

# Why Beachy Head East should be made a Marine Conservation Zone

The sea off Beachy Head, Eastbourne, Bexhill and Hastings is well known for its wealth of wildlife and rich seabed habitats. Until the 20<sup>th</sup> July 2018, the government is consulting on whether the inshore area known as Beachy Head East should be protected as a Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ).

## Unique ecological value

At an impressive 195km<sup>2</sup>, the area of Beachy Head East contains:

- ▶ rare chalk and sandstone reef systems,
- ▶ vulnerable blue mussel beds,
- ▶ fragile, living reefs made by the tube-building cross worm,
- ▶ two marine Sites of Nature Conservation Importance: the Royal Sovereign Shoals and the Horse of Willingdon Reef,
- ▶ diverse habitats for a wide range of marine life, including important and declining species such as the native oyster and short-snouted seahorse,
- ▶ feeding grounds for cuckoo wrasse, sole, plaice, lobster, European eel and small spotted catshark and possible spawning beds for herring.

Underwater chalk reefs like those found at Beachy Head East are rare in Europe but are particularly important for local marine life.

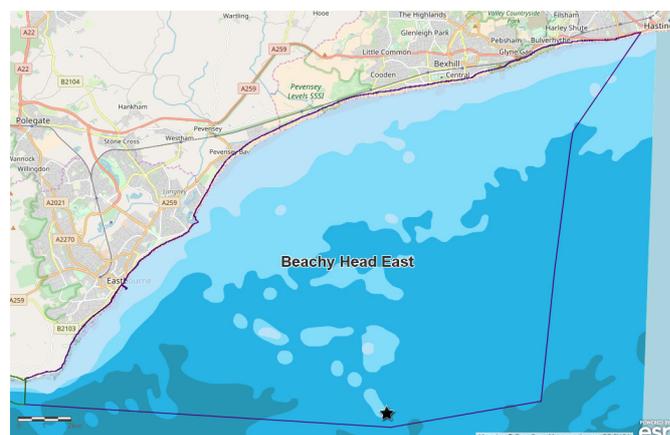
## The need for protection

The area urgently needs the protection that designation would provide. The site is currently fished by non-local fishing boats that use heavy bottom-towed fishing gear. This type of fishing significantly damages the precious local seabed habitats, and churns up sediment in the water, smothering local oyster and mussel beds.

The local community, including anglers and businesses, is backing the campaign to make Beachy Head East a MCZ. Local fishermen want to see an end to destructive fishing practices that damage the reef and the habitat on which

fish depend. Businesses believe that establishing the zone, and allowing wildlife to recover, will help enhance the local economy and attract new visitors.

Protection and management as a MCZ will protect these vulnerable and fragile seabed ecosystems from damaging human activities. This will give the ecosystems chance to recover and become more resilient to the other threats all marine life faces, such as ocean warming, acidification and pollution.



## How to show your support

The government is consulting with the public about the final group of potential English MCZs. This is your chance to tell Westminster why you think Beachy Head East should become a marine conservation zone. An online survey can be found at: <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/marine/consultation-on-the-third-tranche-of-marine-conser/> Be quick, the consultation closes on 20th July 2018.

After the consultation closes on 20th July 2018, the Government will make a decision about new designations within 12 months.

## Now is the time to make your voice heard!

Visit [www.beachyheadeast.org](http://www.beachyheadeast.org) and follow [#backingbeachyheadeast](https://twitter.com/backingbeachyheadeast) on social media.



This campaign is facilitated by the Agents of Change, a project led by the Marine Conservation Society with Fauna and Flora International and the New Economics Foundation and funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. This campaign is partnered with Clean Seas Please and Angling Trust and is funded by the Marine Protected Area Fighting Fund. Sign the petition on Change.org (<https://www.change.org/p/support-the-beachy-head-east-marine-conservation-zone>)