

Research and education Code of Practice for the preservation of the marine natural heritage value in Wembury Voluntary Marine Conservation Area

Wembury Voluntary Marine Conservation Area (VMCA) was established in 1981 by the Wembury Advisory Group (WAG) in recognition of not only its nationally important marine natural heritage, but also due to the increasing level of human pressure the area faces.



Figure 1. Map showing extent of Wembury Voluntary Marine Conservation Area (VMCA).

The VMCA extends for four miles from Yealm Head to Fort Bovisand (Figure 1) and lies within or is covered in part by the following protections/designations:

- [Plymouth Sound and Estuaries Special Area of Conservation \(SAC\)](#)
- [Wembury Point Site of Special Scientific Interest \(SSSI\) \(including Blackstone Reef and the Great Mewstone\)](#)
- [Yealm Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest \(SSSI\)](#)
- [South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty \(AONB\)](#)
- South Hams Coastal Protection Area

Because the VMCA lies within the above protection areas, particularly the SSSI, consent will need to be granted for any activities that are likely to have adverse effects on the protected features. The following code of conduct is intended to inform research and educational activities within the Wembury VMCA only. It is expected that all seashore



users abide by the [Seashore Code](#). This code of conduct will also try to explain who the landowner is and how to obtain consent.

Acceptable without consent*:

1. Species and habitat monitoring that does not involve disturbance or where disturbance is transitory only (for instance, turning boulders but replacing them in the same place without damage to organisms; digging sediment and backfilling the hole by hand only)
2. Photographic monitoring using only non-fixed points of reference (e.g. GPS)
3. In situ non-destructive physical parameter measurements, e.g. salinity, pH etc.
4. Removal of small samples of seawater for further testing

*please still contact [Wembury Marine Centre](#) with details of your project or activity so it can be logged on the database.

Requires consultation/ consent / licence:

Please email info@wemburymarinecentre.org in the first instance if your intended project/activity involves any of the following:

1. Any removal of habitats (e.g. rocks, sediment) or change to habitats (e.g. rockpools)
2. Collection, removal or destruction of any species*, including common species and including seaweeds
3. Any manipulative experiments, including exclusion and/or inclusion experiments
4. Any experiments involving the removal or disturbance of non-native or invasive species

* Some species are protected by statute under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 and require a licence to collect or damage (see <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-3614> for more info).

Prohibited activities - these activities are strictly prohibited within the VMCA/SSSI unless exceptional circumstances are demonstrated:

1. Any physical damage to the bedrock and/or reef habitat
2. Any construction that involves drilling or habitat destruction
3. Any construction of cages, fences etc. that will have a long-lasting effect on the bedrock/habitat
4. Any species/sample collection whatsoever from Wembury Point
5. Any in situ species/habitat destruction
6. Any introduction of nutrients or poisons



The SSSI slate reef at Wembury Point is of particular significance for nationally important and rare marine species and habitats. It experiences much less human disturbance than the main Wembury Beach and Blackstone Reef. For this reason, it is requested that future research and educational visits involving any removal, damage or disturbance of species or habitats, **do not take place at Wembury Point.**

Conditions for granting consent:

- Please give at least 2 months notice to allow time for discussion and consent to be granted
- Please consider how to minimise the impact of your (or your student/group) study on the marine environment
- Please send a copy of your final publication/report to info@wemburymarinecentre.org where it will be logged on a database for future reference and knowledge exchange
- All users of the shore need to undertake an appropriate risk assessment before starting their research. Please note work carried out on the shore is done so at your own risk -the landowner accepts no responsibility.

Knowledge Exchange –

Wembury Marine Centre provides the public interface between visitors and the local marine environment. As such, a programme of marine awareness events is delivered each season by Devon Wildlife Trust staff and volunteers. The Centre is keen to share the work and research taking place at Wembury with the local community and a series of evening talks is organised annually by the Wembury Marine Conservation Area Advisory Group (WAG). If you would consider delivering an informal evening talk about your project to the local community, please get in touch with WAG Secretary, John Hepburn - mewstone.enterprises@gmail.com.

Please contact Wembury Marine Centre with any queries regarding this Code of Conduct:

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