



North Devon Marine Pioneer

Building on the vision

This Marine Working Group (MWG) workshop discussed marine governance, estuary issues, local fishing, and financing of Marine Protected Areas.

We asked participants to create a circle of influence:

- How influential do you think your organisation is in the governance of North Devon's marine environment?

- What other organisations do you talk to, and how influential do you think they are?
- What small but influential organisations in North Devon should we be including?
- What connecting organisations or forums should we be working with?

Where does the influence lie?

The circle of influence exercise revealed that:

- as many as 40 organisations were seen as particularly influential
- of those 40, most were national not local organisations
- only two organisations were identified by everyone – the Marine Management Organisation, and Devon & Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA)
- as many as 143 organisations and groups were thought to play a role in marine governance in North Devon
- 39 organisations were 'missing' from the perceived circle of influence – useful information for the North Devon Marine Pioneer.

A report by WWF and Sky Ocean Rescue¹ gives more detail on this exercise.



¹ WWF and Sky Ocean Rescue (2018) *Who is in Charge Around Here? Perceptions of Marine Governance in North Devon*. https://ukseasproject.org.uk/cms-data/reports/UKSEAS_Perceptions%20Report_8pp_screen.pdf

How can we make a difference?

Opportunities	Challenges
Create a local marine management forum representing all sectors to influence policy	How do we involve industry and other marine users in the decision-making process?
Review current marine management and assess its effectiveness so we know what needs improving	How can we clarify where responsibility lies and who marine stakeholders should go to, nationally and locally?
Engage local people with their marine environment – through schools, work experience, communities	Where should we combine forces so that multiple active organisations do not weaken stakeholder engagement?
Communicate transparently to integrate the different organisations	How can we influence outcomes despite local communities having no statutory authority?
Embed local communities' expertise and knowledge within management	What are innovative ways of working within the limited resources available to those with influence?
Liaise with higher-level authorities by identifying a clear contact point	How do we ensure local community structures do not discourage stakeholder participation?
Promote stewardship and a tourism strategy that incorporates the natural environment	Where can we improve understanding of how marine management works for communities that feel remote from it?
Seize opportunities for change – the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan , Brexit and the Pioneers	How can we avoid tourism resulting in damage to Devon's unspoiled landscapes and beautiful coastline?

Water and wildlife in the Taw Torridge Estuary

One group looked at the management of multiple uses, impacts and ecosystem services within the Taw Torridge Estuary, focusing on two issues: bird populations and water quality.

Participants identified these opportunities:

- ensure well-managed tourism benefits the estuary, with the port being a draw
- promote access around the estuary – it's great, but not enough is made of it
- make more of connections with literature – Henry Williamson's *Tarka the Otter*, Charles Kingsley's *The Water-Babies*
- promote Blue Flag beaches, and avoid further loss of Blue Flag status due to lack of facilities
- build on good water quality and habitat improvements that are helping to improve the status of wildlife
- respond to people's changing views to enhance the natural environment and educate people about the estuary and its wildlife
- offer sense-of-place training for locals, to give them ownership of their natural environment

- provide an estuary officer as a focal point – if resources can be found.

Bird populations

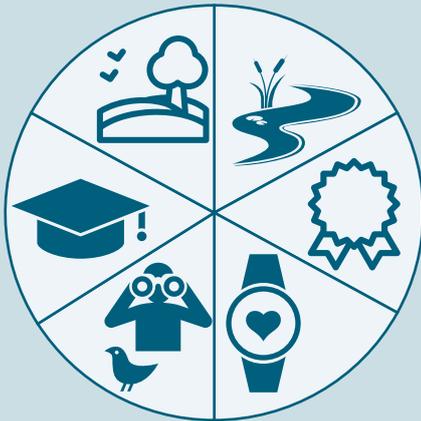
Pressures and impacts on bird populations:

- residential development close to the estuary
- water quality at Instow, which has lost 'bathing beach' status
- Canada geese at Instow, which prey on mallard ducklings
- invasive species and their impact on native populations
- tourism in light of the region's capacity and limited infrastructure
- pollution potential from landfill site on Northam Burrows – potentially toxic substances could already have been washed out to sea
- management and enforcement, with the harbour authority at Bideford having limited powers that reach roughly to Torridge Bridge and no recognised authority to manage other areas
- overfishing and neonicotinoids, which may affect availability of prey (food) for birds
- recreation activities that increase noise and disturbance.

Management measures to benefit bird populations include district and local plans, Shoreline Management Plan, tourism strategy, **agri-environment schemes**, voluntary/community-based efforts such as **beach cleans**, **Estuary Code of Conduct** and **Plastic Free North Devon**.

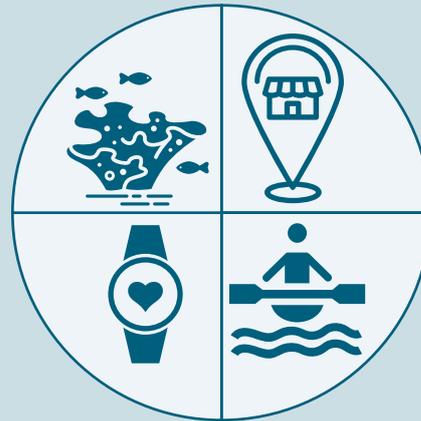
Management measures to benefit water quality include the Estuary Code of Conduct, local beach clean, and **Tarka trail** litter picks; local 'fishing for litter' efforts and **Seafish's Responsible Fishing Scheme**; and projects to tackle farming and land management problems,² pollution events and water quality.

BENEFITS of improving bird populations



- ▶ natural landscape
- ▶ species indicators of estuary health
- ▶ international recognition
- ▶ education
- ▶ human health
- ▶ tourism

BENEFITS of improving water quality



- ▶ nursery habitats for fish and rare species
- ▶ exercise and human health
- ▶ tourism
- ▶ local businesses

Water quality

Pressures and impacts on water quality:

- ▶ climate change and threat of coastal erosion
- ▶ holiday population expansion with associated waste issues
- ▶ unclear who owns and manages the different areas of the foreshore
- ▶ any potential tidal barrage across the estuary could have a significant impact on water quality
- ▶ pollution from different sources – discarded fishing gear, marine litter, farming run-off, and increased storms and sediment movement
- ▶ development at Yelland and possibly Chivenor
- ▶ motor boats and jet skis no longer licensed through Torridge District Council – current voluntary code of conduct is believed to be largely ignored.

Next steps

The South West Partnership for Environmental and Economic Prosperity (SWEPP) team will use the outputs from these workshop sessions when compiling the North Devon Geodatabase. The Geodatabase will map data including habitats, species, human activities and values.

Local fishermen have their say

A second group looked at ways to deliver economically viable, sustainable fisheries management in the North Devon Marine Pioneer area. The views captured here largely reflect those of the local fishermen.

What are the challenges?

North Devon's commercial fisheries are very dependent on the weather and tides. This mixed fishery is traditionally diverse and seasonal, targeted by mobile gear, pots, nets and rod-and-line – as well as aquaculture for oysters and harvested wild mussels.

Participants identified these challenges:³

- ▶ quota management (4) posing a barrier to long-term fisheries
- ▶ bass regulations/Devon & Severn IFCA netting bylaw (3) causing difficulties due to a perceived disconnection between research and stock; the risk of choke species; and increased risk of fishing outside the estuary during bad weather

² North Devon Biosphere (n.d.) 'Catchment Management' <https://www.northdevonbiosphere.org.uk/catchment-management.html>

³ Numbers in brackets indicate how many of four groups mentioned this issue in their top 5.

- whelk stocks (2) suffering from changes to the minimum landing size for whelk; high and increasing fishing effort; and heavy potting from visiting and larger vessels in the area
- ray ban (2) having a significant socioeconomic impact with a resulting reduction of the towed-gear fishing industry in North Devon
- stock assessments (2) would benefit from replacing precautionary approaches with appropriate management measures underpinned by science and a fully documented fishery, recording discards, observational data, local knowledge and historical landing data
- spurdog management (1) would avoid predatory fish (spurdog, porbeagle, tuna) affecting the ecosystem and acting as choke species
- water quality in shellfisheries (1) where three poor readings for water quality (possibly due to boat owners' sewage or diffuse pollution) can shut down a fishery
- increased potting on all shellfish (1) due to an increase in static gear effort and pressure on the seabed caused by EU funding for new potting gear
- discard ban and landing obligation (1) needs recording of discards to document every fish caught, to move towards a fully documented fishery
- shoreside facilities (1) would assist in adding value/new markets.
- producer organisations seeking funding for quayside infrastructure and conservation projects through the European and Maritime Fisheries Fund
- robust science underpinning management to ensure real-time data on sustainability of fish stocks, with a strong link between scientists and fishermen
- improved management of quotas and licences, such as sub-quotas and non-transferable quotas.

What would help sustain fishermen's livelihoods?

North Devon fishermen identified the following needs:

- education and apprenticeships such as work experience on boats and education in local schools, as well as business support for fishing businesses
- new routes to markets linked to brand sustainability
- communications such as boat stories to promote fishing as a vocation
- management at several levels, looking beyond quotas to how more fish can be made available for a sustainable fishery

A **choke species** is a species with a low quota that, in a mixed fishery such as North Devon, can cause a vessel to stop fishing – even if it still has quota for other species.

Lundy is an example of a mixed economy where tourism, transport to the island, and statutory authorities' inputs all contribute to the cost of managing the marine nature reserve and the Marine Protected Area.



What would regional management look like to the local fishing industry?

Regional management would include:

- improved access to traditional seasonal fisheries to increase diversification
- a community-led inshore policy overseen by a multi-stakeholder committee – recreational and commercial fishermen – working in tandem with local authorities

- joined-up management between commercial and recreational fishing, supported by better enforcement.

Regional management in the Bristol Channel/ Pioneer area would be **community-led local fisheries management**, where fishermen work in partnership with fisheries managers.

Next steps

The ideas that came out of the workshop, and from previous discussions with North Devon fishermen and aquaculture businesses, will be used to guide the demonstration projects for the Marine Pioneer.

Protecting Marine Protected Areas

The third group looked at long-term solutions for financing Marine Protected Areas. Participants pointed out that there is no single, specific source of funding for Marine Protected Areas, but funding is sourced from both public and private sector sources, grants for specific projects, and in-kind time.

Participants identified these challenges:

- communication and engagement – people see the sea as a free resource, so when seeking funding it needs to be clear why we should value it, building on national media and engagement activities – *Blue Planet 2*, *Countryfile*, the Natural History Museum
- political climate – at a time when other issues have priority, and as there are fewer voters on the coastal fringes, we need to identify people and groups to influence and lobby in a coordinated way, for example through local MPs.

Participants identified these potential funding sources for Marine Protected Areas:

- link terrestrial areas with high spend to value from the sea – e.g. natural flood barriers cost less than flood defences
- tourism tax – although a balance is needed between the deterrent to visit (the tax) and encouragement to enjoy the area
- visitors willing to pay – e.g. restaurants/hotels adding £1 to each bill – although there must be clarity about what the money would be spent on

- user pays – maritime industry contributions could include shipping, aggregates industries, and permit fees for fishing, angling and diving, and charter boats
- other industry-specific sources of funding might include the Shellfish Association of Great Britain and other producer organisations
- fines for bad practice could be used to fund good practice – with enforcement
- corporate responsibility by marine-specific industries such as surf companies and pleasure yacht companies, and businesses such as transport companies, tolls on roads and ferries, and commercial sponsorship – businesses need to include natural capital implications in their business plans
- grants/short-term funding – projects for environmental activities should link clearly to the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan to have any chance of funding success; grants should kick-start the process for longer-term sustainable financing.

Stakeholders

Forty-nine stakeholders representing a range of interests attended the workshop:

- academic researchers – Cardiff University, Plymouth Marine Laboratory, University of Plymouth, University of Surrey, Marine Biological Association
- local businesses and tourism – North Devon Chamber of Commerce, North Devon Marketing Bureau, charter boat company
- local councils and designated areas – Cornwall Council, North Devon Biosphere Reserve, North Devon Coast AONB, North Devon Council, Somerset County Council, Torridge District Council

Non-monetary resources include volunteers offering skills in business planning, communication and outreach projects; behaviour change such as recycling and beach cleans; organisations offering time and the use of equipment; and connections with others working on the same challenges and shared experiences.



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- local fishermen and consultants – fishermen from Appledore, Bideford, Clovelly and Ilfracombe, Porlock Bay Oysters, Torridge Oysters and Mussels, North Devon Fishermen’s Association
- local projects, forums and NGOs – Sustainable Fish Education, Biosphere Reserve Foundation, Devon Wildlife Trust, Somerset Wildlife Trust
- maritime safety – Royal National Lifeboat Institution, Harbour Masters
- national and international NGOs – Blue Marine Foundation, Marine Conservation Society, National Trust, UK SEAS (WWF)

- recreational users – Appledore Sub-Aqua Club
- regional and national statutory agencies – Devon & Severn IFCA, Environment Agency, Natural England, Marine Management Organisation, National Association of AONBs

For more information see the [full workshop report](#).

The North Devon Marine Pioneer contributes to the Government’s [25 Year Environment Plan, A Green Future](#)

For updates visit our website: northdevonbiosphere.org.uk/marinepioneer.html

