

Guidance: Marine pioneer

Aspects of the coastal and marine environment are in decline ([Charting Progress II](#)) and we are causing irreversible damage to biodiversity and a loss of natural capital. This is despite previous efforts to prevent degradation and maintain and restore species and habitats. Current policies direct public and private organisations to manage the marine area as one whole system for example by using an ecosystem approach and sustainable development.

Different initiatives are working on implementing these approaches e.g. marine planning, plan led licensing, sustainable fisheries and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, but the marine environment is a complex interconnected system which we are still trying to fully understand. We are reliant on it for our health and prosperity. We must progress to not only preventing degradation but improving environmental health for current and future generations through collective societal, economic and environmental decisions.

To tackle this and other similar issues the government has outlined a 25 year environment plan. The vision of the plan is that the environment will be in a better state for the next generation than it was for this generation. The plan has a longer term approach and a more holistic view. It aims to make sustainable use and restoration of the environment central to all society's decisions.

The pioneer has been set up to inform delivery of the 25 year environment plan. In particular to test the application of a natural capital approach, how to integrate planning and delivery further, how to apply better funding mechanisms and to share lessons.

Aims and objectives

The marine pioneer will explore how to:

- apply a natural capital approach in the marine environment
- identify local environmental priorities in Suffolk and North Devon's coast and sea
- improve inter and intra government and non-government working together
- increase care for, and understanding of, the marine environment
- gather information about all of the marine system (social, economic, ecological)
- increase the use of social and economic science and practice in delivering marine management
- develop a plan and mechanism for prioritising investment to restore natural capital
- develop and implement innovative finance opportunities
- share lessons learned and best practice more widely
- contribute to implementing and updating the 25 year environment plan

Actions

This will be done by local partnerships of agencies and stakeholders. They will carry out a range of demonstration projects. The projects will explore new operating models for government and non-government organisations highlighting benefits and beneficiaries as well as demonstrating how natural capital approaches can be applied to the marine environment.

These partnerships will benefit from liaison and co-working with existing coastal and terrestrial groups such as Local Enterprise Partnerships, Coastal Partnerships, special coastal interest groups, designated sites partnerships, non-government organisations, industry groups, academics and government policy and implementation teams.

New evidence particularly on value (qualitative and quantitative) will be gathered to support testing of the tools and methods. We will seek advice and innovation from disciplines such as social science, finance and investments, systems thinking, communications and engagement.

This work will contribute to recommendations for maintaining and restoring natural capital. Innovative finance models can then be applied. The lessons learned will be shared widely and hopefully can be replicated in other areas as well as being incorporated into the next iteration of the 25 year environment plan.

A project of this ambition requires resources which are currently limited. In addition we need leadership, excellent communication and engagement, and an ability to change institutions and society. All of this will be challenging. Initial steering groups have been set up but further input and resources will be required.

Governance

MMO are leading the marine pioneer programme and will report progress to Defra and other government departments. Critical other parts of Government will be MHCLG with their important role in planning, BEIS to ensure a link to business and economic growth, DoE to ensure we are communicating with the next generation and Treasury to understand public investment opportunities. To ensure alignment with marine policy the programme lead is liaising with Defra marine policy and evidence colleagues, the Marine Outcome System Committee and the Transformation programme Board. In addition a national steering group consisting of representatives from Defra and its agencies are providing further insight to marine policy including on the 25 year environment plan, current delivery mechanisms and future developments.

The Suffolk and North Devon projects consist of a project officer in each location hosted by a local designated area team based in the local authority. In North Devon this is the [North Devon Biosphere Reserve](#) and in [Suffolk the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty \(AONB\)](#). The project officers are supported by local steering groups.

The local pioneer steering groups consist of government agency, non-governmental organisations, academics and local authority representatives. There are others who we believe could offer great value to the work and we are very keen to engage more widely following the launch of the 25 year environment plan (25YEP). To deliver the 25YEP's vision engagement with the many beneficiaries and people who can contribute to restoring and protecting natural capital will be important. This includes but is not limited to the next generation via the education sector, the health sector. To gain a critical mass for change it is important to increase stewardship by increasing understanding.

Next steps

- engage with 25 year environment plan policy and evidence leads
- prepare a paper linking the pioneer objectives to the demonstration projects, setting out how we will answer the asks of the pioneer and what the outputs will be
- agree and implement a monitoring and evaluation programme
- deliver agreed demonstration projects and develop further ones (current possibilities with Historic England, Environment Agency, National Trust)
- communicate and engage about the marine pioneer to increase awareness, input and dialogue
- engage with other government departments, local authorities, government agencies and partnerships to ensure policy join up and integrated planning and delivery
- explore options for sustainable funding via an inter-pioneer funding group, discussion with financial experts and strategic agreement of what should be funded
- seek resources for officers and project work
- collate and develop the evidence base for applying the natural capital approach

For any enquiries please contact aisling.lannin@marinemanagement.org.uk