

KEY FINDINGS

There are eight National Parks in England and Wales with coastline. Over the past seventy years since their designation, society has learnt a lot more about the value of the sea for human well-being. The potential to extend our existing National Parks seawards deserves exploration.

National Park status for the sea would differ from existing coastal and marine designations. Put simply, they have evolved without the engagement of the public. We need to engage coastal communities and promote ocean literacy. National Parks and National Landscapes involve people in their purposes. There are 14 different types of coastal/marine designations which are complex and not well understood by the public. An 'umbrella' framework which promotes governance at a larger, landscape-scale with which people identify is needed. The simpler messaging of 'National Parks' could be beneficial to future stewardship of our coasts and sea.

In 2023, Blue Marine Foundation published a vision for National Marine Parks with a set of principles and guidelines. Since 2024, Campaign for National Parks has been exploring the idea further: the extent to which existing National Park Authorities currently engage with coastal communities and the potential for greater inclusion of the sea in their work. In 2025, eight National Park Authority representatives were interviewed and came together through an online roundtable to share their views and explore the appetite towards a new endeavour, for National Parks to include the sea.

National Parks (NPs) coastline boundaries vary between high and low water mark, with some including nearshore islands. There is no clear rationale for the variation in their boundaries – but none include the sea. The level of engagement with coastal communities varies and is somewhat dependent on the boundary and therefore the planning function. However, most National Park Authorities (NPAs) undertake a range

of coastal project work and are particularly conscious of improving coastal access and river quality. The sea is partially recognized in National Park management plans, in different ways and to different extents. There are established relationships with organizations who have coastal/marine responsibilities, but engagement with the Marine Management Organisation (who are responsible for marine governance in England) is limited to occasional engagement in marine planning and consultations over licensing for development. NPAs are interested in doing more marine work with coastal communities but are less sure about engaging in offshore management. They considered it would be legitimate and logical to expand the existing National Park into the seascape if additional resources and marine expertise were available.

NPAs could build on their experiences of coastal community engagement with more purpose, openingup opportunities for stronger relationships with marine users including fisheries, harbour authorities and recreational watersports users. Their role in marine governance could lead to more democratic accountability in marine planning. The offshore extent of any NP extension into the sea has not yet been considered, but potential benefits were identified. NPAs could support a perceived gap in landscape-seascape connectivity, with the potential to protect species migration and safeguard use and access for the future. There was a clear message that NPAs would not want to take on any extension to their role in coastal/marine areas without additional capacity to meet expectations. Several NPs had previously experienced interest from their communities to extend seawards. Clarity and common understanding amongst other organization's would be needed to secure buy-in before proceeding. Potential risks and barriers were identified, for which a range of work with government, other organization's and communities would need to be resourced to explore the benefits at all levels. Overall, there was a positive level of interest in exploring the idea further.



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Glossary of Terms

AONB CEFAS	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (now National Landscape)
CEFAS	Centre for Environment, Food and Aquaculture Science
	Campaign for National Parks
DEFRA	Department of Environment, Fisheries and Rural Affairs
IFCA	Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
MMO	Marine Management Organisation
NE	Natural England
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NL	National Landscape
NMP	National Marine Park
NP	National Park
NPA	National Park Authority
NRW	Natural Resources Wales
NSIP	Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest

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1 BACKGROUND

1.1 Purpose of this report

Campaign for National Parks (CNP) were commissioned by the Esmee Fairburn Foundation to explore how the National Parks model could apply to the sea. Building on the work of Blue Marine Foundation's vision for National Marine Parks, this report shares the findings of initial work by CNP. The aim was to understand the challenges and opportunities for extending the existing National Parks model to include seascape. The research involved interviews with the eight National Parks in England and Wales with coastline, followed by a roundtable (online) presentation of the findings and discussion, between January-March 2025. This report presents the key findings and recommendations in relation to the potential future role of National Parks in marine governance, legislation, protection and the promotion of greater connectivity between coastal communities and the sea. It supports understanding of the added value, risks and benefits over existing coastal and marine designations. It provides a baseline upon which to consider further opportunities and key activities for a multi-year programme of work towards implementation.

1.2 Rationale: the evolution of National Parks and the coastline

National Parks were designed over 70 years ago, when our understanding of the sea and its importance was far less recognised than it is today. Our ocean and coasts are now subject to much higher use, development pressures and pollution, whilst highly valued for their natural environment, socio-economic importance and blue health benefits. Coastal areas were identified for potential designation, but only one became a National Park explicitly recognised for its coast and connection to the sea – Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. Seven other National Parks (NPs) include some stretches of coastline within their designated area. Many other areas became Heritage Coasts or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, now National Landscapes.

The purposes for which National Parks are recognised today are increasingly relevant to the coast and sea because:

- the 'health-giving happiness' gained from landscapes (which motivated NP formation) also relates increasingly to seascapes, with coastal access providing important space for recreational activities and watersports, supporting blue health;
- the place-based governance and planning function of National Park Authorities would support engagement in decision-making over future development: balancing pressures and opportunities for the benefit of coastal communities: shipping, marine aggregates, and offshore renewables in particular;

The socio-cultural value of coastal communities and their connection to the marine environment are not well recognised in existing governance of the land-sea interface. The range of coastal/marine designations (14 different types) have been primarily based on habitats & species protection, not beauty, 'seascape' or connectivity. Society and nature could benefit from a larger 'landscape-scale' or 'umbrella' status with branding which people can relate to more easily. Eight of the fifteen National Parks in England and Wales include coastline, therefore there is potential to build on their existing governance. The simpler messaging of 'National Parks' promoting governance at a larger, landscape scale, could be beneficial to future stewardship of our coasts and sea.

1.3 National Marine Parks

From 2018-2024, Blue Marine Foundation explored a vision for National Marine Parks across Britain. In collaboration with Plymouth City Council, they facilitated the 'self-declaration' of Plymouth Sound National Marine Park in 2019, which has gained national interest. Scoping work was undertaken across Britain to explore the appetite for the idea elsewhere, including a vision for Scotland. In 2023, Guidance for NMP evolution was published, with ten steps to facilitate the formation of a National Marine Park.

As a result of this work and through convening a national strategic working group, a definition of National Marine Parks (NMPs) was proposed, alongside guiding principles to reflect the status.

DEFINITION OF NATIONAL MARINE PARKS

An expansive seascape of national importance, where the priority is to promote public awareness and understanding of coastal and maritime 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).

1.4 Campaign for National Parks objectives

Research with National Park Authorities was part of Campaign for National Parks' (CNP) work plan for the Esmee Fairburn Foundation from 2024. The objectives included three key outcome areas:

- Key Outcome 1: Secure political support to take forward National Marine Parks as part of Government Designation Programmes across the UK
- Key Outcome 2: Through knowledge exchange and meaningful engagement, we have increased awareness, appetite and interest in National Marine Parks across the UK
- Key Outcome 3: A deeper understanding of the role that National Marine Parks can play for coastal and in-land communities and environmental recovery, and a plan to implementation.

Part of outcome 2 is a deliverable to 'Establish a NMP Alliance and a Futures Sub-Group to explore National Parks on land, coast and sea'. The target audience for this report and its' recommendations are the National Park Authorities, together with the NMP Alliance and Futures Sub-Group.



2 NATIONAL PARKS AUTHORITIES RESPONSE

From 2024, at the culmination of Blue Marine Foundation's NMP vision work, CNP became interested in exploring the idea from our own perspective. The views of the eight NPs with coastline were asked about the potential for greater inclusion of the sea - in relation to existing and evolving purposes, special qualities, current and future work.

2.1 Method

CNP commissioned Natasha Bradshaw, an independent researcher who had worked for Blue Marine on the NMP vision, to undertake further investigations with existing National Parks. At the end of 2024 Natasha approached the Chief Executive Officers of the eight National Parks, with a short briefing note about the research (Annex 1), and asked for a one-hour interview. All eight of the National Park Authorities (NPAs) with coastline provided senior level staff for interview: Broads; Eyri/ Snowdonia; Exmoor; Lake District; New Forest; North York Moors; Pembrokeshire Coast; and South Downs including a representative of the National Parks England.

An open, informal and inductive approach was taken to the conduct of the interviews, based on a long list of questions provided in Annex 2 (which were not all used). Participants had a right to withdraw from the interview at any time with their anonymity assured. Notes were taken and summarised for qualitative analysis to identify common themes. Any specific, attributable information taken from the interviews for reporting purposes was checked with interviewees before use in any publication. This report provided a verification step with the interviewees prior to wider publication of any content.

Following eight interviews, an online roundtable was held on 10th March 2025 to share the findings presented in this report and discuss the implications (Annex 3). Results of the roundtable discussion have been considered in the formation of the recommendations and the next steps contained in this report.

2.2 Findings

Firstly, NPAs were asked about their awareness of the pre-existing National Marine Parks' vision. Half of the eight NPAs with coastline (n=4) had not heard about it until this approach for interview from CNP. Several (n=3) had heard about Blue Marine Foundation's NMP vision work and/or Plymouth Sound NMP and/or the idea of City National Parks. One NPA had been involved in previous scoping work with Blue Marine. A few NPAs (n=3) were aware of local discussions in the past to consider their coastal extent and/or a possible extension into the sea: Exmoor (20 yrs ago); Pembrokeshire (10-12 yrs ago); South Downs (around the time of designation in 2010).

The findings from the interviews and online roundtable, are presented in the approximate running order of how the interviews were conducted:

- A Existing connections with the sea
- B Purpose of including the sea
- C Further exploration

A numbering system is used to cross-reference to specific National Parks, for which the key remains with CNP for anonymity purposes (Annex 4). Quotes from interviewees which highlight key points are provided, identified by person/NPA where permission was provided to publish.

PART A EXISTING CONNECTIONS WITH THE SEA

The first part of the interview assessed NPAs existing connections with the sea. An initial consideration of where the current boundary is at the coastline, and which urban areas/communities are within/outside the boundary, led to a discussion about existing levels of engagement with coastal communities and their identification with seascape. Experience of marine management, planning, licensing and protection was explored, followed by the NPAs level of interest in engaging more with the sea, how legitimate it would feel to do more, and the implications for governance.

Al Designated boundary

Two interviewees (3, 5) considered that their NP remit extends to high water mark; three to low water mark (2, 6, 8) and three were unsure (1, 4, 7). It was apparent that the digitisation of maps in recent years had highlighted that in some cases, it wasn't clear from original maps. For a definitive answer to this question, additional desk-based research is needed. The boundary is strictly applied in relation to the NPAs planning functions, but in most cases, it appears to be loosely applied for community engagement work around the coast.

"The NP boundary is the low water mark but we are interested in and will comment upon development in the setting of the National Park, which includes the Bristol Channel" Exmoor National Park Authority.

"We are not certain about where exactly the boundary of the National Park designated area is, although pretty certain it doesn't take into account the marine environment beyond the shoreline"

North York Moors National Park Authority.

"The fact that we don't know, shows that our engagement is limited"
Eryri National Park Authority.

"Maybe it's time to define where we want it to be: our boundary wouldn't be drawn now as it was then"

Anon.

A2 Existing engagement with coastal communities and the sea

Current engagement with the coast and sea was considered to take place regularly (2, 3, 5, 8); sometimes (1, 7) or occasionally (4, 6). Engagement with coastal communities is typically around planning (3), tourism & destination promotion (3), cultural heritage (4) coastal erosion (2), SSSI management (2), catchment/river management (most), coast path/access (2, 6) and marine habitat awareness (3, 5 not 4). Many NPA interviewees described their engagement activities with coastal communities as positive experiences around which they could do more. Where coastal communities lie inside the National Park there is an active focus on NP purposes, but for those communities lying outside the boundary the NPAs effort and ability to support them, or their relationship with the sea, varies.

'My view is that we really should have a stronger relationship with coastal communities' Eryri National Park Authority.

"They are our communities [but] some could be more engaged with the sea than the NP: people are generally more focused on land than sea unless they work with it"

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority.

'We actively work with coastal towns and their residents as part of meeting our NP purposes. They are amongst the main users/ visitors/ beneficiaries"

South Downs National Park Authority.

A3 Seascape

When asked if the existing Management Plan referred to the sea/seascape or there was a seascape assessment, half said yes (1, 2, 6, 8), whilst two said they were unsure (3, 7), and two said no (4, 5). More specifically, the sea is considered within the special qualities (3); not a specific chapter/ possibly a policy/ we should refer to it (4); or it refers to Heritage Coast (5). There was a sense of cautious support for a marine NP due to its' potential role in promoting seascape-landscape connectivity - but it was queried how and whether this would be a NP designation or whether it would just be a 'label' (5). Most recognize the importance of high-water quality for the sea and although the management plan doesn't have specific actions for the sea, it recognised it for improving water quality (6).

"Coastal communities do feel left out" Lake District National Park Authority.

"Logically we need to look at the whole coast as one unit [and] focus on adaptation" Broads Authority.

"Communities within the NP could be more engaged with the coastline"

New Forest National Park Authority.

A4 Marine experience & relationships

Existing marine work included enabling coastal access, promoting recreation & watersports, oyster/ seaweed farming, fisheries engagement, nature restoration work, coastal change, coastal strategies/ plans, cultural heritage, archaeology, WW2 history, licensing for offshore wind, seawalls and mining. NPAs are a statutory consultee on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects and typically consulted over coastal/marine infrastructure projects where they are considered to potentially affect the National Park. The terrestrial system is the main focus, so there is little capacity to actively seek engagement in marine issues and the NPAs have little power over marine recreation (e.g. jet skis, coasteering).

Established relationships exist with coastal local authorities (for planning), the Marine Management Organisation (for marine licensing and planning), Natural England (over site management), the Environment Agency (Catchment Based Approach), Natural Resources Wales (site management, access), Heritage England (cultural heritage protection/promotion), Forestry England, National Trust (big landowners), Heritage Coasts, Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities, CEFAS and DEFRA. Relationships with coastal/estuary/marine partnerships were evident in 6 out of 8 NPAs. There was a mixed degree of working with marine NGOs.

"We have legal responsibility as a Relevant Authority and are a statutory consultee to the MMO"

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority.

"Our special quality (coast/seascape) has played a role in determining one or two planning applications (e.g. wind farms)"

New Forest National Park Authority.

"There is potential to bring more partners and communities together (e.g. heritage)"
Eryri National Park Authority.

"It has been a challenge getting the Marine Management Organisation here, but we have had some engagement on marine plans. National Park Authorities are treated the same as any Local Planning Authority"

New Forest National Park Authority.

A5 Legitimacy & governance requirements

When NPA interviewees were asked if they were interested in doing more marine work, three said yes (1, 4, 8), four 'somewhat' (2, 5, 6, 7), one was unsure (3) but none said 'no'. All expressed strongly that it would be entirely dependent upon the additional resources available. It was well recognized that more connectivity between inland users and coastal recreation would be beneficial.

"A voluntary extension to the NPA would undermine the status of the current NP. It would require clear purpose/legislation especially around planning"

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority.

"Yes [we] should get more involved in geological awareness, mythology, submerged forests at low tide and connecting people"

Eryri National Park Authority.

"If we had the resources we would be more interested.

Offshore - we don't have the capacity to take on new areas of work"

Broads Authority.

"Could we be a more equal partner? We would welcome our landscape scale and 'ICZM' approach linking land and sea (e.g. nutrients, climate impacts). There is not much connection between inland users & coastal recreation - more connectivity could be beneficial"

New Forest National Park.

On the subject of how legitimate it would feel for the NPA to do more with coastal communities and/or offshore, four said yes (1, 2, 7, 8) and four were unsure (3, 4, 5, 6) - none said 'no'. It was reemphasized that this would be dependent upon resourcing and upskilling (e.g. sea rangers). It was suggested that their engagement with the sea was implicit and not prioritised – so it could be made more explicit and would then become more of a priority. It was also suggested that an update to NP purposes at the national (policy) level could be considered alongside the contribution of NPs to Local Nature Recovery & climate change adaptation (which is already being considered).

Regarding governance requirements there was recognition that more marine skills would be required for guidance on planning, boundary extension, amending the purposes to include seascape and strengthening the duty to seek to further them. Board representation would usefully include marine expertise as well.

"Completely legitimate, we should be doing more. We could almost extend boundaries to include more coastal work within our exiting governance and create more trust."

Eryri National Park Authority.

"Nervous about boundary going beyond shoreline and into the sea/seabed on the basis that it would require a whole new level of expertise that we don't have"

North York Moors National Park Authority.

"Legitimate in logical terms, but less so considering the expertise and resources needed.

Taking on a marine planning function would be a step change to have a marine lens on NP functions, plus working with additional marine sector partners"

South Downs National Park Authority.

PART B PURPOSE OF INCLUDING THE SEA

For the second part of the interviews, NPAs were asked to imagine 'What if your National Park already included the sea? From this perspective, we explored how community engagement might differ, how far offshore it would feel appropriate to influence, and the risks/benefits of including the sea within the National Park.

B1 Community engagement

Most NPs considered that community engagement was already within their scope, therefore if the NP included the sea it would lead to more coastal access work; more and wider public awareness work; more support to urban deprivation, regeneration and nature restoration. Extending the designation could make a difference over more direct involvement with marine interests, particularly harbours, water users and engagement with the fishing community. The opportunity for more democratic accountability in planning was noted.

"Marine planning would be different with more democratic accountability"

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority.

"Engage with fishing communities (like we do land management communities)"

Lake District National Park Authority

"Urban deprivation is an important issue, we'd love to do more to connect (3) and as the planning authority, we could have a regenerative role in linking people with the sea"

Eryri National Park Authority.

B2 Offshore extent

The question of 'how far offshore it would be appropriate to include' had not been given prior consideration, so most NPAs had no view but suggested a clear method/rationale would be needed. Specific ideas were offered including consideration of migratory species which could imply a role far offshore; the extent of the landscape/seascape connection and users perspectives on 'busy-ness'; and a suggestion that 'possibly not that far' would be necessary to make a difference (2, 6, 8).

"Strengthening landscape description would be quite legitimate...we would need ways of measuring tranquillity as we do on land"

New Forest National Park Authority

B3 Benefits & risks

The following benefits of including the sea were identified:

- encourage people to make more of a living from the sea;
- restoration/protection-biodiversity, cultural heritage;
- promotion, knowledge, engagement;
- marine planning democratic accountability;
- water recreation management/enforcement;
- safeguarding people's rights to use the sea & securing future access;
- creating more resilient communities, awareness of climate change and working with the coast rather than perceive it as mainly a threat;
- strengthen linkage with existing work, landscape connectivity including fish migration and habitat linkage between land and sea.

National Parks and the Sea

The following risks from including the sea were identified:

- ability to meet expectations;
- capacity, resources, finance we can't do more with less;
- compromise quality of existing work and purposes if spread thinner;
- undermine statutory role/status of NP if not a designation;
- tourism pressure already high;
- housing targets harder to reach;
- unintended consequences.

Several of the perceived risks would be managed if NPAs were adequately resourced (staff resource, marine expertise) to ensure they had the capacity to deliver, meet expectations and ensure proper implementation. There would likely be a need to consider (on a local basis) the future allocation of sites for housing development and the appropriate level of NP promotion to manage potential tourism pressure. However, both issues could be balanced by the potential benefits of supporting the socio-economic opportunities from NP status. In addition, working with the sea could help to enable coastal communities to adapt and become more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

"It depends on the way the engagement happened" New Forest National Park Authority.

"Understanding of the interplay between sea and land could help, the sea is not all bad. The way it's currently perceived is all about a threat"

Anon.

"Operational and financial risks - a whole new area of burden and reputational risk if we weren't able to meet expectations"

North York Moors National Park Authority.



PART C FURTHER EXPLORATION

The third and final part of the interview explored the appetite to investigate the idea further in terms of any local political interest, perceived enablers and blockers, resources, and interest in being involved in piloting.

C1 Political interest

None was known at the present time. Some examples were provided of previous political interest and/or local groups advocating for more inclusion of the coast and/or sea (1, 2, 3, 5, 6) which included Exmoor 20 yrs ago; Pembrokeshire 10-12 yrs ago; and South Downs around the time of designation in 2010.

C2 Enablers and blockers

To further consideration of the idea, the following enablers identified by the interviewees were:

- clarity around planning (1);
- a different mechanism to engage with coastal communities: would the proposed amendment to purposes around nature restoration and climate adaptation provide this? (6);
- working with other advocates i.e. marine NGOs (7);
- buy-in of other (statutory) organization's i.e. MMO (8).
- Perceived blockers at the current time identified by the interviewees were:
- the idea has not yet been discussed at NPA board level (5);
- the appetite of coastal communities could be self-determined (6);
- profiteering e.g. ports/harbour's (7);
- resources, skills and need for a partnership approach (8).

Some clarity and common understanding would be needed amongst other organization's to secure buy-in before proceeding.

"For a variety of our partners this would require a range of resources, finance and engagement with government agencies. Most important, would be co-creation with coastal communities as relationship forming takes years to build trust and social capital. There would be a long-term sequence of actions to move from one state to another".

Lake District National Park Authority

"Upskilling, understanding connections, showing benefits. Perhaps a 5yr period to understand connections and identify benefits. Perhaps an opt-in/opt-out approach to make the case".

New Forest National Park Authority

C3 Future Involvement

Overall, there was a positive level of interest in exploring the idea further, more locally/regionally (subject to capacity), with three interviewees saying yes (1, 6, 8), four saying 'probably' with stated conditions (2, 3, 4, 7) and one unsure/already doing enough (5). However, as the interviews were the first time most NPA representatives had considered the sea, these responses require further verification and exploration.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the interviews revealed issues which would benefit from greater insight, either through desk-based research or follow-up discussion. A range of implications and proposed actions were identified and presented to the five NPAs that attended the online roundtable. Finally, a general conclusion and the next steps are recommended on the basis of the findings.

3.1 Key issues

The following key issues arose from the interviews and would benefit from further insight:

- clarification of the rationale for different coastal boundaries/extent of National Parks at the coast;
- democratic accountability beyond mean high/low water mark;
- consenting, between Natural Resources Wales/Natural England and the NPA (e.g. inter-tidal habitat restoration);
- relationships with coastal, estuary and marine partnerships;
- contact with the Marine Management Organisation (MMO)/Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (IFCA) especially over fisheries management (limited to planning and licensing);
- inclusion of the sea in an update to NP purposes alongside contributions to Local Nature Recovery & climate change adaptation;
- · where would the Local Planning Authority role end;
- · could adding marine into NP purposes help with future funding.

3.2 Implications

From a summary of the interview findings, the following implications were drawn and offered at the online roundtable for verification.

Existing connections (A)

- It would be helpful to gain clarification of where the coastal boundary is (if defined) and the rationale behind it. A consistent approach across England is not necessary, but NP specific clarity and understanding would be useful.
- All NPAs have experience and feel they could do more with their coastal communities to engage them with the National Park (as well as the sea).
- A more thorough review of National Park plans' reference to sea/seascape/coast, and awareness of seascape assessments, would be informative to future work on National Parks and the sea.
- NPAs have coastal/marine project and planning experience, which could be built upon.
- NPAs have coastal/marine relationships which could be built upon, particularly with coastal/ estuary/marine partnerships. Stronger engagement with the MMO would be beneficial over marine planning and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).
- NPAs have coastal/marine relationships which could be built upon, particularly with coastal/ estuary/marine partnerships. Stronger engagement with the MMO would be beneficial over marine planning and NSIPs.
- Proceed to any advocacy work with a clear message that NPAs ability to extend into the sea
 is dependent upon resource and expertise. They are generally in a good position to build on
 existing, trusted relationships.

Purpose of including the sea (B)

- Explore the value of more NPA engagement in coastal and marine governance.
- The extension of NP boundaries into the sea requires much more consideration.
- Advocacy opportunities exist around the perceived benefits.
- In any future advocacy work, be clear that the role would require additional resources.
- Advocacy from the national level (by CNP) should consider engaging local politicians.

Further exploration (C)

- CNP are advised to work with other organisations to explore their level of support as part of future political and public advocacy work.
- Lack of broad awareness requires wider communication of the potential benefits.
- Build a 5-year plan towards engaging others in the vision.
- The feasibility of NP's role being extended into the sea is entirely dependent upon additional resources.
- CNP to re-visit the level of interest in exploring the idea more locally/regionally before deciding on a pilot location(s).

3.3 Roundtable discussion

Five NPAs engaged in the online roundtable. They were presented with the above findings and provided the following feedback:

National Park	Initial feedback
Exmoor	Very interested and a logical concept, but other than responding to offshore renewables applications for development and connectivity to the coast, it's hard to see how the benefit would outweigh the cost. Communities at the coast are not obviously making a direct living from fishing or commercial boats. People live in coastal towns for a variety of reasons – tourism, retirement, family connections, or simply to be near the sea. The high cliffs mean the coast is wild and beautiful but the beaches are incredibly accessible. The harbours at Porlock and Lynmouth are very small and quite challenging with the huge tidal range – fishing activity is limited - however there may be some scope to increase public awareness and engagement.
Pembrokeshire Coast	Genuinely interested but other work takes priority, and it would probably take ages to come to fruition. Pembrokeshire Coast NPA engages quite a lot over marine issues and can see the value of NP status. New pressures such as freeports, floating wind, hydrogen production suggest the need to understand the line of acceptability. The foreshore is leased from The Crown Estate but underwater areas were taken out of the lease. Pleased to see this research into the statutory route as a voluntary extension could undermine the existing NP status.
South Downs	It is fascinating to see what happened in Plymouth with the formation of a voluntary National Marine Park and finding this 'sweet spot' is key. For NPs it doesn't make sense to stop at high/low water mark from a planning, visitor management or nature recovery perspective – there is a real connection between land and sea for which we need to consider linkages in management. We need to take the 'fear' out of how we adapt to climate change/sea level rise pressures. We are intrigued about where this idea could go, unclear about our role, but it will be useful to be a part of this conversation. Criteria for designation would need to be considered i.e. linking landscape and seascape and NPA responsibilities relative to others (e.g. IFCAs). Are there opportunities through devolution and local government re-organisation (e.g. marine Local Nature Recovery). Scope may exist for a 'multi-agency' approach (as we have for suicide prevention around Beachy Head).

New Forest	Very interesting conversation. With 26 miles of coastline there are opportunities for us to encourage more people to be involved as the coast/ sea is a huge part of the landscape with many connections. We'd like to explore the benefits, mindful of other roles/networks particularly the pre-existing role of the Solent Forum. The role for the NPA is not clear but there could be situations where there would be benefit to the NPA having more of a seat at the table. Suggest considering an 'opt-in/opt-out' approach rather than a blanket approach for all eight NPs with coastline. There are distinctive linkages between the New Forest and the Isle of Wight and the whole channel (Solent) is designated for marine conservation.
Lake District	Potential benefits to coastal communities in low-lying Cumbria are worth exploring, especially for climate adaptation/coastal change and energy opportunities. Most of our focus is on farming but we could consider greater inclusion of the coast/sea in our special qualities and management plan.

During the roundtable the following questions were offered for consideration:

- How might we build capacity and secure funding to support NPA activity at the coast and sea?
- Where might there be a suitable site(s) for trialing a NMP?
- How do we get political buy-in/make a case to government?

The first step suggested at the roundtable was a review of existing National Parks' management plans to see how the special qualities are defined. Some are under review, so there may be opportunities to include more consideration of seascape/coastal communities within current governance.

3.4 Conclusion and next steps

Eight National Parks in England and Wales include coastline within their designated area. Exploring their existing engagement with coastal communities and planning function, suggests there is potential for National Park Authorities to support future seascape management. More connectivity between land and sea could lead to more joined-up governance and democratic accountability in marine planning. It could support the management of inshore waters by enabling stronger engagement between the NPA and ports/harbours, fisheries and recreational watersports users. The land-scape-seascape connectivity would support a more ocean literate society.

Recommendations for the next steps:

- 1. Circulate this report amongst NPAs for greater consideration.
- 2. Invite representation from NPAs onto the NMP Futures Group / Alliance and secure speaker(s) at NMP event(s).
- 3. Promote consideration of additional reference to coast/marine in promoting nature and climate in NP purposes.
- 4. Explore the willingness and appetite for one or two NPA to engage in a pilot endeavor to include the sea within their National Park purposes and/or designated area.

ANNEX 1 PRE-INTERVIEW BRIEFING FOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITIES

National Parks and the Sea



Briefing for interview participants

Purpose

National Parks tell the story of our nation, with each landscape a chapter showcasing the most beautiful and best of the UK. Despite being an island nation, the sea is missing from our National Park story. 75 years on from the designation of Britain's first National Park, National Park Authorities across Britain are now being asked for their views on including the sea.

Campaign for National Parks have contracted Natasha Bradshaw, an independent researcher, to interview existing National Parks through an open conversation about their views on the sea and its' inclusion in existing National Parks. We would like to explore the pros and cons, current engagement with the sea and level of interest. This will include discussion about your existing links with coastal communities, marine planning, management and conservation. We would ask you to imagine if the National Park included the sea, how far offshore would be appropriate. Are you interested in working more with coastal communities and what would be the potential benefits (and risks)?

Consent

By agreeing to participate in the interview, Natasha and Campaign for National Parks agree to retain complete anonymity and confidentiality around the data you provide. Any specific information taken from your interview for reporting purposes, will be checked with you before use in any publications. You have a right to withdraw from the interview at any time.

Background

Campaign for National Parks (CNP) are being funded by the Esmee Fairburn Foundation to research the potential for National Marine Parks in Britain. CNP begun exploring the potential for the UK's first National Marine Parks with the Blue Marine Foundation. The Vision for British Seas developed insights from the evolution of a voluntarily declared status for Plymouth Sound in Devon. A National Framework and Guiding Principles was drafted by a group of organisations, which led to the following definition:

What is a National Marine Park?

An expansive seascape of national importance, where the priority is to promote public awareness and understanding of coastal and maritime 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).

As the National Marine Park vision evolves, CNP are investigating the option of extending exiting National Parks into the sea and/or creating new National Marine Parks. A full summary of the background is available <u>online</u>.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research.

We look forward to meeting with you soon.

ANNEX 2 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1 - Awareness of NMP vision

Have you become aware of any national interest in the inclusion of the sea in NPs?

2 - YOUR NATIONAL PARK: Existing connections with the sea

I would like to explore how the National Park is currently engaging with the coast and sea....

Where is the current NP boundary, and how do you apply it (strictly or loosely)?

Which coastal communities are within/adjacent to the NP and to what extent do you work with them? Are there excluded coastal communities which could be more engaged?

Does the existing Management Plan for the NP refer to the sea/seascape and if so, how?

Could you talk about your existing work and any marine work underway in the adjacent sea?

Could you provide any examples of how the sea has been factored into any decisions (e.g. planning, licencing, byelaws)?

How do you work with other public bodies which care for the coast/sea (i.e. duty to have regard / future generations) such as comms with MMO / NRW / NE.

Have you engaged in 30x30 at sea or marine planning e.g. MPA/MCZ designations? If so, how?'

Have you worked with marine NGOs? If so, how?

How interested are you in doing more with coastal communities and/or offshore?

How legitimate would it be/feel for your NP to do more with coastal communities and/or offshore?

Would you need any additional legal/ governance mechanisms or amendment to the NP purposes?

3 - PURPOSE: Imagine your National Park included the sea

How would your engagement with coastal communities be different?'

How far offshore do you think would be appropriate to include?

Could you suggest potential benefits to people, place and the NP - if the sea were more actively recognised as part of the NP?

Could you suggest potential risks to people, place and the NP - if the sea were more actively recognised as part of the NP?

Has there been any political interest in extending the NP into the sea?

4 - NEXT STEP

Do you want to explore this idea more locally/regionally?

What would be the biggest enabler - to recognise the coast/marine environment formally or informally as part of your NP?

What would be the biggest blocker - to recognise the coast/marine environment formally or informally as part of your NP?

Where would you need support (resources)?

Would you be willing to stay involved in this project [e.g. run a pilot / research bids / work with CNP as a coalition of the willing]?

ANNEX 3 ROUNDTABLE **PRESENTATION**

Powerpoint file is available from CNP.





Your NP: Seascape





National Parks and the Sea

Natasha Bradshaw, Rose O'Neill & Ffion Mitchell-Langford, CNP



You said...about the Management Plan referring to the sea/seascape or existence of a seascape assessment: The understanding:

The sea is partially recognized in National Park Plans, in different ways and to differing extents.

Implications/actions:

A more thorough review of National Park plans' reference to sea/seascape/coast, and awareness of seascape assessments, would be informative to future work on National Parks and the sea.

Your NP: Marine experience

You said... marine work includes:

- enabling coastal access, promoting recreation & watersports
- oyster/seaweed farming
- fisheries engagement
- nature restoration work
- coastal change, coastal strategies/plans
- cultural heritage, archaeology, WW2 history
- Licencing for offshore wind, seawall, mining (NSIPs)

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The understanding:

A wide range of coastal/marine engagement work is taking place to different degrees and most NPAs feel they could do more if additional resources were available to do it.

Implications/actions:

NPAs have coastal/marine project and planning experience which could be built upon.



Your NP: Marine relationships

Yes = 4 (1.2.6.8)

Unsure = 2 (3, 7)

No = 2(4,5)

But...

Coastal Local Authorities (planning)

Sea is within the special qualities (3) Not a specific chapter, possibly a policy, we should refer to it (4) Refers to Heritage Coast: sense of cautious support for a Marine NP for seascape-landscape connectivity - but query how - NP designation or label? (5) High water quality for seas...plan doesn't have actions for the sea, just recognises it for improving water quality (6).

- Marine Management Organisation (licencing, planning)
- Natural England (EMS, SSSIs, NNR)
- Environment Agency (Catchment Based Approach) Natural Resources Wales (site management access)
- Heritage England (cultural heritage protection/promotion)
- Forestry England, National Trust (big landowners)
- Heritage Coasts
- Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities CEFAS, Defra

Relationships with coastal/estuary/marine partnerships evident from 6/8 NPAs. Mixed degree of working with marine NGOs.

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The understanding:

There are established relationships with organization's who have coastal/marine responsibilities but engagement with the MMO is limited to licensing consultations and light engagement in marine planning.

Implications/actions:

NPAs have coastal/marine relationships which could be built upon, particularly with coastal/estuary/marine partnerships. Stronger engagement with the MMO would be beneficial over marine planning and NSIPs.

Your NP: Interested in doing more marine?

You said...

- Yes = 3 (1.4.8)
- Somewhat = 4 (2.5.6.7) Unsure = 1 (3)

Land of the state of

BUT...only 'if we had the additional resource'. Offshore 'no capacity to take on new areas of work' More connectivity between inland users and coastal recreation would be beneficial.

Interview findings

Existing connections with the sea

Marine experience & relationships

es of National Marine Park vision

CAMPAIGN for YMGYRCH Y NATIONAL PARKS PARCIAU CENEDLAETHOL

NPAs are generally interested in doing more marine work as it links to coastal communities, but only if additional resources were made available. Less certainty about engaging in offshore

Implications/actions:

The understanding:

The feasibility of National Parks role being extended into the sea is entirely dependent upon additional resourcing.

Your NP: Legitimacy & Governance Requirements

You said... about legitimacy

- Yes = 4 (1, 2, 7, 8)
- Unsure =
 No = 0 Unsure = 4 (5, 4, 5, 6)
- Dependent upon resourcing and upskilling (e.g. sea rangers).

Governance requirements - Guidance on planning

- Boundary extension
- Purposes need amending to include seascape?
- Board representation?
- Strengthen 'duty to have regard/seek to further...'?

CAMPAIGN for YMGYRCH Y NATIONAL PARKS PARCIAU CENEDLAETHOL



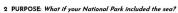
The understanding:

There is a general feeling that it would be legitimate or logical to expand the existing National Park into the seascape, but uncertainty exists because of the resources and expertise required to do so.

Implications/actions:

Proceed to any advocacy work with a clear message that NPAs ability to extend into the sea is dependent upon resource and expertise. They are generally in a good position to build on existing, trusted relationships.

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- Community engagement
- Benefits & risks Political interest
- 3 NEXT STEP: Further exploration?
- Enablers & blockers Resources



Purpose: Community engagement

- Mostly already within our so more coastal access work
- more and wider com
- more support to urban deprivation, regeneration and nature restoration
- direct involvement with marine interests e.g. harbours and water users
- engagement with the fishing community.

Opportunity for more democratic accountability in planning

CAMPAIGN for NATIONAL PARKS PARCIAU CENEDLAETHOL



The understanding:

The understanding:
NPAs would build on experience of coastal community engagement with more purpose, opening-jup apportunities for stronger relationships with marine users including fisheries, harbour authorities and recreational watersports, it could lead to more democratic accountability in marine planning.

Implications/actions:

Explore the value of more NPA engagement in coastal and marine governance



1 VOUR National Park

Existing engagement





Purpose: Offshore extent







YMGYRCH

You said... how far offshore?

- not considered / no view
- clear method/rationale needed
- specific ideas (6, 8)

User perspective of 'busy-ness' vs landscape-seascape linkage (a)

The understanding:

Offshore extent of any NP extension into the sea not yet considered.

Implications/actions:

The extension of NP boundaries into the sea requires much more consideration.



Purpose: Benefits

- encourage people to make more of a living from the sea (1),
- restoration/protection-biodiversity, cultural heritage (2, 3, 4),
- promotion(2), knowledge (4), engagement (5),
- planning democratic accountability(2),
- water recreation management/enforcement (2, 3),
- safeguarding peoples rights to use the sea & securing future access (3),
- of climate change (5) and work WITH the coast rather than perceive it as mainly a threat,
- strengthen linkage with existing work (4), landscape connectivity including fish migration habitat linkage land-sea (8)

The understanding:

Lots of potential benefits identified, many building on existing work/experience, some adding to a perceived gap (e.g. landscapeseascape connectivity, fish migration, democratic accountability), safeguarding use and access for the future.

Implications/actions:

Advocacy opportunities exist around the perceived benefits.

CAMPAIGN for

Purpose: Risks

Capacity, resources, finance – can't do more with less

- Ability to meet expectations
- Compromise quality of existing work and purposes if spread thinner.
- Undermine statutory role/status of NP if not a designation.
- Tourism pressure already high
- Housing targets harder to reach Unintended consequences

Black Cole

CAMPAIGN for NATIONAL PARKS



The understanding:

Clear message that NPAs would not want to take on any extension to their role in coastal/marine areas without additional capacity to meet expectations.

Implications/actions:

In any future advocacy work be clear that the additional role would require additional resources.

Agenda



- · National Marine Parks background (NB)
- · CNP's work plan (FM)
- Interview findings (NB)
- Discussion: capacity to support NPAs activity at coast/sea (RO to chair)



Political interest?

You said...

- None known at the present time
- Some examples of previous political interest and/or local groups (1, 2, 3, 5, 6)



The understanding:

No known current local political interest in extending National Parks into the sea.

Implications/actions:

Advocacy from the national level (by CNP) should consider engaging local politicians

Awareness of National Marine Park vision 1 YOUR National Park: Existing connections with the sea

- Designated boundary
- Existing engagement
- Marine experience & relationships

Interview findings

Interest, legitimacy & requirements



- 2 PURPOSE: What if your National Park included the sea?
 - Community engagement Offshore extent
 - Benefits & risks
- Political interest

3 NEXT STEP: Further exploration?

- Enablers & blockers
- Involvement (pilot).







Next Step: Enablers

You said...

- Clarity around planning (1)
- A different mechanism to engage with coastal communities: would the proposed amendment to purposes around nature restoration and climate adaptation provide this? (6)
- Working with other advocates i.e. marine NGOs (7)
- Buy-in of other (statutory) organisations i.e. $\mbox{MMO}_{(8)}$

CAMPAIGN for NATIONAL PARKS



The understanding

Some clarity and common understanding would be needed amongst other organisations to secure buy-in before proceeding.

Implications/actions:

CNP are advised to work with other organisations to explore their level of support as part of tuture political and public advocacy work.

Next Step: Blockers

You said...

- · Not vet been discussed at NPA (5)
- Appetite of coastal communities to be self-determined (6)
- Profiteering e.g. ports/harbour's (7)
 Buy-in of other organization's e.g. MMO (8)

Resources, skills and need for a partnership approach (e)



The understanding:

Some potential blockers/barriers have been identified.

Implications/actions:

Lack of broad awareness requires wider communication of the potential benefits.



Purpose: Offshore extent





Purpose: Benefits

CAMPAIGN for

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You said... how far offshore?

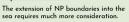
- not considered / no vie
- clear method/rationale needed
- specific ideas (6, 8)

User perspective of 'busy-ness' vs landscape-seascape linkage (a)



Offshore extent of any NP extension into the sea not yet considered.

Implications/actions:



- encourage people to make more of a living from the sea (1),
- restoration/protection-biodiversity, cultural heritage (2, 3, 4),
- promotion(2), knowledge (4), engagement (5),
- planning democratic accountability(2),
- water recreation management/enforcement (2, 3),
- safeguarding peoples rights to use the sea & securing future access (3),
- of climate change (5) and work WITH the coast rather than perceive it as mainly a threat,
- strengthen linkage with existing work (4), landscape connectivity including fish migration habitat linkage land-sea (8)

The understanding:

Lots of potential benefits identified, many building on existing work/experience, some adding to a perceived gap (e.g. landscapeseascape connectivity, fish migration, democratic accountability), safeguarding use and access for the future.

Implications/actions:

Advocacy opportunities exist around the perceived benefits.

Purpose: Risks

- Capacity, resources, finance can't do more with less
- Ability to meet expectations
- Compromise quality of existing work and purposes if spread thinner.
- Undermine statutory role/status of NP if not a designation.
- Tourism pressure already high
- Housing targets harder to reach
- Unintended consequences

CAMPAIGN for YMGYRCH Y NATIONAL PARKS PARCIAU CENEDI AFTHOL



The understanding:

Clear message that NPAs would not want to take on any extension to their role in coastal/marine areas without additional capacity to meet expectations.

Implications/actions:

In any future advocacy work be clear that the additional role would require additional resources.

Political interest?

You said...

- None known at the present time
- Some examples of previous political interest and/or local groups (1.2.3.5.6)

CAMPAIGN for YMGYRCH Y NATIONAL PARKS PARCIAU CENEDLAETHOL



The understanding:

No known current local political interest in extending National Parks into the sea.

Implications/actions:

Advocacy from the national level (by CNP) should consider engaging local politicians



Interview findings

Awareness of National Marine Park vision 1 YOUR National Park:

Existing connections with the sea

- Designated boundary
- Existing engagement
- Seascape
- Marine experience & relationships
- Interest, legitimacy & requirements



- 2 PURPOSE: What if your National Park included the sea?
- Benefits & risks
- Political interest

3 NEXT STEP: Further exploration?

- Enablers & blockers
- Involvement (pilot).

Next Step: Enablers

You said...

- Clarity around planning (1)
- A different mechanism to engage with coastal communities: would the proposed amendment to purposes around nature restoration and climate adaptation provide this? (6)
- Working with other advocates i.e. marine NGOs (7)
- Buy-in of other (statutory) organisations i.e. $\mbox{MMO}_{(8)}$

CAMPAIGN for NATIONAL PARKS PARCIAU CENEDLAETHOL

The understanding:

Some clarity and common understanding would be needed amongst other organisations to secure buy-in before proceeding.

Implications/actions:

CNP are advised to work with other organisations to explore their level of support as part of future political and public advocacy work.



Next Step: Blockers





Next Step: Resources





- Not yet been discussed at NPA (5)
- Appetite of coastal communities to be self-determined (6)
- Resources, skills and need for a partnership approach (8) Buy-in of other organization's e.g. MMO (8)

The understanding:

Some potential blockers/barriers have been identified.

Implications/actions:

Lack of broad awareness requires wider communication of the potential benefits.

For a variety of our partners this would require a range of resources, capital and engagement with government agencies. Most important would be cocreation with coastal communities as relationship forming takes years to build trust and social capital. There would be a long term sequence of actions to move from one state to another.

"Upskilling, understanding connections, showing benefits. Perhaps a 5yr period to understand connections and identify benefits. Perhaps an opt-in/opt-out approach to make the case".

The understanding:

A range of work with government, organisations and communities would need to be resourced to explore the benefits at all levels.

Implications/actions







CAMPAIGN for NATIONAL PARKS YMGYRCH y Next Step: Your Involvement (pilot) Do you want to explore this idea more locally/regionally?... The understanding: Overall a positive level of interest in exploring the idea further (subject to capacity). Yes = 3 (1, 6, 8) Yes, probably/with stated conditions = 4 (2, 3, 4, 7) Unsure/already doing enough = 1 (5) Above responses need verification/elaboration Implications/actions: CNP to re-visit this question to explore level of interest in a pilot.





Key Issues / areas for clarification

- Democratic accountability
- Consenting falling between NRW/NE and NPA (e.g. inter-tidal habitat restoration)
- Positive relationships with coastal, estuary and marine partnerships
- Limited direct contact with MMO/IFCA especially over fisheries management (limited to planning and licencing).
- Include the sea in an update to NP purposes alongside contribution to LNR & climate change adaptation?







Summary: Three takeaways

- Appetite is there
 Capacity is not there
 Further exploration would be welcomed by at least half of the NPAs







Key Issues / areas for clarification

- Democratic accountability
- Consenting falling between NRW/NE and NPA (e.g. inter-tidal habitat restoration)
 Positive relationships with coastal, estuary and marine partnerships
- Limited direct contact with MMO/IFCA especially over fisheries management (limited to planning and licensing).
- Include the sea in an update to NP purposes alongside contribution to LNR & climate change adaptation?













Discussion

How might we build capacity and secure funding to support NPA activity at the coast and sea?

Where might be a suitable site(s) for trialing a NMP?



Next Steps

- Circulate outputs from interview process
- Act on findings: representation on NMP Futures Group / Alliance
- Secure speaker(s) at event(s) later in 2025
- National Marine Parks Lead to follow up with prospective place-based partners
- New National Parks



ANNEX 4 NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITIES WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE RESEARCH

National Park Authority	Interview code	Roundtable participation
Eyri/Snowdonia	Confidential information retained by CNP	No
Exmoor		Yes
Lake District		Yes
New Forest		Yes
North York Moors		No
Pembrokeshire		Yes
South Downs		Yes
The Broads		No



