

NORTH DEVON MARINE PIONEER PROJECT –

SUMMARY OF NEF OUTPUTS

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Output 1: Context, baseline and what is possible for the NDMP

- MMO vessel data and IFCA permit data do not align and this may mask true landings, fishing capacity, value and impacts on the marine ecosystem. MMO data needs to be updated to reflect vessels actually involved in the fishery.
- The ports within the area are diverse and require tailored discussions on research and management interventions relative to their fishing activity and target species / areas.
- The NDMP area is part of the wider Celtic seas ecosystem, a historically overfished and ecologically depleted area with UK and EU fleet fishing activity, targeting a wide range of species and stocks. Wider trends around fishing mortality and spawning stock biomass are overall improving but for some species the trends are still of concern. Less than half the stocks (~405) are at MSY and over 25% are overfished.
- Shellfish management for inshore and offshore areas at UK / regional level is appropriate, for most TAC species they are trans-boundary and require shared management. Quotas for these species cannot be set unilaterally.
- Stock health or lacking stock assessments are fundamental management challenges. Species / fishery specific recommendations are made.

Output 1b: Ecosystem Service benefits and shellfish

- Current water quality issues are mainly driven by EU WFD and the UK needs to ensure these standards are absorbed into UK law (and importantly that UK water quality needs to be improved).
- Bivalve shellfish rely on good water quality to be consumed, but also provide wider ecosystem services (provisioning, regulating, supporting and cultural) which are described as a narrative.
- Porlock Bay oysters are an innovative CIC model growing pacific oysters within the NDMP area, and mussels are also harvested in the Taw Torridge. Water quality in Porlock Bay is Grade A and the oysters do not require depuration.
- Any opportunities to increase bivalve shellfish aquaculture in the NDMP should be investigated, the CIC model holds promise for coastal communities and IFCA research time is a valuable contribution to the NDMP with regards to shellfish.
- Resolving the Non-native, invasive species issues around Pacific Oysters would be a useful first step when considering options and opportunities.

Output 2: Who gets to fish in the NMDP

- Fishing opportunities are varied. They are also necessary to prevent overfishing, and ensure access to the resources. Socio-economic and environmental aspects (from equity to externalities) need to be incorporated as allocation criteria, whether for quota, spatial access or effort.
- Decisions on what criteria to apply and how can be taken at national level (e.g. TAC species) or local / regional level (e.g. access to shellfish grounds) but need to be underpinned by scientific assessment of the capacity of the stock or area to be fished sustainably.
- The UK Fixed Quota Allocation (FQA) system has had unintended social outcomes, as a result of using historic track records which the majority of the fleet did not keep. As a result, the majority of inshore vessels in the fishery share around 2% of the UK quota. Quota reallocation (possible now) and the application of criteria for new quota as a result of Brexit (not yet possible) could overcome this problem and deliver socio-economic and environmental benefits.
- Producer Organisations (POs) have a key role and the recent formation of the Coastal PO may be a means to access greater fishing opportunities for the inshore fleet in the NDMP area, but the pre-requisite is healthy stocks.
- Quota leasing for individuals may be an interim solution, and Days at Sea systems (although committed to a Defra trial via the White Paper) have been shown to perform worse than quota systems.
- Current locally relevant management measures for the NMDP are described.
- Environmental criteria should be applied to all possible fishing opportunities available in the NDMP area to ensure the health of natural capital and maximise the sustainable flow of ecosystem services through limiting damaging fishing activity.
- 'Low impact fishing' needs both a legal definition and supporting criteria to be meaningful. Determining thresholds for low-impact gear should be developed with managers, scientists and industry. Ten suggested low impact criteria are presented, ranging from fossil fuel use, to bycatches levels, pollution / plastics and wider ecosystem damage. These should form the basis of discussions at NDMP level.
- The NDMP area could meet its objective by developing an approach to ensure the only permissible fishing within the area can be considered 'low impact'. This should be a key requirement of the NMDP management plan. This work should also inform Defra's thinking on how to match the definition to the commitments of the white paper with regards to the allocation of fishing opportunities.

Output 3 – How NDMP fisheries management can be funded

- Fisheries management is expensive relative to the size of the industry in the UK. Defra spent £85 million on their 'marine and fisheries' in 2016/17 according to the National Audit Office. While substantial, it is much lower than other countries in the OECD, notably the USA, Norway or Australia.
- Brexit is likely to increase fisheries management costs.
- Management costs are paid for through general taxation but the financial benefits of fisheries management is limited to those within the fishing industry. The 'resource rent' generated by fishing is further limited by commercial licensing. A cap on commercial fishing licenses prevents new entry into the fishing industry (and generates economic benefits for those fishers holding licences).
- Profits in the UK industry are the highest on record, so this is the correct time to discuss and operationalise cost recovery as committed to in the Fisheries White Paper. On both equity and efficiency grounds, the fishing industry itself, rather than the public should pay for fisheries management.
- Any demands for increased local management or stock assessments leading to increased fishing opportunities will need to be financed. From Local Authority to IFCA level it would be impossible to justify giving preferential treatment to stakeholders in the NDMP without contributions to the cost of that management. A local cost recovery programme should be consulted on.
- Options for cost recovery:
 - National level cost recovery typically involves either auctioning fishing opportunities or charging a tax/levy. Some of the Seafish landings levy could be ring-fenced for inshore fisheries management. Removing the fuel tax exemption nationally would provide an incentive for innovation in fishing behaviour, developing new gear technology, and/or switching between fishing types. It would reduce emissions and be transformative in terms of how the industry operates, and which kind of fleets can adapt.
 - Local level cost recovery typically involves the use of permitting. A multitude of cost recovery byelaws are used by IFCAs, including a combination of licences, permits for specific fisheries, and pot tagging schemes to aid limiting static fishing gear per vessel spatially. D&SIFCA currently charge £20 for 24 months for their permits, although this could be reviewed later in 2019. Local Authorities could increase council taxes to cover some fisheries management costs although this would need to compete with other priorities in the region, where health, poverty etc may have higher public support for the use of taxes. Access fees could be

charges by the Crown Estate, but these may seem unfair to fishers who fish within the NDMP area versus those who do not. A landings tax for the NDMP area which would cover the fisheries management costs was estimated at 23.5% of landings to cover the costs, which is a barrier to buy-in or local landings which would likely move to ports outside the NDMP.

Output 4: NDMP Fisheries management and governance options

- Fisheries management in England takes various forms, including: Spatial management (access to certain grounds / areas); Quota for certain species (tonnage per month), to regulate fishing mortality or catch; Effort based systems ('Days at Sea' or 'Hours KWH at Sea', or gear limits e.g. number of pots fished); Funding (subsidies and incentives).
- Opportunities for the NDMP:
 - The NDMP fishers could form a PO, join the Coastal PO, or set up a community-quota scheme, where it is then up to the community organisation to determine how the quota is used by its membership.
 - TURFS may be hard to deliver in the NDMP area because of established fishing activity from vessels outside the NDMP ports
 - Spatial management measures are usually put in place to protect biologically sensitive/valuable areas or to prevent gear conflict and would be deliverable in the NDMP area to protect particular features or Essential Fish Habitats (feeding, spawning or nursery areas).
 - Fishing seasons are usually applied to match migratory patterns and avoid fishing during the sensitive spawning season for a species, e.g. the closure of the offshore pair-trawl fishery for bass during the winter spawning season.
 - Fishery closures are also put in place once quotas have been exhausted or significantly depleted and for certain fisheries in the NDMP area fisheries closures may be necessary to protect vulnerable species such as spurdog, smooth-hound or undulate ray.
- Fisheries co-management has certain success factors, which are applied to the NDMP context:
 1. Appropriate scale and defined boundaries – Clearly defined boundaries have been agreed for the NDMP, but There are issues with the boundary from a human perspective (as sea users or managers) and there are ecological issues as

well as the Celtic Sea, or Bristol Channel may be more appropriate in terms of scale to reflect the wider ecosystem.

2. Membership is clearly defined – Membership of fishermen has to an extent been defined but requires support to develop this further.
3. Group homogeneity – The group currently covers central government, local government, industry, academia and third sector organisations: Defra, MMO, Natural England, D&S IFCA, Torridge District Council, North Devon District Council, Devon County Council, the North Devon Biosphere Reserve, SWEEP as well as NGOs and the Devon Local Nature Partnership
4. Participation by those affected – this is met to some degree by the NDMP via fishers’ representatives, but not all fishers in the area participate. Scientists and regulators participate in the group.
5. Leadership – The North Devon Biosphere (BR) are providing leadership for the North Devon UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, but with regard to fisheries, management leadership from within the NDMP fishery needs to be developed further. NGOs are taking an active role in much of the delivery at present. The MMO fisheries division have not engaged in this project to date.
6. Empowerment, capacity building, and social preparation - If the fisheries group becomes a subset of the North Devon Biosphere’s Marine Working Group, some capacity building and education would be necessary within the Marine Working Group to enable a detailed understanding of fisheries management.
7. Community organisations – The North Devon Fisherman’s Association (NDFA) and Porlock Bay Oysters CIC (Community Interest Company) are members of the NDMP group, as are Clovelly Shell Fishermen, Ilfracombe Fishermen’s Association, D&SIFCA committee, the Biosphere Partnership and marine working group. The Coastal PO could be an important addition for fishers if the benefits can be clearly defined and communicated
8. Long-term support of the local government – the time commitment beyond the initial stage is unclear and the long-term support is only possible given appropriate funding. Local government representatives sit on the BR partnership and has a longer term remit beyond the end of the pioneer.
9. Property rights over the resource – no TURFs or privatised quota is held within the NDMP
10. Adequate financial resources/budget – Funding has not been made available for anything beyond the status quo from Defra, the Local Authority are developing an EMFF bid to cover some of the work streams and time is being put into the project from Plymouth University and NGOs. It is widely felt this

funding is inadequate for the scale of ambition. There are no specific NDMP funds (beyond an initial year of coordinator time confirmed until March 2020). The 'budget' is the contributions from the Partners, including an EMFF grant for a 'marine natural capital plan', which is for coordination time and some stakeholder engagement and communication work.

11. Partnerships and partner sense of ownership of the co-management process - A clearly defined knowledge and dialogue process needs to be established, accompanied by full transparency, engagement and liaison along the journey. The Steering group has Terms of reference, but there is not anything formalised for the Fishing group/Marine Working Group yet. There is a need to enhance/develop this relationship through a fisheries scientist and manager partnership.

12. Accountability – The core steering group for the Marine Pioneer has representation from North Devon Biosphere, University of Plymouth, Plymouth Marine Laboratory, Natural England, Devon and Severn IFCA, MMO, WWF -UK and Blue Marine Foundation. More recently including representation from Defra.

13. Conflict management mechanism – Much of the conflict management to date comes from the liaison between the sectors (and sometimes vessel to vessel) although this is not always achieved. Governance documents and conflict resolution are currently defined through the BR.

14. Clear objectives from a well-defined set of issues – The two aims of the NDMP are to explore how marine natural capital can best be managed for the benefit of the environment, economy and people, and; to test how local interests (environmental, social, business) can play their part in managing, monitoring and communicating the benefits of a location's marine area and related coastal and terrestrial zones.

15. Management rules enforced - this is met by the NDMP area via national (MMO) and local (D&SIFCA) management measures and enforcement. There are limited resources to employ in enforcement and a risk-based approach is used regarding compliance.

- Until the 15 key criteria listed above are fulfilled, the implication is that co-management at the NDMP level is not likely to be the appropriate level, for ecological and socio-economic reasons as access is not restricted to vessels from the NDMP ports.
- The IFCA model is open and combined with the top down steer from Defra (consultative co-management) and bottom-up stakeholder driven input, where stakeholders can propose management ideas and the IFCA can then in turn focus their research to test the feasibility of these proposals. This evidence base can

then be developed and taken to the IFCA committee with all the representatives from different sectors to then determine whether the proposal should be implemented or not and this can then be further refined (if it proceeds) to a byelaw agreed and drafted by the IFCA. Byelaws are made by the individual IFCAs (sometimes with external legal advice) with varying degrees of input from the MMO. The MMO and Defra review the draft byelaw before sign off by the Secretary of State (SoS).

- Natural Capital and the principles of ecosystem-based management should underpin and be central to the future fisheries and marine environmental management and this includes the human dimension - but this requires staff time and therefore increased funding.
- The current IFCA funding structure supports local accountability and has been shown to be cost-effective to deliver fisheries management, research and enforcement. IFCAs are well placed to meet their objectives, and understand the environmental and socio-economics context and reality, but this requires appropriate financial support.
- The Governance Structure of the North Devon Biosphere is the appropriate level for local decision-making and accountability.
- The NDMP sits within a well-established governance framework (the North Devon Biosphere) and has built partnerships and developed areas of work. Formalising the roles within the NDMP groups and ensuring they are represented at D&SIFCA level, both at the quarterly meetings and at the IFCA byelaw and permitting subcommittee, is recommended.
- Funding going forwards is a barrier to the ability of the NDMP to deliver and also for any localised fisheries management, whether research, engagement or developing new cost recovery options and therefore the best solution at present is to make use of the opportunity at IFCA level through co-management at a wider regional scale until further funding becomes available.