

PROTECTED OR NOT PROTECTED?

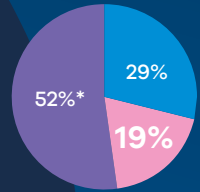


UK Government has committed to protect 30% of our seas by 2030. Yet over 60% of the seabed in England's Marine 'Protected' Areas is still not protected from damaging bottom trawling.

- Protected
- Not protected
- Deep Sea Regulation

Percentage area of seabed within England and Scotland Marine Protected Areas with full protection from bottom towed gear

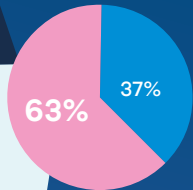
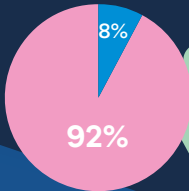
- Scotland inshore (0-12nm)
- Scotland offshore (12-200nm)
- England inshore (0-6nm)
- England offshore (6-200nm)



Scotland offshore (12-200nm)

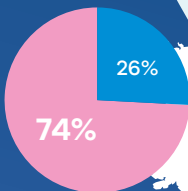
*52% of Scottish offshore MPA seabed is protected by the EU Deep Sea Regulation that bans bottom trawling below 800m

Scotland inshore (0-12nm)



England offshore (6-200nm)

England inshore (0-6nm)



MARINE 'PROTECTED' AREAS NEED REAL PROTECTION

What are Marine Protected Areas?

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are areas of ocean set aside for marine life to thrive and recover. This is essential for healthy, functioning marine ecosystems and we have already seen extraordinary recovery of marine life where destructive fishing methods have been removed.

UK's 30 x 30 commitment

In December 2022, 196 nations, including the UK, signed up to the United Nations Global Biodiversity Framework committing to conserve 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water, coastal and marine areas by 2030.

As a signatory of the 30x30 commitment, the UK is already in a leading position, having protected 42 per cent of its territorial waters from bottom trawling by dint of exemplary protection of its UK Overseas Territories. Britain has the fifth largest ocean estate in the world, covering 6.8 million square kilometres and 2.5 million square kilometres of this is fully protected. However, while our Overseas Territories have benefited from the highest levels of protection, the UK domestic seas on our doorstep continue to lag far behind.

The benefits of well-managed and properly protected Marine Protected Areas include:

- 1 Protection and restoration of marine life and fish stocks
- 2 Re-establishment of a balanced and functioning ecosystem
- 3 Enhanced resilience to climate change
- 4 Carbon sequestration and storage
- 5 Provision of resources and services

Protected areas or paper parks?

In UK domestic waters, 377 MPAs* cover 38% of our seas. On paper this may seem to more than deliver on our 30x30 commitment. However, many of these areas remain as "paper parks", with little or no management of potentially damaging activities. One of the key activities threatening the recovery of our seas and achievement of the conservation objectives for these MPAs is bottom trawling. Bottom-trawling (dragging heavy gear and nets along the sea floor) and dredging (raking the sea floor with steel chain mesh) is the most destructive fishing practice and yet it is still permitted on over 60% of the seabed in England's MPAs.

74 per cent of England's inshore MPA area still allow bottom trawling and dredging. The ten regional Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs) are responsible for the management of the 157 inshore MPAs within 0-6nm and are working towards introducing new measures to ban bottom trawling within their MPAs, yet challenges at varying stages are hindering the process and preventing progress.

63 per cent of England's offshore MPA area still allow bottom trawling and dredging, despite a commitment by the responsible authority, the Marine Management Organisation, to introduce fisheries management to protect all 41 offshore MPAs by the end of 2024.

Call for action to protect England's MPAs

To fulfil its commitments to support the future of UK seas and reach the target of 30 per cent of effective protection we call upon Government to:

- Approve all current byelaws restricting bottom towed gear in inshore MPAs as a matter of urgency
- Publish the proposed byelaws for the remaining offshore MPAs, ensuring they include the highest possible levels of protection
- Speed up the process for introduction of protection measures within MPAs
- Invest in monitoring the condition of MPAs
- Move towards a whole site approach to protect marine life from damage

*UK MPAs include: Marine Conservation Zones, Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas



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