowledgement of the uncertainty in feature condition. Improved evidence on the condition of these features as part of the six-year reporting cycle required under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 and the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, or through provision of other evidence, may result in modifications to recommendations for management to support the achievement of the feature conservation objectives.

Map 2 The distribution of proposed protected features within the Hatton Rockall Basin possible MPA



¹ Brooks, A.J., (2013). Assessing the sensitivity of geodiversity features in Scotland's seas to pressures associated with human activities. *Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No. 590*.

Overview of activities

Limited information is available regarding the activities taking place within the possible MPA. Only non-UK fishing effort has been recorded within the possible MPA, but it is not known what fleet or gear types are being used because of the coarse resolution of the data. There is anecdotal evidence that otter trawling and static gear fishing take place in the wider region that overlaps with the possible MPA. Further discussions with potential users of the area are required to improve our understanding of these activities (e.g. distribution and intensity etc).

Those activities which the proposed protected features are sensitive to are explored in detail in the next section. Activities which the proposed protected features are not thought to be sensitive to (i.e. any interaction between the activity and the proposed protected features is considered to be minimal) will not be considered further within this document. Future or other activities not identified within the table would need to be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Development of management options

Management options are being developed for each possible MPA where it is considered that some form of management may be necessary to achieve the conservation objectives for each proposed protected feature. The approach to identifying management options for each activity will be risk-based i.e. advice will be focused on where it is believed that there is a risk to achieving the conservation objectives for the proposed protected features. To do this, we are using existing data and information on proposed protected features and relevant activities, and also our understanding of the relationships between the proposed protected features and activities. The management options may be informed by discussion with stakeholders. If new information becomes available during the consultation, the management options may be revised.

Management options are focussed on the activities that cause pressure(s) that a proposed protected feature is sensitive to. Pressures can be physical (e.g. abrasion of the seabed), chemical or biological. Different activities may cause the same pressure, e.g. fishing using bottom gears and aggregate dredging both cause abrasion which can damage the surface of the seabed. The proposed protected features of a possible MPA are considered sensitive to activities that could adversely affect them (because of the associated pressures) especially if they are unable to or are very slow to recover.

The online sensitivity tool ([insert weblink](#)) reflects current understanding of the interactions between activities, pressures and features and supports the first steps of the assessment of risk to the features in the possible MPAs. The tool highlights that activities can give rise to a range of pressures, which the proposed protected features of the possible MPA may be sensitive to. The online tool provides more detailed information including the evidence that has been used in developing these recommendations.

Risks to achieving the conservation objectives have been identified where there is an overlap between proposed protected features and activities associated with pressures the features are sensitive to. We have recommended management options to manage this risk. Specific details of the recommended management options for each activity are provided in the following sections. The overlap between different activities/planned developments and the proposed protected features is described and where appropriate, mapped. The text focuses on interactions in terms of physical overlap but the assessment of risk in the future should also take account of the intensity and frequency of activities within the possible MPA.

The following range of management options have been identified, including:

- no additional management required
- management to reduce/limit pressures
- management to remove/avoid pressures

All of the management options provided are based on knowledge of the existing activities taking place within the possible MPA. The options do not preclude introducing management in the future for new activities, or future management where there is an increased intensity of activities beyond levels currently taking place.

We recognise that stakeholders can provide local environmental knowledge and more detailed information on activities, including in relation to intensity, frequency, and methods. This additional information may help to develop more specific management options, focussed on interactions between features and activities.

Management options

Management options have been considered by activity, please click on the activities below to be directed to the relevant section:

1. [Fishing activity](#)
2. [Telecommunication cables](#)

Fishing activity

JNCC has evaluated management options to support achievement of the conservation objectives for the proposed protected features of the Hatton Rockall Basin possible MPA. A gradient of management options have been considered to reduce exposure to pressures, these have been described under three potential management option categories below. Proposed protected features may require a combination of these options to ensure that they achieve their conservation objectives.

a) No additional management

b) Additional management to reduce/limit pressures – where fisheries managers may wish to consider a range of measures that could be used to reduce the risk to features by reducing fishing pressure or preventing its increase to unacceptably high levels. These could include:

- Area restrictions (e.g. permanently closing some or the entire extent of the feature)
- Temporal restrictions (e.g. closing parts of the extent of the feature on a rotational basis)
- Seasonal restrictions
- Gear restrictions (e.g. restriction on the use of more damaging gears)

Ideally, any measures would generally apply only to the part of the site where the feature is present. However, there may be circumstances in which it could be desirable to extend management measures beyond the known area of feature distribution, for example, where conditions are suitable for a feature to exist but there are insufficient data to confirm its presence.

c) Additional management to remove/avoid pressures – where fishing activities known to adversely affect the feature would be excluded and prevented from occurring in the future. Such exclusion would generally apply only to the part of the site where the feature is present, unless it was necessary to apply to the whole MPA.

The likely effects on the feature condition and the risk to the conservation objectives were assessed using the evidence described in the JNCC/SNH MPA fisheries management guidance.

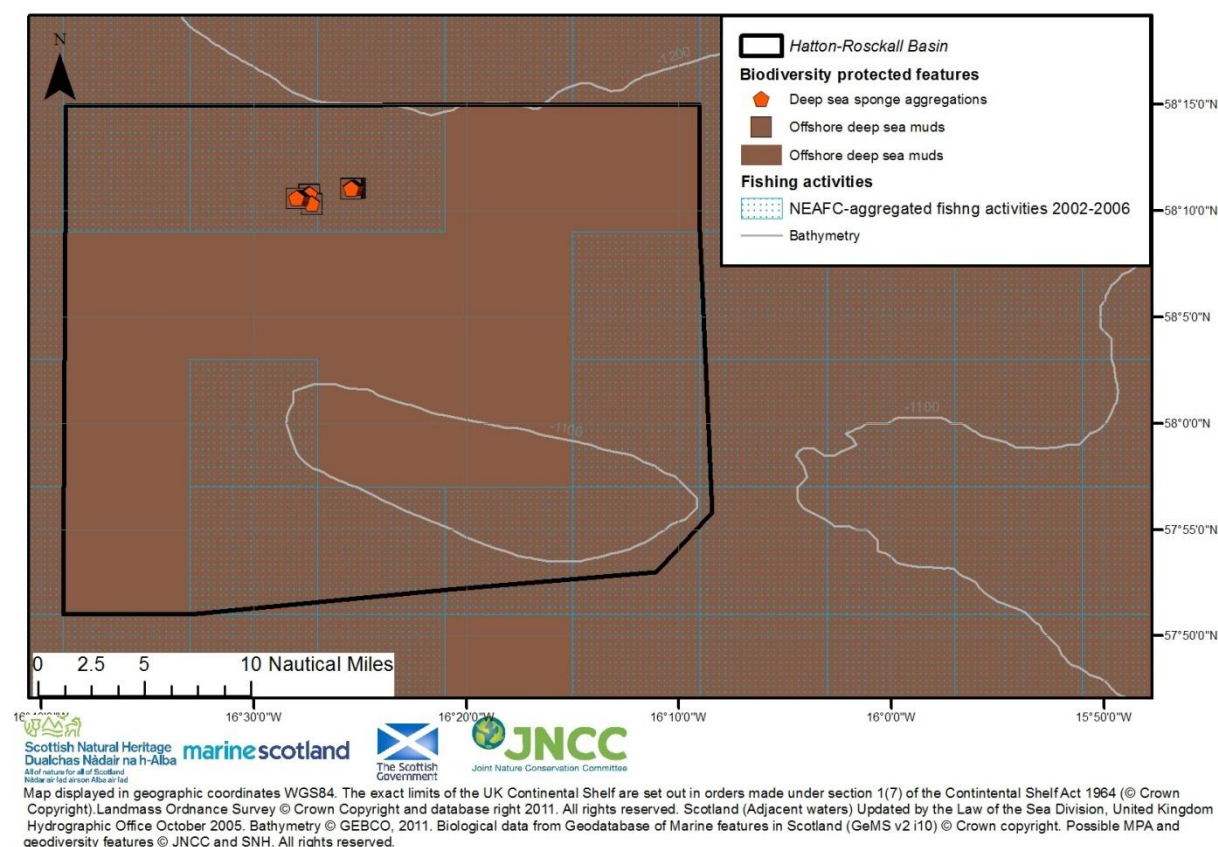
Fishing activity

Due to the location of the Hatton-Rockall Basin possible MPA, any fishing vessels active in the region will be greater than 15m in length and thus will be fitted with VMS transponders. However, the possible MPA is located outside of UK fishery limits, and so UK agencies have no authority to collect VMS data for non-UK vessels active in the area. Instead, monitoring of vessel activity is administered by the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC). Currently JNCC have no formal data sharing agreements with NEAFC, although access to NEAFC data for 2001-2006 was provided by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES). Due to the nature of the data, (i.e. no associated vessel speed information) it is not possible to distinguish between vessels steaming and fishing events so interpretation was limited to presence/absence of vessels in the area.

Based on VMS data from UK vessels (2006 – 2011) there is no evidence of fishing activity in the Hatton-Rockall Basin possible MPA. From the limited VMS evidence available for non-UK fleets it is likely that the extent of demersal activity in this deep water site (>1000m) is negligible. However, there are records of fishing vessel presence broadly overlapping the deep sea sponge records within the possible MPA between 2001 and 2006 (as shown in map 3).

Based on knowledge of fishing in the NEAFC regulatory area, past demersal activities are limited to otter trawling and static gear activities. The possible MPA lies in a region defined as a “new” fishing area under current NEAFC regulations. This means that any proposed fishing activity would require an environmental assessment and fishing would only be permitted if it can be shown that it would not cause damage to the Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems present.

Map 3: Location of NEAFC aggregated fishing activities in relation to proposed protected features



Management options

Fishing activity

(e.g. all bottom contact fishing gear)

No additional management: There is a risk of not achieving the conservation objective for **offshore deep sea muds**. The conservation objectives would not be achieved for **deep sea sponge aggregations** and it is recommended that this option should not be applied in areas where deep sea sponge aggregations occur.

Reduce/limit pressures: This option would reduce, but not entirely eliminate, the risk of not achieving the conservation objective for **offshore deep sea muds**. Appropriate management could include closure of a proportion the site to damaging gears. The location of areas to be covered by management restrictions would be decided in consultation with fishers. The conservation objective would not be achieved for **deep sea sponge aggregations** and it is recommended that this option should not be applied in areas where deep sea sponge aggregations occur.

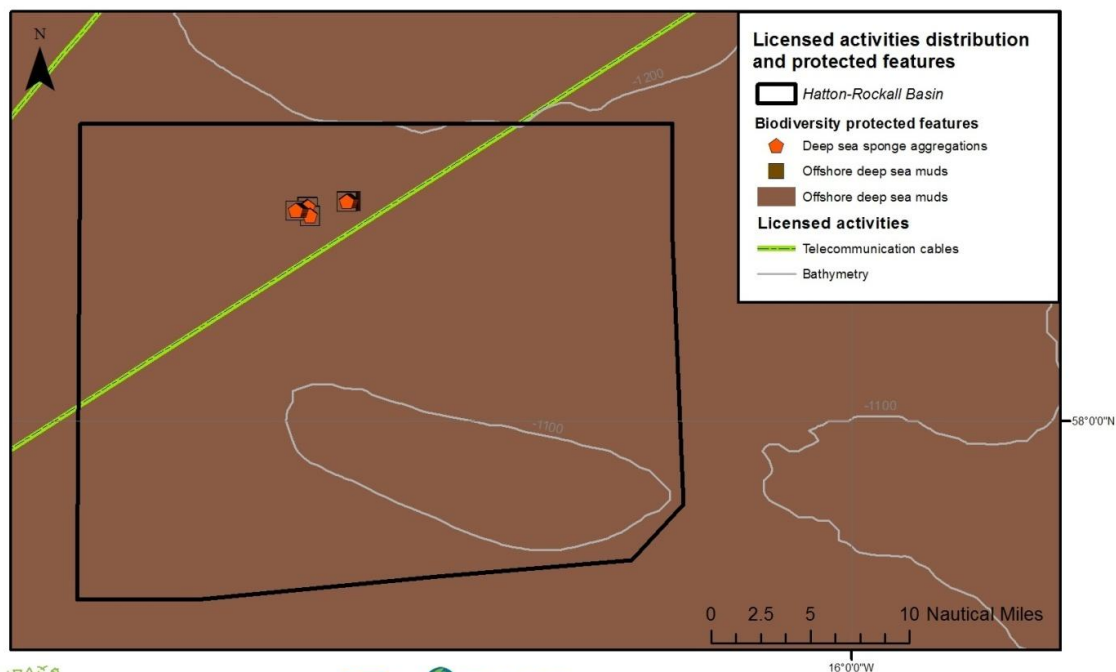
Remove/avoid pressures: This option would reduce the risk of not achieving the conservation objective for **offshore deep sea muds** to the lowest possible levels. This is the only option that would allow the conservation objective to be met for **deep sea sponge aggregations** and it is recommended that this option should be applied.

Telecommunication cables

Telecommunications cables are not subject to assessment under the EIA regulations (2009) and therefore do not, in general, go through the marine licensing process. As such, it is not possible to develop specific management options for unlicensed activities such as cables. Instead, discussions with operators would be welcomed at the earliest opportunity regarding plans for new cable installations, and the maintenance or removal of existing cables.

The possibility of licensed activities taking place within the possible MPA in the near future is thought to be low due to the location of the possible MPA. The possible MPA falls within a claimed area of the UK continental shelf. Therefore, should interest be expressed, either in relation to cable associated works, or other developments, a legal framework for consenting licensed activities would need to be developed.

Map 4: Location of telecommunication cables in relation to proposed protected features



Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba

marinescotland



The Scottish Government



Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Map displayed in geographic coordinates WGS84. The exact limits of the UK Continental Shelf are set out in orders made under section 1(7) of the Continental Shelf Act 1964 (© Crown Copyright). Landmass Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright and database right 2011. All rights reserved. Scotland (Adjacent waters) Updated by the Law of the Sea Division, United Kingdom Hydrographic Office October 2005. Bathymetry © GEBCO, 2011. Biological data from Geodatabase of Marine features in Scotland (GeMS v2.110) © Crown copyright. Possible MPA and geodiversity features © JNCC and SNH. All rights reserved. Licensed activities © UKCPC 2011.

Management options Telecommunication cables

Early discussions with the operator would be welcomed for all plans relating to cables within the possible MPA, including installation, maintenance and removal. It is recommended that a voluntary Environmental Impact Assessment is undertaken to support plans for any new cable installation to assess the impacts of the associated activities on the proposed protected features present. Industry best practice should be used to avoid the most sensitive areas within the possible MPA where feasible.

Conclusions and further recommendations

Before any firm recommendations are made, discussions should be held with stakeholders to ensure that there is a good understanding of the features and the likely interactions with activities. Marine Scotland will lead the discussions on management with stakeholders. These discussions will start during the formal consultation and, if necessary, may continue

after the consultation. The discussions should lead to an improved understanding of the risk to the proposed protected features. The options presented here will then be reviewed by JNCC and a preferred way forward may be recommended. This will form the basis of advice from JNCC to Marine Scotland on management requirements for this possible MPA should it be designated as a Nature Conservation MPA.

Marine Scotland will be responsible for making recommendations to Scottish Ministers on any management measures that may be required. These measures will be developed through discussion with stakeholders after the formal consultation on the possible MPA. Should any management measures require statutory underpinning, Marine Scotland will undertake further consultation.

Further information

The following documents are available for background information:

- [SNH and JNCC MPA network advice \(December 2012\)](#)
- [Marine Scotland Report to Parliament on progress in establishing an MPA network](#)
- [The draft MPA Management Handbook](#)
- The online sensitivity matrix tool
- Draft fisheries guidance

The following documents about the possible Hatton Rockall Basin possible MPA are also available:

- Site summary
- Data confidence assessment
- Detailed assessment against the MPA Selection Guidelines