



BLUE MARINE
FOUNDATION

GUIDANCE FOR NATIONAL MARINE PARK EVOLUTION



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A National Marine Park is an expansive seascape of national importance, where the priority is to promote public awareness and understanding of coastal and marine heritage and seascape recovery; enable recreational enjoyment; and realise environmental and socio-economic benefits for coastal communities.

National Marine Parks Strategic Working Group Definition (2023).

BACKGROUND

In 2021, Blue Marine Foundation released a vision for National Marine Parks in British Seas. The national vision was based on insights from supporting the evolution of Plymouth Sound National Marine Park, and research into the existing range of coastal and marine designations relative to National Parks. It showcased ten potential locations to further the conversation about the potential for National Marine Parks in Britain¹.

Over the past two years, the vision has been discussed among people in over ten locations in England, Wales and Scotland. After five years of involvement in the evolution of Plymouth Sound National Marine Park, interviews were conducted to gather local insights and advice from Britain's first National Marine Park.

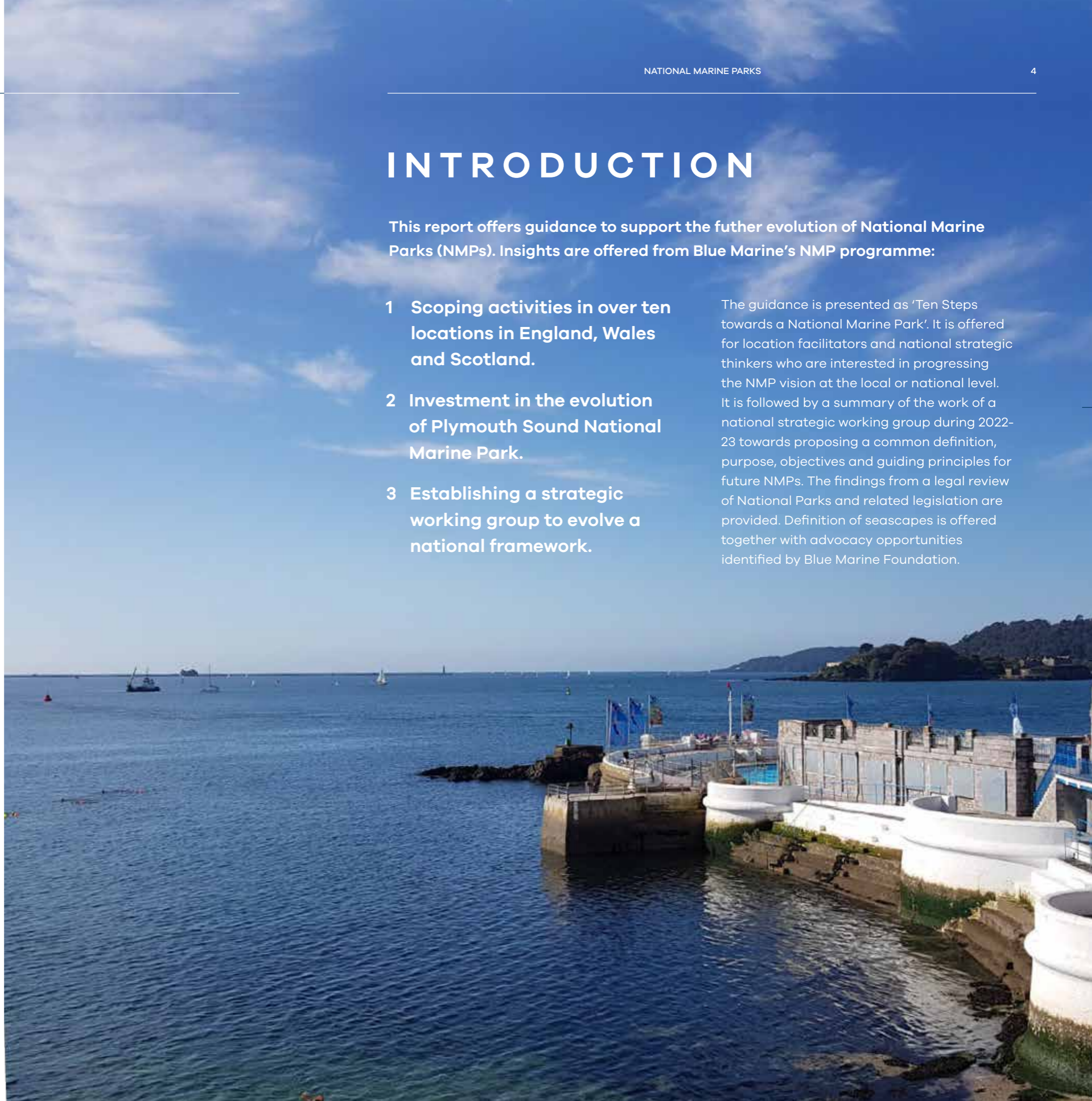
Blue Marine established a national strategic working group which has drafted a national framework with interested parties, to help take the vision to the next stage of its journey.

INTRODUCTION

This report offers guidance to support the further evolution of National Marine Parks (NMPs). Insights are offered from Blue Marine's NMP programme:

- 1 **Scoping activities in over ten locations in England, Wales and Scotland.**
- 2 **Investment in the evolution of Plymouth Sound National Marine Park.**
- 3 **Establishing a strategic working group to evolve a national framework.**

The guidance is presented as 'Ten Steps towards a National Marine Park'. It is offered for location facilitators and national strategic thinkers who are interested in progressing the NMP vision at the local or national level. It is followed by a summary of the work of a national strategic working group during 2022-23 towards proposing a common definition, purpose, objectives and guiding principles for future NMPs. The findings from a legal review of National Parks and related legislation are provided. Definition of seascapes is offered together with advocacy opportunities identified by Blue Marine Foundation.



NATIONAL INSIGHTS: SCOPING LOCATIONS

Blue Marine's Vision for National Marine Parks (NMPs) entered the public domain in April 2021. The report described the history and value of National Parks and coastal/marine designations. It outlined a vision, aims and opportunity for NMPs. It was suggested that the status offered an 'umbrella' over existing clusters of designated sites which would help connect them with people and improve their understanding of the marine environment.

Ten broad locations were highlighted, based on where there was high existing designation density and/or connection to people, plus where it was considered there may be interest in the NMP status. The locations illustrated in the vision

report were not intended to be exclusive or exhaustive - they were places to further explore the opportunities based on the initial research. Our ambition was to meet stakeholders in each of these locations to explore how the vision could evolve.

Since the release of the vision report, Blue Marine staff have visited or engaged with people in most of the locations showcased. The scoping activities consisted of 1:1 meetings, presentations, workshops, site visits and/or leaflets for local circulation, based on what appeared to be the most appropriate approach in each location. Various scoping activities were undertaken in the following locations:

THE SOUTH	Plymouth Sound, Dorset, Sussex Bay
EAST ANGLIA	The Wash and North Norfolk
NORTH EAST ENGLAND	Tyne to Tees Seascape, Northumberland and Berwickshire
NORTH WEST ENGLAND	Morecambe Bay
THE SEVERN SEA	Severn Estuary and the Bristol Channel
ATLANTIC CORNWALL	The Isles of Scilly
WALES	Pembrokeshire coast and North Wales
SCOTLAND	Argyll Coast and Islands
A CROWN DEPENDENCY	Jersey

The scoping activity has showcased the varying degrees of readiness and interest in evolving NMPs across the country. The locations where there appeared to be the most potential at the time were Scotland, Pembrokeshire, the Isles of Scilly and Jersey. Locations most interested in further exploration of the vision included the North Norfolk Coast and The Wash, Tyne to Tees Seascape, The Severn Sea, Dorset and Sussex Bay.

Different routes to achieve NMP status have been discussed, from top-down legal backing to bottom-up engagement and leadership. We visualised different routes to achieve NMPs but a common vision for their purpose and objectives. Existing National Parks on the coast such as Pembrokeshire, Lake District, North York Moors and the New Forest may be more likely to pursue a National Marine Park via the legislative route.

Sussex Bay, the Tyne to Tees Seascape and the Severn Sea were identified as locations more likely to evolve NMP status from the 'bottom-up' as demonstrated in Plymouth.

As the 2021 vision emphasised, any NMP status should include a bottom-up element to ensure local buy-in and stewardship, plus a top-down element for leadership. Stakeholders we met during the scoping activities re-affirmed the importance of this.

Any NMP status should include a bottom-up element to ensure local buy-in and stewardship, plus a top-down element for leadership.



PLYMOUTH SOUND NATIONAL MARINE PARK INSIGHTS

Plymouth Sound National Marine Park was declared in 2019. The concept of a National Marine Park for Plymouth Sound stems back over a decade. There was academic inspiration (Professor Martin Attrill) and a keen interest among people working with Blue Marine Foundation (Terri Portman, Tom Appleby, Charles Clover and Dan Crockett). It gained momentum when the Labour MP (Luke Pollard) put it into his manifesto and was then elected in 2017. The idea progressed through the hosting of a marine parks conference in Plymouth in 2018, supported by Blue Marine and Plymouth City Council. In 2019, the leader of the Council (Tudor Evans) declared Plymouth Sound National Marine Park and ever since, has been working with others to demonstrate the role of Britain's first National Marine Park. In 2021, substantial funds were awarded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and an Interim Chief Executive was appointed. Plymouth has paved the way and there is much to learn from Britain's first self-declared National Marine Park.

The key milestones along the journey from 2009-2023 included a national conference which raised the profile of the idea; political and local support which was crucial to energising the vision; declaration led by Plymouth City Council (supported by Blue Marine and many signatories); a feasibility study funded by the Marine Management Organisation; the establishment of a NMP Board to drive it forwards; substantial funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund; and ongoing dialogue over the parks' size, location and governance.

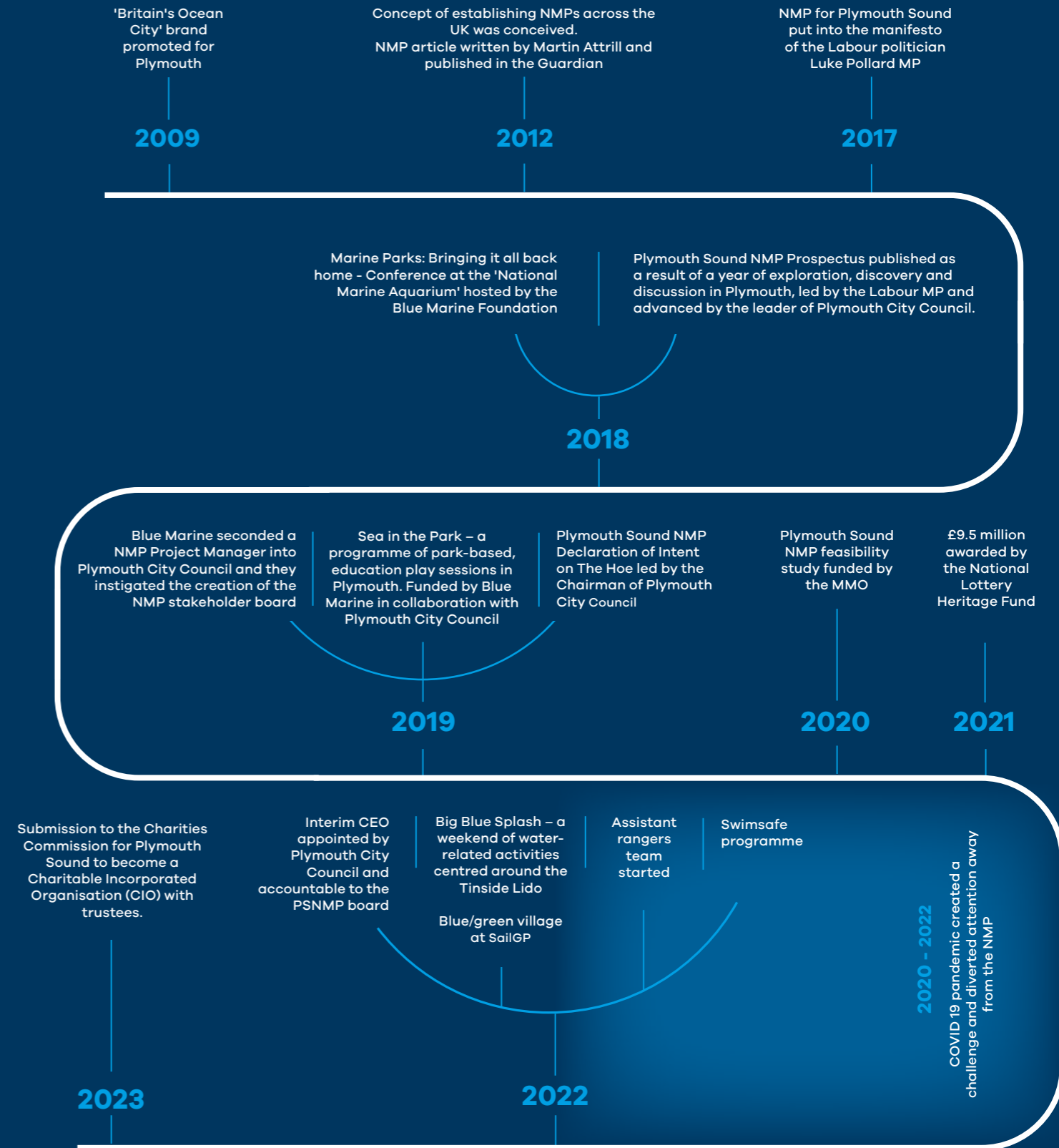
Benefits which have already been identified include the funding it has delivered into the city, the consensus building it has generated amongst stakeholders, and the awareness and enthusiasm it has generated for the marine environment. There were challenges to face too – from maintaining stakeholder engagement, balancing the purposes, terminology, politics, boundaries and the meaning of to the declaration. However, many opportunities are perceived across the three pillars of sustainability.

- Socially it is considered that NMP status has the potential to raise the aspirations of local young people through education, skills and training, with Plymouth more widely recognized as a hub for marine research.
- Environmentally, NMP status offers enhanced possibilities to celebrate and increase connections between people and the marine environment – with easier access to the sea and nearby facilities. It should also lead to more opportunities for habitat protection and enhancement.
- Economically, NMP status brings new investment possibilities in recreation, agriculture, small businesses and support to sustainable marine industries including tourism. It offers scope for new dialogues linking the marine environment and socio-economy.

“If we can do it in Plymouth Sound, we can do it anywhere”

Tudor Evans (Leader of Plymouth City Council)

TIMELINE AND MILESTONES



NATIONAL MARINE PARK GUIDANCE

Scoping activities across the UK and research conducted with key stakeholders in Plymouth, have revealed ten recommended steps towards NMP evolution.

There is national appetite for NMPs and wide recognition that the vision provides a huge opportunity to deliver benefits for the environment, society and economy. NMP evolution also requires investment, capacity, and strong partnerships to make meaningful progress. This section outlines ten steps for any location to consider when evolving a NMP. They are cross-cutting suggestions, recognising it is important to acknowledge that the creation and management of a NMP requires a tailored location-specific approach.

Ten steps towards a National Marine Park

Our recommendations for NMP evolution are presented as ten steps which answer five basic questions:

Why?

1. Understand place and purpose

What?

2. Explore environmental and socio-economic benefits and challenges

Where?

3. Beware of the Gap: Boundaries

Who?

4. Engage national and local seascape and marine experts
5. Enlist political support and encourage broad engagement

How?

6. Nurture good continuous communication from the start
7. Facilitate collaboration and long term partnerships
8. Strive for inclusive and representative governance
9. Source sustainable funding
10. Generate stewardship.

Photo: Paul Richards

STEPS

1. UNDERSTAND PLACE AND PURPOSE

An essential first step is to explore what the NMP could deliver. This will help everyone work towards a common, shared vision.

A strong baseline of information is needed, using existing national, regional and local information about the place and its seascape. This step may be driven by a small number of interested parties, or an existing local/regional network of people, who have worked together on past/present projects or in partnership.

Finding clarity of purpose underpins the ability to successfully deliver many of the steps described below. A clear narrative on what the NMP sets out to achieve and who/what it is for, is important to create a common vision that can be taken forward and developed in partnership - involving local people, businesses and organisations. If working with one or more local authorities, there needs to be approval from officers and appointed members, to ensure that the vision is carried forward cohesively. To avoid misconceptions about what the NMP is or could be, it is important to have a clear purpose which supports strategic objectives.

Blue Marine's NMP Vision report (2021)¹ identified the opportunity for an umbrella status to draw together pre-existing, valuable designations over large multi-use areas of coast and sea which cross the land-sea interface and utilise a simple brand. Opportunities and potential locations were indicated in the original vision report, based on existing designation density and population density, because a core purpose would be to link people and the sea to increase understanding and appreciation of the marine environment. NMPs could build on the original purposes of National Parks and support societies' response to the climate and biodiversity emergencies.

The general purpose of NMPs should be to connect people with their seascape to share in a sustainable future. Seascape, like landscape is about the relationship between people and place and the part it plays in forming the setting to our everyday lives.

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

Dan Laffoley, IUCN

Practical guidance

It is important to come together as a group to answer the following key questions;

- **What are we trying to achieve with a NMP?**
- **What benefits and challenges do we see?**
- **Who's the NMP for and who needs to be involved in its formation?**

Answering these questions will help to reach a common vision and provide the foundations for a feasibility study. In several locations, Blue Marine worked with the local Coastal/ Estuary Partnership to host a workshop where these questions were explored with 20-30 local/regional participants as a first step to stakeholder engagement.

2. EXPLORE ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

Marine parks have been recognised across the world to provide social, economic and environmental benefits, but there are many different models used for marine conservation and stewardship.

Ownership and buy-in to the vision is more likely to be achieved if the benefits and challenges are explored together, with key stakeholders at the outset and on a regular basis. The NMP status and 'brand' have the potential to be utilised for different purposes, especially where the momentum evolves from within communities at the local level. This is different to other statutory designations which have prescribed aims. If NMP status evolves through a voluntary declaration (as Plymouth Sound NMP), this is especially important to ensure common understanding, expectations and ultimately acceptable expenditure and decision-making.

To support the evolution of NMPs from communities (bottom-up) or from government (top-down) a national framework and guiding principles was agreed by a strategic working group in 2023. It contains a proposed common definition, purpose, objectives and principles to help ensure consistency of approach across different locations. See page 21-22 of this report.

Practical guidance

- **Convene a 'world-café' style² workshop where participants brainstorm benefits and challenges – they provide their own insights and get to see what others think.**
- **Map-out the potential opportunities and challenges which NMP status could bring for the environment, for people and the economy.**
- **Offer clarity and transparency about the anticipated balance between the three pillars of sustainability (environment, society, economy).**



3. BEWARE OF THE GAP: BOUNDARIES

Seize the opportunity to promote a new and unifying vision of a bay, coast or seascape.

There are many administrative boundaries in the coastal and marine environment. Not least between land and sea, but also between areas of responsibility for management, planning and governance. Local authority's administrative boundaries extend to the low water mark. Marine plans overlap from the tidal limit inshore and extend over large marine regions offshore.

NMP status has the ability to offer a new brand and promote place-attachment which could help to unify and increase understanding of the coast and sea across the land and sea boundary. The vision for 'umbrella' status has the potential to unite designated sites on land and at sea and cross local authority and designated site boundaries. One of the unique opportunities created by NMP status is to encourage people and organisations to work together across geographical, sectoral and administrative boundaries at a scale that connects landscape and seascape.

Beware of the tendency to put lines on a map to define a NMP and create new boundaries, especially at the outset of discussions about a NMP. This could limit the scope and potential of the vision. Engage widely across the boundaries - including neighbouring local authorities and marine bodies. Think carefully about the right timing to offer lines on maps, which may be needed if the NMP status is to influence planning policy.

Practical guidance

- Use 'fuzzy' boundaries on any maps to show the potential area of a NMP.
- Stay open-minded about the area for inclusion (lines on maps can create exclusion).
- Be ambitious: the unique opportunity with NMPs is to unite the land and sea and bring cohesion by crossing existing boundaries.

Seascape Definition

Seascape, like landscape is about the relationship between people and place and the part it plays in forming the setting to our everyday lives. Seascape results from the way that the different components of our environment – both natural and cultural – interact together and are understood and experienced by people (Natural England, 2012). See p27-28 for further guidance.

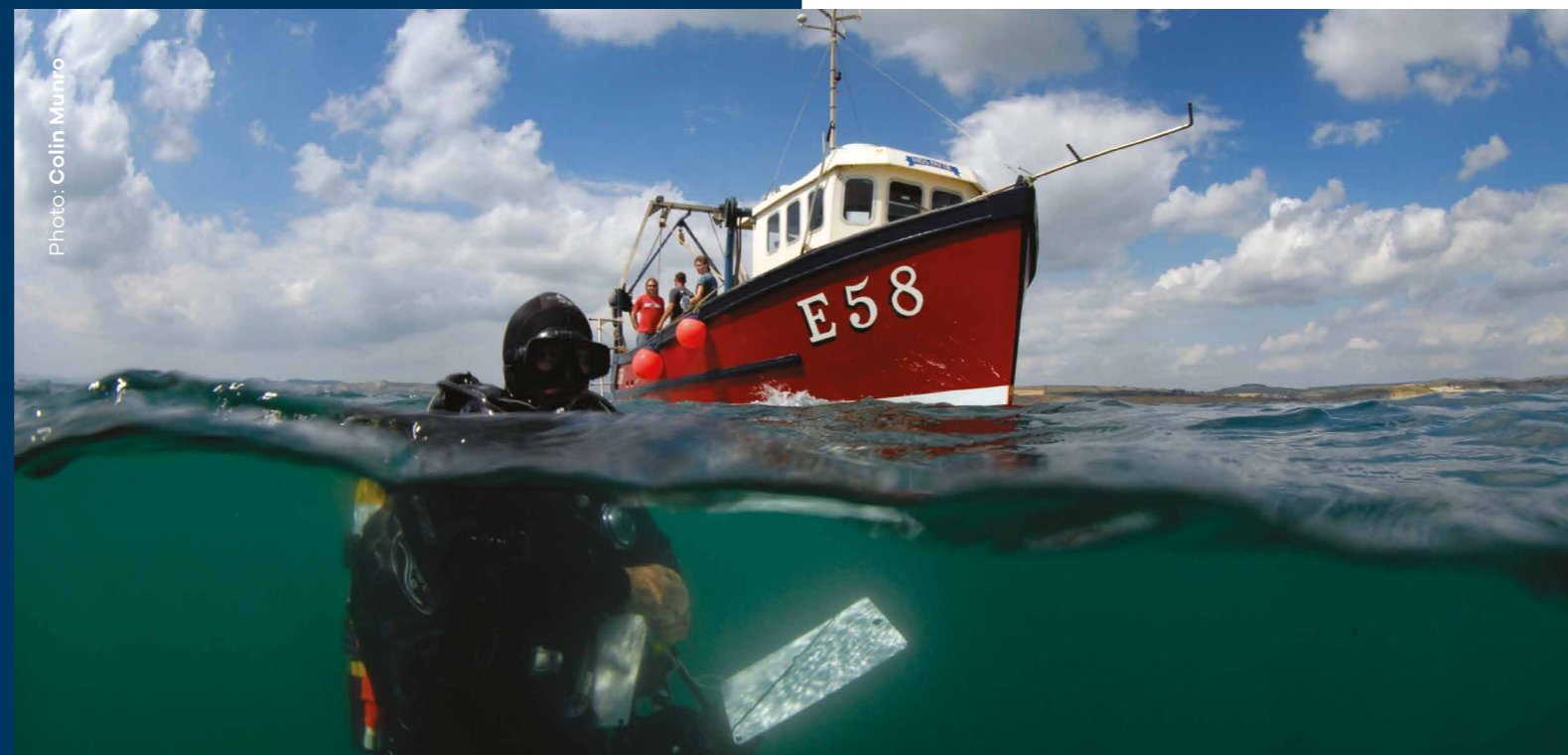


Photo: Collin Munnio

4. ENGAGE NATIONAL AND LOCAL SEASCAPE AND MARINE EXPERTS

It's crucial to understand the national context and the complexities of the location to respect and reflect local knowledge.

Seascape and marine experts should be seen as an asset to a NMP. Drawing on local and marine backgrounds, they can help to showcase the value of the park. They are likely to know people who are passionate about the sea who can help to communicate its' value from different societal and sectoral perspectives. This includes the historic and natural environment and cultural associations with the sea. They may also be able to predict and prevent potential barriers and challenges to progress. Their networks may support stakeholder engagement, good communication and facilitate leadership. Local buy-in is the key to success.

Practical guidance

- Involve local and marine experts from the beginning and work together to build an awareness of the local context, existing designations, and relationships.
- Consult experts in the development of information and materials to check for accuracy and to pressure-test communications.
- Engage national to local people as champions and ambassadors of the NMP.

Understand existing designations, what it means and who is doing the work. Build awareness between and among Local Authorities and talk to those who understand the complexities of the area early-on.

Expertise needs to be there from the beginning amongst the group setting up the NMP. There needs to be local understanding and involvement of people who can talk across different sectors.

5. ENLIST POLITICAL SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE BROAD ENGAGEMENT

It's important to have political will to make it happen - try and get cross-party support from the get-go.

Political will can be crucial to pushing things forward and galvanising different interests towards a common NMP vision, particularly when trying to engage businesses and community groups early on. However, a careful balance needs to be struck between gaining political support, and the NMP being politicised. Using the NMP as intellectual property for individual gains is not conducive to the inclusive and collaborative approach that is required to make a NMP a success.

Encourage broad engagement by working with existing known networks. Where there is a local coastal/estuary partnership, offer regular news/updates and presentation opportunities. Respect the depth of knowledge of local officers/co-ordinators and listen to their advice about how to engage different audiences. The NMP vision should seek to strengthen (not compete) with existing networks.

NMP status offers the opportunity to increase awareness of the marine environment where there are already clusters of designated sites.

Practical guidance

- **Identify the levers and opportunities for collaboration with politicians and others who have a personal interest.**
- **Gain political support but be mindful and mitigate against the risk of the NMP being politicised.**
- **Collaborate with and through local networks and initiatives, especially existing Coastal/ Estuary Partnerships.**

Enlist political support through the local Council and MP.

6. NURTURE GOOD CONTINUOUS COMMUNICATION FROM THE START

Be transparent with what you are trying to achieve and use clear language.

Good, regular communication and clear language should be adopted to avoid misunderstandings. Careful attention to terminology is needed to engage and inspire diverse audiences. Working hard upfront to develop a shared language and understanding will help to reach a consensus quicker and bring people along on the journey.

The marine, seascape and coastal environment is a complex landscape occupied by a variety of stakeholders, and the development of a NMP needs to be cognisant of their different needs and perspectives. Engaging with stakeholders early to communicate the benefits of a NMP and understand their concerns will set the foundations for collaborative working. Having a continued dialogue to clearly understand each other's agendas and boundaries will also reduce the likelihood of tensions arising further down the line. Inclusive stakeholder engagement also comes with additional benefits; it encourages others to carry the NMP forward as their own and opens up funding opportunities to support its evolution.

Practical guidance

- **Engage with neighbouring authorities who border the NMP area.**
- **Build on the relationships and networks that already exist locally, whether through a coastal forum or other organisation.**
- **Create a map of different stakeholders, who they are and when to engage them. Consider which category they fall into (operational, strategic, or ambassadorial) and engage them appropriately.**
- **Think strategically about what information to share and when. Have a clear engagement plan which sets out how relationships will be maintained throughout NMP evolution and management.**
- **Find local people who have experience of creating space for open and honest dialogue.**
- **Carefully design social media content to develop a following and increase interest and engagement in NMP events and activities.**
- **Have a point of contact who can handle questions and requests from stakeholders to ensure that everyone is consulted throughout and feels their voices have been heard.**

St Abbs head. Photo: Paul Richards



7. FACILITATE COLLABORATION AND LONG TERM PARTNERSHIPS

Work together to innovate.

Whether it's politicians, industry, community voices, Local Authorities, NGOs, or others, everyone has a valuable role to play in creating and managing a NMP. Involving enthusiastic people and identifying levers and opportunities for opportunities to work in partnership will amplify the possibility of success. Collaboration between stakeholders and local users will also improve the chance of creating a NMP that positively impacts people and the marine environment.

The new status will offer new branding opportunities to promote the area. In turn, this can attract finance and investment in place-based branding which enhances social identity and respect for the environment.

Practical guidance

- Include the voices of the community in early discussions to understand what it is they want and the benefits a NMP could deliver for them.
- Identify levers and opportunities for collaboration with politicians and others who have an interest.
- Work with Local Authorities and regional/national organisations to help with strategic planning.

Local Authorities have a very important supporting role. Build a strong relationship through partnership and common purpose.



NMPs are a great opportunity to work in partnership to innovate, and encourage our marine industries to become sustainable.

8. STRIVE FOR INCLUSIVE AND REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNANCE

Governance should build on existing structures and increase local accountability.

To strategically guide evolution of a NMP there is a need for basic but well-established governance structures. Most important is to have a clear system and process that is focused on the goal and encourages ongoing dialogue between different sectors and interest groups. There should be clear lines of authority while allowing room for decision-making at the delegated level. These structures are important to establish upfront and it will be crucial to make sure the NMP's activities remain aligned with its purpose and objectives. NMP governance could be build on an existing structure such as a National Park, National Landscape, Coastal, Estuary or Marine Partnership.

Practical guidance

- Assemble a NMP board to represent stakeholders as an important first step to ensure robust and inclusive decision-making.
- Map out clear processes and mechanisms for change which can be used to hold decision-makers accountable to the common vision and rationale for any deviation from it.
- Structures which are separate but relevant to the NMP, should have clear lines of communication into the NMP board, ideally with an overlap of people sitting across them so that decision-making is undivided.

There is a need for clarity of governance arrangements, strategic priorities, and activities that drive it.



Photo credit: Rowan Aitchison

9. SOURCE SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

Funding and resource planning needs to happen.

Another crucial piece of the puzzle is funding. The National Lottery Fund's Heritage Horizon Award was an enabler for the Plymouth Sound NMP and initiatives such as the Seascapes project in North East England. Local Authorities can go some way to provide a vehicle for funding, but dedicated resource and capacity is needed to keep up momentum. Plymouth Sound NMP is establishing a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) to help provide a platform for increasing revenue opportunities.

“Local Authorities are important for funding and capacity to make it work, it's important to recognise the very important role they have to play and keep them onside throughout. Build a strong relationship through partnership and common purpose”

Tudor Evans (Leader of Plymouth City Council)

Practical guidance

- Explore potential funding models early on to sustainably support dedicated resource and activities.
- Wherever possible, provide long-term contracts to staff members to provide job stability and encourage commitment.
- The marine environment is having its moment! Seize this moment to draw funding in from the private sector.

In the middle of a climate crisis, this is a perfect response to growing public interest in our oceans.



Photo: George Karbus

10. GENERATE STEWARDSHIP

It took decades to define National Parks and designate National Landscapes. The journey to establish NMPs requires patience and persistence, but it is on this journey that people will find the vision and generate a sense of stewardship.

National Parks took decades to evolve across Britain. Coastal and marine designations have emerged since the 1980s but marine protected areas are still being designated. This next phase of recognising the value of something new will take time – it has to find its' place and the enablers to make it happen, locally and nationally.

“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, Interim CEO, Plymouth Sound National Marine Park

A NATIONAL FRAMEWORK: THE JOURNEY SO FAR

Blue Marine has engaged in conversations with people and organisations working at the national level with interests in the countryside, communities, heritage and the marine environment. In 2022 a National Marine Parks Strategic Working Group was established to collaborate for one year and create a proposed national framework for NMPs.

The NMP Strategic Working Group discussions and a national workshop with location facilitators (November 2022), provided broad cross-sector and regional input to shape the framework. The purpose and objectives that already apply to National Parks on land in England, Wales and Scotland, also provided a starting point for application to the coastal and marine environment.

The national framework aims to promote common understanding of the vision for National Marine Parks across Britain and proposes a definition, purpose and objectives that encourage a new and shared, sustainable relationship for people with the seascape and guide future NMP evolution. Five guiding principles cover: sustainability; connectivity; fundability; lifelong learning; and equity and inclusion.

The aims of an individual NMP may differ depending on the particular coastal and marine features, designations, uses and socio-economics of the local area. As a guide for communities seeking to establish a NMP, a set of principles and example aims are included in the 'NMP National Framework and Guiding Principles' available on Blue Marine's [website](#). The aims can be selected and adapted as appropriate for a specific location.

NATIONAL MARINE PARKS STRATEGIC WORKING GROUP 2022-2023

PARTICIPANTS

Adur and Worthing Council
Blue Marine Foundation
Campaign for National Parks
Historic England
Isles of Scilly Partnership
Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group

Luke Pollard MP
Natural England
National Association of AONBs
Plymouth University
Plymouth National Marine Park
Scottish Campaign for National Parks
Wales Coasts and Seas Partnership
Wildlife and Countryside Link

Blue Marine initiated the following framework, in consultation with a strategic working group and location facilitators to offer a definition, purpose and objectives for NMPs.

DEFINITION

A National Marine Park is an expansive seascape of national importance, where the priority is to promote public awareness and understanding of coastal and marine heritage and seascape recovery; enable recreational enjoyment; and realise environmental and socio-economic benefits for coastal communities.

PURPOSE

Connect people with their seascape to share in a sustainable future.

OBJECTIVES

NMPs should have objectives that encourage a new, sustainable relationship for people with the sea:

- Facilitate sustainability through collaborative working.
- Promote public understanding and responsible enjoyment.
- Conserve, enhance and recover coastal and marine seascapes.
- Nurture the socio-economic health of coastal communities who depend upon their seascape.
- Build seascape and climate change resilience by leading nature recovery and a just transition to net zero.

NMPs should have a purpose and objectives that encourage a new and shared, sustainable relationship for people with the seascape.



ROUTES TO REALISATION: THE NMP 'SPECTRUM'

Initial research for the NMP vision (2021) revealed that people had different perspectives and ideas of what a NMP could be. These were represented as two ends of a 'spectrum' as shown in the diagram below. All interpretations of a 'marine park' or a 'national park at sea' can be united around the common aim of promoting seascape access, conservation and restoration. A **Marine Park** could evolve entirely through branding, increasing public understanding and stewardship through local 'bottom-up' initiative. A **National Park at sea** could build on the existing governance mechanisms and experience of National Parks, particularly where they already include the coast. There may be different routes to achieve NMPs, but the national framework offers a collective vision of their purpose and objectives with guiding principles.

The vision promoted by Blue Marine was for NMPs to embrace evolution through different routes. We have seen a Marine Park initiative evolve for Sussex Bay without reference to national status. Plymouth evolved voluntarily and adopted national status. Existing National Parks could utilise existing legislation and seek extension into the sea such as the Pembrokeshire Coast, Lake District, North York Moors and Exmoor. This approach might also evolve for other national landscapes such as existing Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Heritage Coasts which are already focused around the coast or contain significant coastline such as Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. For the purpose of pursuing a collective conversation about the vision, plus the declaration of Plymouth Sound as a National Marine Park, it was considered valuable to promote one vision which could evolve through different routes. The national framework continues to promote one definition and purpose with a set of objectives and principles.



LEGAL OPPORTUNITY AND A NEW BRAND

A legal review of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949) was conducted by Cardiff University for Blue Marine in 2023³. It concluded that the 1949 Act as it stands contains the power to designate marine areas within territorial waters as a 'National Marine Park' in England and Wales. This is by virtue of both the spirit and the letter of the Act, as follows:

Spirit of the Act

- The spirit of the Act is to promote environmental conservation and recreation regardless of environmental medium, in keeping with a tradition of outdoor recreation involving the offshore and onshore environment dating back to the eighteenth century.
- The concept of 'countryside' in Britain is not confined to rural land, but extends to coastal land and coastal waters.

Letter of the Act

- The statutory objectives of the Act are to promote 'sailing, boating, bathing and fishing and other forms of recreation', as introduced into the national parks regime by section 12 of the Countryside Act 1968.
- The territorial application of the Act is broadly defined, with 'land' defined as encompassing 'water', 'waterways' and 'sea' (section 114).
- By virtue of the fact that in England and Wales (and the UK as a whole) no one is more than 70 miles from the sea, the marine environment contains many areas that are accessible for purposes of the 1949 Act.

Blue Marine commissioned a legal review of the National Parks Act and its' interpretation

- The overlapping conservation regime of sites of special scientific interest has been extensively applied at sea, with 'offshore SSSIs' being used to comply with international and EU law relating to the conservation of migratory birds.

The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 states that designations can cover an area that includes the sea. Blue Marine commissioned a legal review of the Scottish Act and its' interpretation. The report⁴ considers the legislative framework, designating marine areas as part of a National Park area, the legislative framework for designation, the powers and functions of a National Park Authority and the interaction between any new marine National Park and other existing nature conservation designations. It concluded that the status has not been widely utilised in Scotland but the legal opportunity and political appetite exists.

A New Brand

Across England and Wales, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty 'AONBs' are in the process of being re-branded as National Landscapes. The UK Government is a signatory to the European Landscape Convention which extends to 12 nautical miles offshore. The historical precedence shown through the legislation and recent re-branding for national landscapes suggests the time is right to explore NMPs.

ADVOCACY FOR NEW NATIONAL PARKS AND SEASCAPES

There has been a growing number of advocates and public interest in new National Parks including coastal and marine parks in England, Scotland and Wales:

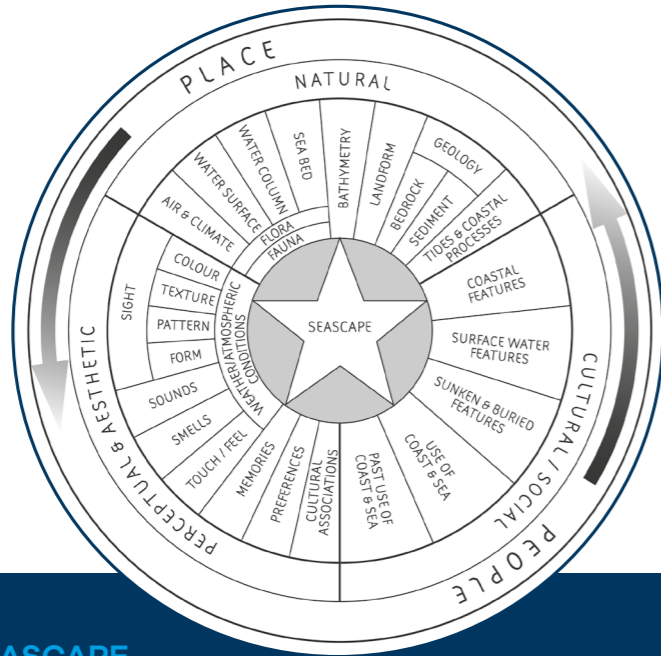
- South Downs National Park was most recently designated in 2002.
- A coastal National Park in Dorset has been the focus of a campaign driven by local people.
- The Scottish Government has committed to at least one more National Park in the current term of Parliament, based on a commitment made through the Bute House agreement when the Scottish National Party and Green Party formed a coalition government.
- The Welsh Government has recently proposed a new National Park in North East Wales, which could extend to include the Dee Estuary⁵.
- Defra's Landscapes Review by Julian Glover recommended strengthening National Parks and AONBs towards National Landscapes⁷.
- Campaign for National Parks have expressed interest in 'more' National Parks including marine.
- The People's Plan for Nature developed by WWF, RSPB and National Trust included 'National Parks for the sea'⁸.
- Natural England's coastal and marine seascape assessment⁹.
- Heritage England's ongoing interests in raising the profile of maritime cultural heritage.
- Media coverage of the National Marine Park vision included The Guardian, CBBC, Fishing News, The Week, local press and radio.

The enabling legal framework offers a clear opportunity for existing National Parks with coastline to extend seawards. It also suggests that existing designated landscapes (e.g. AONBs in England and Wales) could build on their connections to the seascape with the movement towards national landscapes⁶. This momentum suggests the time is right to advocate the value of National Marine Parks for people and the planet.



A marine park could really tell the story about our marine life – it could mimic something that people recognise from National Parks on land.

WHAT IS A SEASCAPE?



DEFINITIONS OF SEASCAPE

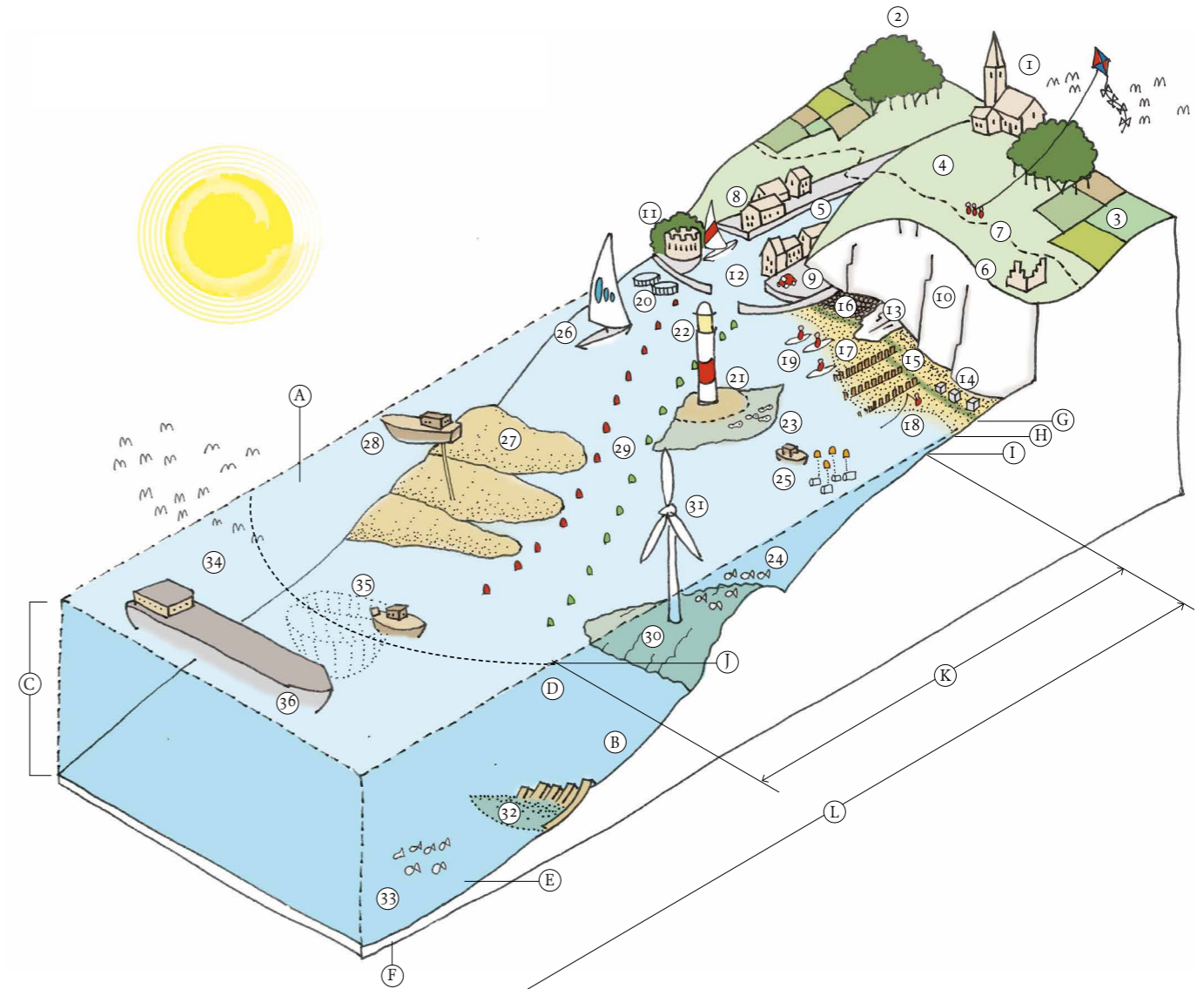
"An area , as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors." Article 1, European Landscape Convention (2000)

"Landscapes with views of the coast or seas, and coasts and the adjacent marine environment with cultural, historical and archaeological links with each other." UK Marine Policy Statement (2011)

"Seascape, like landscape is about the relationship between people and place and the part it plays in forming the setting to our everyday lives. Seascape results from the way that the different components of our environment – both natural and cultural – interact together and are understood and experienced by people." Natural England (2012)⁶

There is no legal definition for seascape in the UK and so different ones may be found. Article 1 of the European Landscape Convention (ELC) defines landscape and/or seascape as: "An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors". Alternatively, and as used in the context of this document, the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011) describes seascape as "landscapes with views of the coast or seas, and coasts and the adjacent marine environment with

cultural, historical and archaeological links with each other". These interactions have been described and graphically represented by Natural England (See figures above and in *An Approach to Seascape Character Assessment*, Natural England, 2012). The UK Marine Policy Statement also notes that: "The effects of activities and developments in the marine and coastal area on the landscape, including seascape, will vary on a case-by-case basis according to the type of activity, its location and its setting."



LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND ACTIVITIES

- 1 Hilltop village
- 2 Ancient woodland
- 3 Arable farmland
- 4 Grazed pasture
- 5 River
- 6 Collapsing cliff & partially ruined farmhouse
- 7 Coastal path
- 8 Fishing village
- 9 Tourist car park

SEASCAPE FEATURES AND ACTIVITIES

- 10 Rocky cliffs
- 11 medieval castle
- 12 Estuary/harbour
- 13 Rock ledge
- 14 Coastal defence
- 15 Groynes
- 16 Pebble beach
- 17 Sandy beach
- 18 Fishing
- 19 Surfing
- 20 Aquaculture
- 21 Rocky outcrop
- 22 Lighthouse
- 23 Seals basking
- 24 Shoal of fish
- 25 Lobster potting
- 26 Pleasure boating
- 27 Sandbanks
- 28 Dredging
- 29 Navigation buoys
- 30 Submerged rock outcrop
- 31 Wind farm
- 32 Partially submerged wreck
- 33 Site of fully submerged wreck
- 34 Site of naval battle
- 35 Commercial fishing
- 36 Container ship

TECHNICAL TERMS

- A Sea surface
- B Seabed
- C Water column
- D Pelagic habitat
- E Benthic habitat
- F Continental shelf
- G High Water Mark
- H Foreshore/intertidal zone
- I Low water mark (Baseline)
- J 12 nautical miles (from Baseline)
- K Extent of UK Territorial Sea (Baseline to 12nm)
- L British Fishery limits, Renewable Energy Zone/UK Pollution Zone and Exclusive Economic Zone (up-to 200nm from Baseline)

CONCLUSION

The journey towards realising the vision for National Marine Parks has begun, with several milestones achieved along the way:

- A Strategic Working Group has proposed a national framework and guiding principles for wider discussion.
- Blue Marine's support and engagement with people involved in the pioneering Plymouth Sound National Marine Park has provided insights for the evolution of future NMPs.
- Scoping activities at over ten locations have demonstrated the appetite for developing NMPs across Britain.
- A 10-step guide has been created to support establishment of NMPs led by regional stakeholders and communities.

The guiding principles emphasise the need for collaboration, inclusivity and development of long-term partnerships that can be owned and embraced by all. To support this, good

communication, a sustainable funding model and open governance are crucial to provide capacity and fund initiatives which demonstrate the purpose. Political support can help to drive interest and the impetus to make it happen, but wide ownership of the vision is vitally important.

The steps laid out in this report are relevant for any location, but it will be up to the individuals and communities to create a NMP that responds to local identity and national context. The existing legislation has been shown to be fit for purpose. Existing designated areas are being re-branded as National Landscapes, many of which already include areas of coast and could be extended to include the seascape. The Scottish Government is inviting communities to propose new National Parks which could include coast and marine areas. The foundations for extending existing or creating new National Parks to include the sea exists, through the spirit and the letter of the law or through voluntary declaration by coastal communities.

There is a sea of opportunity for the National Marine Park vision to evolve and create new connections between communities and their local seascape.

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**BLUE MARINE
FOUNDATION**

3rd Floor South Building,
Somerset House, Strand, London,
WC2R 1LA

+44 0207 845 5850

info@bluemarinefoundation.com

www.bluemarinefoundation.com

