

## Other Species to Spot

- Fulmar (mostly March-October)
- Bottlenose dolphins (mostly winter)
- Shag (year round)
- Harbour porpoise (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:** Laxey beach and pier

**Type:** Shore fishing

**Amenities:** You'll find a café and public toilets on the promenade. Free car parking can be found on the promenade but can be busy at times.

**Location:** Douglas Bay and Douglas Head

**Type:** Breakwater, shore and rock fishing

**Amenities:** Around the Island's capital you'll find shops, eateries and public toilets in the town centre. Free car parking is available around the harbour area.

## 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](http://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.



Maughold cliffs © James Cubbon

The nearest protected areas to Laxey Bay MNR are: **Maughold Cliffs and Brooghs ASSI and Santon Gorge and Port Soderick ASSI.**

<https://www.gov.im/protectedsites>

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



**DEFA, Thie Slieau Whallian, Foxdale Road  
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# Laxey Bay Marine Nature Reserve

*Kemmyrk Bea-Varrey Baie Laksey*

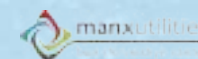


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# Why Protect the Marine Environment?

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](http://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>



# 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<sup>2</sup>, around 52% of the 0-3 nautical mile area, or 11% of the whole territorial sea.

## Laxey Bay MNR

Laxey Bay MNR is approximately 4km<sup>2</sup> in size which equates to around 0.5% of the 0-3 nm area, or 1% of the reserves network. The bay was previously a fisheries closed area with its own legislation, the Sea-fisheries (Scallop Ranching) (Restricted Area) Bye-law 2009 which was established to protect the 100,000 50mm individually-tagged juvenile scallops imported from Ireland that were released here to see if ranching was possible. It was shown that the scallops survived and grew, but the project largely ceased in 2014 and the bay essentially became another scallop larval production area; the MNR now protects both fisheries and biodiversity.



# Laxey Bay Marine Nature Reserve

The Laxey Bay MNR extends from Carrick Roayrt south to Clay Head. Although it is one of the smaller Marine Nature Reserves it still contains a diversity of species and habitats, such as eelgrass and whelks, which are one of our commercial fishery species. It's also a great place to spot bottlenose dolphins during the winter, at times in super-pods of over 100 individuals.

## Important habitats within Laxey Bay MNR

Eelgrass Meadows • Sandy Seabeds • Maerl • Rocky Reefs



Laxey eelgrass © Bangor University

### Eelgrass meadow

Eelgrass or seagrass (*Zostera marina*) is a marine flowering plant, growing at between 5-12m in depth and forming meadows that provide habitat for crabs, lobster, and various fish and molluscs. Eelgrass meadows provide a range of benefits including reducing coastal erosion by stabilising sediment, reducing wave action and acting as a carbon store. The eelgrass area in the south of the bay, off Garwick, has been shrinking and new surveys are required to map its current extent and status. Meanwhile, a new eelgrass bed has been found to the north of Laxey, at Bulgham Bay.

### Rocky reef

Rocky reefs provide an attachment site for various marine animals and algae. 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 that allow them to cope with a constantly changing environment. Rocks that occur below the waterline often host a wide range of different species providing protection and a good feeding location.



Rocky reef © Chris Wood



Sandy seabed animals © DEFA/Bangor University

### Sandy seabeds

Expansive, inshore sandy seabeds are relatively uncommon around the island, and they support particular kinds of animals, especially burrowing species. Unlike rock or coarse gravel, where seaweeds can take hold, water currents move the sand around resulting in less seaweed. The exception is eel grass, which can stabilise the sand via its complex root system. Laxey Bay contains characteristic sandy species such as heart urchins, sand star, masked crab (*Corystes cassivelaunus*) and excitingly, the first Manx record of the fan mussel (*Atrina fragilis*), one of the region's rarest molluscs (see left).



Brown crab on maerl © Jim Self

### Maerl

Maerl is a coralline (hard) red algae which creates a colourful, fine-branching layer on the seabed. This habitat has high species diversity, with shellfish, anemones, urchins, crabs, shrimps, worms and fish found here. It also provides a nursery ground and refuge for juvenile queen scallops and whelks — two of the island's commercially important species. Maerl also plays a part in slowing the effects of climate change, by depositing calcium carbonate and acting as a 'blue carbon' store.

# 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 Laxey Bay MNR

Minke whale • Iceland clam • Bottlenose dolphin • Seabird species  
Masked crab • Salmon and sea trout • European eel • Whelk  
Purple heart urchin



Iceland clam © Angus Robson

### Iceland clam

Buried under the Laxey sand is one of the oldest-living animals in the world, the Iceland clam (*Arctica islandica*), also known as the black clam. It can live up to 500 years old and is listed as a regionally threatened/declining species under the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR), hence the importance of our MNR in protecting such species.

### Common whelk

The common whelk (*Buccinum undatum*) is a large whelk up to 10cm in length and is one of the five commercially fished species in Manx waters. Caught in pots, it is mainly exported to Asia and is found in large numbers on the soft sediments in the Bay. Its empty egg masses, known as 'sea wash balls' are often found on the strandline, with a single juvenile snail crawling out of an individual egg capsule.



Whelk © Caroline Perry



Bottlenose dolphins © Peter Duncan

### Bottlenose dolphins

Bottlenose dolphins tend to be seen during the winter and can appear in super-pods of over 100 individuals off the east coast. This pod, based on photo-identification, is thought to be from Cardigan Bay and they move frequently between the Welsh coast and the island. They are here feeding on the schooling fish in the area, which also bring in other cetaceans such as minke whales.

### Migratory fish

Laxey derives from the Norse word for salmon river (Laxa). Both Atlantic salmon and sea trout move upriver to breed, whilst the European eel leaves our rivers to breed in the Caribbean. Such complex life cycles make these fish vulnerable to many different hazards and so they are heavily protected on the island, both in MNRs and under fisheries legislation. This is an example of how MNRs can help protect our biodiversity and cultural heritage.



Salmon fry and parr © DEFA