



**Consultation regarding the proposed
new management measures for Thanet
Coast SAC and Essex Estuaries SAC-
bottom towed gear.**

3 June 2013

Purpose of this consultation

The purpose of this consultation is to;

- a) seek views on proposed Essex Estuaries SAC management measures required by Defra to protect seagrass (*Zostera* spp.) as a key site feature, and
- b) seek views on proposed Thanet Coast SAC management measures required by Defra to protect intertidal chalk reef as a key site feature

Consultation Process

Geographical scope: This consultation applies to two areas. Site A is the area of the Thanet Coast SAC and surrounding area. Site B is the area of the Essex Estuaries SAC and surrounding area.

Duration of the consultation: 6 weeks

Body responsible: Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority

How to contribute

The closing date for this consultation is 16th July 2013. Responses should be sent to the following email address:

info@kentandessex-ifca.gov.uk

Or by post to:

Dr. W. H. Wright (Chief IFCO)

KEIFCA

Paragon House

Albert Street

Ramsgate

Kent

CT11 9HD

Further information is available on our website kentandessex-ifca.gov.uk.

Confidentiality

In line with KEIFCA's policy of openness, at the end of the consultation period copies of the responses we receive may be published in a summary of the responses to this consultation. **If you do not consent to this, you must clearly request that your response be treated as confidential.** Any confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system in email responses will not be treated as such a request. Respondents should also be aware that there may be circumstances in which KEIFCA will be required to communicate information to third parties on request, in order to comply with its obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Background

European Marine Sites (EMSs) are designated to protect those habitats and species defined within the EU Habitats Directive and the EU Birds Directive. To bring fisheries in line with other activities, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) announced on the 14 August 2012 a new approach to manage fishing activities within EMSs. This change in approach will promote sustainable fisheries while conserving the marine environment and resources, securing a sustainable future for both.

In order to implement this new approach a Fisheries in European Marine Sites Implementation Group (IG) has been set up to include key stakeholders and delivery bodies to ensure that the new approach is implemented effectively and practically, in line with legal commitments, considering the impacts of management measures available and suitable timetable of delivery. The approach will be introduced to current fishing activities on a risk-prioritised basis.

In order to keep people informed about the work of the group and any subsequent actions taken by the regulators, relevant documents and information are accessible at:
www.marinemanagement.org.uk/protecting/conservation/ems_fisheries.htm

A risk matrix has been developed by the European Marine Sites Implementation Group to identify the level of risk for each European Marine Site. Based on the risk matrix each site has been assigned to one of three categories; red, amber and green, which reflect the priority and order that the site assessments will be undertaken. "High risk" (red) sites will be required to have protection in place by the end of 2013 and other sites (amber and green) by the end of 2016.

Within the Kent and Essex IFCA district, Thanet Special Area of Conservation (SAC) has been identified as a "high risk" site on the basis of potential conflict between the features contained within it and the potential gear types worked in the area (specifically bottom towed gear being used over chalk reef). This site will require control measures to be put in place by the end of 2013. This will be achieved by the introduction of a KEIFCA byelaw.

In addition to the Thanet Coast SAC, the Essex Estuaries Special Area of Conservation (SAC) has also been identified as having a "high risk" gear/feature interaction, in this case this is bottom towed gear being used over sea grass (*Zostera* spp.). This site will also require control measures to be put in place by the end of 2013. This will again be achieved by the introduction of a KEIFCA byelaw.

Working with local fishermen to develop management measures

As the guidance and policy paper from Defra has indicated that a regulatory solution is required to protect key sensitive features on European Marine Sites; non-regulatory options (gentleman's agreements, codes of conduct etc.) will not be assessed as part of this byelaw making process.

Thanet Coast – Site A

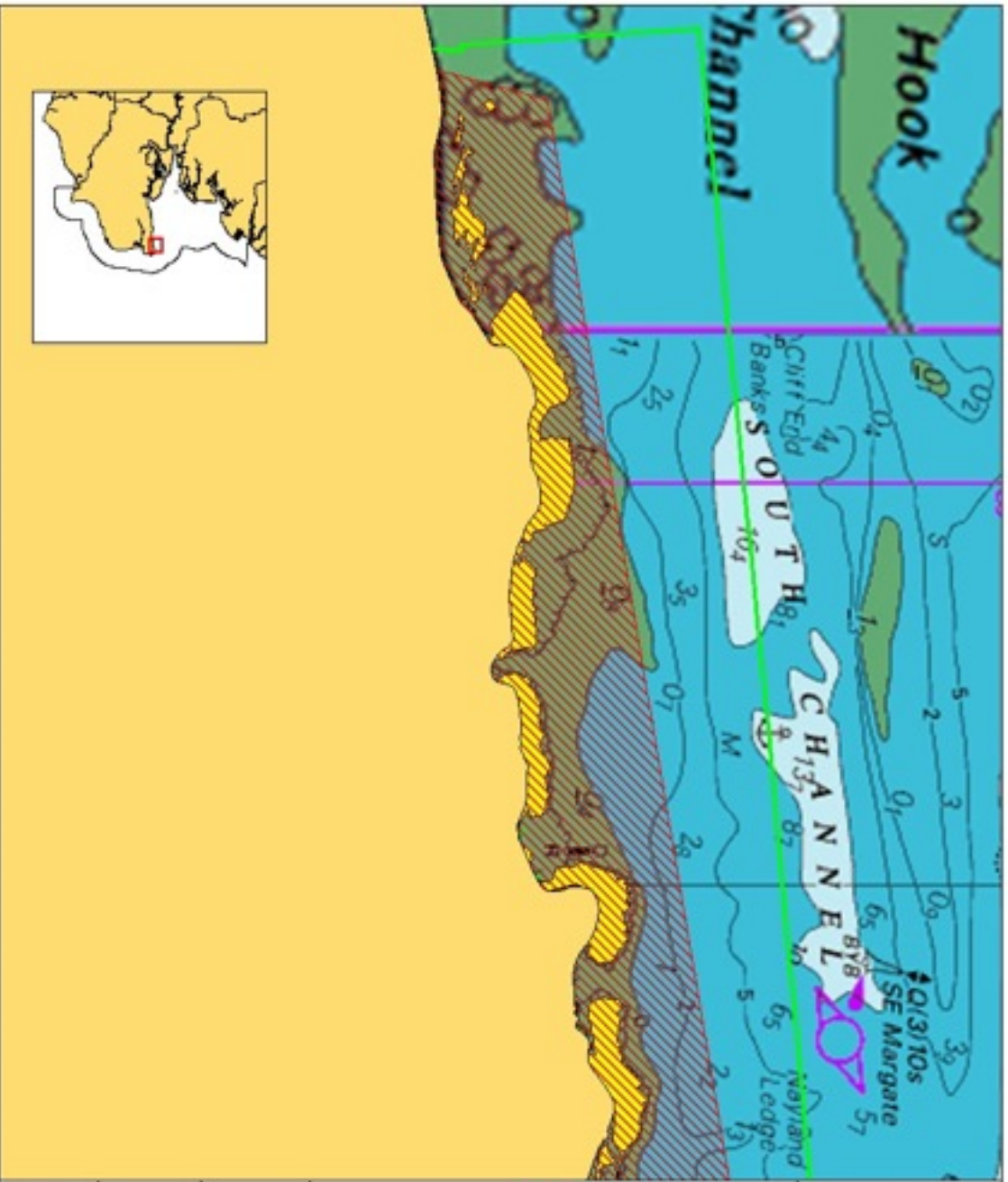
In developing management options for this site the primary aim of the new management will be to protect the integrity and ecological function of the key features of the site (chalk reef). To achieve this KEIFCA have worked closely with Natural England and other key organisations to assess the best available data relating to the location and extent of this feature (chalk reef). KEIFCA held a series of local meetings in March, with Ramsgate and Whitstable fishermen that use the site (or could be affected by the displacement of effort from the site), and have discussed site management issues including the amount of fishing activity on the site, the economic value of the site to local fishermen and the outcome of restricting all bottom towed gear on the site and on the feature. Natural England has attended all the meetings with the local fishing industry and has offered conservation advice as required.

The major concern held by most fishermen was that other fishing activities (potting and netting) would be stopped from working on this feature. As stated previously the European Marine Sites Implementation Groups risk matrix has not identified these types of gear as a high risk on the feature (chalk reef) and these gears will be assessed as part of an ongoing work stream that has to be completed by 2016.




The other issue discussed by the meetings revolved around the size and location of the buffer around the feature (the buffer is important to reduce any possible risk of any gear towed gear inadvertently interacting with the feature). A local agreement was reached that a 100m buffer was an appropriate compromise between offering adequate protection to the feature and reducing the impact of the management measure on the fishing industry.

Proposed management measure

KEIFCA would draft and introduce a byelaw that would prohibit bottom towed fishing and harvesting gear inside of the red line shown on the charts provided below. The byelaw would be planned to come into force before the end of 2013.



Legend

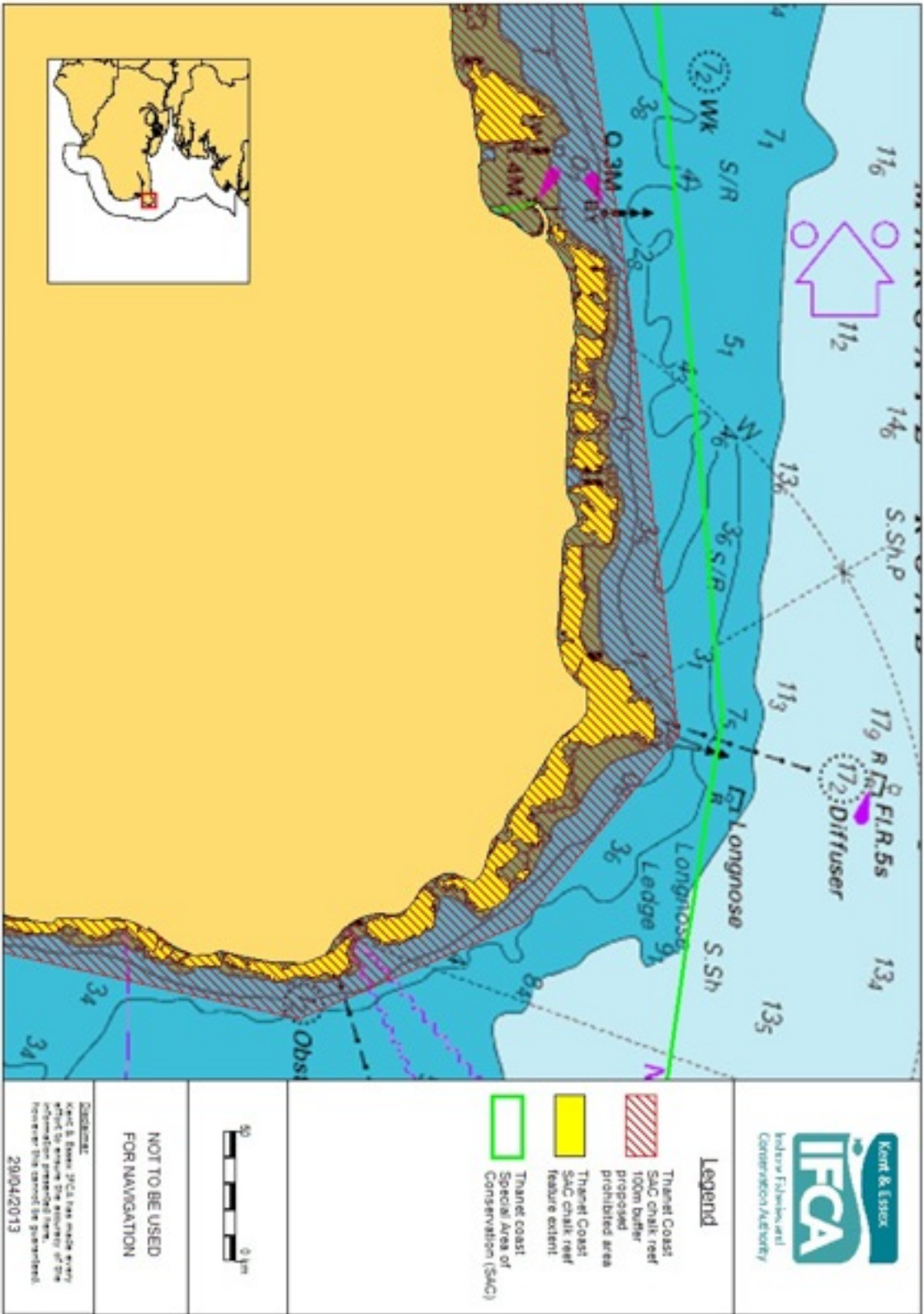
-  Thanet Coast SAC chait reef 100m buffer prohibited area
-  Thanet Coast SAC chait reef feature extent
-  Thanet coast Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

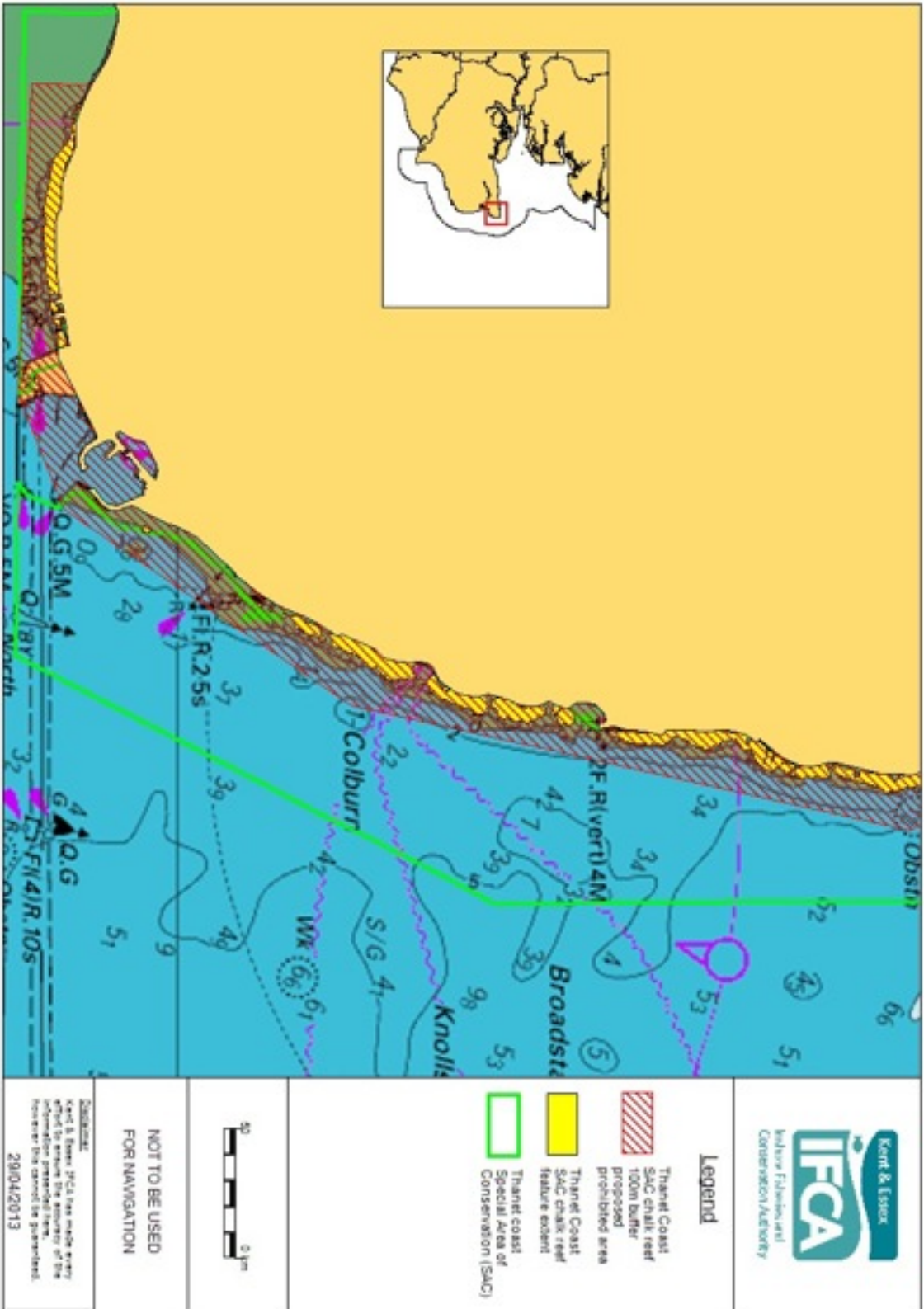


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Disclaimer:
Kent & Essex IFCFA has made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the information presented on this map. However, the Crown is not liable for any errors or omissions.

29/04/2013





Questions for consideration for Thanet Coast SAC Site A

Your views are sought on the future management of the Thanet SAC, in this case being the prohibition on the use of bottom towed gear within the designated area. We urge you to consider providing your views on these questions even if you are not in favour of any additional legislation.

Below is a list of questions that we can use to quickly summarise the potential impact of this new legislation on your business. The results of your responses will be used in the Impact Assessment that will accompany the byelaw.

Q1. How would you describe yourself?

- a) Fisherman
- b) Supplier/processor
- c) Other (please state)

Q2. Do you agree with the proposed management measure? If you do not please explain why.

Q3. What difference will the proposed byelaw make to you?

Q4. Will the introduction of the proposed management measure change where you fish? Do you think any possible displacement or movement of fishing activity to another area will affect you?

Q5. Is the buffer of 100m an appropriate size? If not please advise what distance you would suggest and why.

Q6. Is there another way of protecting the chalk reef which would work better than the proposed byelaw? If so, please give details.

Q7. If the proposed byelaw is introduced, how can we minimise the impact of the byelaw on fishermen's' businesses whilst making sure the chalk reef is protected?

Q8. Are there any comments that you would like to make regarding Marine Protected Areas in KEIFCA district?

Q9. Are there any comments that you would like to make regarding any of the issues covered in this document?

Contact Details

Essex Estuaries – Site B

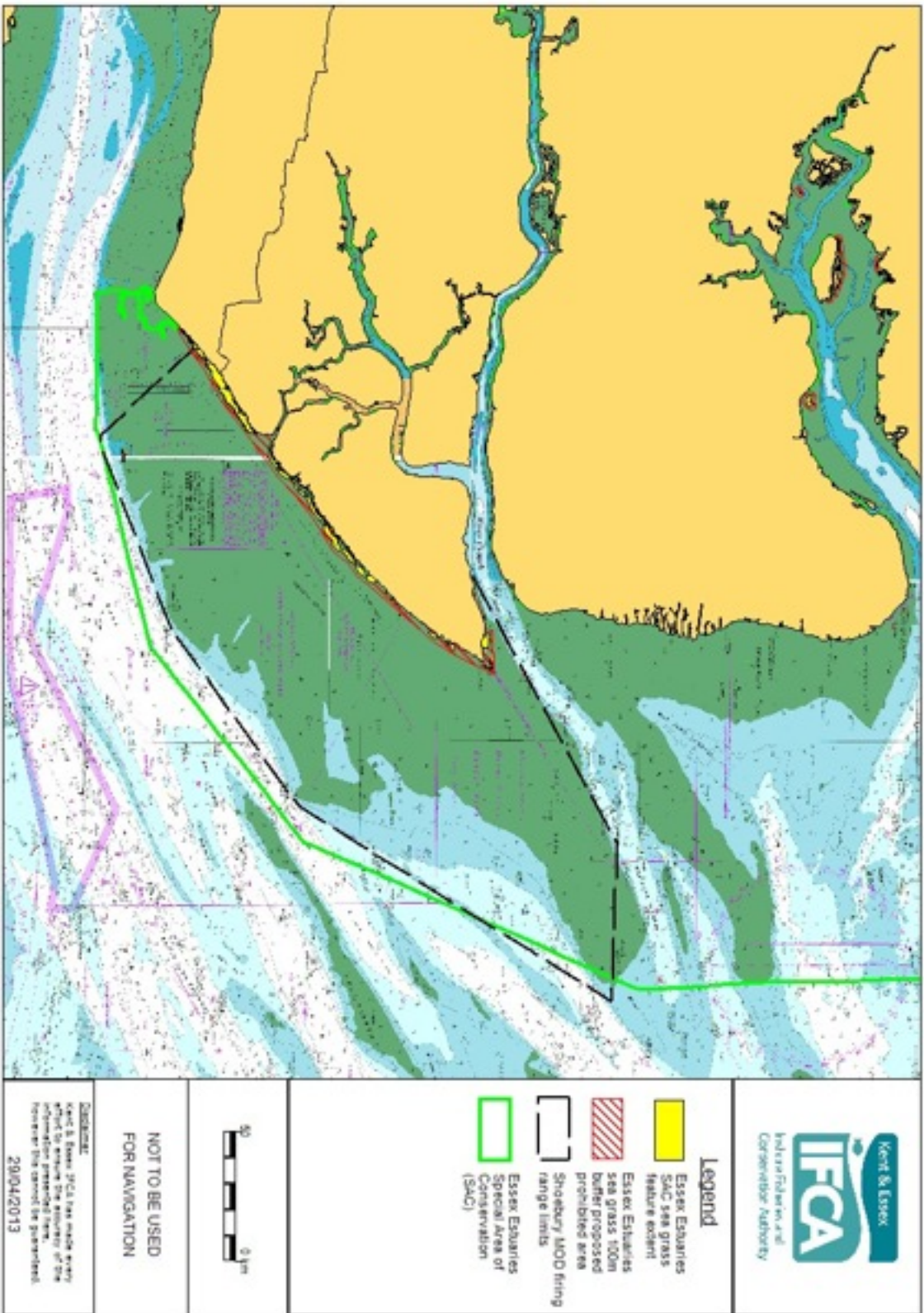
In developing management options for the site the primary aim of the new management will be to protect the integrity and ecological function of the seagrass (*Zostera* spp.) feature on the site. To achieve this KEIFCA have worked closely with Natural England and other key organisations to assess the best available data relating to the location and extent of the sea grass (*Zostera* spp.). KEIFCA held a series of local meetings in March, with Leigh and West Mersea fishermen that use the site (or could be affected by the displacement of effort from the site), and have discussed site management issues including the amount of fishing activity on the site, the economic value of the site to local fishermen and the outcome of restricting all bottom towed gear on both the site and on the feature. Natural England has attended all the meetings with the local fishing industry and has offered conservation advice as required.

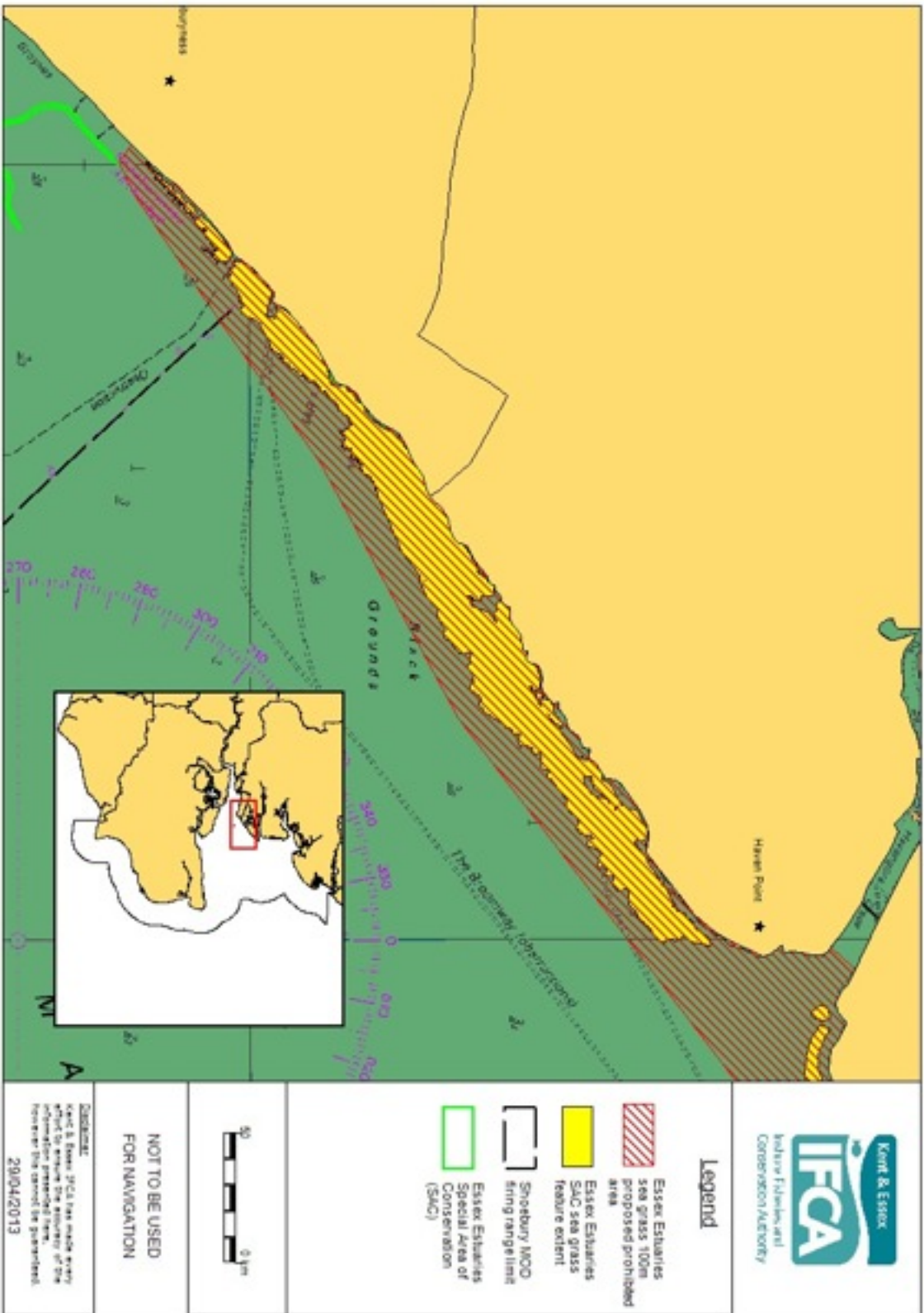
Similarly to the Thanet Coast SAC site, the major concern held by most fishermen was that other fishing activities (netting, etc.) would also be prevented from working on this feature. It was explained that the European Marine Sites Implementation Groups risk matrix has not identified other types of gear as a high 'red' risk on the sea grass and that these other gears would be assessed as part of the amber/green work stream that has to be completed by 2016.

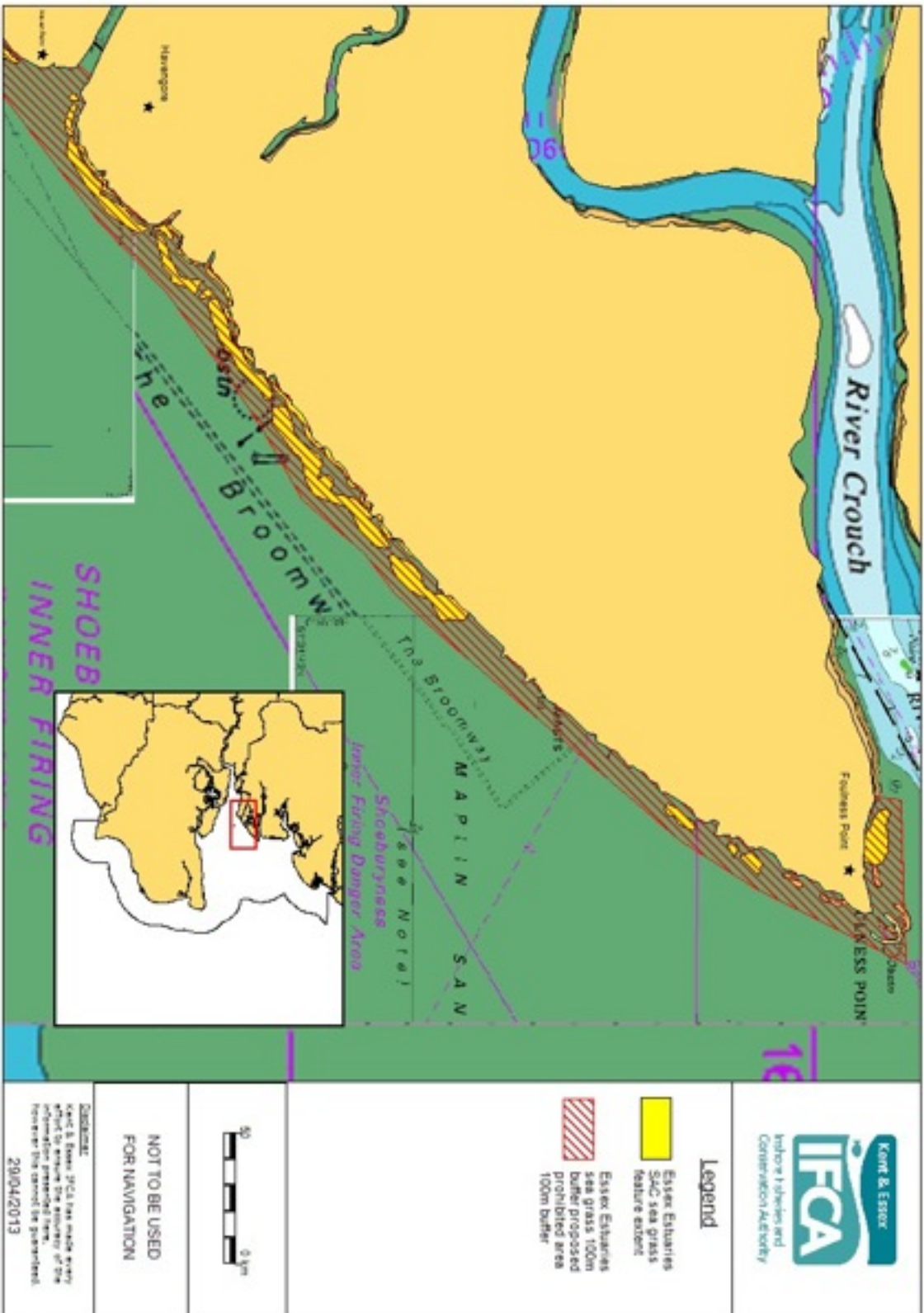
The other main issue discussed by the meetings revolved around the size and location of the buffer around the feature (the buffer is important to reduce any possible risk of any gear towed gear inadvertently interacting with the feature). A local agreement was reached that a 100m buffer was an appropriate compromise between offering adequate protection to the feature and reducing the impact of the management measure on the fishing industry.

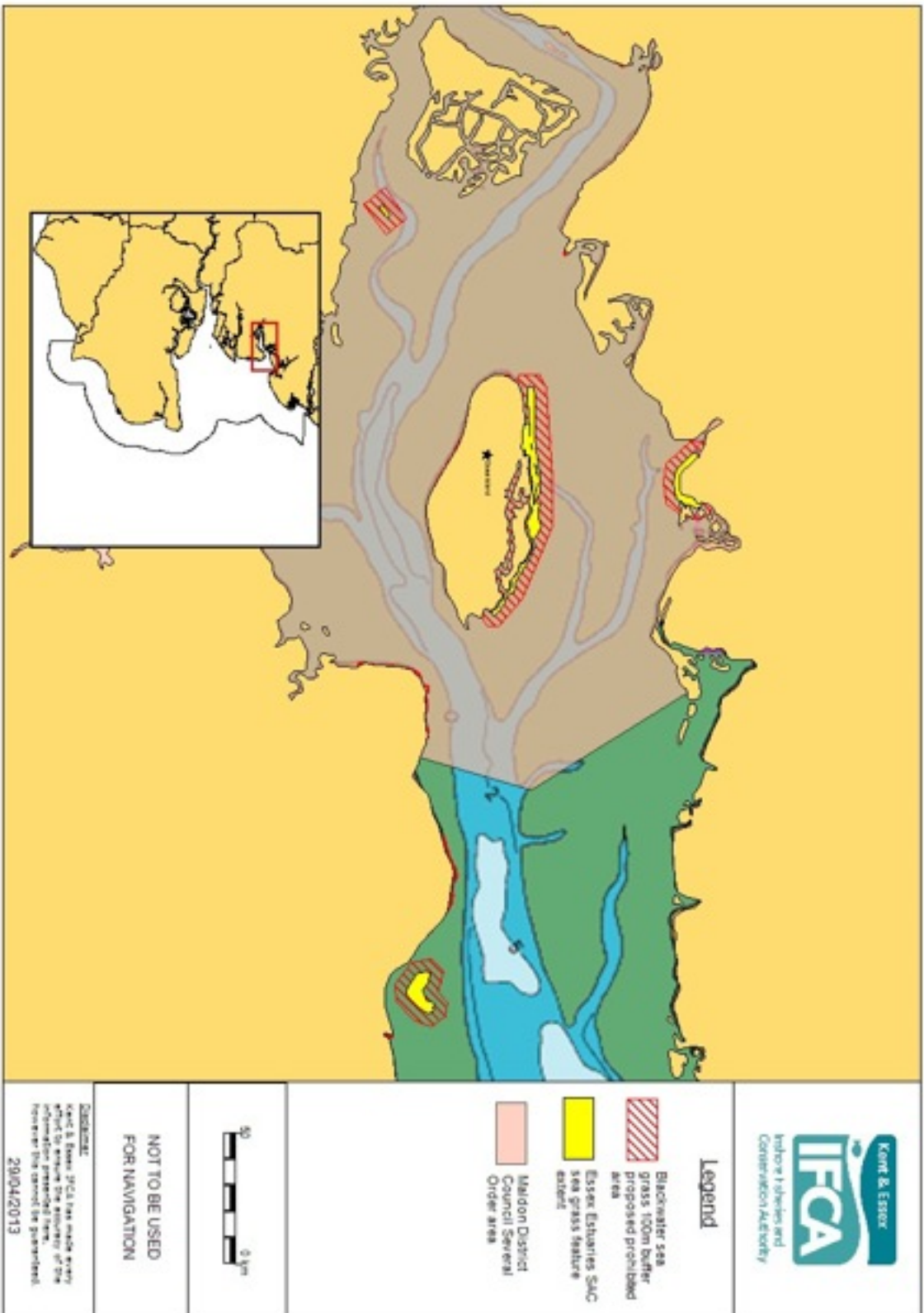
Proposed management measure

KEIFCA would draft and introduce a byelaw that would prohibit bottom towed fishing and harvesting gear inside of the red line shown on the charts provided below. The byelaw would be planned to come into force before the end of 2013.












Legend

-  Blackwater sea grass 1000m buffer proposed prohibited area
-  Essex Estuaries SAC sea grass feature extent
-  Maldon District Council Severn Order area



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Disclaimer:
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Questions for consideration for Essex Estuaries SAC Site B

Your views are sought on the future management of the Essex Estuaries SAC, in this case being the prohibition on the use of bottom towed gear within the designated area. We urge you to consider providing your views on these questions even if you are not in favour of any additional legislation. *Below is a list of questions that we can use to quickly summarise the potential impact of this new legislation on your business. The results of your responses will be used in the Impact Assessment that will accompany the byelaw.*

Q1. How would you describe yourself?

- d) Fisherman
- e) Supplier/processor
- f) Other (please state)

Q2. Do you agree with the proposed management measure? If you do not please explain why.

Q3. What difference will the proposed byelaw make to you?

Q4. Will the introduction of the proposed management measure change where you fish? Do you think any possible displacement or movement of fishing activity to another area will affect you?

Q5. Is the buffer of 100m an appropriate size? If not please advise what distance you would suggest and why.

Q6. Is there another way of protecting the chalk reef which would work better than the proposed byelaw? If so, please give details.

Q7. If the proposed byelaw is introduced, how can we minimise the impact of the byelaw on fishermen's' businesses whilst making sure the sea grass is protected?

Q8. Are there any comments that you would like to make regarding Marine Protected Areas in KEIFCA district?

Q9. Are there any comments that you would like to make regarding any of the issues covered in this document?

Contact Details

If you are happy to provide your details it will be useful in case we have any further follow up questions to the answers provided. We would be interested in obtaining contact details for your company. Please provide a contact email address, telephone number and contact name, if there is a preferred contact.