

Seapens and burrowing megafauna communities

EUNIS Code: A5.361 and A5.362

National Marine Habitat Classification for UK & Ireland code: SS.SMu.CFiMu.SpnMeg and SS.SMu.CFiMu.MegMax

Plains of fine mud, at water depths ranging from 15-200m or more, which are heavily bioturbated by burrowing megafauna with burrows and mounds typically forming a prominent feature of the sediment surface. The habitat may include conspicuous populations of seapens, typically *Virgularia mirabilis* and *Pennatula phosphorea*. The burrowing crustaceans present may include *Nephrops norvegicus*, *Calocaris macandreae* or *Callinassa subterranea*. In the deeper fiordic lochs which are protected by an entrance sill, the tall seapen *Funiculina quadrangularis* may also be present. The burrowing activity of megafauna creates a complex habitat, providing deep oxygen penetration. This habitat occurs extensively in sheltered basins of fjords, sea lochs, voes and in deeper offshore waters such as the North Sea and Irish Sea basins.

See OSPAR Agreement 2008-07 for references