West Coast Marine Nature Reserve

Kemmyrk Bea-Varrey'n Clyst Heear

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Why Protect the Marine Environment?

The past 50 years have seen global declines in the health of our seas, which not only reduces species and habitats, but also the economic and social benefits we enjoy.

Threats to the marine environment include habitat loss, pollution, invasive species, over-fishing and climate change.

By protecting areas of the sea as marine nature reserves we can conserve and restore healthy habitats and provide refuges for spawning and nursery grounds to help replenish the areas outside.

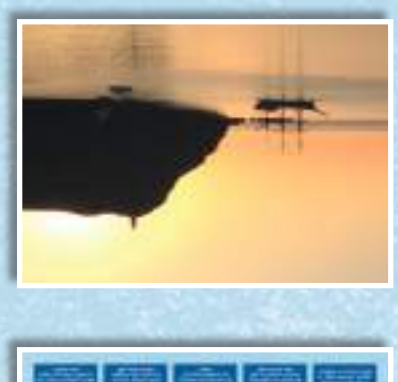
This helps maintain commercial and recreational fisheries, with Ramsey Bay MNR being a good example of how conservation and careful management can boost stocks of king and queen scallops over time.

Linked with the UNESCO Biosphere Isle of Man, the designation and careful management of MNRs can lead to the sustainable development of coastal areas; enhancing our experiences, economy and tourist appeal.

The Isle of Man territorial sea is a shared resource used by commercial fishermen, recreational anglers a wide variety of commercial, leisure and scientific interests, as well as the Manx community.

People who use the sea regularly have a wealth of knowledge which can complement the scientific information collected by DEFA and our partner organisations and we welcome input from anyone with information, ideas and experiences to share.

How to get more involved with your local Marine Nature Reserve



#MyManxMNR

Share your MNR experiences and the wonderful world of everything marine by submitting your images online using the hashtag **#MyManxMNR**

Blueways Trails

The Blueways Trails offer a sense of what goes on around the Isle of Man's seas and shorelines by providing multi-activity exploration of our historic and diverse coast. On land, on and under the water; from snorkel safaris to maritime history, from wildlife watching to geology, there is much to discover on the Blueways.
https://www.visitisleofman.com/blog/read/2020/07/discover-the-islands-blueways-b98

Raad ny Foillan

Manx Gaelic for *'The way of the gull'*; take a wander along the island's coastal footpath. At almost 160km/100 miles in length it's the perfect way to see our coastline. Details can be found here:
https://www.visitisleofman.com/see-and-do/active-and-adventure/walking-and-hiking/raad-ny-foillan-coastal-path

Spotter Sheets

Download a 'species spotter sheet' for each MNR from our website and use it when exploring your local Marine Nature Reserve. The QR code on this leaflet will take you there, or use: **www.gov.im/MNR**

Other Species to Spot

- Gannets (mostly March-October)
- Harbour porpoise (year round)
- Eider ducks (year round)
- Tern species (seasonal)
- Grey seals (year round)

Information For Anglers

The best time for sea fishing is between April and September with plankton populations blooming in the warmer months. This attracts sand eels, shoals of mackerel, herring, pollack, cod, grey mullet, and tope. There is good bass fishing up to the end of October and in winter you're likely to find codling, saithe and dogfish in Manx waters.

Location: Blue or Rue Point
Type: Shore fishing
Amenities: You'll find a café and public toilets just a few miles from this beach in Bride village. Alternatively head into Ramsey.

Location: West point, Point of Ayre
Type: Shore fishing
Amenities: You'll find a café and public toilets just a few miles from this beach in Bride village. Alternatively head into Ramsey.

Location: Peel
Type: Breakwater and shore fishing
Amenities: Ample free parking and shops, pubs, restaurants, cafes and public toilets in the town centre.

Does Your Catch Measure Up?

Although you don't need a licence for saltwater angling remember to observe minimum landing sizes for each species. These are displayed on boards at all main harbours or find them online, along with other useful fishing information at: **www.gov.im/recreationalfishing**

Fishing Litter

Please be considerate to wildlife and other people and take your tackle litter home or put it in a bin.

Additional Protected Areas

Around the Manx coast there are a number of Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) and a National Nature Reserve (NNR). These designated areas of land, which include the intertidal zone, have legal protection due to their special fauna, flora, geological or physical features.

ASSIs are areas of private or public land whose owners/occupiers require consent from DEFA before undertaking activities that may damage its special features. **All coastal ASSIs are accessible to the public.**

NNRs are areas protected via specific byelaws to ensure that reserve visitors behave responsibly.

Ballaugh Cronk © Lara Howe

The nearest protected areas to West Coast MNR are:
Central Ayres ASSI and NNR, Cronk y Bing ASSI, Glen Maye ASSI and Dalby Coast ASSI.

https://www.gov.im/protectedsites

For further information about Marine Nature Reserves contact DEFA Fisheries on:
01624 685857
fisheries@gov.im
or use the QR Code.

DEFA, Thie Slieau Whallian, Foxdale Road
St. John's, Isle of Man, IM4 3AS

Isle of Man Government
Reiltys Ellan Vannin

Biosphere Isle of Man

Manx Wildlife Trust
Treisht Bea-Feie Vannin

Marine Nature Reserves (MNRs)

What is a Marine Nature Reserve?

Marine Nature Reserves (MNRs) are a type of marine protected area, usually established to conserve particular species and habitats, or enable their recovery, and where the most damaging activities and impacts are excluded. Marine Protected Areas are a well-established method for achieving these objectives and have been successfully used worldwide.

Manx Marine Nature Reserves

There are 10 MNRs around the Isle of Man, forming a network that has been developing since 1989. Some areas, such as the first protected site, at Port Erin, and Ramsey Bay Marine Nature Reserve, have been well-studied and are examples of how conservation can benefit the marine environment and commercial and recreational fisheries. Manx MNRs now cover 430km^2, around 52% of the 0-3 nautical mile area, or 11% of the whole territorial sea.

West Coast MNR

The West Coast MNR is the largest of the nature reserves at around 185km^2, which equates to 43% of the protected area network. Strong tidal currents to the north and around the Point of Ayre provide ample food for the shore-nesting sea birds, such as Arctic terns, and many larger species such as seals, cetaceans and basking sharks.

West Coast Marine Nature Reserve

The West Coast MNR extends northwards from Elby Point to the Point of Ayre, with a mainly sandy coastline stretching north of Peel. These sediments were laid down during the last Ice Age, and the northern beaches are composed of glacial deposits and 'erratics'; glacier-transported rock fragments. The Ayres is particularly important for nesting and foraging sea birds.

Important habitats within West Coast MNR

Kelp forest • Rocky reef • Intertidal blue mussel • Soft sediments

Rocky reef © Chris Wood

Rocky reefs

Rocky reefs provide an attachment site for various marine animals and algae and, over time, wave action creates crevices that increase the available habitat. The rocky intertidal zone is routinely covered and uncovered by the tides and species that live here have special adaptions to cope with a constantly changing environment. Rocks that occur below the waterline host a wide range of different species providing protection and a good feeding location.

Intertidal blue mussel beds

This bivalve mollusc settles in large numbers as seed mussels but appears to be uncommon as adults, although there is a small colony near Peel Castle and at Niarbyl. They attach to the seabed or rocks using sticky threads called byssus. They are predated on by dog whelks, eider duck and oystercatchers.

Blue mussels © Melissa Parsons

Queen scallop © Lara Howe

Mixed soft sediment

The strong currents create and erode the beaches up the north-west coast and the numerous subtidal sand banks offshore, supporting a variety of species including two scallop species and whelks; three of our commercial fishery species. The shape of the MNR reflects historic fishing interests for scallops, and ensures that the ground called "Targets" remains accessible to the fishing industry.

Kelp forests

Kelp seaweeds grow close to shore creating underwater forests. They have similar structures to terrestrial plants; the holdfast (like a root), stipe (like a stem) and blades (like leaves), and establish on hard rock surfaces which they anchor to with the holdfast. Kelp provide a 3D habitat for a diverse range of species; worms, molluscs and crustaceans hide in the holdfast and the blades host bryzoans, juvenile fish and other seaweeds that colonise the surface. Kelp also plays an important role in marine foodwebs, providing a food source for fish, urchins and the beautiful blue-rayed limpet.

Kelp forest © Lara Howe

MNR General Restrictions

No mobile fishing gear (dredge or trawl)

No seabed extraction or deposit of materials

No damage to protected habitats or species

Important species within West Coast MNR

Basking shark • Blue mussel • European eel • Seabirds • Harbour porpoise • Sand eel • Grey seal • Bass

Burrowing anemone © Lara Howe

Burrowing anemone

This burrowing sea anemone *(Edwardsia timida)* is found in soft sediments. Typically it is found in sheltered areas between the lower shore and just beyond the shore in the sublittoral zone. It has a worm-like body and several pale pink/white/brown stinging tentacles which it uses to catch prey, but only the tentacles can be seen.

Basking sharks

The basking shark is the second-largest fish in the world, feeding on zooplankton (small crustaceans, larvae and fish eggs) that it filters from the water with its gills. As their Manx name, *Gobbag Vooar* (big mouth) suggests they can strain up to 2000 tonnes of water per hour. Basking sharks have a worldwide distribution and search out plankton blooms in Manx waters from mid-May to the beginning of September.

Basking shark feeding ©Anders Salesjo

A west-coast Bass © Brian Walmsley

Bass

European bass *(Dicentrarchus labrax)*, also called sea bass, are an important angling fish around the island, and strict conservation measures were introduced in 2016. Scientific surveys have shown that bass use the island as a nursery, with juveniles found close inshore, and in the intertidal river and harbour areas. The MNRs therefore provide important nursery habitat, helping to maintain offshore populations.

Seabirds

A variety of birds reliant on the island's healthy coasts and seas feed and nest along this long coastline, including; kittiwakes, shags, fulmar, common and black guillemot, ringed plover and oystercatcher. The very northern tip of the island, at the Point of Ayre, is the only place on the island where Arctic terns breed, and the Point of Ayre and Ayres National Nature Reserve (NNR) are the only places where little terns breed. Peel Hill is important for cliff-nesting species including puffin, razorbill, common guillemots and fulmar, and Peel harbour walls provide nest holes for black guillemot.

Black guillemots, Peel © Peter Duncan