

Port Erin Bay Marine Nature Reserve

Kemmyrk Bea-Varrey Bate Phurt Ghjarm



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.



Bradda Head © Lara Howe

NNRs are areas protected via specific byelaws to ensure that reserve visitors behave responsibly. The nearest protected areas to Port Erin Bay MNR are: **Dalby Coast ASSI and Port St Mary Ledges and Callow Point 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.

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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



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



#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>

Other Species to Spot

- Seabirds (year round)
- Bottlenose dolphins (mostly winter)
- Basking sharks (May-September)
- Grey seals (year round)
- Peregrine falcon (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: Port Erin Bay and Bradda Head

Type: Shore fishing
Amenities: Ample car parking near to the breakwater and at Bradda Glen where you'll find a restaurant. Shops, eateries, pubs and public toilets can be found in the village centre.

Location: The Calf Sound and the Calf of Man

Type: Shore and boat fishing
Amenities: Located at the south of the island you'll find parking plus a cafe and visitor centre. Further facilities are available in Port St Mary and Port Erin.

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.

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 430km², around 52% of the 0-3 nautical mile area, or 11% of the whole territorial sea.

Port Erin Bay MNR

Port Erin Bay MNR is relatively small at just under 4.5km². Facing due west, the bay acts as a funnel for wind and wave from the Irish Sea and these forces have produced one of the best sandy beaches on the island. Scallop research at the Port Erin Marine Laboratory initiated the first closed area in 1989, and its success as a source of larvae for offshore fishing grounds encouraged the collaborative development of the current marine protected area network that culminated in MNR designations in 2018. The bay contains much more than scallops though, with a wide range of habitats and species, including lobster, ballan wrasse, plaice, basking shark, sea hares (a very large type of seasilg) and seabirds.



Port Erin Bay Marine Nature Reserve

Port Erin Closed Area was established in 1989 as a fisheries research site and is the oldest Marine Protected Area in Manx waters. The current MNR extends southwards from Bradda Head to just beyond Bay Fine, and up to highest astronomical tide. The core zone of the MNR has not been fished by mobile gear for decades and is an example of a scallop fishing ground that has been allowed to recover and regenerate into a rich seabed habitat which now supports a wide range of species including, of course, scallops.

Important habitats within Port Erin Bay MNR

Rocky reef • Brittlestar beds • Kelp forest • Plaice nursery



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 adaptations 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.

Brittlestar beds

Brittlestars have slender arms that are about 5 times the length of their main body (disk) and can grow up to 20 cm; so they can create large tangled beds of many thousands when they congregate. As suspension filter feeders they hold their arms up in the water column catching plankton. Brittlestars are very fragile and the arms are often broken so it is imperative to prevent mobile fishing gear from being used in areas where they are found.



Brittlestar beds © Lara Howe

Kelp forests

Kelp seaweeds grow close to shore creating the equivalent of 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 bryozoans, 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

Stalked jellyfish

Stalked jellyfish are found low down on rocky shores or just below low tide in shallow water. They live attached to seaweeds, particularly the leaf-like fronds of kelp. They appear like an upside-down jellyfish with the tentacles positioned on top of the body facing upwards, the opposite of a regular jellyfish. Most records occur within the south-west of England and Scottish west coast but they can be found all around the British Isles, including in Port Erin Bay.



Stalked jellyfish © Peter Duncan

MNR General Restrictions

No mobile fishing gear (dredge or trawl)

No seabed extraction or deposit of materials

No damage to protected habitats or species

No anchoring in eelgrass areas

Important species within Port Erin Bay MNR

Basking sharks • Fulmar • Shag • Kelp • Bottlenose dolphin

Stalked jellyfish • Iceland clam • Herring Gull



Flame shell © Polly Whyte

Flame shell

Named after the fringe of bright orange tentacles, used to catch passing food particles. Flame shells protect themselves from predators by building a nest using sticky byssus threads, gravel and shell debris. Over time, these nests link together to create a flame shell bed, which provides habitat for many other species. Individual flame shells are sparse on Manx coasts so restricting towed fishing gear in flameshell habitats is essential for their protection.

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

Historic eelgrass beds

This map of Port Erin Bay from 1919, shows historic eelgrass beds in the bay, circled in red. These have since been lost, possibly due to a wasting disease in the 1930s, but there is now interest in restoring this species in the area, partly due to the increasing importance of eelgrass in marine carbon capture and storage; known as 'blue carbon'.

