

## 27 Sabellaria spinulosa reefs

*Sabellaria spinulosa* is a polychaete worm that builds tubes, binding together sand particles. Dense, subtidal aggregations can provide a solid base amongst stabilised cobbles, pebbles or gravel, that allow species requiring such a substrate to thrive in an otherwise difficult environment. A hard substrate is required for attachment and suspended sand particles to build a tube. Once a reef is established, larvae are strongly stimulated to settle there. The national plan will only include stable reefs, not occasional individuals or seasonal, thin crusts, broken up during winter.

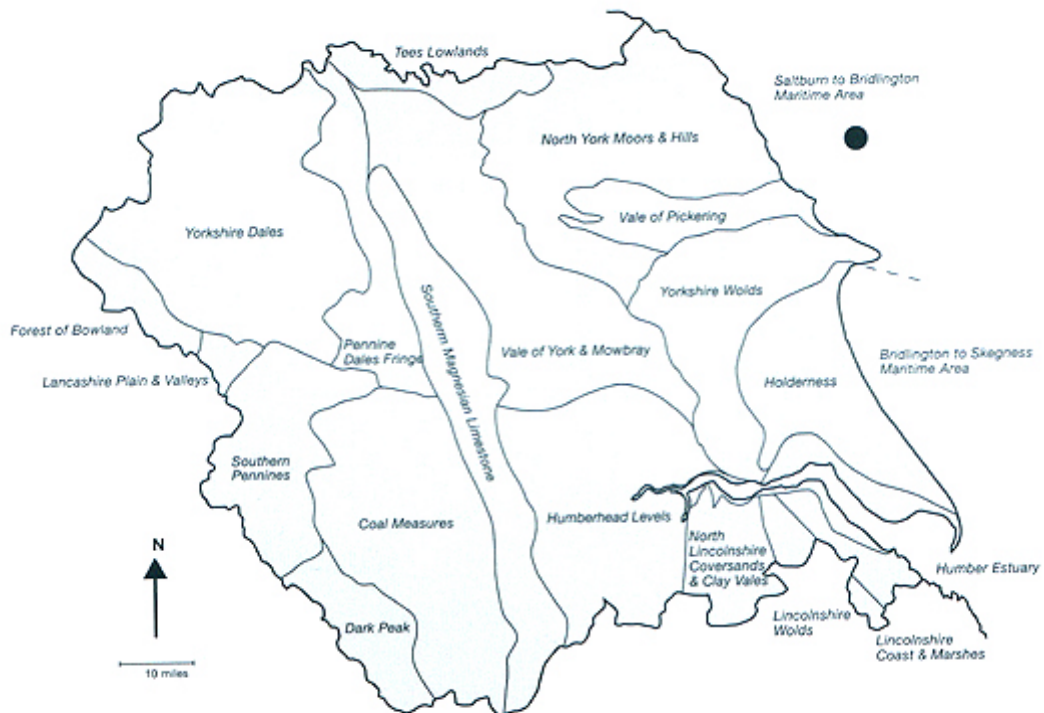
### Status

Though in this region we do not have reefs of the quality of sites in the south-west of Britain, there are two sites known to have reefs, both mentioned in the Marine Nature Conservation Review summaries<sup>1</sup>. The Staithes to Filey Bay summary notes a sublittoral site near Saltwick Nab with 'a distinct reef-like structure covering the entire area surveyed'. Small reefs have also been found on heavily sand-influenced bedrock on the north side of Flamborough Head. Away from these, individual worms are commonly found along the North Yorkshire coast in sandy channels on boulder beaches and amongst kelp holdfasts.

### Threats

Fishing activities break the reefs up and prawn fishermen appear to have destroyed the reefs and the fishery in the Wadden Sea. Fishing for crustacea or molluscs can be particularly detrimental. Aggregate dredging can destroy reefs so licences must stipulate the avoidance of reefs. Damage can be done easily but regeneration is difficult and very slow (15-150 years).

Map 30: Presence of *Sabellaria spinulosa* reefs shown by Natural Areas



● Habitat present (maritime area)