

The questions and background for the consultation are presented here in Times New Roman font, and my answers are presented in Arial. New consultation sections are presented in bold and underlined for clarity.

The background to the North Devon Marine Natural Capital Plan

This section looks at the overall aim of the plan, how it was developed, the geographic area of the plan and the strategic context.

** Please read section 1 of the plan, pages 5 to 13. Please be specific and detailed with your responses and refer to the paragraph number, table or diagram, where appropriate. You may also wish to refer to the North Devon Marine Natural Capital Asset and Risk Register:

<https://bit.ly/2vC5MSl>

Do you understand what the plan is and what it will be used for

Yes /No /**Yes, with changes**

Please clarify your response

The context and overall aim are quite clear. However, some aims and objectives have specific actions that seem targeted to individuals/ organisations, and it is not clear who is the intended actor for these actions, or on what basis they are/are not obliged to fulfil these actions. This could be clarified in this section of the Plan.

Paragraph 15 – unusual to refer to the core of the North Devon Biosphere reserve as Branton Burrows dune system – is this written in the Biosphere Policy/strategy documents – if so can this be referenced

In paragraph 17 MCZ designation are listed but no EMS – these should include Lundy SAC and Branton Burrows SAC

Paragraph 18: a map would be useful here to show the relevant fishing areas that are referred to (the Ray Box, Whelk Box, etc.). When talking about Lundy NTZ it should read D&S IFCA byelaws – not IFCA. The netting and towed gear zonal restrictions were in place long before the MCZ designation at Lundy. The restrictions for mobile fishing vessels have been extended further in 2014 in parts of the Lundy SAC. D&S IFCA's Netting, Potting, Diving and Mobile Fishing Permit Byelaws all prohibit the removal of spiny lobsters from within the Lundy MCZ as well as Bideford to Foreland Point MCZ

Paragraph 19 minor point: the species name for grey seal (*Halichoerus grypus*) has been misspelled.

Paragraph 19: Should the SSSIs be listed?

Paragraph 40 or thereabouts would benefit from reference to the 25 Year Environment Plan

Page 11- under statutory plans - could the D&S IFCA Annual plans be referenced here? One is produced each year in April and refers to management of fishing activities, compliance monitoring and evidence gathering as well as internal process – on our website <https://www.devonandsevernifca.gov.uk/Resource-library/A-Role-function-and-management-of-the-Authority>

The vision, objectives and policies

Please refer to section 2 of the plan, pages 14 to 25 and for additional reference, the North Devon Marine Natural Capital Asset and Risk Register <https://bit.ly/38oYNto> and the Sustainability Assessment - Appendix 1 <https://bit.ly/2lhXLoa>

Paragraph 57 – In the context of the North Devon area, and the UK as a whole, would this benefit from explicit mention of food security (including fisheries and mariculture) as part of National Security

****Please be specific and detailed with your response**
Do you agree with the over arching vision? (page 17)

Yes/ No/ **Yes, with changes**

Please clarify your response

Overall, the vision is useful and relatively clear. However, D&S IFCA suggests that more emphasis should be placed on the sustainability of maritime industries (including fisheries and mariculture). In addition, more emphasis is required on the consideration of nature as a whole system, perhaps tying in a brief definition of the ecosystem approach; currently the vision states the “Nature will be considered as a whole system, recognising that land and sea are intrinsically linked...”, but it is important to recognise not only that there are linkages between land and sea but also between all elements of what happens within each of these realms, and the additive/synergistic effects of multiple activities on nature (on a range of Nature receptors, rather than simply considering those receptors that a given activity obviously impacts).

Paragraph 57 – In the context of the North Devon area, and the UK as a whole, would this benefit from explicit mention of food security (including fisheries and mariculture) as part of National Security

AM01. Achieve sustainable and viable wild-capture fisheries

Do you agree with Aim 1?

Yes/ No/ Yes, with changes

If yes with changes, please clarify your response.

D&S IFCA agree with this aim. However, we would like to draw attention to an apparent discrepancy which, if addressed, would likely improve future progress towards achieving this aim. Plan Policy PL03 states that “Development or activities within existing or potential strategic areas of sustainable mariculture production must demonstrate consideration of and compatibility with sustainable mariculture production.” However, there is no similar consideration for existing fisheries activities. Requiring future development or activities within areas of existing (or potential) sustainable wild-capture fisheries activity to demonstrate consideration of, and compatibility with, sustainable wild-capture fisheries may afford these fisheries the protection they require to operate sustainably. There does need to be a separate policy on this – to consider the existing users and uses of the sea area (a duty that MMO are obliged to do under MaCCA) when encouraging developments such as mariculture. This has been absent in national marine plans.

Would you like to respond to any of the specific objectives in Aim 1? please tick all those that apply and refer to the number in the comments box below

- 1.1 Develop and test innovative approaches to fisheries management through collaboration between fishermen, regulators and scientists
- 1.2 Support local delivery of the recommendations from FRMP and the Herring Project to achieve sustainable commercial fish stocks (wild capture)
- 1.3 Maintain and/or increase cultural and economic value of ongoing inshore fisheries (wild capture), where these do not exceed sustainable exploitation limits, including value-added benefits e.g. fish smokeries
- 1.4 Support robust management of hand gathering activity in the Taw-Torridge estuary, including monitoring of the spatial distribution of crab tiling zones and bait digging areas
- 1.5 Support sustainable management of wild, subtidal blue mussel (*Mytilus edulis*) beds in Taw-Torridge estuary SSSI
- 1.6 Maintain migratory fish species stocks (*Salmo salar* and *Salmo trutta*) above conservation limits
- 1.7 Achieve sustainable non-quota commercial species stocks (*Homarus gammarus* and *Cancer pagurus*) through locally-led initiatives between fishermen and regulators

Please add your comments here, referring to the number of the objective above.

Objectives 1.1 and 1.7 require buy-in at a high level (i.e. from Defra and MMO), not just from IFCA's, fishers etc. For points like this, the associated uncertainty in feasibility, and/or the difficulties associated

with achieving the objective should be acknowledged, and in all cases it would be useful to identify the relevant actors and the obligations they would/ would not be under to work towards the objectives. Overall, the processes are relatively unclear. National development of working groups to look at species/ species groups is up and running and may lead this rather than directly through the ND MNCP.

Objective 1.3 has an underlying indicator of “Annual landings (tonnes and £) per species by vessels operating from NDMP ports”. However, this is likely to be difficult to quantify accurately and reliably – landings by North Devon fishers are often not recorded as they are under the recordable limit and are sold directly to the public. This is also likely to be problematic for indicator 1.7(i).

Objectives 1.4 and 1.5 are clearly workstreams that are delivered by the IFCA; however, IFCA workstreams are decided based on authority input and IFCA obligations under the Marine and Coastal Access Act and should not be seen to be dictated elsewhere. It is therefore unclear how these objectives should be framed in terms of the relevant actors and the obligations they would/ would not be under to work towards the objectives.

Objective 1.6 is a useful example of how some aspects of the Plan could be clarified in the context of the broader management of the marine environment, the pressures that it faces, and the complex regulatory environment. While actions to maintain migratory fish stocks may be possible within the Plan area, it is clear that this objective may still not be met due to e.g. high fishing pressure, environmental factors, other human activity, or other reasons contributing to high mortality, poor reproduction/growth etc that are not in the control of actors within the Plan area. It would be useful to clarify this context and how management/ monitoring/objectives can account for this. The same is true of Objective 1.7, and several others throughout the Plan.

AM02. Create new jobs in sustainable aquaculture

Do you agree with Aim 2?

Yes/ No/ Yes, with changes

If yes with changes, please clarify your response.

Would you like to respond to a specific objective within aim 2? Please tick all those that apply and refer to the number in the comments box below

2.1 Support development and adoption of a code of conduct for future commercial shellfish culture

2.2 Maintain and / or increase economic value and employment of ongoing commercial shellfish culture

2.3 Conduct feasibility study for macroalgae culture in Taw-Torridge estuary

Please add your comments here, referring to the number of the objective above.

Objective 2.1: Some codes of conduct for this already exist in various forms; clarity on specific requirements and objectives of this code of conduct would be useful. As with policies above, the relevant actors and their obligations are unclear. D&S IFCA are currently developing a Mariculture Strategy which will aim to help new and existing members in this industry, Hand Working Permit Byelaw will have measures in it such as back filling holes dug for bait and limit of recreational intertidal hand gathering catch of shellfish.

Objective 2.2 should include a statement that this should occur within the bounds of sustainability and the requirements of other legitimate users of the marine environment. Sustainable exploitation limits of commercial shellfish gathering are determined by conservation objectives of MPA e.g. Taw Torridge SSSI and overwintering bird food availability so some reference to these should be included.

Objective 2.3 is another good example of an objective for which a specific actor is clearly intended, but it is not clear who/ which organisation this is. It would be useful if the wording could be altered to reflect either (i) who is being referred to, or (ii) that a feasibility study is desirable, but that this is not a targeted action.

AM03. Promote sustainable tourism and recreation

Do you agree with Aim 3?

Yes/ No/ Yes, with changes

If yes with changes, please clarify your response.

Would you like to comment on any of the objectives in Aim 3:

3.1 Implement voluntary no-anchor zones and a mooring code of conduct. Links with MNCP4, MNCP6

3.2 Increase number of eco-moorings and/or permanent, subtidal moorings where recreational boating activity interacts with sensitive habitats. Links with MNCP4, MNCP6

3.3 Review and deliver code of conduct of conduct for recreational activities within the Taw-Torridge estuary including zoning areas for motorised watercraft e.g. water-skiing, jet-skiing etc.

- 3.4 Review and reinstate licencing scheme for motorised watercraft
 - 3.5 Implement the recommendations from the seabird disturbance report to reduce overwintering bird disturbance by recreational use
 - 3.6 Review and reinstate biosphere accreditation scheme for recreational boats as part of BCHT project. Links with MNCP4
- Please add your comments here, referring to the number of the objective above.

AM04. Improve water quality and clean sediments

Do you agree with Aim 4?

Yes/ No/ Yes, with changes

If yes with changes, please clarify your response.

Would you like to comment on any of the specific objectives for aim 4?

- 4.1 Support delivery of the recommendations from the River Basin- and Catchment- Management Plans to maintain and where possible improve the overall Ecological Status of water bodies
- 4.2 Improve shellfish waters up to at least class B by 2030 through enhanced upstream management to reduce run-off
- 4.3 Improve bathing water quality to guideline standards by 2025 through concerted beach and catchment management including beach specific measures
- 4.4 Support the implementation of Plastic Free Consortium strategy particularly through Fishing for litter and other marine sectors
- 4.5 Support research and development to monitor microplastics in the marine environment through continued collaboration with local research agencies
- 4.6 Support activities of Plastic Free North Devon to reduce waste at source

Please add your comments here, referring to the number of the objective above.

Objective 4.2 is important for the marine environment generally (including for aquaculture/shellfish harvesting as identified), and will likely require intense multi-agency and cross-jurisdiction working to achieve.

AM05. Deliver robust protection of marine biodiversity

Do you agree with Aim 5?

Yes/ No/ Yes, with changes

If yes with changes, please clarify your response.

Would you like to comment on any of the specific objective for aim 5?

- 5.1 Identify sites at risk / unfavourable / recover that could be HPMA
- 5.2 MPA statements / plans with an NC / ESS focus – net gain and whole site approach
- 5.3 Co-management of fisheries – partnership working, greater compliance, increased yields (FRMP)
- 5.4 Tools for mapping NC assets (Geonode) and assessing sustainability (SA)
- 5.5 Fisheries primer i.e. Objective 1.8
- 5.6 Reduced disturbance from recreation

Please add your comments here, referring to the number of the objective above

5.1 The reference to highly protected marine area management measures is unclear. There are no HPMA in the NDMP/Biosphere area and measures have yet to be decided once HPMA are introduced. What areas are being referred to here? This would not apply to the whole of the NDMP area.

5.2 Regulatory bodies such as D&S IFCA are required to balance the needs of all users as well as the marine environment. Any management would be decided through the D&S IFCA and appropriate consultation.

5.5 It is not clear what is being referred to as a trial – D&S IFCA has already introduced IVMS to all mobile gear fishing vessels so have the ability to monitor fishing activity already across different habitats.

AM06. Enhance resilience to natural hazards and future climate change

Do you agree with Aim 6?

Yes/ No/ Yes, with changes

If yes with changes, please clarify your response.

Would you like to comment on specific objectives in aim 6

6.1 Increase saltmarsh extent in the Taw-Torridge estuary by 50-80Ha by 2030

6.2 Improve degraded saltmarsh habitat ('unfavourable' in Rees et al. 2018, 2019) to achieve national policy targets for GES by 2030

6.3 Improve degraded (LRC<3 in Rees et al. 2018, 2019) infralittoral rock and littoral mud, sand sediment habitats to achieve national policy targets for GES by 2030

6.4 Undertake a feasibility study for blue carbon (phytoplankton, macroalgae and seagrass)

6.5 Establish criteria for acceptable offshore wind and tidal renewable energy projects

6.6 Reduce social and economic risk from natural hazards through investment in natural sea defences

Please add your comments here, referring to the number of the objective above.

6.5 It is not clear what this means – perhaps a little more detail will help.

AM07. Develop a centralised database and knowledge sharing

Do you agree with Aim 7?

Yes/ No/ Yes, with changes

If yes with changes, please clarify your response.

Would you like to make comment on a specific objective for aim 7?

7.1 Establish voluntary agreements with fishermen and shellfish harvesters to supply appropriate spatial-scale data on catch and effort. Links with MNCP1

7.2 Collaborate with regulatory bodies to improve access to data on spatial intensity of fishing activity

7.3 Repeat North Devon water sports survey regularly as part of recreational activities monitoring scheme. Links with MNCP3

7.4 Reinstate incident database on Biosphere Reserve website. Links with MNCP3

7.5 Design and deliver regular water bird disturbance survey. Links with MNCP3

7.6 Collation of data on marine litter from citizen science and voluntary marine waste collection organisations. Links with MNCP5

7.7 Collation of data on features of conservation interest in MPAs. Links with MNCP6

7.8 Implement annual monitoring of mean chlorophyll-a concentrations as a proxy for planktonic productivity
7.9 Support research and development to improve habitat-based models of coastal storm impacts

Please add your comments here, referring to the number of the objective above

7.1 Who will host this information and who will have access to it – D&S IFCA?

AM08. Establish new governance and funding structures

Do you agree with Aim 8?

Yes/No/Yes, with changes

If yes with changes, please clarify your response.

Would you like to make comment on the specific objectives for aim 8?

8.1 Establish Biosphere Foundation as local delivery body for Blue Impact Fund / natural capital trust

8.2 Formalise the role of the North Devon Biosphere Reserve's Marine Working Group and sub-groups

8.3 Seek funding to progress and formalise the Fisheries Science and Management Partnership

8.4 Strengthen the relationship between the Biosphere Partnership, Marine Working Group and IFCA committee

8.5 Develop clear management objectives and decision-making partnerships for MPAs (where this doesn't exist)

8.6 Set-up appropriate monitoring and evaluation of governance groups

8.7 Seek funding to hire a North Devon Marine Coordinator by 2025

8.8 Seek funding to hire an Estuary Officer for the Taw-Torridge estuary by 2030

Please add your comments here, referring to the number of the objective above.

The questions for each policy (PL01 – PL12, below) have the following format:

Do you agree with the policy?

Yes/No/Yes, but with changes

Please clarify your answer:

Policies

Policies in the North Devon Marine Natural Capital Plan support delivery of the plan objectives to achieve the vision and address challenges and opportunities identified through policy development.

****The policies can be found on page in section 2.4 pages 18 to 21 of the plan. Please be specific and detailed in your response**

Would you like to make comment on any of the policies? **Please use tick box and press 'next' to be taken to the relevant policy. After making comment on a specific policy you will be returned to this page

PL01. Novel and ongoing monitoring of the marine environment should incorporate local knowledge to identify where there may be potential for research and data gathering, and promote partnership working between regulators, academics and local stakeholders.

PL02. Development or activities that will maintain and / or increase the cultural and economic value of inshore fisheries, including diversification, should demonstrate consideration of and compatibility with thresholds for sustainable use and be designed to maintain and, where possible, enhance ecosystems services and functioning.

PL03. Development or activities within existing or potential strategic areas of sustainable maricultural production must demonstrate consideration of and compatibility with sustainable mariculture production.

This is a useful addition to the Plan, but D&S IFCA are concerned that there is no similar consideration for existing wild-capture fisheries activities. D&S IFCA's District is home to small-scale wild-capture fisheries of great social and heritage value. Requiring future development or activities within areas of existing (or potential) sustainable wild-capture fisheries activity to demonstrate consideration of, and compatibility with, sustainable wild-capture fisheries may afford these fisheries the protection they require to operate sustainably.

There does need to be a separate policy on this – to consider the existing users and uses of the sea area (a duty that MMO are obliged to do under MaCCA) when encouraging developments such as mariculture. This has been absent in national marine plans.

PL04. Support proposals that will improve water body condition and / or reduce marine litter.

PL05. Support proposals that will increase extent of marine natural capital where it has been identified as 'at risk' and / or support multiple ecosystem benefits.

This seems to refer to PL07 in the Plan, but is not an exact copy of PL07s policy statement.

PL06. Support proposals that will restore degraded marine natural capital where it has been identified as 'at risk' and / or support multiple ecosystem benefits.

This also seems to refer to PL07 in the Plan, but is not an exact copy of PL07s policy statement.

PL07. Set management priorities that will rapidly enable 'recovery' of habitats where this conservation objective exists.

This is PL08 in the Plan. Should this refer directly to the Natural England site conservation objectives?

PL08. Support MPA management priorities that consider the wider ecological structures and processes that have the potential for 'recovery' and 'renewal' beyond the delineated boundaries of features of conservation interest within an MPA (whole site approach, net gain).

This Policy is PL09 in the Plan. It's not yet clear to me how this sits alongside current legislation which grants protection specifically to qualified features, e.g. what weight would the plan have in ensuring that the whole site is considered, rather than just the identified features. It is also unclear how this would be achieved on a practical level - given that it is difficult enough to monitor specifically designated and delineated features, how can the monitoring individual/organisation monitor the whole site, or even begin to define targets for the whole site?

As mentioned previously, D&S IFCA can introduce management to protect site features. Further whole site protection if proposed would have to go through the IFCA decision making process and consider its other duties to balance the needs of all users whilst ensure marine protection and viable fishing industry. Management of HPMA might be different if it was a Government revised approach.

PL09. Support the implementation of management measures that can reduce pressure across subtidal sediments.

This is PL10 in the Plan.

As previously mentioned D&S IFCA introduces appropriate management on a range of habitats depending on the impact of the interaction with the fishing gear in MPAs. Assessment are undertaken and measures introduced after formal advice from NE. Further restrictions outside of MPAs may impact the limited demersal fisheries in North Devon, - this may be contrary to the plan suggesting it will support local fisheries. Is the plan suggesting that demersal fisheries are removed from the ND marine pioneer area?

PL10. Trial natural capital approaches to support waste remediation (e.g. saltmarsh restoration, mussel beds).

This is PL05 in the Plan.

PL11. Support land-based infrastructure development, diversification or regeneration which facilitates water quality and marine pollution goals through integration with the North Devon Landscape Strategy.

This is PL06 in the Plan.

PL12. Proposals that enable the provision of sites for marine renewable energy technologies and associated supply chains will be supported where there is no net loss of biodiversity or natural capital, and where conflict of use is reduced.

This is policy PL11 in the Plan, but refers to PL12 in the Policy Description column of the relevant table. The Plan only has 11 Policy statements (PL01-PL11). Rather than aiming for "no net loss of biodiversity or natural capital", a plan such as this should aim for net gain.

How the plan will be governed

A place based, partnership approach for governance has been developed using the recommendations from the Marine Pioneer which expands on the Marine Pioneer model. If there is a need for adaptive management in a place, as identified by this plan, then the governance should also be adaptive. The proposed structure allows for adaptability and interaction – between different marine sectors but also between land and sea.

****Please read section 3, pages 26 to 32. Please be specific and detailed with your responses and refer to paragraph number, table or figure, where appropriate.**

If you need further background material you can refer to WWF's Compass Pilot Report for North Devon <https://bit.ly/3aqUOOB> and Stakeholder Perceptions of Marine Governance in North Devon <https://bit.ly/2VN4KgX>

Do you feel this is the best way to govern the plan?

Yes/No/Yes, with changes

Please clarify your answer.

Under 3.2 paragraph 93 some additional info about the FRMP would be useful. We would recommend the following: Fisheries Research and Management Plans (FRMPs) aim to bridge the gap between current, species-focused fisheries management and a more ecosystem-based approach at an appropriate scale. The FRMPs will provide an ecosystem-based review of the ecology, fisheries and management for key fish species within the North Devon Marine Pioneer area. This approach will integrate local and historical knowledge with scientific research outcomes, building the knowledge base for sustainable ecosystem-based management at an appropriate spatial scale, and highlighting current knowledge gaps to inform future research.

How the plan will be monitored

Monitoring is essential to establish what the trends have been up to the present and to estimate what may happen in the future. It provides vital feedback for decision-makers and policy development.

The plan will be reviewed over intervals of no more than 5 years and will also be subject to adaptive management supported by the governance structure.

****Please read section 4, pages 34 and appendix 3 <https://bit.ly/2TFGxqb>**

Do you feel that monitoring and evaluation of the plan is suitable and realistic within the governance of the plan?

Yes/No/Yes, with changes

Please clarify your answer.

The options for Sustainable Finance and Investment

Through the work of the Marine Pioneer in North Devon it was identified that there are parts of nature (natural capital) which are at risk that will affect its ability deliver the services that

benefit us. These services are: wild food production; healthy climate; sea defences; tourism and recreation; and flows of clean water. To ensure the future of these services key projects were identified as suitable for investment: fisheries enhancement; enhancing clean water; reducing impact on wildlife; enhancing carbon storage and natural flood management

****Please read section 5, pages 34 to 46 and refer to the action plan - appendix 2**

<https://bit.ly/38nZhjo>

Do you feel that the options for sustainable finance and the investment opportunities are suitable for delivery of the aims of the plan. Please refer to paragraph numbers, figures and tables where possible

Yes/No/Yes, with changes

Please clarify your answer.

Do you agree with the qualitative risk assessment for the proposed activities for the plan?

Yes/No/Yes, with changes

Please clarify your answer.

The action plan

The action plan provides the framework for the delivery of the plan, identifying what can be achieved in the next 5 years, the risk associated with the projects, who might be involved and where there is potential for future work. Please refer to Appendix 2 <https://bit.ly/38nZhjo>

Do you agree with the actions for the plan?

Yes/No/Yes, with changes

Please clarify your answer.

The action plan contains the text “Long term (+5 years) dependant on feasibility study: increase in sustainable aquaculture in estuary”. This should also include sheltered areas of coastline. It is also not clear to which feasibility study this refers. Who is running this?

Sustainability Assessment

A new method to incorporate natural capital into sustainability assessment was developed through the Marine Pioneer, and tested with this plan. This assessment has looked at how the Marine Natural Capital Plan makes a difference in the short term and long term (vs no plan).

Do you have any comments about the Sustainability Assessment?

Paragraph 80 contains the text “Management of bait digging is likely to reduce disturbance of intertidal mud.”. However, the management of hand working (including bait digging) is still in its infancy and there may not be changes in management unless assessments identify this as a requirement - such as back filling holes and removing bait digging from sensitive habitats such as seagrass and Sabellaria. Perhaps this should read something more along the lines of: Future management of bait digging may be introduced in some areas which might have ecosystem benefits.

Paragraph 82 of the Plan states that there may be a decline in benefits from bait digging, as “future management of effort may restrict opportunities for individuals and prohibit expansion”; this is also reflected in Table 2 (Summary Table for the Sustainability Appraisal), which highlights that the expected changes in ecosystem goods/services from bait are negative in the longer term. This is also suggested in several areas of the full Sustainability Appraisal document. On the contrary, management of bait digging through DS IFCA’s proposed Hand Working Byelaw would seek to ensure longer-term sustainable provision of ecosystem services while simultaneously protecting features (e.g. seagrass) through certain spatial provisions (e.g. closed areas), providing sufficient quantities of sea fisheries resources for personal consumption (hence no planned or foreseen restriction of opportunities for non-commercial individuals), and allow permitting for (and monitoring of) commercial activity.

The GeoNode (beta version)

The GeoNode is being developed to support planners and licensors to provide a spatial tool that will help them with their decisions. It may also be useful for people who would like to set up codes of conduct. <https://pioneer-geonode.plymouth.ac.uk/> you may also like to read the how to use guidance <https://bit.ly/2x4cQr9>

Do you have any comments about the Marine Natural Capital Plan GeoNode - please be aware the GeoNode is in beta mode for testing during this consultation. **Please be specific and detailed in your response.