



BLUE MARINE
FOUNDATION

NATIONAL MARINE PARKS

A VISION FOR BRITISH SEAS

by Natasha Bradshaw
& Daniel Crockett



In the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, no-one thought about the sea being part of a National Park.



Photo: James Bowden

“Marine Parks have the potential to take us a new distance towards engaging people with the sea”

Dan Laffoley, IUCN

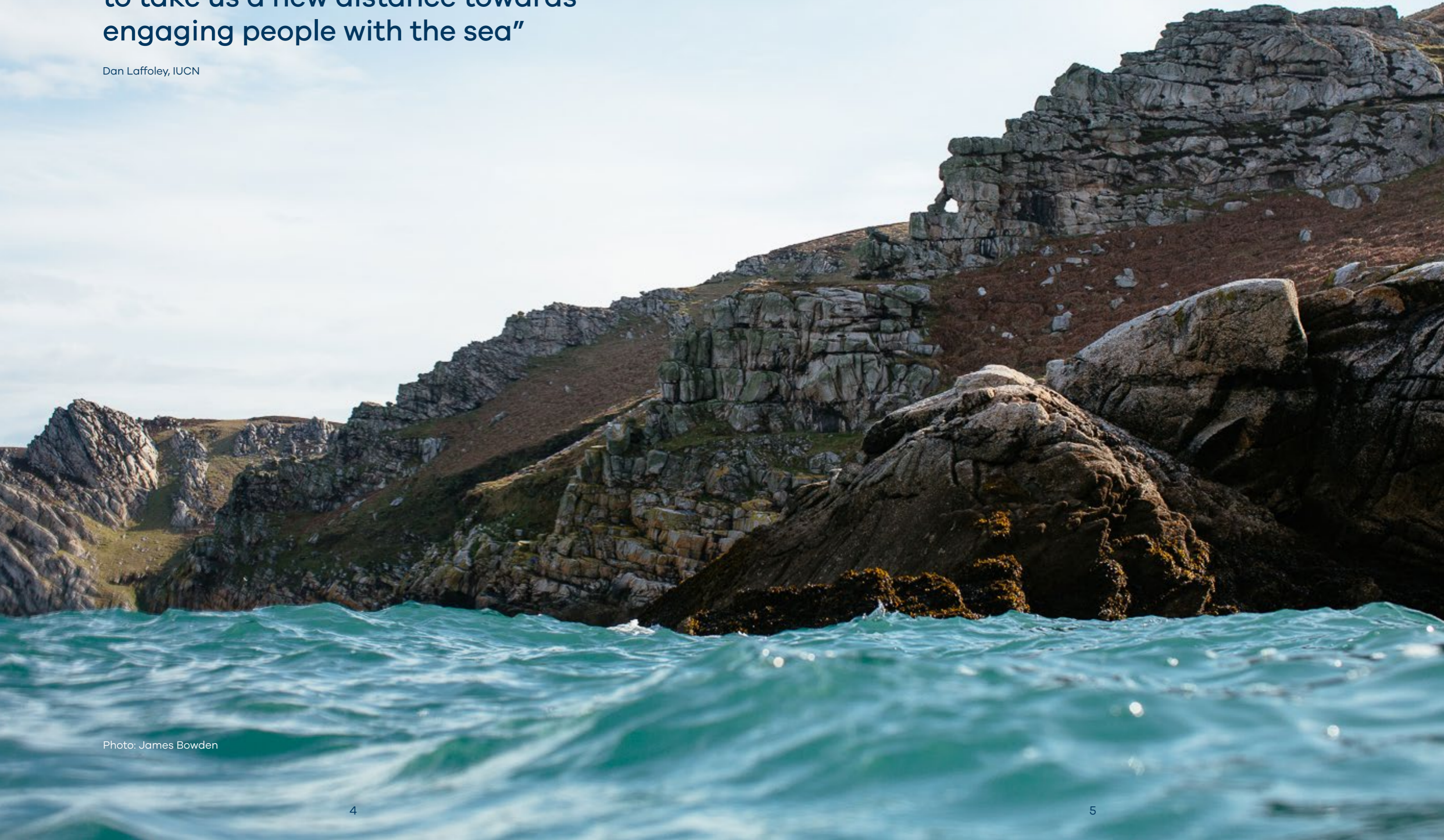


Photo: James Bowden



“We must simplify how we communicate about our designations to make it easier for users to understand them and help the authorities improve management”

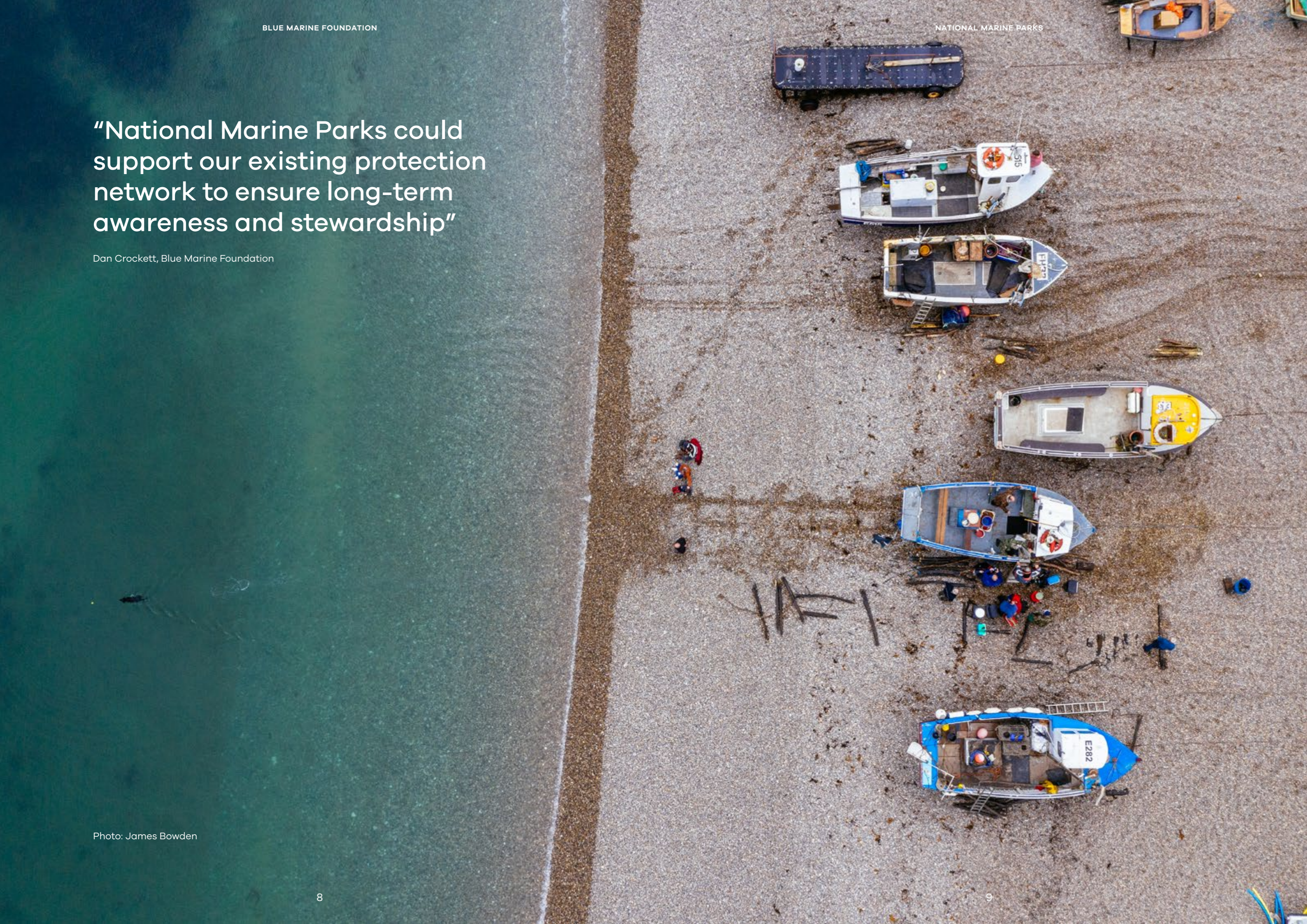
Sue Wells, Flora and Fauna International

Photo: James Bowden

“National Marine Parks could support our existing protection network to ensure long-term awareness and stewardship”

Dan Crockett, Blue Marine Foundation

Photo: James Bowden



“The idea for National Marine Parks means different things to different people, from playgrounds to protected areas”

BLUE has created this vision to start a conversation and invite you to join a new journey - to explore where and how this could work for Britain.

Natasha Bradshaw, National Marine Parks Research Advisor

OVERVIEW

This report sets out a vision for establishing National Marine Parks in the seas around Britain. Marine Parks could celebrate our biodiversity and heritage, improve public understanding and communicate the value of our coast and sea. They could improve stewardship by uniting communities to engage with and sustainably manage their local marine area.

To explore the potential for Marine Parks in British waters, the Blue Marine Foundation 'BLUE' explored maps and interviewed a range of stakeholders across Britain to discover areas where they could bring social, economic and conservation benefits. This is a summary of the research, offering insights for further discussion and debate.

The report builds on the outcomes from a conference led by BLUE in 2018 and the learnings from a pioneering initiative in Plymouth Sound, where a National Marine Park was self-declared by the local community in 2019.

This report proposes the start of a conversation about the purpose and benefits of National Marine Parks. It offers insights into some potential locations that might benefit, and some of the principles that might support their evolution from within communities to form a framework for National Marine Parks.

Please address all thoughts and feedback to marineparks@bluemarinefoundation.com



This is the start of a conversation about the purpose and benefits of National Marine Parks in Britain

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Of the 15 National Parks in Britain today, only a few include the coast and none include the sea. The formalisation of National Parks happened in the days following the Second World War.

Recognising Britain's natural and cultural heritage became all-important after the looming threat of invasion. What many people do not realise is that National Parks did not arrive fully formed in 1949. The campaign for their designation took decades and continues today.

Of course, at that time, our appreciation and understanding of the sea was very different. In some ways we were closer to it, our history as a great maritime nation was less distant. But we had no concept of the need to protect it from exploitation or celebrate it as an incredible public asset and home to a huge diversity of marine life. The result is that people sometimes see our seas as murky, unappealing and cold. But our 30,000km long coastline and islands offer many places which are hugely appreciated by locals, visitors and tourists. Our seas are extraordinary for their diversity and the huge abundance of marine life that they support, which brings us to consider the need for National Parks in the sea.

Over the past few decades, scientists have understood much more about the value of the ocean and the importance of the marine environment to the health of the planet. Britain has designated fragile places with an array of acronyms designed to protect them, while striking a balance with the many users of the sea for business and enjoyment. Marine conservation here has been a lifelong endeavour for many people, myself one of them. The building blocks are now complete, we have a marine protection network, but it is opaque to the British public. Our belief is that this limits its potential. Despite a growing global appreciation of the ocean and the challenges it faces, many people are disconnected from truly understanding and appreciating their home waters.

We propose that a clear way to solve this challenge, one that respects the progress made to establish an ecologically coherent network of protected areas in British seas, one that celebrates marine conservation in a way that people understand, is to create National Marine Parks. They would ultimately benefit people, the marine environment and our collective efforts to protect it.

Our vision is for Marine Parks to evolve where there are clusters of marine designated sites and a need to link them with human culture across those areas. Marine Parks have the potential to help us improve co-ordinated management and improve opportunities for people and marine life. They could make more of the connections between our lives on land and the value of our coasts and the sea. Marine Parks would bring together our maritime heritage with our newer appreciation of marine wildlife and the need for its conservation. Marine Parks would enable us to find new ways to celebrate our relationship with the sea.

Several years ago, it became clear that Plymouth had the bold and ambitious vision to recognise the great opportunity for Plymouth and the Sound, with a National Marine Park in the highly-designated and well-managed waters surrounding the city. BLUE jumped to support this opportunity, framing a conference in June 2018 at which there was unanimous support to develop a Marine Park in Plymouth Sound. A little over a year later, seventy stakeholders from around Plymouth Sound formed a declaration of intent. Tudor Evans, Leader of Plymouth City Council, boldly declared it and brought the initiative to life and now has the task of framing its future.



Daniel Crockett
Development Director
Blue Marine Foundation

This initiative presents inspiration and opportunity for other locations across Britain. Following the 2018 conference in Plymouth, BLUE commissioned Natasha Bradshaw to look at where the evidence might support the creation of other national marine parks and the level of support for the idea. This report is a distillation of her research.

Natasha found evidence of past and current conversations about coastal or marine parks across the country, from Cornwall and Dorset to North West England and to Scotland. This included the Isles of Scilly, where specific provision was written into the 1949 Act. Many more coastal areas were proposed in the 1940s than have come into fruition. In fact only one site – the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park in Wales – has been formally designated for its seascape. In Scotland, Coastal and Marine National Parks have been considered and a Hope Spot on the west coast brings new opportunities. Further afield, Jersey is considering the creation of a Marine Park.

“To go forward, we need someone to write a mission statement about what Marine Park status seeks to achieve including the financial, logistical and management needs”

Based on maps of existing conservation designations and coastal population density, Natasha interviewed dozens of people around the country. We believe this is hugely important work and we are delighted

to announce a three-year campaign to further its ambitions and conclusions. Natasha discovered a groundswell of support for the idea of Marine Parks. We have therefore put this research in context, detailing the history, current situation and future possibilities for Marine Parks in British Seas, while recommending a number of potential locations for further conversations. Ultimately, though, this is about local communities and the value they see in the idea.

One highlight from Natasha's interview process was a thought from Lyme Bay fisherman Rob King, who said: “To go forward, we need someone to write a mission statement about what Marine Park status seeks to achieve including the financial, logistical and management needs.” Our plan is to take up the mantle of Rob's request over the next three years. We see this report as our first contribution towards framing a mission statement for National Marine Parks.

The campaign for National Parks rose to prominence in the 1940s and continues today. People were struck by the need to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of our precious countryside alongside economic recovery. They emerged from a time of tragedy and conflict to make a bold new future for people and nature. As our first National Parks reach their 70th Birthdays, we are again emerging from a challenging time and must plan for a recovery that improves on what came before. Our access to the sea, together with its preservation, has become more important than ever. BLUE believe that the time has come to do for the sea what we did for the land. We therefore consider this report to be the start of a campaign for National Marine Parks. We couldn't be more excited about where it might lead.

HISTORY

Over 70 years ago, an important step was taken to look after our special places on land. The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949) created the opportunity for the most appreciated landscapes in England and Wales to be recognised as National Parks, but designation stopped at the coast, with just one Coastal National Park in Pembrokeshire (1952). Scotland has designated two parks since the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, but neither include the sea. Highly valued parts of the coast have been designated as Heritage Coasts and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). These national landscapes have gained prominence through the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000), National Planning Policy Framework (2019) and the Landscapes Review (2019).¹

There have been other legal and voluntary initiatives which have considered the value of land and sea beyond the coastline. The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) established legislation for National Nature Reserves (NNRs) but only one marine NNR was designated - Lundy Island in 1986 - having been managed as a Voluntary Marine Nature Reserve since 1971. It wasn't until the Marine and Coastal Access Act in 2009 and Marine (Scotland) Act in 2010 that a higher proportion of the marine environment was protected, after many years of campaigning by environmental organisations. Marine Protected Areas have made a crucial difference, by designating special places in the sea where damaging activities must be managed, to protect the important habitats and species within them.

However, the designation landscape has become complicated and, in some areas, crowded and confusing. The different designations often overlap and there are good reasons for this – underlying legislation to protect different species and habitats. We have come a long way to protect our coastal and marine environment over the past decade, with effort focused on identifying the most important areas for designation based on scientific evidence and liaison between industry, NGOs and government. A network of Marine Protected Areas is now established. However, more engagement of the public is needed to encourage meaningful understanding and stewardship.

On a voluntary basis, there has been significant interest in caring for our coast and seas. Fifty years ago, The National Trust began their 'Enterprise Neptune' campaign and they now look after 780 miles of coastline. In the 1990s, the 'Campaign for a Living Coast'² led by English Nature, and 'Focus on Firths' initiative led by Scottish Natural Heritage, together with the UK Government's interest in coastal policy, led to the formation of over 50 coastal and estuary partnerships. They continue to bring coastal communities and stakeholders together across Britain. Combining this voluntary effort to care for our coast, with the past few decades' campaign to designate Marine Protected Areas and the history behind National Parks, could bring further momentum towards celebrating our national landscapes and seascape.

“Marine Parks have the potential to take us a new distance towards engaging people with the sea”

Dan Laffoley, IUCN

THE VALUE OF NATIONAL PARKS

The value of National Parks to our environment, society and economy is well recognised. National landscapes cover almost a quarter of England, providing health and well-being through outdoor space, cultural value and employment opportunities as well as ecosystem benefits.^{3,4} The ten National Parks in England have been shown to contribute to the economy with 90 million visitors each year spending as much as £4 billion and 22,500 businesses employing 140,000 people.^{5,6} In Wales, three National Parks cover 20% of the land surface, bringing an estimated 12 million visitors per year, and over half a billion pounds into the Welsh economy. Scotland has designated two National Parks since the enabling legislation in 2000 and there is an active campaign for more areas to gain this status. The socio-economic benefits of National Parks have been proven, nature-based tourism is growing and the value of blue health benefits from spending time by the sea are becoming evident.⁷⁻¹⁰ National Parks show how working landscapes can be areas in which people live and work in harmony. There is potential for similar principles and practices to be applied to the seascape. The Jurassic Coast brings £111 million per year into the Dorset and Devon economy.¹¹



“There can be few national purposes which, at so modest a cost, offer so large a prospect of health-giving happiness for the people”

John Dower (1945)¹²

NATIONAL DESIGNATIONS

Britain has 15 National Parks showcasing some of our most treasured landscapes. Only one of them reflects our connection with the sea: Pembrokeshire Coast National Park in Wales, designated in 1952. Over the past two decades as international conventions, European Directives and national legislation have come into being, an increasing proportion of our seas have been designated with the aim of protecting important habitats to protect or restore marine biodiversity.

There are now 371 Marine Protected Areas in UK waters covering 885,430 km² including Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), marine National Nature Reserves (NNR), Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ) and National Conservation Marine Protected Areas (NCMP). Well over a quarter of UK waters are now designated as some form of Marine Protected Area.¹³ In addition, coastal areas are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Heritage Coasts and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Local and National Nature Reserves (NNRs). There are also a handful of Biosphere Reserves and World Heritage Sites. The map in Figure 1 illustrates twelve different kinds of designation supported through domestic laws and international conventions within 3km inshore and 3nm offshore reflecting the importance of our coast and seas.



“We need to stop getting tangled up in terminology and designations that confuse people. We don’t need a new type of designation which could cause more complication, but better branding of what we’ve got – the name Marine Park might be a better term”

How would a National Marine Park be different to existing designations?

There is no single agreed definition for a Marine Park used internationally, but what many have in common is that they are multiple use areas with different zones allowing different types of activities. Several Marine Parks are defined as a form of Marine Protected Area where limits have been placed on human activities, but most of them allow – or indeed actively encourage – access and recreational activities.

Existing designations for Britain’s coast and seas are typically focused on a single purpose; to protect biodiversity, archaeology or seascape; or to manage activities such as fishing or recreation. Layers of

designations have been added as international, European and national marine legislation developed over the last 50 years, leading to a myriad of different terms that are generally opaque and can be confusing to the general public.

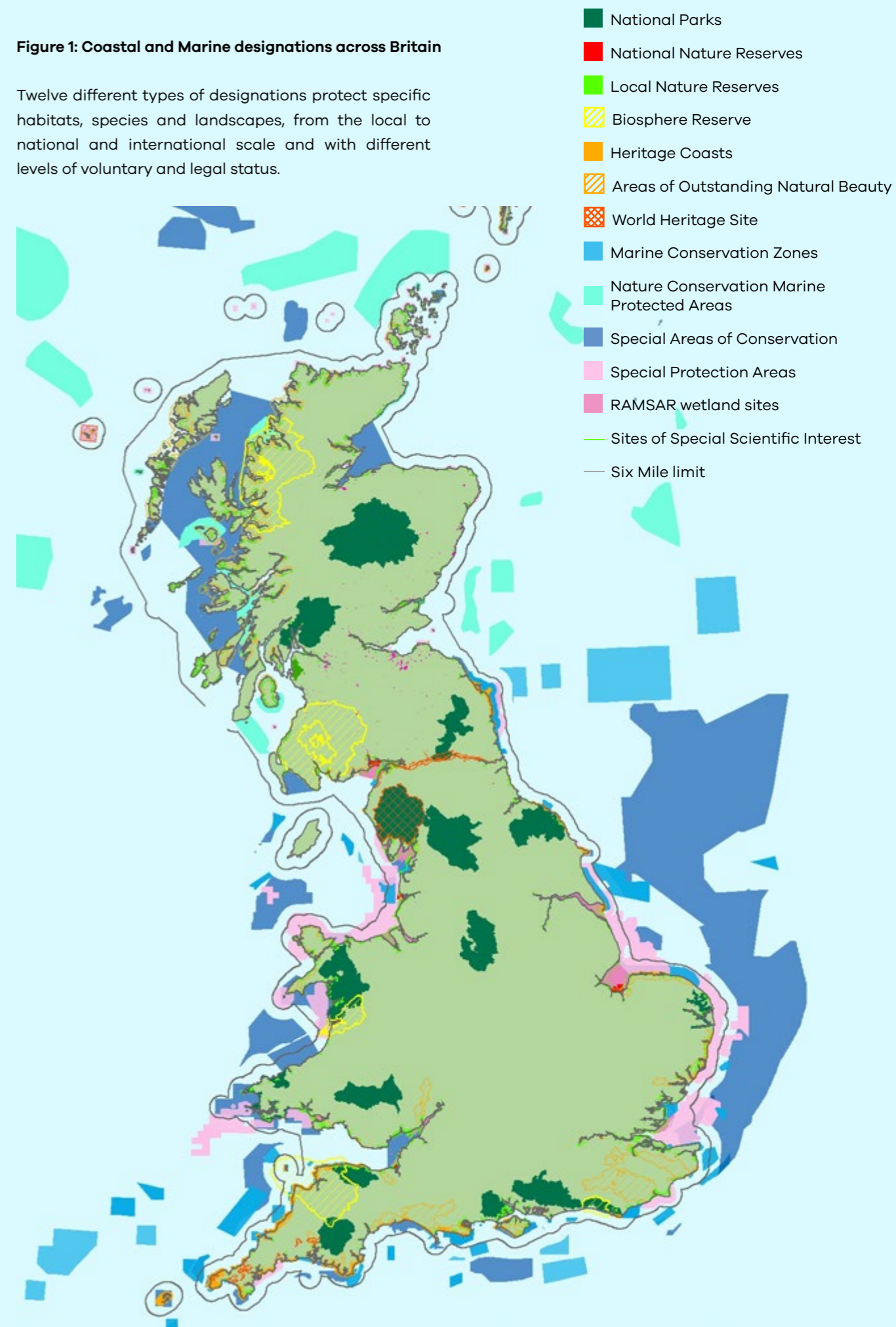
A National Marine Park, as envisaged by BLUE and many people that attended the Marine Parks conference in 2018, is a status for a larger multi-use space that draws together pre-existing, valuable designations such as Marine Protected Areas and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, alongside carefully managed commercial and recreational uses.



Photo: James Bowden

Figure 1: Coastal and Marine designations across Britain

Twelve different types of designations protect specific habitats, species and landscapes, from the local to national and international scale and with different levels of voluntary and legal status.



VISION

Blue Marine Foundation (BLUE) has a vision for National Marine Parks which builds on what has come before in the designation, management and governance of our seas. It is a vision that supports and enhances the solid foundations laid by decades of hard work by scientists, conservationists, government agencies and numerous local stakeholders who have worked together successfully. At no point do we suggest replacing what already exists.

National Marine Parks would be about shared opportunity. About the recognition of what is precious to us all. About conserving and enhancing our rich coastal waters in a way that people understand. We want coastal communities to feel pride in their marine environment and for visitors to respect the value of our seas.

National parks on land have been found to be important to 90% of people - their value is well recognised. By contrast, the way in which we communicate the value of the sea through many designations can be hard to understand. An important part of the picture - encouraging stewardship by connecting people with greater understanding and appreciation of what's under the sea - feels unfinished. With a comprehensive network of Marine Protected Areas now in place, the time is right to bring them to life for the public and celebrate the marine species, habitats and heritage they protect. By taking a broader view that encompasses and celebrates all the important features, protected areas and uses within a marine area, the National Marine Park concept could instigate much more meaningful and positive engagement between diverse marine stakeholders and local communities. Through the power of narrative, Marine Parks can create more opportunities for understanding, enjoyment and stewardship of marine areas.

This is a vision that is focused on engagement and stewardship to compliment existing designation, regulations and governance. It will build on and emerge from local people understanding the complexities of governance and the challenges faced to reach this point. There cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach to National Marine Parks. This is a status that should be considered on a case-by-case basis, and driven by the particular natural, cultural, social and economic characteristics of a local area. It will bring about a wide range of benefits which are in the long-term public interest.

BLUE have mapped all existing designations for the coastal and marine environment and looked at areas where they overlap. These areas were compared with coastal population density, focusing on places where people visit the sea. We spoke to stakeholders across Britain and discovered a groundswell of support for a status that would help to unite and communicate the way we protect the sea. Going forwards, BLUE wishes to act as a catalyst and enabler, helping to support the growth of the idea by building momentum across each site and sharing information between the sites around Britain.

An idea is a powerful thing. One day, we hope that National Marine Parks will support health and wellbeing around the coastlines of Britain. That they will give people a sense of purpose and renewed identity with the sea. That they will deliver benefits to coastal communities, raise awareness of the marine environment and its role in supporting our lives on land. We believe that stronger and simpler communication holds the key to all of these things and more. What we found during the development of this report was a wide range of people who believe in exploring the idea.



Photo: James Bowden

“We heard impressive arguments from those in favour of giving particular areas protection and many enthusiastic calls for change, including with regard to our marine and coastal areas.”

Defra Landscapes Review, 2019¹

AIMS

What can Marine Parks achieve?

The following aims are a starting point for a national framework for British seas, based on BLUE's initial research.

- Celebrate our extraordinary natural and cultural maritime heritage.
- Connect people's lives with the sea to improve health and wellbeing.
- Promote better understanding of life below water.
- Build awareness of, and support for, existing conservation designations.
- Encourage positive communication around our marine environment amongst those that use and protect it.
- Promote balance and collaboration between the many different types of users and visitors.
- Facilitate recreation and tourism opportunities and generate additional economic opportunities through better branding.
- Engage local communities in developing an inclusive plan to solve local challenges, promote local opportunities and generate a stronger sense of stewardship.
- A National Marine Park would not necessarily need any new legislation or authority - it could build on existing governance arrangements.

People we interviewed indicated a range of views of what a Marine Park could be and how it could be formed. We believe the above aims provide a starting point for conversations worth having and a journey worth starting.

“There is a rich seam of existing sustainability principles to apply to Marine Parks, which will need strong guiding principles”

Bob Earll, CMS Ltd and convenor of Coastal Futures

“Marine Parks could bring down boundaries, bring everyone together, allow groups to see what connects them all and get people working together in their place”

Aisling Lannin, Marine Pioneer Coordinator, MMO

OPPORTUNITY

Over 30 people from around Britain were interviewed to explore their views on the potential for Marine Parks. People involved in planning, managing or caring for the coast and sea in local authorities, industry, fisheries, academia, government, environmental NGOs, coastal partnerships and independent strategic thinkers. One third of the people we interviewed had given previous consideration to the concept of Marine Parks; one third were giving the idea current consideration; and one third based their understanding only on knowledge of the existing land-based National Parks.

The value of Marine Parks has been considered before. The Scottish Government researched coastal and marine national parks in 2006 and a consultation for an Argyll and Islands Coastal/Marine National Park took place in 2017. Over ten years ago the North West Regional Development Agency proposed Regional Parks including the North West Coast. A Maritime Strategy for Cornwall included debate about a Cornish Marine Park. Recent proposals for a Dorset National Park considered inclusion of the sea. These are just a few of the insights we gained from talking to people around Britain.

The UK Government's recent review of England's protected landscapes has sparked new interest in National Parks and AONBs. There is growing interest in Plymouth Sound National Marine Park and the conference hosted by BLUE in 2018 to promote a national debate.

Everybody we spoke to could see the value of Marine Parks. Their main reasons for this were the need to simplify the complexity around existing designations, through a single status that enables easier communication. Most people understood that Marine Parks would promote more than conservation and environmental protection: they could be a way of promoting and protecting seascape for the benefit of all. Climate change, Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic pose threats but also provide us with a chance to look at things anew. As part of our socio-economic recovery and resilience planning for the future, this could be the right decade to give National Marine Parks serious consideration.

“Despite being a maritime city, Plymouth is disconnected from the sea. In many deprived communities there are children that have never visited the water. A Marine Park in Plymouth has the opportunity to make the environment better than the sum of the parts, in a way that resonates with the public”

Professor Martin Attrill

LOCATIONS

Photo: George Karbus

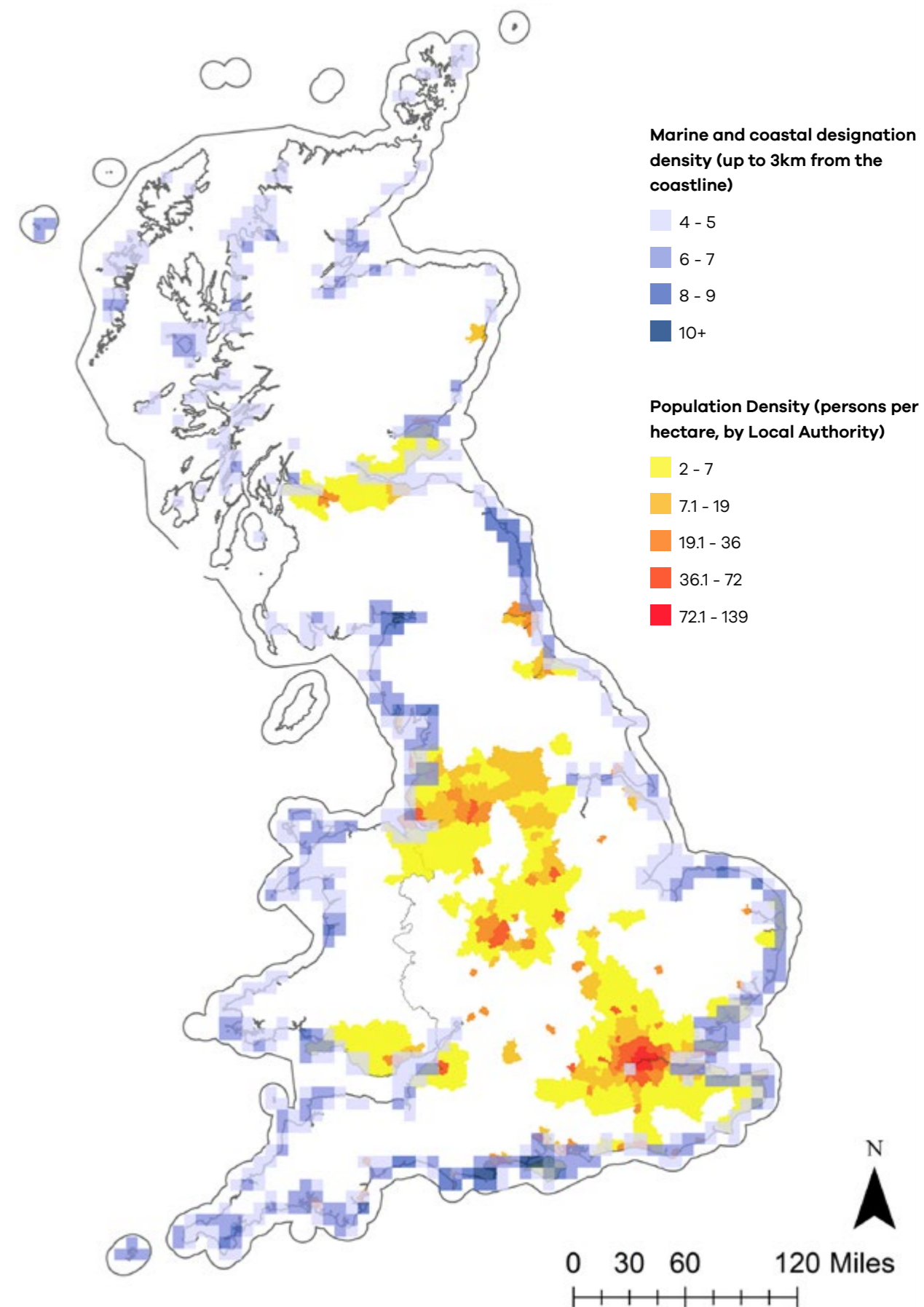
BLUE mapped existing designations within 3km of the coastline inland and 3nm offshore, to create a 'heat map' of designation density (see Figure 2). We also mapped population density to explore where highly designated coastal and marine areas linked with proximity to people. In a range of locations we interviewed stakeholders who understand the existing way that coastal and marine designations work alongside the planning system, the regulatory duties of public bodies, the work of local authorities, coastal partnerships and voluntary groups, to promote awareness and connection between people and the sea.

Based on our mapping work and interviews with over thirty people from across Britain, we have identified an appetite for furthering the conversation about Marine Parks. The locations illustrated below are not proposals intended to be exclusive or exhaustive, they are places where we recommend conversations are furthered. BLUE believe that Marine Parks will only be successful if stakeholders agree that this is appropriate and they are driven by the will of local people.

Starting from Plymouth, where National Marine Park status was declared voluntarily in 2019, we showcase a selection of areas across England and offer a perspective on Wales, Scotland and experience from Jersey.

1. **The South**
Plymouth Sound National Marine Park
Dorset, Solent and the Isle of Wight to Sussex
2. **The Greater Thames**
London Gateway, North Kent & South Essex
3. **East Anglia**
Suffolk, The Wash & North Norfolk
4. **North East England**
Tyne to Tees Seascape, Northumberland and Berwickshire
5. **North West England**
Cumbria's Colourful Coast, the Solway Firth and Coastal Regional Parks.
6. **The Severn Sea**
Severn Estuary and the Bristol Channel
7. **Atlantic Cornwall**
The Isles of Scilly
8. **Wales**
Pembrokeshire
9. **Scotland**
Argyll Coast & Islands
10. **A Crown Dependency**
Jersey

Figure 2: Heat map of designation and population density



THE SOUTH

In Devon, a pioneering National Marine Park has triggered interest along the south coast to Lyme Bay, Dorset, the Solent and to Sussex.

Plymouth Sound National Marine Park

Britain's "Ocean City" initiative is led by Plymouth City Council who self-declared National Marine Park status in September 2019 with the support of 70 local stakeholders. There had been a background level of interest in a Marine Park by local academics (Martin Attrill chiefly) and a small number of individuals for some years. With political momentum from Luke Pollard MP, the Leader of Plymouth City Council Tudor Evans and others in 2017, the initiative really took off. They promoted a vision for a Marine Park that enabled people to understand marine protection and connect better with the ocean, bringing more people into contact with the sea through education, exploration and employment. BLUE organised a national conference in 2018, convened by Dan Crockett, that brought together 120 interested parties at the National Marine Aquarium in Plymouth. The end of the day saw a near-unanimous show of hands for Plymouth to create a Marine Park.

A key feature of Plymouth Sound National Marine Park is the link between the marine environment and the city's cultural maritime heritage. The area supports a naval dockyard, commercial ports, watersports, a marine research cluster, a tourist destination and a base for a fishing fleet and fish market – all alongside

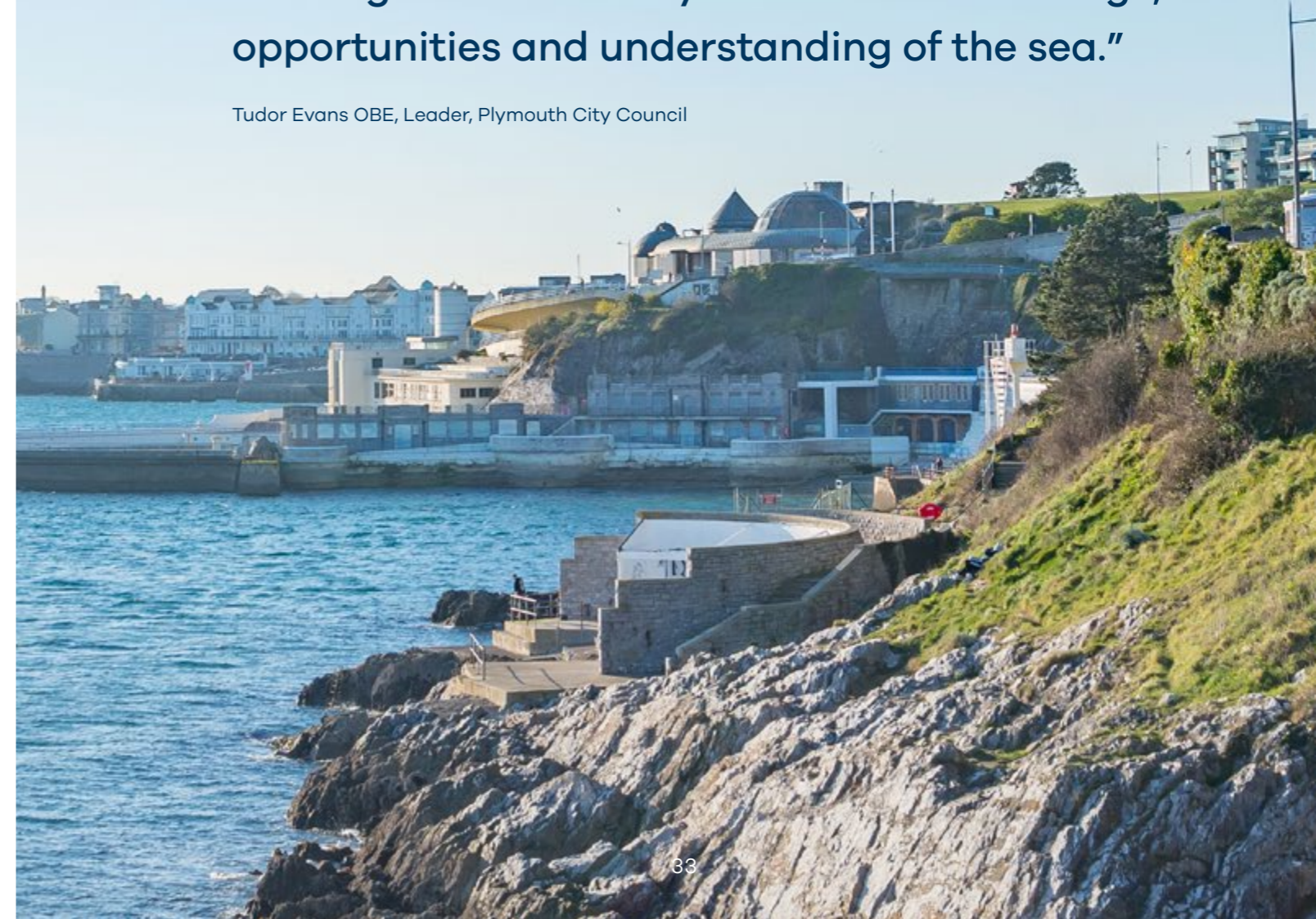
internationally important wildlife in the sea. The marine sector in Plymouth employs over 13,000 people.

Plymouth City Council realised that many children living in the city, within a few miles of the sea, hadn't visited Plymouth Sound. New opportunities for people to benefit from the city's waterside location could arise through raising its status as a National Marine Park. BLUE identified 64 natural and cultural heritage designations in and around Plymouth Sound, including the coast and estuaries extending beyond the Sound, particularly in the South Hams District which is an extensive Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

The Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum (TECF) offer best practice in working with organisations and local authorities with statutory responsibility towards the management of Plymouth Sound and its advisory groups which the marine park looks to support and celebrate. The City Council were supported by a secondee, Josh McCarty, from BLUE to launch the declaration of intent for Plymouth Sound National Marine Park. With a grant from the Marine Management Organisation, Plymouth City Council commissioned a National Marine Park feasibility study, which should be delivered in 2021.

"Plymouth - Britain's Ocean City - has a long history of launching many pioneering voyages, from the Beagle to the Mayflower and every time one of her majesty's ships crosses Plymouth Sound we are reminded of how our maritime space has helped shape the city, nation and world. Plymouth Sound National Marine Park is Plymouth's next exciting marine voyage. With more than 1000 species residing in Plymouth Sound, it's not about additional regulation, it's about users and stakeholders working collaboratively to increase knowledge, opportunities and understanding of the sea."

Tudor Evans OBE, Leader, Plymouth City Council



Dorset and Lyme Bay

Dorset occupies a long stretch (142 km) of the coast of south England. It has the most densely designated marine environment with three Special Areas of Conservation, two Special Protection Areas, nine Marine Conservation Zones and numerous Sites of Special Scientific Interest, across one of the most intensively used areas in UK marine waters. An active group of individuals with support from local groups has proposed a new National Park for Dorset. Interest has grown and there is some suggestion that the proposal could include a marine element.

There is a good level of groundwork already undertaken in Dorset to consider Marine Park status. The Dorset Coast Forum wrote about the concept of a Marine Park in Dorset about a decade ago and found that the term Marine Park means different things to different people. The pursuit of Marine Conservation Zones through the Marine Act has been the predominant driver since that time. The Dorset coast from Studland Bay westward to the Devon border and onto Exmouth is included in the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site designated in 2001.

A Marine Park initiative could build on the success of BLUE's ground-breaking work setting up the Lyme Bay Fisheries and Conservation Reserve, which has established an effective ecosystem-based approach to marine management through a combination of regulatory and voluntary measures co-developed and

managed by fishermen, regulators, researchers and conservation groups.

The co-management of the reserve has resulted in measurable recovery of biodiversity, whilst the creation by BLUE of the Lyme Bay Reserve Seafood initiative has brought financial benefits for participating fishermen that fish sustainably. A schools outreach programme has also delivered education and engagement with the local community.

With such a successful model already in place at the heart of the Dorset coast, there is a strong foundation for developing a Marine Park that broadens engagement and partnership across a wider area with other user groups of this marine space.

“Dorset is at the heart of many lively discussions about National Park status and the opportunity for a Marine Park here”

Dr Simon Cripps, Chair Dorset Local Nature Partnership 2012-2020

“Dorset Coast Forum could lead a project to explore Marine Park status: they are neutral, trusted with a proven track record of delivery. They could bring people from different marine and coastal sectors to discuss this opportunity.”

Bridget Betts, Dorset Council

Solent and the Isle of Wight to Sussex

A high density of coastal and marine designations and population concentration exists around Southampton and the Isle of Wight. East of Southampton, Portsmouth and Chichester Harbour are backed by the South Downs National Park, the most recently designated National Park in England. West of the Solent, the New Forest National Park includes 40 miles of coastline from Barton on Sea into Southampton Water and up to Totton, a town not far from the city of Southampton. The Solent and Southampton Water are designated as Special Protection Areas. Parts of the Solent and the Isle of Wight Lagoons are also a Special Area of Conservation. This area also has five relatively recently designated Marine Conservation Zones. Approximately half of the Isle of Wight is designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the western side is Heritage Coast, with proposals for World Heritage Site status.

There are similarities between Plymouth and the Solent – both are proud of their rich maritime heritage with significant past and present naval interests, lively recreational watersports and nearby National Parks. Like Plymouth Sound, the Solent and Isle of Wight offer potential to celebrate the special characteristics of the area and promote greater understanding and engagement. This would include residents within the urban communities of Southampton and Portsmouth, many of whom find it challenging to access the coast and water for recreation and wellbeing benefits, plus over 1.4 million people who live within a ten-minute drive of the Solent. This is a challenging area to manage multiple-use with major ports, commercial interests and recreational events and many people separated from the sea by urban development. BLUE recommends

that to ensure wide and open discussion, any Marine Park proposal would start its journey with the Solent Forum.

There is clear evidence to suggest that the conversation about Marine Parks should be developed further and wider along the south coast of England. The experience from Plymouth in Devon could be explored across Lyme Bay and Dorset to the Solent. There may also be potential eastwards along the Sussex and Kent coasts. The potential for a Sussex Bay Marine Park is being explored alongside proposals for kelp restoration.

“Marine Parks could be a focus for us to celebrate maritime activity, our maritime history, our marine research institutes and promote citizen science to raise awareness of the importance of the marine environment”

Peter Barham MBE, SUDG and Solent Forum Chair

“Just as the post-war government was ambitious to establish National Parks, so too must we be ambitious for more National Marine Parks. In the middle of a climate crisis, this is a perfect response to growing public interest in our oceans.”

Luke Pollard MP for Plymouth Sutton and Devonport and Shadow Environment Secretary

THE GREATER THAMES

The Thames Estuary is an area with great potential. It has sizeable economic power, a strong feeling of collaboration and a ‘can do attitude’ from London right out to the sea. The Estuary has an important brand and status, which makes a significant contribution to the UK economy.¹⁵

Many people do not recognise that London is by the sea. The River Thames is tidal through central London and upstream as far as Teddington. This presents an opportunity to tell millions of people about the value of our coastal and marine environment. The Thames Estuary extends beyond Greater London into Kent and Essex as it reaches the sea. Here there are Special Areas of Conservation, Marine Conservation Zones and protected wrecks offering maritime connections with our capital city.

Efforts to safeguard, restore and enhance the natural and man-made environmental assets around the Thames are gaining recognition. The Thames Estuary is central to the Greater Thames Gateway vision. It involves socio-economic regeneration around a tapestry of ‘productive places’ including the city ribbon, inner estuary, south Essex foreshore, north Kent foreshore and the River Thames out to sea. Plans include a continuous Thames Path and a Greater Thames Park, recognising that the Thames Estuary is a precious yet undervalued landscape with only 11% of the Estuary having statutory protection for nature conservation.¹⁶ The Council for the Protection of Rural England are calling for a Regional Park to co-ordinate environmental protection and improvement alongside regeneration and renewal, in particular encouraging nature conservation, landscape restoration, sustainable farming and public access

supported by sustainable finance. More consideration could be given in these plans to marine conservation and seascape. There is potential to engage with local initiatives and explore the opportunity for Marine Park status alongside the recently designated London City National Park. The city marine parks concept¹⁷ shows unfulfilled potential for coastal cities such as London. It could enhance community well-being, prosperity and sustainable living in the heart of our capital city around the Thames Estuary.

“Marine awareness will be easier through the creation of Marine Parks for inshore areas such as estuaries and where there are already clusters of designated sites”

Amy Pryor, Technical Director, Thames Estuary Partnership

EAST ANGLIA

The North Sea is very much a ‘working sea’ where meaningful engagement is needed with the seascape and marine environment. The challenge to engage people here is perhaps tougher than anywhere due to the lack of open, sandy beaches in Suffolk and the vastness of the mudflats of The Wash.

The Wash Estuary and North Norfolk Coast

The Wash Estuary and North Norfolk coast offer contrasting environments of salt marsh, mud flats and open coast across a vast rural area. The Wash is included in a large Special Protection Area of international significance for birds with several National Nature Reserves. The North Norfolk coastline is an extensive Heritage Coast and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which links to the Broads National Park.

Norfolk County Council are leading a review of legislation and its integration, in which the option of a Marine Park has been raised. They are part of a North Sea region project¹⁸ to explore the benefits of linking sustainable growth and nature protection. This will be achieved through unlocking the potential of nature heritage brands as a driver for jobs and sustainable regional development. Opportunity and appetite exists to unite existing designations through a World Heritage Site, Biosphere Reserve or Marine Park. The designated marine sites extend up to mean high water and overlap with the North Norfolk Coast AONB which reaches out to mean low water mark. There is potential in the overlapping designations to simplify messaging around the Wash Estuary and North Norfolk coast.

Suffolk Coast

The Suffolk coast also has potential to explore Marine Park status. It runs from Landguard Point south of Felixstowe to the Norfolk border just above Lowestoft. The shoreline is predominately shingle, worked by small fishing boats launched off the beach in places like Aldeburgh, Dunwich and Southwold. Several sandy beaches including the unusual Covehithe, are well-loved by locals and visitors alike. There is a rich history of human interaction with the sea and in several places once-thriving harbours have been reclaimed and drowned. A large MPA, the Orford Inshore, has been designated 14km offshore from the Alde-Ore Estuary, providing a vital nursery and spawning ground for many fish species. Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB was designated in 1970 to conserve and enhance the habitats and biodiversity of heathlands, woodlands, estuaries and coast. This includes several important estuaries with abundant saltmarsh, known to sequester and store carbon. Rewilding has a growing momentum in the county, led by a group of landowners called Wild East. There is likely to be an appetite for a Marine Park that would help to communicate the value of marine life.

NORTH EAST ENGLAND

North East England is an area of contrasting coastlines, some highly designated and recognised for their special character and others less designated but with potential to be more appreciated.

Tyne to Teas seascape

The Durham Heritage Coast is at the heart of a SeaScapes initiative between the Rivers Tyne and Tees. This area lies between the Yorkshire coast - adjacent to the North York Moors National Park - and heavily designated Northumberland and Berwickshire marine sites. It is an area of unique, post-industrial, recovering coastline with a deep history of coal mining, ship building and trade which has embedded communities with a dependency on the coastal and marine environment. The importance of connecting a poorly engaged and deprived community with conservation goals is seen as a route to its future success and sustainability. National Marine Park status could work for this stretch of coast out to 6nm offshore, to support the full recovery of its natural heritage and to recognise its cultural heritage significance - there are a high number of wrecks and offshore features. Marine Park status could ignite stewardship by further encouraging people's connection with the sea.

Northumberland and Berwickshire

Contrasting with the Tyne to Tees seascape, the Northumberland coastal and marine space is one of the most highly designated areas of England with Heritage Coast, Marine Conservation Zones and European Marine Sites. Central to this area is the Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve including Holy Island. Inland, lies the

Northumberland National Park. The northern section of the Northumberland and Berwickshire coast is essentially a rural area which is recognised for its special character including the coast and marine conservation. The southern section of the Northumberland coast extends down into urban Tyneside and is more industrial and post-industrial in character, but retains recognised importance for marine conservation. There is potential for National Marine Park status to connect the larger proportion of the population of Northumberland and Tyneside in the south with the highly designated coastal and marine environment in the north.

North East England highlights that National Marine Parks have the potential to restore as well as protect the marine environment for the benefit of people and the sea.

“We are watching the National Marine Park process closely as we think it could work well for the Durham Coast and SeaScapes project area”

Niall Benson, Durham County Council

NORTH WEST ENGLAND

A high proportion of the North West coast and inshore marine environment is designated, in particular around the Solway Firth, Morecambe Bay and the Ribble Estuary. Liverpool Mercantile Maritime City is the UK's only cultural World Heritage Site. The Lake District National Park and World Heritage Site meets the sea in a rural area of Cumbria with 23 miles of coastline.

The combined cultural maritime heritage and natural beauty of this area are worthy of consideration for National Marine Park status with landscape value recognised in two coastal AONBs and over 90% of the north west coast within a Marine Protected Area. The Lake District is one of eight of Britain's National Parks which reach the coast, where opportunities could be explored to connect the existing National Park to a Marine Park.

Cumbria's Colourful Coast

West of the Lake District National Park, the coast of Whitehaven to St. Bees Head Heritage Coast is being promoted as the 'Colourful Coast'. It has a rich history with the village of Whitehaven formally dependent upon fishing, farming and salt-making, until coal mining and the construction of the pier in the 1600s introduced it as a port and trade route. St Bees is a popular seaside tourist destination and the start of the Coast to Coast Walk across northern England. The Colourful Coast could be explored as a Marine Park extension of the Lake District National Park.

Solway Firth

Straddling England and Scotland, the Solway Firth is a highly designated area supporting internationally important habitats and species such as saltmarsh and sand dunes, geese, waders, seabirds and migratory fish, with an important nursery area for skates and rays. The

English part of the Solway Coast has been recognised as an AONB since 1964. National Scenic Areas on the Scottish side in Dumfries and Galloway are pioneering consideration of nationally important landscapes, including consideration of whether to include coastal and marine in a National Park proposal. The Solway Firth Partnership brings together communities and stakeholders across the border including joint work between Scottish and UK authorities for marine planning.

Coastal Regional Parks

Proposals have been made in the past for coastal regional parks in North West England including a Morecambe Bay Regional Park, the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park and Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, linked by a North West Coastal Trail. These connecting concepts were pursued by the North West Regional Assembly and Regional Development Agency over a decade ago and included guiding principles for a coastal Regional Parks framework.¹⁹ Coastal Regional Parks would have given recognition to special places such as Morecambe Bay and the Ribble Estuary. The momentum was lost when the English regional bodies closed. The concept had similarities to what a Marine Park could offer in future.

THE SEVERN SEA

Known as ‘Mor Hafren’ in Welsh, the ‘Severn Sea’ has one of the highest tidal ranges in the world and Britain’s largest estuary. The Severn Estuary and surrounding areas have the highest level of international and European designations for wetlands which are linked to the Somerset Levels and Moors, the Gwent Levels and River Wye.

The Severn Estuary and Bristol Channel are surrounded by nationally designated coastal landscapes with Exmoor National Park, the Wye Valley AONB, Quantock Hills AONB, Glamorgan Heritage Coast, Gower Peninsula Heritage Coast AONB and the North Devon UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

Despite the special features and many designations around the ‘Severn Sea’ there is limited understanding and celebration of the natural seascape and marine environment amongst neighbouring urban communities. Accessibility to the coast and water is challenging due to the fast tidal currents and large mudflats in many areas. The cities of Gloucester, Bristol, Newport and Cardiff offer significant potential for more community awareness, understanding, engagement and enjoyment of this ecosystem. Wilderness and well-being opportunities exist, but few interpretation and recreational facilities are available to encourage people to understand the marine environment or connect their daily lives with the sea.

The ‘Severn Sea’ faces many challenges and opportunities. Coastal and marine designations span the border across England and Wales but there

are significant pressures for development on both sides. The Severn Estuary Partnership has been co-ordinating local authorities and key stakeholders around the estuary since the 1990s, providing essential networking effort across the border. There is significant potential to work on citizen engagement, particularly with deprived coastal communities who could benefit from socio-economic opportunities associated with the Severn Estuary and Bristol Channel. Marine Park status could attract investment for awareness raising and engagement effort, bridging connectivity between millions of people and this vast ecosystem.

“Many people living in Cardiff, within 1 mile of the coast, have never been there”

Rhoda Ballinger, Cardiff University



ATLANTIC CORNWALL

Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly offer significant potential to demonstrate how enhancing public connection with the sea leads to a greater sense of stewardship and sustainable living based around the marine environment.

Cornwall

There is hardly a stretch of the Cornish coast that isn't recognised for its high value, with 34% of Cornwall's inshore waters (to 12nm) now within a Marine Protected Area. Much of the coast has Heritage Coast and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) status. The highest coastal and marine designation density in Cornwall is around Falmouth and the Lizard Peninsula where citizen engagement in marine stewardship is high.

In the past, stakeholders in Cornwall have considered the option of Marine and Coastal Park status for the Cornish coast and nearshore waters, linking and extending the coastal elements of the AONB and existing Marine Protected Areas.

In evidence to the Glover Review of Designated Landscapes¹, Cornwall AONB Partnership requested stronger protection for landscape in the planning system and a new model to reflect more accurately the purposes and highest status of protection for national landscapes.

Isles of Scilly

In the 1949 National Parks Act, special provision was given for the Isles of Scilly Council to designate a National Park. The main islands collectively form an AONB and Heritage Coast, with European Marine Site designations and ten Marine Conservation Zones. Island livelihoods are highly embedded with the sea and the clear tropical-like waters of the open Atlantic attract many visitors. However, access and interpretation opportunities to communicate the value of marine wildlife and protected wrecks are still quite limited.

Promoting the uniqueness of Scilly could improve sustainable livelihoods by attracting additional investment. National Marine Park status would promote wellbeing from the sea, support a strong sense of identity for Scillonians and offer new experiences for visitors, such as a new marine education and science centre. It could help to secure long term community resilience for people and the sea.

National Marine Park status could unite the large number of existing designations, connecting them under one 'umbrella brand'. Enabling simpler communication would offer new marketing and branding opportunities. A Marine Park would support local fishing and fishermen's alliance with resource conservation – protecting local interests and building higher value for seafood. It could draw in new audiences, sustaining and enhancing locals' and visitors' understanding and appreciation of our connection to the sea.

“In the past, stakeholders in Cornwall have considered the option of Marine and Coastal Park status for the Cornish coast and nearshore waters, linking and extending the coastal elements of the AONB and existing Marine Protected Areas”

Philippa Hoskin, Cornwall Council

WALES

The west coast of Wales has a range of designations across the coastal and inshore marine area, with the highest density in north-west Wales where Snowdonia National Park reaches the coast. However, it is in south-west Wales where Pembrokeshire has the only Coastal National Park in Britain.

Pembrokeshire

Pembrokeshire designated the majority of its coastline in 1952 under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949). It is the only National Park in the UK to have been designated primarily because of its spectacular coastline, with nowhere in the park more than 10 miles from the sea. The Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail, opened in 1970, is 299 km long and provides access to 420km of coastline. Over ten years ago a study revealed that the coastal park contributed 4650 jobs and £81 million annually to the Welsh economy.²⁰ The 629km² of land within the National Park includes coastal habitats, the Cleddau Estuary, rivers and marshes, upland areas, offshore islands, farmland and small pockets of woodland. The coastal strip is relatively unspoilt and the marine environment supports a rich diversity of life with many offshore bird colonies. The legacy of castles, churches and prehistoric landscape provide a unique historic and cultural heritage which are a key feature of the Coastal National Park.

The purpose of the National Park includes promoting a healthy environment: fresh air, clean water, local produce, tranquillity, a sense of 'wilderness' and interesting literary, artistic and scientific connections. The Park offers opportunities for quiet recreation and for more 'upbeat' activity breaks including climbing, sailing and coasteering. Pembrokeshire Coast National

Park Authority was created in 1996 as a result of the Environment Act (1995) and has planning controls to manage the balance between development and conservation. The Authority has two statutory purposes, common to all National Parks designated under the 1949 Act:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park, and;
- To promote opportunities for public enjoyment and understanding of its special qualities.

The socio-economic and environmental benefits of this Coastal National Park have been proven. Over 22,000 people live in the Park – it is one of the most densely populated National Parks with St Davids city and Tenby town – plus small villages, isolated farms and hamlets. It is estimated that residents make over 500,000 day visits within the National Park annually. In addition, there are around 7.2 million day visits to the National Park every year, of which 1.1 million are holidaymakers.²¹ Milford Haven waterway is the second deepest natural harbour in the world (after Sydney Harbour in Australia) so hosts important port facilities and commercial interests that are balanced with conservation interests. There are active measures to encourage sustainability through reducing car use and noise, encouraging people to get involved in voluntary work and help the local economy by staying in the park to support local businesses.

Pembrokeshire is one of the smallest of the UK's existing National Parks. The majority of land in the National Park is in private ownership (>95%) with a small percentage owned by the National Park Authority, the County Council and the National Trust. The National Park Authority works with landowners, and acts as the planning and regulatory body for development within the park. The Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum helps to balance conservation with meeting the needs of the local communities, through consistent stakeholder engagement and careful communication since its formation in 2000. Pembrokeshire Coast National Park offers a vision for National Marine Parks and Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum a role model for engagement.

Beyond Pembrokeshire

Wales has two other National Parks: Snowdonia (1951), and Brecon Beacons (1957) which together with Pembrokeshire Coast (1952) cover approximately one fifth of the country's land area. In addition, Wales has designated 69% of the Welsh seas with 133 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) covering 4200 square miles. Natural Resources Wales manages 58 National Nature Reserves, some of which are coastal.

Snowdonia National Park includes a long stretch of coastline from Afon Dwydd in Ceredigion Bay in the north to the Aberdyfi estuary in the south. Cardigan Bay with its stunning seascape, marine mammal watching opportunities and an existing marine wildlife centre in New Quay offer scope for consideration. Marine

Park status could help to improve understanding and connectivity between people and the sea. Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, together with commitment to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, offer strong experience to draw on for the rest of Britain.

“The beautiful beaches, cliffs, harbours and coves of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park are unforgettable. Stroll along the 300km coast path to admire the surroundings and don't forget to look out for incredible marine wildlife such as seals, dolphins and basking sharks”

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

“Neutral facilitation had been used to help develop codes of conduct and accurate maps of marine use. Buy-in and a sense of ownership has been created through community engagement”

Paul Renfro, Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum

SCOTLAND

Scotland has two National Parks and a range of designations including Marine Protected Areas designated under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010. The legal framework for National Parks in Scotland is different to the 1949 Act for England and Wales.

The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 has a stronger focus on sustainable use of natural resources and sustainable social and economic development of the area's communities. In addition, the Scottish Act includes provision to apply the National Park designation in marine areas providing satisfactory consultation with those who 'live, work or carry on business in the area' which includes the interests of commercial fishing operations.

Over ten years ago, the Scottish Executive proposed establishment of 'Scotland's First Coastal and Marine National Park' with a consultation led by Scottish Natural Heritage (2006).²² The purpose was to recognise the importance of natural and cultural heritage and safeguard it for future generations. The coastal and marine National Parks would be founded on the principles of sustainable development and help create a self-reinforcing cycle of benefits generating income locally through tourism, new opportunities to increase visitor spend and increase demand for sustainable

products through branding. A Coastal and Marine National Park was seen as a long term commitment to stewardship of resources. A three-stage assessment based on seascape, distinctive character and coherent identity led to a list of 10 possible areas. When the Scottish Government consulted on proposals for Scotland's First Coastal and Marine National Park in 2006-07, Argyll Coast and Islands emerged as the front runner together with the area northwards to Skye.

Argyll Coast and Islands

With the second highest marine biodiversity in Scotland after St. Kilda, Argyll Coast and Islands have protected areas for marine wildlife, landscape and heritage. Part of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park already lies within the area. Argyll and Bute Council consulted on the potential to create a new Coastal Marine National Park in 2017. The proposal was part of the Local Development Plan²³ as part of their aims to deliver a growing tourist economy. They suggested

"A Marine Park could really tell the story about our marine life - it could mimic something that people recognise from National Parks on land"

Annabel Lawrence, Hope Spot Champion

that if the Scottish Government instigated a review of National Parks, they would actively seek to fully appraise the marine option. Its aims would be to secure social and economic development of communities including fishing, agriculture, aquaculture and tourism whilst providing a focus for encouraging recognition, promoting outdoor recreation, education and the generation of new commercial and tourism opportunities.

Around 80% of the region's 88,000 residents live within 1km of the coast. There are 3000 miles of coastline and 23 inhabited islands which currently attract around 1 million annual visitors. Frequent ferry and train connections provide fast links between the rural communities of this unspoilt wilderness and the central belt of Scotland.

This is one of the wildest coasts in Europe where wildlife abounds - otters, eagles, porpoises, basking sharks, whales and beneath the water maerl beds, anemones, northern feather stars and rare flame shells. Argyll & Bute Council envisaged that a coastal and marine National Park would value the heritage of the area including agriculture, seafood, forestry and tourism industries. Local communities traditionally relied on mobile fishing but increasingly, creel fishing produces valuable catches of crabs, lobsters and prawns. Wildlife tourism supports many jobs in Argyll. However, the area has a fast depopulation rate and ageing population with socio-economic impacts on communities. National Marine Park status could encourage diversification of livelihoods, celebration of the coastal and marine wildlife and seascape, together with authentic tourism opportunities supported by coastal communities.

"Marine Parks have great potential in Scotland. A review of possible sites for Scotland's first coastal/marine National Park in 2006-07 identified front-runners in the Hebridean sea. Political will is necessary, and was then absent - as is having vocal support from communities in the area(s) chosen"

Hugh Raven, Ardtornish

In 2019 a new initiative called the 'Hope Spot' emerged through local community support for Marine Protected Areas. Together with community trusts, associations and enterprise initiatives there is potential to generate the political leadership needed at the local and national level to re-visit National Marine Park status. In addition, the Scottish Crown Estate Act (2019) offers new opportunities for communities to get more involved in local management. The high density of marine and coastal designations around Argyll Coast and Islands suggests it remains a clear front-runner for National Marine Park potential.

Beyond the Argyll region

Scotland has a different legal context for consideration of National Marine Parks, with provision for marine areas in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000. Having proposed Scotland's first Coastal and Marine National Park over a decade ago, the political context changed and the government are now in the throes of establishing regional Marine Planning Partnerships. In south-west Scotland, Dumfries and Galloway are pursuing National Park status and have considered a marine component. There is scope for further investigation here, perhaps through the facilitation role of the Solway Firth Partnership.

Scotland has only two National Parks so far and interest has been shown nationally and within current proposals for a marine element. Leadership from the Scottish Government as well as within communities, with political influence at the national and local levels, will be needed to help drive the process. BLUE is interested in opportunities for further discussion.

A CROWN DEPENDENCY

“A Marine Park would protect and showcase the very best of Jersey’s sea habitats and boost its reputation as a forward-thinking and responsible jurisdiction”

Senator Lyndon Farnham, Economic Development Minister

Jersey

Jersey is the most southerly island of the British Isles with 90 km of coastline including dramatic cliffs, wide sandy bays, small harbours and the port town of St. Helier.

The island’s waters host some of the most productive coastal waters in Europe. The northwest coast has the greatest variety of seaweed in the British Isles. On the southwest, some of the richest and most diverse clam beds in Northern Europe can be found and the rocky intertidal and outlying shallow reefs offer habitats found nowhere else in the region. The south, southeast and west coast have a very shallow, gently sloping shore profile which means that at low tide the island can expand by a quarter as up to 30 km² of intertidal area becomes accessible. The Minquiers and other offshore reefs harbour rare pink sea fans, sunset cup corals, ormers and marbled electric rays. Seagrass beds provide nurseries for cuttlefish and bream and sandy gravels are important spawning grounds for finfish. Jersey also provides sanctuary for larger mega-fauna and is home to a pod of over 350 resident Bottlenose dolphins.

The importance of Jersey’s marine and coastal ecology is reflected in a number of designations. In 2011 Jersey designated over 2,000 ha as a Coastal National Park, which includes extensive intertidal areas exposed by

one of the highest tidal ranges in Europe. There are four Ramsar wetlands of international importance covering almost 190 km² of inter-tidal habitat. In 2017 two large Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) were designated to protect over 6% of the island’s waters. Within the MPAs there are measures to protect vulnerable and important habitats from mobile fishing gear as well as other gear types such as parlour pots.

Jersey’s rich marine life, beautiful beaches and coastline underpin a thriving economy through fishing, water sports, tourism and aquaculture and offer recreational enjoyment for visitors and local people. The gifting of the seabed by The Crown Estate to the people of Jersey in 2015 enables unique opportunities for community stewardship of the marine environment. In December 2019, the island’s Economic Development Minister suggested that Marine Park status would be good for biodiversity, tourism and the economy, including fisheries.

Alongside the Island Plan, Marine Plan and Integrated Coastal Zone Management, a Marine Park could create a more holistic vision for marine protection and cultural heritage, promoting low-impact activities within an enhanced and protected environment, including sustainable and high-valued fisheries.

“It makes perfect sense to have a national park that extends beyond the shoreline to the sea around Jersey. The National Trust welcomes it wholeheartedly and it’s really important that it is integrated into the Island Plan. We need a well thought out concept that will also be well resourced so that it can be effectively delivered”

Charles Alluto, National Trust, Jersey

Photo: James Bowden

CONCLUSIONS

This report represents a condensed version of research and analysis of interviews, maps and reports. Substantial evidence has been gathered to support this report. BLUE would like to encourage and facilitate further conversations about the potential for Marine Parks around Britain. However, we wanted to let the perspectives of the people we interviewed close this report as they opened it. They say more about the passion and potential for this opportunity than we could hope to summarise.

“Every bit of my intuition says ‘do more’ – every bit of my intuition says ‘do it’ - I don’t think it matters where you start it as long as you do”

Elaine Hayes, Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority Chair 2012-2019

“National Marine Parks offer an opportunity to give people something simple to believe in. Something positive people can do rather than being told what not to do”

Josh McCarty, Blue Marine Foundation,
Plymouth City Council

“Dorset Coastal Forum could lead a project to explore Marine Park status: they are neutral and already get people around the table. They could bring research and people from different sectors together”

Bridget Betts, Dorset County Council

“Clusters of designations wrapped into one will probably be welcomed by industry and easier for the public to appreciate”

Amy Pryor, Thames Estuary Partnership

“Marine Park status has the potential to simplify and unify our voice for marine protection, and improve engagement with and support from the public and business community”

Sam Lew, Coastal Partnerships Network

“A Marine Park in the Solent could be a great idea: if it is shown to be successful in Plymouth then by definition it should be here too”

Peter Barham, Seabed User Developer Group and
Solent Forum Chairman

“Marine Parks will need to be led by a strong group of people who have a long-term vision, clear objectives and resources”

Aisling Lannin, Marine Pioneer Coordinator, MMO

“A Marine Park for Lyme Bay could enable fishermen to take more local ownership and accountability for the longer term stewardship of fish stocks”

Rob King, Lyme Bay fisherman

“There could be several routes for Marine Parks. The voluntary approach may work if everyone supports it as an additional commitment through their duties, powers and provisioning - it’s probably as secure as any other route”

Dan Laffoley, IUCN

NEXT STEPS

Ultimately, through creating this report we have been left with a huge sense of possibility. National Marine Parks in this country have an almost limitless amount of potential, if they can build on and celebrate what has come before, and if they are created by local people to answer local needs. They would focus on engagement with existing designations, encouraging stewardship through existing governance, aiming for similar outcomes to terrestrial National Parks.

We are not pre-determining a one-size fits all model for Marine Parks, or what a national network would look like. We are proposing a National Marine Park development programme which starts from the 'bottom-up' whilst exploring linking mechanisms and scope for a national framework.

In conclusion, Blue Marine Foundation 'BLUE' would like to connect with local stakeholders around the country, both in the locations that we have identified and further afield to encourage local stewardship and national

representation of our marine environment, through exploring Marine Park status. The Covid-19 pandemic has taught us all that we can communicate virtually, that in many ways we are closer together than we ever have been before.

BLUE will seek to design a campaign over the next three years which sparks conversations about National Marine Parks. We are ready to support local facilitators and local networks to encourage debate and use our expertise to attract additional investment.

BLUE will host another gathering to learn from existing sites and build on emerging conversations. We will invite regulators, practitioners and local champions to explore Marine Park status and what it means to them, and how we can work together to take this forward across Britain.

Please address all thoughts and feedback to marineparks@bluemarinefoundation.com

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