Appendix 5. Sensitive Seabed Habitats

Identifying highly sensitive Features of Conservation Interest (FOCI) habitats for policies HME 7, HME 9 and HME 10.

IMPORTANT CAVEATS

1. The FOCI habitat maps and sensitivity tables are for guidance only. Decisions on licensing and development will ultimately rely on due process, including where necessary an Environmental Impact Assessment, and require expert judgement on a case-by-case basis.
2. The FOCI habitat maps do not cover the entire C-SCOPE Marine Plan Area, being restricted to the areas surveyed within the DORIS survey. This does not mean that areas outside the Doris survey area are less important or not sensitive to human activity or development.
3. The Dorset seabed is highly complex and multiple habitats can exist within very small areas. Therefore, although best practice has been used throughout the Doris seabed survey and its interpretation, elements of uncertainty remain.

The seabed habitat maps forming part of this Plan have been produced by Dr Justin Dix of the National Oceanography Centre at The University of Southampton and Peter Tinsley at Dorset Wildlife Trust. A variety of data sources were used, including substrate mapping from the DORIS Study (see Appendix 13 for full methods).

These maps must be used in conjunction with the accompanying matrices which have been adapted from those produced by Defra, Natural England and JNCC for estimating the general sensitivity of marine features. The Defra matrices also identify sensitivity at a broad-scale habitat level but it was felt that, as these may contain multiple biotopes with different levels of sensitivity to certain pressures, the FOCI habitats were a more suitable scale to work with.

How to use the matrix and maps
Policies HME 7, HME 9 and HME 10 identify pressures that are particularly damaging to the marine environment and guide activities or developments away from FOCI habitats which are highly sensitive to these pressures. To find out if an activity or development will create these pressures:

1. Go to the 'Activities' tab within the FOCI Habitat Maps and Sensitivity Tables and identify the proposed activity/activities in the top row. Read down the column(s) and wherever you find 'associated activity' read left across the row to find the pressure this activity creates. Record all of these pressures.
2. Now switch to the 'Sensitivities' tab and find the pressures identified in step 1 in the top row. Read down the column and identify if this pressure is 'high' or 'high*'. Read left across the row to the sensitive FOCI habitat. Click on the habitat cell and this will take you to the GIS tool which will show where the habitat exists within the C-SCOPE Marine Plan area, and thus areas to be avoided.

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Note: FOCI habitats within the C-SCOPE Marine Plan area which have 'medium' or 'low' sensitivity to pressures which your activity or development will produce should also be identified, as cumulative effects will also need to be considered during any licensing decision.

About the Defra matrix

The matrix shows the sensitivity of marine habitat features to 40 given pressures, and which human activities cause these pressures. Sensitivity is based on a combination of resistance and resilience of each habitat feature to a pressure benchmark (Table 1).

Table 1. Sensitivity Assessment Scale. Source: Defra Sensitivity Matrices.

	Resistance categories			
Recovery categories	None	Low	Medium	High
Very Low	High	High	Medium	Low
Low	High	High	Medium	Low
Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low
High	Medium	Low	Low	Not Sensitive

Sensitivity was assessed to a pre-determined benchmark for each pressure, and it is important to note that an assessment of not sensitive means that the feature is judged to be not sensitive at the pressure benchmark, it does not mean that the feature would be unaffected by the pressure at different levels of intensity, duration, and magnitude to the benchmark. Assessments marked with an asterix (*) indicates that the score is at the higher end of a range.

For more information about the matrix and how to interpret it, please read the MCZ Project Sensitivity Matrices guidance.