

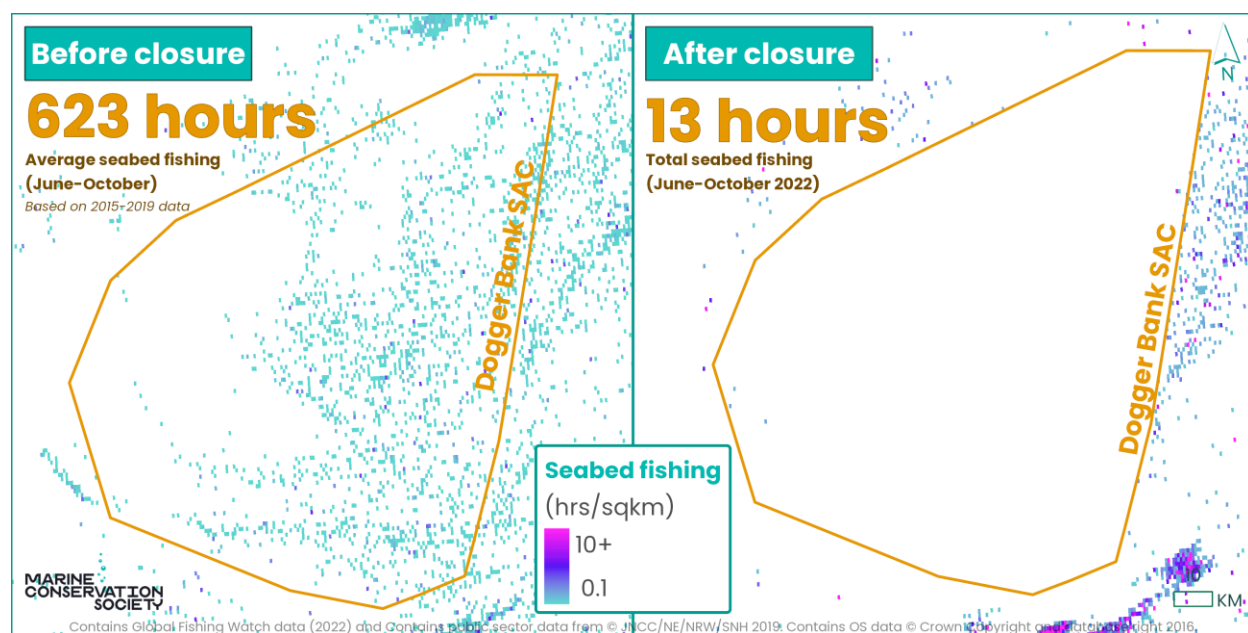
## New research shows 98% decrease in bottom-towed fishing in Marine Protected Area since ban

- **Marine Protected Area, Dogger Bank, has experienced a 98% decrease in bottom towed fishing since the ban came into force in June 2022**
- **UK Government needs to fully protect remaining 36 English offshore Marine Protected Areas from destructive fishing**
- **COP15 – International effort must be made to fully protect our ocean**

New analysis from the Marine Conservation Society of fishing in Marine Protected Areas (MPA) has shown how effective byelaws banning bottom-towed fishing in MPAs can be.

Between June and October, from 2015–2019, an average of 623 hours of bottom-towed fishing took place within the English Dogger Bank MPA. Located about 120 kilometres east of Hull, Dogger Bank has been heavily fished for decades.

However, between June and October 2022, since the ban has been in place, fishing activity dropped to just 13 hours; a **98% decrease in seabed fishing**. This steep decline in fishing highlights how effective proper protections in these vulnerable and vital areas can be.



**Jean-Luc Solandt, Principal MPA Specialist at the Marine Conservation Society** said, “The huge reduction in seabed fishing we’ve identified shows how effective governments can be in protecting our ocean. This needs to be replicated across all offshore MPA’s to help recover fish stocks, provide sanctuary for marine life, and protect sensitive habitats from destruction.

“Our ocean has an incredible ability to recover when it’s given a chance. The Government must meet its target to fully protect all English offshore MPAs before 2024. The sooner this happens, the sooner our seas can restore themselves.”

To more accurately monitor fishing activity, the Marine Conservation Society is working with WWF and RSPB, as the *Future Fisheries Alliance*, to campaign for the Government to implement the use of Remote Electronic Monitoring with cameras on boats. Not only would this technology allow scientists to see where boats fish, but it would also help reduce bycatch and prevent overfishing. You can read the charity’s report [here](#).

Protection of England’s offshore MPAs is critical for both climate and nature recovery. However, the UK Government has a long way to go to reach its promise of properly protecting all 40 of England’s offshore MPA sites by 2024.

**Sandy Luk, Marine Conservation Society CEO, said:** “With the UN Conference on Biodiversity (COP15) currently taking place, world leaders must turn their attentions to urgently protecting our planet from nature loss. If we’re to achieve 30% of land and sea protected by 2030, our ocean cannot be forgotten. When our ocean is protected, habitats can recover and support the incredible diversity of life in our seas.”

At five times the size of the Lake District National Park, Dogger Bank was once abundant in species such as halibut, cod and angelshark, whose populations are currently struggling in UK waters. There is hope that, with these new protections in place, these species and many more will be able to recover and thrive.

However, the charity’s evidence shows that fishing efforts continue to be high in adjacent Dutch and German sections of the Dogger Bank MPA. Whilst the ban in English waters of the MPA will encourage local wildlife stocks to recover, the charity’s data does show intense fishing elsewhere.

To address this, the Marine Conservation Society continues to work with a coalition of European NGOs, *Seas at Risk*, fighting to protect all of Europe’s MPAs from the damage done by bottom trawling. In particular, the charity is working with Dutch and German colleagues to ensure that protection of their part of the Dogger Bank follows the UK protection.

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### Images

Please find a selection of infographics and high-res images linked in this [Dropbox folder](#).

### Press Contact

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### Notes to Editors

The [Marine Conservation Society](#) is the UK's leading ocean charity, fighting for cleaner, better-protected, healthier seas. The charity works to highlight the importance of our ocean, and the life within it, through working with government, industry and education, to take action to restore and protect the marine environment.

In June 2022 a byelaw came into force that banned damaging fishing activities from four of English offshore Marine Protected Areas: Dogger Bank Special Area of Conservation; Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge Special Area of Conservation; South Dorset Marine Conservation Zone; The Canyons Marine Conservation Zone.