

A Diver's Crib Sheet to Sediment Veneers.

Mobile sediment on hard surfaces changes the sessile community on that hard surface.

Sediment veneers are frequent in the sublittoral of Dorset but often go un-recorded. The working definition of a veneer we are using in Dorset is: *A deposit of sediment on top of reef which is thin and/or mobile enough so that sessile species can colonise and grow on the hard surface of the reef through or under the sediment veneer. Two geological components (reef and overlying sediment) combine their effects towards determining the community.* A veneer is rock and sediment together with sessile life on the rock.

Sediment is a veneer if:

Species attached to hard surface (rock, cobbles or stones) are growing through sediment. You waft away silt/sediment to find rock beneath with live animals or plants on it.

Sediment is not a veneer if:

The rock beneath a layer of sediment has no life, e.g. if coarse sand scours away anything that settles, that is "mobile sediment on rock".

If there is infauna (bivalves, gravel cucumbers) living in the sediment and not attached to rock beneath.

Filling in the form to record a veneer.

For an **Observer form**, the best thing would be to write, for example: "Sand veneer, 80% cover on bedrock" in the 'anything unusual or noteworthy' box on page 3 under the diagram. Show species growing through sand on the diagram.

For a **Surveyor form**, tick the box for 'sediment on rock' in 'features' for a veneer habitat. Record the percentages of rock/boulders/cobbles/pebbles (max 100%) and the species on the hard surface as normal. Do not record the sediment as well as the rock to get more than 100%! Instead, write a description of the habitat to include the keyword "veneer":

3. DESCRIPTION (physical + community)

HORIZONTAL Rocky REEF (BEYOND BOULDERS, H1) WITH A SEDIMENT VENEER OF MOBILE CLEAN, RIPPLED COARSE SANDS OF VARYING DEPTHS TO 10CM APPROX. WITH LOS PLATE SUCH AS *AMPHIPECTA LICHATA* (WITH GRATIAS) GROWING THROUGH AND CORALLINE CRUSTS & OCCASIONAL SPOROBLANCOUS TUBES & BROWN CRUSTS ON ROCK BENEATH. VENEER PRESENT ON 80% OF HABITAT. 6.3 TO 7.3M BCD

Biotope Code

Seabed type: rock boulders cobbles pebbles gravel sand mud wreckage other

Communities: kelp forest kelp park mixed seaweeds seagrass bed enc pink algae

animal turf SPONGE CRUSTS animal bed sediment with life barren sediment

2

You can tick the boxes for 'features, sediment' but write in a note that they apply to the veneer only e.g. for Habitat 3. For details of how to do this on the interactive form, see the **Diver's Guide to Sediment Veneers** which also contains photos of veneers and form snapshots. On a paper form, just write it in. Remember that a veneer sediment can be mixed and include gravel and shell fragments with sand or might be silt with shell fragments. It is useful to provide a breakdown of the composition of a veneer, e.g. estimated percentages of gravel, coarse/medium/fine sand, silt or mud. Also write in how much of the rock in a habitat is covered by sediment veneer.

Different sediment components may be mobile at different intervals e.g. sand can be more frequently mobile than gravel. Divers will never be present to see storms or extreme currents moving veneers. If you need to record the veneer composition and can "co-opt" another column to do so, you can. But remember to label it clearly and make a note in the description that you have done so. If there is no vacant column, then make your own on the paper form or for the interactive form. The **Diver's Guide** shows how. Scour. A veneer is composed of mobile sediment so scour must occur to some extent as the sediment particles move across the rock surface. If you see scour, record it please.

