

MARINE PARKS

BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME

A global idea that could work for Britain



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PLYMOUTH
CITY COUNCIL

A conference at the
National Marine Aquarium
Plymouth | June 2018

Executive Summary

In June 2018, Blue Marine Foundation (BLUE) and Plymouth City Council organised a conference at the National Marine Aquarium to explore the idea of Marine Parks. The proposition discussed was that Marine Parks could improve the conservation of the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the UK's coastal waters and create more opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of outstanding marine areas by the public.

The 130 delegates heard first-hand experience and perspectives from around the world and from the length and breadth of the UK coast. A consensus was then reached: Marine Parks could be used to better protect coastal waters as public assets while bringing shared prosperity, broader public engagement and regeneration of deprived coastal communities.

So what is a marine park? A marine park, as envisaged by the conference, is a multi-use space - an umbrella designation that draws together pre-existing, valuable designations such as marine conservation zones, alongside commercial and recreational uses of the marine space.

The Marine Parks designation uses the power of narrative and better public understanding to derive wider benefits from a fragmented marine landscape: with the whole being more valuable than the sum of its existing parts.

However, there cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach to marine parks. This is a designation that should be considered on a case-by-case basis, and driven by the needs of local communities, reflecting community priorities and delivering locally-appropriate social, economic and environmental

benefits. There is much to be gained from branding and celebrating the diversity of our marine and coastal ecosystems.

The conference heard from several speakers that Plymouth Sound and its nearby waters are an ideal testbed for a marine park. It was agreed that by connecting and weaving together pre-existing designations and uses, a National Marine Park in Plymouth Sound could improve the delivery of a range of public interest and conservation objectives.

Global experience suggests that public interest and cross party support is essential for the creation of marine parks. Plymouth would appear to fulfil these conditions: there is an interested, Labour-controlled council, led by Tudor Evans, OBE, and cross-party political support for exploring the idea of a marine park in Plymouth Sound from both Luke Pollard, the Labour MP for Plymouth Sutton and Devonport, and from Michael Gove, the Conservative Environment Secretary. There is a high-conservation-value environment, maritime heritage, varied marine stakeholders and a diverse city of over 250,000 people. Plymouth has an opportunity to become the example that others follow.

"The sea is in Plymouth's DNA... I would like to be the first leader of any city anywhere in the UK that has a national park to its north, a river and a country park to its east and west and a national marine park to its south." Tudor Evans OBE



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Conference Proceedings

Chairman's Opening Remarks & Address from Luke Pollard MP

Professor Martin Attrill, from Plymouth University Marine Institute, welcomed guests to Britain's 'Ocean City', and to the National Marine Aquarium. He framed the day ahead as a 'discussion of the concept' of a UK National Marine Park, and a chance to come to some conclusions as to how the idea could be moved forwards.



He provided delegates with a vision to consider:

"A Marine Park is a specially recognised coastal or marine space, important for its environment and community health and well-being."

Local Member of Parliament, **Luke Pollard MP**, provided an address to the conference via video. He thanked attendees for participating and provided context for the

event: highlighting how the idea of Plymouth Sound as a UK Marine Park had been part of the platform for his election in 2017, and a concrete manifesto promise.

"The reaction from Plymouth marine sites and the wider community has been incredible... the enthusiasm has been amazing"

He commented that the response to the idea from the local community has been 'incredible' - with support and enthusiasm from a range of industries, including the catching sector and local engineering firms. He spoke of a 'strong, comprehensive and compelling case' for the existence of national marine parks, but raised a number of questions it was hoped the conference gathering could begin to answer:

- How do we get the right legislation in place?
- What would it mean for local fishery authorities - the Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authorities (IFCAs), for example?
- What would it mean for existing conservation designations in the area?
- How can we make this a 'plain English' way of communicating marine conservation, that can connect with the local public?

"How can we communicate this idea in plain English?"

Pollard spoke of the huge public enthusiasm for marine conservation seen in the wake of impactful television series such as Blue Planet II, and the need to capture that energy in proposals that connect with people's

drive to help tackle marine environmental issues such as plastic pollution.



He concluded by noting that he hoped to publish outline proposals for what a National Marine Park in Plymouth could do, and how it could connect with the public, later in the year (2018). He hoped for this to be delivered on a cross-party and cross-industry basis.

"Let's make real the Government's talk about blue-belts"

Setting the Scene

Prof Attrill pointed out to the conference that this was a timely discussion: Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, has recently announced a review of UK national parks policy. Mr Gove's adviser, Julian Glover, said the conference was of "central relevance" to his review and is looking forward to reading its conclusions. Prof Attrill noted that 90% of the public say national parks are important to them.

Prof Attrill then posed some questions that would need to be answered to determine a clear vision for UK marine parks.

National Marine Park or Marine National Park?

These two similar terminologies come with distinct legal implications. The creation of a 'Marine National Park' means working within, and adding to, the existing framework. The first option - the 'National Marine Park' - would mean creating an entirely new framework.

Are marine parks about direct conservation policy?

The development of a marine park could deliver a statement that the seas are as important to the UK as our land. Existing UK National Parks cover just 9% of our land area, and only 4% of our total land plus the UK Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). However, overseas we are creating huge areas that could be called 'marine parks' - large areas around overseas territories, often designated as no-take zones.

"Overseas the UK is creating huge areas that could be called 'marine parks', with no equivalent scale in our domestic waters"

In our domestic waters, we have no equivalent-scale designations. If all current and proposed Marine Conservation Zones are combined, this represents a coverage of 11% of our waters. No-take zones within this amount to just 7 kilometres squared, a similar size to Richmond Park in London.



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“The public aren’t aware of the exciting and diverse marine life to be found around the UK”

Are marine parks all about public engagement?

Marine conservation terms, and their associated acronyms - ‘MSFD’, ‘SAC’, ‘MCZ’, ‘SPA’ – can be confusing and a barrier to public engagement. Beyond this, studies have shown the general public is not aware of the exciting and diverse marine life to be found around the UK. In comparison to other nations, the UK scores low when it comes to how impacted people feel by environmental issues and how much they prioritise an environmentally conscious lifestyle. Public engagement is also about social inclusivity: research shows that social groups engaging with existing national parks do not reflect the diverse make-up of our society. Conversely, the composition of social groups on beaches around the UK closely matches the national picture. It is possibly our ‘most socially inclusive habitat’. Additionally, the mental health and wellbeing benefits of visiting the coast are increasingly understood - and increasingly compelling.

“Beaches are possibly our most socially inclusive habitat”

Is it all about the economy?

The designation of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage site in Dorset is worth an estimated £111 million per year. Dartmoor and Exmoor use economic frames to promote their natural assets. Looking at marine economic activity, Prof Attrill pointed to comparative economic benefits of different activities,

noting that commercial fishing is hugely culturally valuable, but may not represent as significant an economic activity as other marine uses. Brands can benefit sales and quality of goods, and it may be worth considering the value of a marine park brand for Plymouth – he commented, “there’s value in a Marine Park brand”.

Conclusions

Prof Attrill concluded by stating that Plymouth would be the perfect place to test the concept of a marine park: the surrounding waters already have the most conservation designations of any marine area. Plymouth could be the first national park to include a city.

His remarks were followed by three further scene-setting presentations from Keith Hiscock, the Marine Biological Association, Professor Callum Roberts, University of York, and Mark Robins of Birdwatch Ireland.



Keith Hiscock highlighted the recreational use of the marine environment surrounding Plymouth. Speaking from the perspective



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of a keen scuba diver, Hiscock pointed to the variety of wreck dives in the area, to the submerged river gorge at Firestone Bay, and to the ‘incredibly tropical’ and rare coral life to be found at the Plymouth Sound drop-off.

“Plymouth Sound drop-off is a site of incredibly tropical-looking, rare and scarce coral”

The commonly used recreational area out of Plymouth, which also hosts charter boat trips, water sports and dive training, extends 10 nautical miles out to sea, produces a semi-circular area covering Plymouth Sound and all current areas designated for different forms of protection. This was posited as a range for a potential marine park.

Hiscock also underlined the importance of education and outreach around marine conservation. The National Marine Aquarium - a window onto the ocean - is an excellent example of this, as is the Wembury Marine Centre, run by Devon Wildlife Trust on National Trust property. He spoke of school groups including local 11-year-olds who have never been to the beach before. This was underscored as something a concerted effort around establishing a marine park could, and should, work to address. He introduced the CBD IUCN Category V and VI as a possible basis for defining UK Marine Parks.

Conclusions: Recreational and educational facilities should play a vital role in public outreach around a Marine Park and are already established and thriving in Plymouth - these should be worked into any vision for a wider, cohesive initiative.



Professor Callum Roberts of the University of York presented on the UK Marine Protected Area (MPA) network in an international and historical context. He noted the historical abundance of fish in UK waters, stating that in the 1880s UK fishermen were landing five times more fish, despite a low-tech, low-power fleet. Correcting for a difference in fishing power - or ‘catch per unit effort’ (CPUE) - we are now catching 17 times less fish. He examined current UK marine protection, based on a national commitment to protect 10% of coastal and marine areas by 2020. This commitment is now linked to the United Nations’ sustainable development goals. A total of 297 marine protected areas exist, or are soon to be implemented, in UK waters. This represents 23% of UK seas - enough to satisfy the UK’s contribution to the UN’s goal of 10% of the world’s oceans coming under protection of some sort. However, Prof Roberts questioned the strength of protection this figure represents: referring to Prof Attrill’s comment that less than seven square kilometres is designated as ‘no-take’. He suggested this showed a ‘tragic lack of ambition’.



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“Marine protection around mainland UK shows a tragic lack of ambition”

Prof Roberts highlighted the goals for marine conservation zones - around ‘maintaining’ the environment. He argued we should be aiming to re-build the abundance, diversity and complexity of marine ecosystems that saw 17 times as many fish being caught, and many more marine megafauna (like halibut and skates) present in UK waters. He asserted that shifting environmental baselines have led to inadequate conservation and management targets; that we are ‘institutionalising the degraded state of our seas’. He provided two specific examples of this ‘institutionalised’ degradation: the protection of ‘sands’ in the Dogger Bank Natura 2000 area in the North Sea, ignoring protection for the wide range of fauna and mobile species in the area, and a study conducted by the University of Bangor into whether scallop dredging should be allowed in a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in Wales, which concluded ‘scallop dredging is compatible with conservation’. He pointed to flaws in the latter ‘recovery’ study: ‘the experimental study was inside an area that had been dredged intensively up to a few years previously’ (creating a poor baseline) ‘and continuously trawled... Recovery was monitored for just four months’.

“We are institutionalising the degraded state of our seas”

New advice from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) on standards for MPAs (issued April 2018) states they should be ‘conservation focused, with nature as the priority’.

Conclusions: The sea is wild and shouldn’t be micro-managed. It is important to protect whole ecosystems, including mobile species, and to work to restore abundance rather than ‘maintain’ the status quo. The use of conservation measures to protect biodiversity is vital for the resilience of the oceans in the long term. Marine parks can be hugely beneficial if they offer genuine protection as part of a matrix of conservation, alongside sustainable use. Any additional benefit with regards to public engagement with the marine environment would also be highly valuable.



Mark Robins of **Birdwatch Ireland** focused on the importance of story-telling to successful conservation projects, and suggested that the marine park should seek to ‘do three things well’ - deliver three ‘storylines’. He suggested the necessary creativity, energy and impact required would need those working on the idea to step beyond ‘statism’ - ie. the curse of thinking inside the box, and act imaginatively.



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“UK marine parks would connect with the daily lives of millions of citizens”

He described the concept of a ‘bricoleur’ - a French term for a ‘jack of all trades’ or someone who ‘creates using whatever materials are present’ - as a new way to look at management and leadership for a marine park. What can be developed with the ingredients to hand, and how can we develop sustainable practices that would secure a lasting legacy for a marine park?

Conclusions: A successful marine park would ‘unleash the imagination’ - both in terms of the concept development and in terms of its eventual reality and engagement with the public. UK marine parks would overcome failings of modern statism and connect with the day to day lives of millions of citizens and their everyday practices, to generate real, sustainable support.

International Perspectives

International perspectives provided an insight into how ‘marine parks’ are defined and viewed across the world.

Dr Martin Taylor, of **WWF Australia** (via live link) provided a cautionary insight into the dangers of marine protection becoming vulnerable to politics, detailing what was described as a ‘largest protected area downgrade in history’ around the Australian coast.

The huge and diverse marine jurisdictions around Australia, which include both State

and Commonwealth waters are, amongst other areas, home to the Great Barrier Reef marine park. They saw an historical increase in protection in 2003: with national marine park and sanctuary areas designated increasing from 5% to 33%. This huge increase was delivered through intergovernmental collaboration to support marine parks - with collaboration between commonwealth and state jurisdictions to produce ‘world-class marine protected areas’.

It was noted that, while ‘zoning schemes’ (ie. rules applied within different types of MPA or conservation zone) are not consistent across different jurisdictions, generally in Australia a marine national park, or a marine sanctuary, bans extractive and consumptive uses - such as commercial fishing - that are present in other zones/MPAs. Dr Taylor questioned whether this was always the case, given the presence of recreational fishing in some marine national parks, but overall felt it was clearly understood and recognised, including by the general public, that these ‘high prestige’ conservation areas are strongly protected.

An impactful ‘Save Our Marine Life’ campaign in Australia saw the expansion of the marine reserve system continue throughout 2009-2012. By 2012, roughly one third of marine regions were put into reserves. Criticism of this expansion was immediate, particularly from the fishing industry. There were significant political ramifications: the government fell and the new government established in 2013 immediately suspended the new designations, with a policy of ‘no change



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on the water' until an expert panel review had been conducted. This panel convened in 2014 and provided recommendations for re-zoning in 2016. In 2017 the government issued drafted management and zoning plans which did not reflect the scientific recommendations of the panel and included major downgrades for many MPAs. The net result was that over half of marine national parks in the Coral sea were downgraded. This faced massive opposition from conservationists and scientists, but the government proceeded.

"This was the largest protected area downgrade in history"

Looking at the downgrade through an economic lens, the reduction in protection returned 4 million dollars of fishing value, versus a projected 28 million dollars of tourism value.

"Political pressure and short-term economic value won over – we must strive for cross-party political support"

Conclusions: Marine protection is difficult to manage when it becomes a 'political football'. In Australia, one side of the political spectrum is strongly 'anti' marine parks, and one side is 'pro'. It is vital to generate a constituency within extractive industries that recognise the benefits of MPAs to bridge these gaps.

Prof Attrill noted that the definition of 'Marine National Park' as used in Australia is distinct from the vision for this term within the UK - a pure protection and conservation tool, versus a multi-use marine space.

Professor Mark Costello, University of Auckland (via live link), provided context on marine protection from New Zealand. He noted that 44 marine reserves had been designated around New Zealand since 1975, resulting in hundreds of thousands of visitors, associated socio-economic benefits, behaviour change in some fish species, and research discoveries on the direct and indirect impacts of fishing.

Marine national parks aren't present in New Zealand, and all marine reserves are strictly 'no take'. Due to the Marine Reserves Act coming into force in 1971, New Zealand offers 'possibly the longest [tranche of] evidence' for impacts of marine protection. Discoveries made as a result of the reserves policy include:

- Reserve areas act as 'controls' for commercial and recreational fishing grounds outside of reserves;
- The indirect impact of fishing on the 'trophic cascade' (chain of predator-prey species within an ecosystem or area) had led to bare, rocky areas grazed by urchins. This was thought to be natural, but near reserve areas where predators like otters and lobsters are restored the ecosystem recovered and kelp forests were restored within twenty years;
- Reserves have led to an increased abundance and size in both snapper and lobster;
- Recent indications suggest non-commercial fish size is also larger within reserve areas.

"We have evidence of shifting environmental baselines... fish size is larger within reserve areas"



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Prof Costello also spoke of the educational and social impacts of the marine reserve system, which international research has indicated are much greater than anticipated. Young children with their families and school groups visit marine reserves for snorkelling trips - he said there was 'no science needed' to show how effective the reserve policy has been. He also stated that communities 'love and value' marine reserves.

"You don't need science to prove how effective marine reserves are"

Conclusions: There is much to learn about the value of marine reserves and associated impacts on the ecosystem from the New Zealand model, even if a different model is being considered in Plymouth/UK.



Providing a perspective from continental Europe and French overseas territories, **Clare Gouvary** from **France Natural Environment (FNE)** explored the use of marine national parks in France - where they are one of 15 different MPA categories

- and were first created by law in 2006. The French Ministry for the Environment covers all national parks, both on land and at sea. There are six marine national parks in mainland France, and three overseas. They aim to:

- Create a better understanding of the marine environment;
- Provide real protection for the marine environment;
- Support sustainable development of maritime activities.

In France, all marine national parks are situated within Natura 2000 areas and follow the EU legislation for uses of these sites whereby they must be managed, conserved and protected in line with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. A management plan is developed for each area and this is delivered through a multi-stakeholder management council, with a voting function that 'must be respected by government'. Gouvary outlined incidences in which this was ignored, including with regards to a vote on the establishment of a wind farm in the Marine Park of the Estuaries of Picardy and the Opal Sea, whereby the vote was taken a number of times until the outcome was in support of the development.

"They are not a real protection tool, but they are better than nothing...will we always put the economy first?"

Gouvary pointed to the fact that many of these multi-stakeholder councils do not contain a representative mix of voices: conservation and nature-focused organisations are not well represented in



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comparison to industry, for example. This leads to disputes over management of the parks, and to industrial and recreational activities being commonplace in French marine parks. She noted that there were a number of conflicts with fishermen across the nine parks – whilst some of these were linked to small-scale artisanal fishers trying to make a living, a number of the parks suffered from large-scale industrial poaching of marine resources.

“We believe in this tool [but] it has to be a government priority. It requires time, money, research and the representation of environmental groups”

Conclusions: Gouvary concluded that national marine parks have not functioned successfully as a ‘protection tool’ in France. It is important to weigh up objectives and balance environmental and economic considerations and ensure one side of the argument is not always dominant. Marine national parks can be an effective tool if they are a government priority, but they require money, time, research and a representative mix of voices in their design and management.



The oldest national park in Canada - the rocky mountains - was established c1895. **Dr Graham Daborn, Emeritus Professor at Acadia University**, noted that terrestrial national parks in Canada are a ‘major asset’, but often a problem to manage in keeping with the ecosystem. This is even more complex in a marine context, where Canada has responsibility for 5.7 million kilometres squared of marine environment, and four coasts: the Arctic, Pacific, Atlantic and the Great Lakes (which are so large they possess ‘ocean characteristics’). The scale of Canada’s marine environment poses a knowledge problem: scientists are constantly discovering new concepts and facts which were never anticipated, and environmental pressures are highly variable. This means management is difficult: it is hard to convince authorities that the available evidence-base is sufficient.

“Between the idea and the reality, Between the motion and the act falls the shadow’. The shadow is our inability to meet the expectations of our desires.” (T.S Eliot, The Wasteland)

Looking at marine protection, Dr Daborn noted that 10% of Canada’s marine waters must be protected by 2020. A Marine Protection Strategy was signed into law in 2010, designed to set up a network of protection areas to ‘preserve, connect and recover’ ecosystems. This ‘comprehensive network’ reflects the ‘connectivity of the marine environment’ and aims to:

“We have a stewardship responsibility towards a shared ecosystem.”

- Recognise the need to accommodate global change, including climate change;
- Ensure sustainability in the long-term;
- Ensure community support, particularly with regards to Aboriginal (Inuit and First Nation) peoples.

This strategy sits within a complex political landscape of jurisdictions and responsibilities, spread between three federal departments and, at a more granular level, between the relevant departments in each separate province and territory. This has resulted in dozens of different types of set-aside zones and conservation options.

A recent approach has evolved to look at a varying array of ‘ecoregions’ across Canada to try and manage the strategy under ‘large ocean management areas’ - on the terrestrial side, this approach shows slow, incremental improvement for the amount of conservation coverage nationally.

The recent change of government in Canada saw marine protection increase from 1% to 7.5% with the designation of

one large arctic area, Lancaster Sound. Dr Daborn highlighted another area, the Bay of Fundy, where authorities are experimenting with a community-based approach to management and planning, in order to ‘get communities in a position to make decisions about their environment’. He questioned how to maintain the momentum in such initiatives: in order to shift these projects away from the influence of politics, it would be necessary to ‘create a formal organisation or provide legislative rights’. He felt it is important we continue to ‘explore the political and social licence for marine uses’ in this context.’

Conclusions: The national marine park concept is challenged by these experiences: how, or to what extent, can the power be shifted from government to some other entity that more fully represents ‘the people’ or nearby communities? Lessons can be learned from what has been tried in Canada and elsewhere, but to improve on these models, and to avoid the pitfalls, will be a real challenge.



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Discussion followed the presentations on international perspectives, this centred around:

- How to best engage industry with the concept of a marine park? While the definition of a marine park being considered for Plymouth Sound is different to the stricter conservation objectives from many of the international presentations, it is seen as vitally important that commercial voices are supportive of the initiative and the project doesn't become a focus for conflict. Comments from the audience and presenters testified to the need to understand and respect the motivations of different actors within the marine space, and work collaboratively to highlight the benefits of any proposal, as well as confront any challenges. Tim Glover, Blue Marine Foundation, pointed to the example of Lyme Bay, where fishermen have been instrumental in establishing and stewarding a marine reserve. Dave Cuthbert, a retired fisherman, spoke of the impact of 'short

termism' - while the big picture may be beneficial, fishermen want to know they can reap rewards of a policy - or simply survive financially - for the next five to ten years.

- Mike Williams from Plymouth University described the 'multi-use platform' of Plymouth Sound and called for input from tourism, defence, commercial shipping, marine recreational use and commercial fishing. He spoke of the importance of multi-sector support and ensuring a marine park doesn't become a new form of MCZ. Crucially, a marine park should help speak to, and inform, society on a range of marine issues.

"A multi-use platform, not a legal straight-jacket but a new status, new legitimacy – legally and politically"

- Linking these points to the importance of the 'social licence' touched on by Dr Daborn, Tom Appleby, Blue Marine Foundation, spoke of the importance of not constraining society in determining its own needs by creating a 'legal straightjacket' - the management system should follow society's needs.
- Participants were disappointed to note international case studies included significant examples of failure. Further comments sought to underline the importance of health and well-being: this being a crucial way in which a marine park could contribute to the local community in Plymouth (and nationally), and part of the vision to be explored further.

Plymouth Keynote – Why Plymouth First?



Following a morning of scene-setting, with perspectives from all over the world and a wide range of definitions for what a 'Marine Park' could be, Professor Martin Attrill opened the afternoon speaking of a 'holistic structure' for a Marine Park in Plymouth, one that could bring a 'wide range of activities together'. Continuing on this theme, **Tudor Evans OBE, Plymouth Council Leader**, delivered a keynote: "A National Park for Plymouth Sound".

"The sea is in Plymouth's DNA...I would like to be the first leader of any city anywhere in the UK that has a national park to its north, a river and a country park to its east and west and a national marine park to its south"

Evans spoke of the excellent bathing waters around Plymouth, and the importance of clean beaches and seas to local families. He touched on the use of coastal areas as outdoor classrooms for Plymouth's children,

and the huge well-being impact of being by the sea.

"We have nuclear submarines, frigates and battleships coming in and out of the harbour. But the [national marine park] concept doesn't mean preservation - it means a mix of use. We have to consider and celebrate the heritage we have here... Being comfortable with embracing conflict between multiple uses"

Reflecting further on this 'mix', Evans described the city as the UK's diving capital, the UK's fishing capital and with a history powered by a sense of exploration, adventure and venturing beyond the horizon.

He encouraged delegates to reflect on the 'long and glorious' past of Plymouth, and to use it to set a course for the city's future. 'No one told us we could be Britain's Ocean city, we just told them we were.'

UK Examples & Potential for UK National Marine Parks

The afternoon keynote address was followed by a series of eight, three-minute presentations on marine conservation and multi-use initiatives around the UK. These were chaired by **Dr Steve Simpson, University of Exeter**.



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Jacob Kean Hammerson, Blue Marine Foundation presented on conservation work in the Solent, the stretch of water separating England and the Isle of Wight, and the potential for a Marine Park in the area. He noted a number of similarities between Plymouth and the Solent: both home to a 'rich and proud maritime heritage'. 1.4 million people live within a ten minute drive of the Solent and it represents what was described as a 'microcosm of UK coasts', with major ports, recreational use, and fishing industry: 'all activities compete for space'. Kean Hammerson noted these economic uses take place alongside a range of conservation designations, including one Special Area of Conservation (SAC), three Special Protected Areas (SPA) and a further SAC for birds. Despite these designations, he commented that the Solent is under-appreciated as a natural environment. A marine park was seen as a possible tool for increasing social and economic cohesion in the Solent – working alongside military and industrial uses of the area:

"The Solent could learn a lot from the direction Plymouth might go in."



Kerri Whiteside, of Flora and Fauna International, presented a case study from St Abbs and Eyemouth Voluntary Marine Reserve, on the east coast of Scotland. She described how the reserve was set up by local divers in the community in 1984, to manage marine use in the area. The reserve is home to 'amazing biodiversity' and 'charismatic species' such as the wolf-fish. The marine reserve was considered an important mechanism for giving local people a say on an environment that is important to them and their well-being.

"The great thing about the Voluntary Marine Reserve is it gives local people a mechanism for having their say"

The initiative had just received funding from BLUE and the European Commission for a new programme of work focused on interpreting the marine environment in new ways through the use of technology.



Rob Spray, from Seasearch, presented a case study from East Anglia, describing how the 'North Sea isn't fashionable' – seen as lacking what may be commonly considered a charismatic marine seascape. He said the area needed marine protection, but to secure this people need to 'know' the North Sea – pointing to the importance of community engagement with, and indeed pride in, their local marine environment. The North Sea is a 'working sea' – 'very multi-use', and in this context, alongside the challenges of engaging the public with a different image of a marine ecosystem, he said gaining MPA status was 'a game with other people in charge of the rules'. He warned against NGOs engaging in local communities where they didn't have a long-term presence, risking using local conservationists as 'lightning conductors' in conservation campaigns, rather than engaging with them meaningfully. He concluded that initiatives such as Marine Parks need to 'use local pride and reach out to normal people' to build on a genuine local reaction to proposals.

'Use local pride and reach out to normal people'



Tom Cameron, University of Essex, presented on one of the UK's largest MCZs in the Essex Estuaries. This 284-kilometre-squared MCZ was championed by Dr Sarah Allison, working alongside the Essex Wildlife Trust and oystermen. It is one of 10% of MCZs that has a duty to 'restore' – in this case to restore oyster habitats and populations. Oysters are the central feature the MCZ focuses on. Challenges faced have included: multi-layer policies that have been difficult to navigate; communication problems with government; not enough data to evidence conservation decisions, and; funding. Cameron noted that there was 'no overarching fund for managing an MCZ', meaning progress was made through 'small projects, small amounts of money'. Would an Essex Marine Park help?

"A pre-designated plan for environmental and societal outcomes, alongside one formal, funded structure would be good"

Cameron added a final comment that 'low impact fishing' should be defined regionally – it would be a negative for Marine Parks if this wasn't considered on a case by case basis.



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Tim Glover, Blue Marine Foundation opened his presentation on the Lyme Bay Fisheries and Conservation Reserve by asking: could Lyme Bay be a Marine Park? He described how a statutory closed to mobile, towed gears had been introduced in 2008. Following this, voluntary conservation measures had been developed through a dedicated working group, with fishermen being a central and vocal part of the reserve's management committee. Adaptive management has brought benefits to fish, fishermen and the local community. To support local inshore fishing, a 'Reserve Seafood' brand had been developed, which has increased the market value of the catch. Glover highlighted an educational outreach programme, centred on the reserve, that has reached over 6,000 children in 151 schools. He questioned what would additionally be needed to foster a Marine Park in the area, listing: diving codes, codes for charter boating, additional tourist information along the coast and, crucially, sustainable funding in the long-term. He concluded, saying: 'Conservation, fisheries, tourism – we have all the elements needed. Welcome to the Jurassic Coast Marine Park.'

"Conservation, fisheries, tourism – we have all the elements needed. Welcome to the Jurassic Coast Marine Park"



Niall Benson, Durham Heritage Coast presented on marine conservation on the Durham Heritage Coast. He noted the coal-mining history of the area, the previous degradation of the coast line, and the importance of connecting a poorly engaged and deprived local community with conservation goals, by linking conservation goals in with their own priorities. He said participation was 'absolutely key'. Other important strategic tools to developing protection measures had been the Heritage Coast status and a strong management plan – more like a 'business plan', focused on action. Under-water imagery provided by Seasearch volunteers had given a valuable 'picture of what we have', supporting local engagement. This kind of imagery helped to show the value and diversity of 'seascapes'. With inspiration from the Lyme Bay reserve and funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, plans are in place to extend protection measures in the area.



Amy Pryor provided a perspective from the **Thames Estuary Partnership**, also touching on issues of engaging local stakeholders.

"70% of Londoners don't know that the Thames is tidal"

She spoke of a 'disconnected public and a fractured landscape' as well as 'policy that favours economic growth above everything else...prioritising the development of the river for trade'. However, experience of MCZ consultations in the South-East had shown stakeholders were keen to see estuaries designated. The Thames has the 'biggest eastern fish nursery feeding the North Sea', yet protected areas had been negotiated downwards, resulting in 'two small areas, protecting spawning grounds for just one species'. She spoke of the need to move beyond traditional terminologies in communicating with different stakeholders – the term 'conservation' often leading to conflict with fishermen who would otherwise be supportive of species protection measures.

"If we talk about Marine Parks as a conservation tool, it's immediately divisive"

She highlighted a 'National Park city initiative, which includes the River Thames' and said lessons could be drawn from the conference: if we could develop the concept 'as a multi-use platform, it could be a great idea'.



Paul Renfro, Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum, spoke of the 'many designations layered on top of each other' with 'little understanding of the difference in meaning or rules' in his area. He commented on the 'challenge of managing multiple activities and designations with no meaningful resource' and said the central aim was to 'balance conservation with meeting the needs of the local communities'. Main approaches to achieve this again focused on consistent stakeholder engagement and careful communication. Neutral facilitation had been used within stakeholder participation to help develop codes of conduct and accurate maps of marine use. Seasonal restrictions on fishing activity had been



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agreed, focusing on the positives to come out of those restrictions – Renfro felt there was an ‘understanding of the common good’ to come from these measures. Buy-in and a sense of ownership had been created through community engagement.

“A Marine Park shouldn’t be a point in time, it should be able to flex and adapt as things change. Keep stakeholders involved the entire time, they will keep helping you do good things”



Key points and themes emerging from these rapid-fire presentations include:

- Marine parks could be particularly valuable in areas where, as in Plymouth Sound, there are already a number of conservation designations in place, alongside other uses such as commercial marine traffic and military activities. This could help to reduce confusion and increase public awareness and action towards marine conservation. In this context, marine parks were seen as a possible step towards greater social cohesion.
- Value is found in other conservation

designations or organisations - such as the St Abbs and Eyemouth Voluntary Marine Reserve in Scotland and Wembury Marine Reserve - where local people are provided with a clear mechanism through which to have their say. This helps projects interpret the environment through the eyes of the community, leading to new approaches.

- Projects should seek to tap into local pride, and reach out to ‘normal people’ to build local momentum. However, we should aim to move away from a short-term project focus to longer term governance that encourages local stewardship.
- Partnership and participation in developing multi-use management plans for marine areas is key - better yet, management plans can be developed as ‘business plans’ to frame work in a more action-oriented, policy-friendly format which works towards sustainable financing.
- Regular communication between all stakeholders is vital, as is avoiding any immediately divisive terminology - including commonly-used terms such as ‘conservation’ and ‘no-take zones’ (nursery areas?). Neutral facilitation can help to bridge gaps and locate common ground in challenging conversations.
- Marine conservation can be linked effectively and impactfully into local education - such as in the Lyme Bay reserve, where an outreach programme has reached 6,000 children in 151 schools.
- Common challenges linked to marine conservation and science in any multi-use area were: difficulties in aligning multiple different policies; communicating

problems to government; struggling to provide enough data to evidence decisions; and, crucially, finding access to long-term funding.

- Marine parks were seen as a possible step towards greater social cohesion between terrestrial and marine planning



Discussion following these presentations focused on access to funding sources. There was broad agreement that the sector is too ‘project-led’, working on an issue or in an area for a defined, funded period of time. This helps to entrench the kind of short-termism identified as a weakness amongst stakeholder groups in earlier sessions. A number of suggestions were raised with regards to funding and sustainable investment: a combination of central or regional government funding with private money; a levy on commercial marine uses; even an ‘ecological enterprise zone’ approach, where sustainable business investment is encouraged through specific incentives. A zone that ‘is proud about enterprise, but proud about the environment’, with revenue flow given preference if it is benefiting or protecting the environment. Linking to this concept

was the idea of a ‘hybrid park’, combining land and the marine environment - in order to create ‘ecological enterprise zones’ it was considered that businesses must see they have impacts below the water-mark, and view their footprint holistically. It was also remarked that success ‘on the ground’ can lead to success in attracting funding.

There was agreement that Plymouth is in an excellent position to ‘hoover up’ ideas and experiences from examples such as those presented. A huge range of different processes have taken place, nationwide, and conservation priorities differ enormously depending on the characteristics of a region or the needs and types of local species. In determining the goals of the marine projects presented (and others detailed from the floor) the voice of the community, and engaging with communities in a tailored and locally-appropriate manner, continued to be underscored as a high priority. **Niall Benson** from **Durham Heritage Coast** highlighted the different priorities and focus of a deprived ex-mining community. **Tom Cameron, University of Essex**, said the ‘marine park’ label may not work as well in a ‘muddy and brown’ estuarine environment. Each community and environment to potentially sit within a marine park would be distinct, with distinct needs.

Presenters: Dr Steve Simpson, University of Exeter (Chair); Jacob Kean Hammerson, the Solent; Kerri Whiteside, St Abbs; Rob Spray, East Anglia; Tom Cameron, Essex Estuaries; Tim Glover, Lyme Bay; Niall Benson, Durham Heritage Coast; Amy Pryor, Thames Estuary; Paul Renfro, Pembrokeshire.



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“What is the added value of a marine park, in addition to existing designations?”

“If marine parks evolve from communities like Plymouth it shows we can govern well from a local level”

The initiative could be a proof point for the principle of governance at the right scale that connects people to the sea.



Natasha Bradshaw, University of the West of England, summarised her response to this as ‘a governance arrangement for an ecosystem’, going on to detail how issues around engagement with marine conservation are centred on a lack of cohesion and a lack of understanding. She pointed to the theme of political power that had emerged earlier in the day, saying ‘if marine parks evolve from communities like Plymouth it shows we can govern well from a local level’

Other panellists reflected on how the approach could be seen to promote more coherence in planning processes, pull together different authorities under a common umbrella and aim to reduce conflict. **Dr Simon Cripps, Dorset Wildlife Trust**, said “you’d get some conflict – people resist – but one, coherent approach is a selling point”. **Tom Hooper, Isles of Scilly IFCA**, noted: ‘in a society where it’s not always easy to have a cohesive fabric, there’s a real opportunity here’.



“In a society where it’s not always easy to have a cohesive fabric, there’s a real opportunity here”

The concept could speak to new narratives around ‘shared prosperity in coastal communities’. It was cautioned that a clear, common understanding of the definition of a national marine park would be critical, and that this is potentially something to be determined by the people of Plymouth in the first instance: they may find that there are aspects of current national park structures and policies that would not meet the needs of their community. **Sue Wells, National Trust** said: ‘You need a common understanding of what you mean by a National Marine Park. If Plymouth is going to be the first one, it’s for the Plymouth people to figure out what they want’.



Commentary from the audience further highlighted the funding issue: ensuring budget is available for communication and outreach would be key. The theme of story-telling was re-iterated as a crucial component to engagement, and one that would need to be well thought-through and supported with appropriate budget. It was felt that central government investment in deprived coastal communities should be linked to the marine park/marine conservation agenda - in addressing issues of sustainable development, health and wellbeing near the coast it was seen as a natural fit to combine the initiatives. This may open up novel central government funding sources.

The Jurassic Coast was again referenced as a revenue-raiser, where funds had been ploughed into a branding exercise, which has in turn seen significant tourism benefit. This was a model to consider for Plymouth marine park.

At the same time, it was questioned whether greater collaboration between existing



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authorities, funds, stakeholders and other organisations such as NGOs couldn't bridge part of the gap when it comes to funding for marine park projects. Pooling resources was seen as an important avenue to investigate moving forwards.

Panellists: Charles Clover, Blue Marine Foundation (Chair); Natasha Bradshaw, University of the West of England; Dr Simon Cripps, Dorset Wildlife Trust; Aisling Lannin, Marine Management Organisation; Sue Wells, National Trust; Dr Jean-Luc Solandt, Marine Conservation Society; Tom Hooper, Isles of Scilly IFCA.

Common Themes & Conclusions



Tom Appleby, Blue Marine Foundation, provided a summary of the day and extemporary conclusions. He spoke about the importance of language and communication, and a focus on people as well as nature. He described effective models presented across the day, outlining the importance of legislation that is able to

evolve and adapt, and sit beyond political shifts.

He praised Luke Pollard MP's openness to a cross-party approach to developing national marine parks, and underscored the importance of the mandate within Plymouth for this initiative - it being part of the manifesto upon which Pollard was elected. In engaging communities with these projects, he highlighted the need for trust, energy and creativity, underpinning the emergence of real community stewardship of the marine environment. It was also clear from the presentations that the top-down approach did not work, and (looking at the Australian example) can lead to de-designation if the public are not sufficiently engaged. He stated that the information provided by the conference had changed his attitude to the Plymouth proposal and that there was a far stronger case, for "just getting on with it" using the New Zealand (or bricoleur) approach than a process-led system.

He provided a summary of take-home messages at the national level and at the Plymouth level:

National Level

- Think of the sea as publicly owned space;
- This underpins general themes for good management of that space: collaboration, trust and stewardship;
- Conservation narratives need to be inclusive and broadened out to encompass themes of health and community well-being.

Plymouth Level

- Plymouth should define a business plan for a marine park, incorporating achievable objectives and goals;
- Define the different groups that should be involved and that this development would affect;
- Work within existing legislation so that this is something that can be enacted now, while there is a public appetite for marine conservation (fuelled by the drive to reduce plastic pollution and media such as Blue Planet II).

Through further concluding debate and discussion with the audience, led by Charles Clover, a number of joint concluding ideals and joint statements were delineated.



Clover then requested the participation of attendees in reflecting on the day's proceedings, calling for a vote in the room as to whether Plymouth should go ahead and set-up a National Marine Park using existing legislation, on the basis of appropriate public interest and conservation objectives.

There was overwhelming support for this proposal.

Tom Appleby closed with the thought that a National Marine Park was for Plymouth to lead on, and that it was for the assembled expertise to "help, but not interfere with".

The way ahead – the conference's recommendations

- Marine parks need to be defined. If they are to be effective designations, a framework is needed. Overwhelming feedback from the conference indicated that a neutral, cross-sector Marine Parks Steering Committee is needed to agree a process for new marine park designations.
- Each marine park will require principles, objectives, management and business plans, advisory groups and funding.
- Global experience suggests cross-party and public support for a marine park initiative is essential to its success.
- Existing government funding for the socio-economic regeneration of coastal communities should be used to support the creation of marine parks.
- Local and national government, not to mention business, should explore further opportunities for innovation in underwriting longer-term financing for such projects.
- The marine parks community should meet regularly to analyse results and inform strategy.



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