



Marine Management Organisation

South marine plan areas options consultation summary

March 2015



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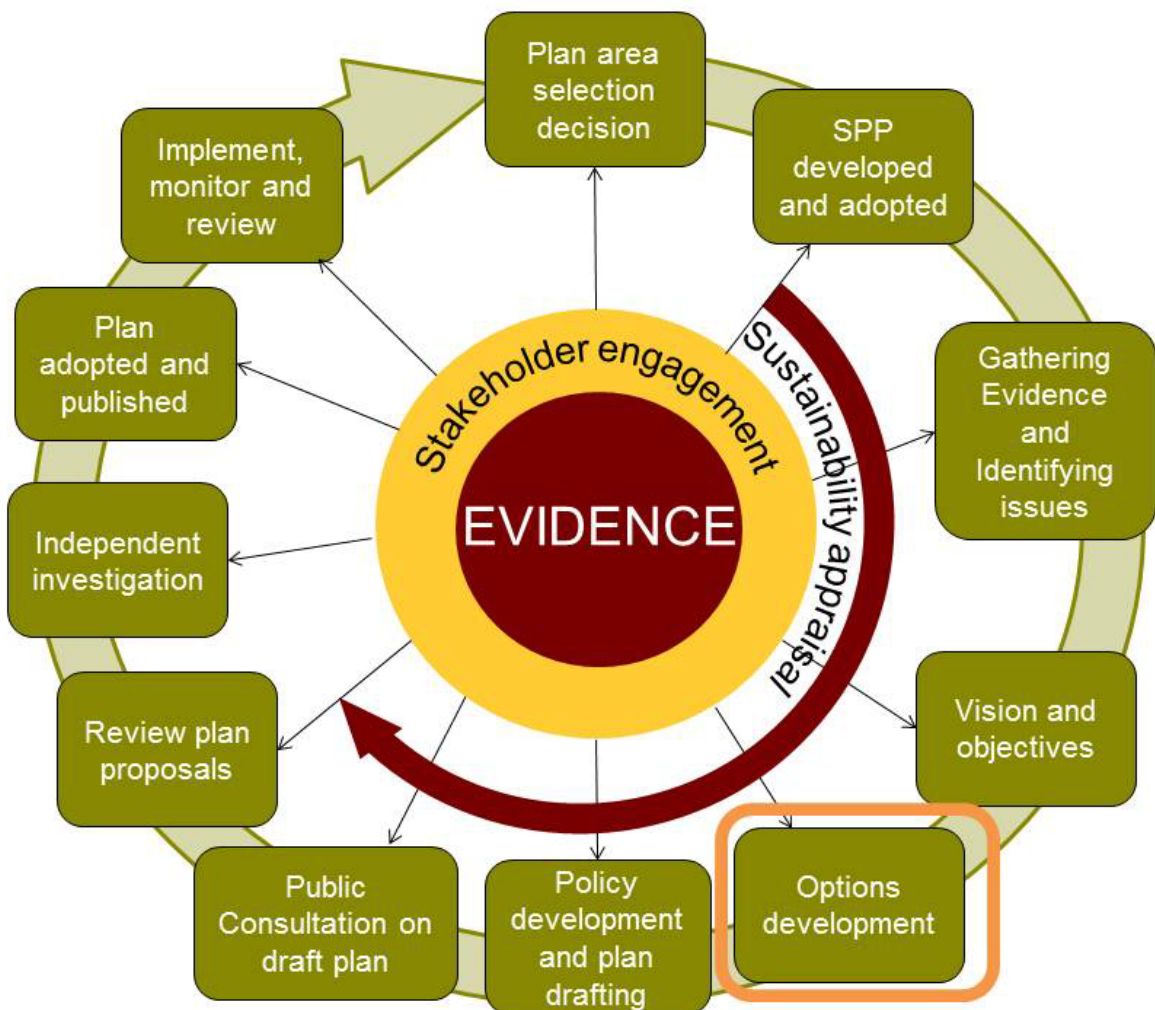
1. Introduction

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) began planning for the South inshore and South offshore marine plan areas in April 2013. The planning process is currently at the “options development” stage (see figure 1).

As part of options development a [document](#) was published in February 2015 to support stakeholder engagement through consultation, on the identification of a preferred option to deliver the South marine plans draft objectives (set out in the [vision and objectives report](#)). The options process builds on the “evidence and issues” and “vision and objectives” stages of the marine planning process. This ensures that the thread from core issues identified earlier in the planning process is maintained. The consultation included a series of workshops.

This report provides an overview of the consultation and provides a summary of the comments received.

Figure 1: Marine planning process wheel



2. Consultation process and workshops

Public consultation on the options stage of the South marine planning process ran from 3 February to 4 March 2015. Comments could be submitted via the MMO's online consultation tool (MMO Connect), by email (planning@marinemanagement.org.uk) and in writing.

The consultation process was supported by a series of workshops to raise awareness of the proposed options and canvass stakeholder views towards a preferred option for developing marine plan policies for the South marine plan areas.

Workshops were held in:

- Brighton (11 February 2015)
- Southampton (12 February 2015)
- Exmouth (13 February 2015)

The workshops were supported by the Solent forum, Dorset coast forum and Devon maritime forum. 145 people from a wide range of organisations attended, representing an array of national and local stakeholders with interests in the South marine plan areas including: tourism, recreation, ports and shipping, aggregates, local authorities, private consultancies, conservation and environmental interests and coastal forums.

Each workshop was comprised of three presentations and three interactive group activities, designed to encourage discussion between delegates on their areas of interest.

All on-line, email and workshop comments have been entered into a database as a full record of the consultation. Comments will be used to inform further development of a preferred option and draft plan policies for the South marine plan areas.

In addition to the consultation process a series of bilateral meetings were held with a range of stakeholders to support their engagement and contributions to the options process. Comments received by the way of discussion have not been included as consultation responses.

This document summarises the comments made by consultees on the options and supporting draft policies only. It is not intended to be exhaustive, but to illustrate the range of comments received. The summary does not provide a detailed response to comments as these will be addressed through the ongoing the plan-making process. Comments submitted on the objectives are not summarised in this document; they will be utilised during drafting of the plans.

If you require further information on any aspect of the options consultation, please call 0191 376 2790 or email planning@marinemanagement.org.uk.

3. Overview of consultation comments

At the conclusion of the consultation period 165 individuals representing over 100 organisations provided responses, either on-line, by email or through the workshops.

A breakdown of the numbers of delegates and comments is detailed in figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Numbers of comments made through the consultation and at workshops

Consultation/Workshop	Recorded delegates	Total comments
Brighton	40	507
Southampton	59	709
Exmouth	46	510
On-line (MMO Connect)	16	152
E-mail	4	121
Total	165	1,999

1,999 comments were received across the consultation and over 1,700 were received directly from stakeholders at the workshops. This can be attributed to the inclusion of feedback forms which stakeholders were asked to complete as they considered the options. Generally, stakeholders felt the forms were a good method of capturing comments and we will be considering how we can best use this approach for future marine planning workshops. The numbers of delegates have been adjusted to account for the fact that many on-line and email responses were received from those who had also attended the workshops. Furthermore, this has been recognised in the breakdown below (figure 3) and the summary of comments (section 4) to avoid “double counting” in preferences for options. This means that where a delegate has submitted a comment through the workshops and on-line their preference is only counted once. In the event of any disparity between different forms of comment the on-line or email comment is given precedence as it post-dates the workshop.

There was general support for the concept of marine planning. Stakeholders felt that policies could go further in some areas and indicated a preference for more prescriptive policies.

Some stakeholders raised concerns in relation to the overlap with existing legislation and requested clarification on how marine plans would deal with this. Similarly there were some concerns over the uncertainty of outcomes over 20 years – particularly in relation to option 2.

There was support for specific policies on climate change, in whichever form, to be included within the plans. Stakeholders also had concerns that some policies are open to very different interpretations and therefore may be applied inconsistently. Some stakeholders also felt that preferences for particular options vary according to

exact location and that subsequently, policies that vary across the plan area could be considered.

Although most delegates did select a preferred option, the general consensus was that a combination of options rather than one specific option would be most suitable. Figure 3 outlines the preferred options suggested by stakeholders.

Figure 3: Preferred options breakdown (from consultation and workshops)

Consultation/ Workshop	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 1 & 2	Option 1 & 3	Option 2 & 3	none
Brighton	7	2	5	0	5	0	4
Southampton	14	9	21	0	3	0	4
Exmouth	12	2	7	1	6	1	1
On-line	3	4	6		1		1
E-mail		1					
Total	36	18	39	1	15	1	10

Note: The numbers included in the table above cover preferences submitted by those stakeholders who made comments during the consultation period. Any discrepancies between Figures 2 and 3 can be attributed to stakeholders either not expressing a preference or duplicating comments in more than one form.

4. Summary of comments

4.1 Comments on the preferred option

The comments listed below are provided for illustrative purposes only. They are not intended to be a comprehensive list or verbatim comments, but provide a snapshot of responses from consultees. The comments are not the views of the MMO and are without prejudice to the MMO's analysis which is now underway to consider all comments in determining an option for policy development.

Option 1

It was recognised that, overall, this option achieves most across the largest number of objectives through the inclusion of as many 'high strength' policies as possible. The greater emphasis on high strength policies for this option should also lead to a relatively greater degree of certainty that the intent and the desired outcomes of the objectives and policies will be realised. Furthermore, with reduced emphasis on prescription compared with option 3, this option allows a greater degree of flexibility for marine planning to adjust to sector's economic priorities as market forces change.

Amongst those comments supporting options 1 and 3, some stakeholders have stated that option 2 is not acceptable as it is too flexible.

Option 2

Stakeholders preferring this option maintain that marine planning policy needs to be flexible.

This flexible option is the preferred way forward to avoid policies being either too prescriptive or not prescriptive enough for different situations. Stakeholders reiterated that the MMO was set up to be able to support balanced use of the sea. As some consider the objectives to be heavily biased in favour of environmental issues and climate change, and the future potential economic uses of the sea are unknown, it is essential that maximum flexibility is retained. Stakeholders reflected that option 2 appears to achieve more compatibility between environmental protection and economic development.

As the inshore marine plan area physically overlaps with that of terrestrial plans, a flexible approach will also be needed to ensure policies interact constructively. This overlap requires marine and land planning to address the overlapping marine and terrestrial environments, and not be restricted by policies that are too prescriptive. This is in line with the [UK Marine Policy Statement](#), which acknowledges that it is important for both systems to adapt and evolve over time.

This option enables decision-makers to apply discretion when presented with the relevant evidence. Clarity can be added to the decision-making process when evidence is prescriptive.

Conversely, those not supporting option 2 suggest it adds nothing to existing regulation and that the lack of clarity would be difficult for regulators, developers and investors.

Stakeholders also felt that they would prefer policies across all options to be framed more positively, but particularly in regard to option 2.

Option 3

Option 3 is regarded by some to be the most challenging to implement, as it aims to have high strength policies along with of sectoral priorities. Those preferring it consider it provides the greatest certainty to marine users. It offers the best set of aspirational outcomes for sustainable development. It also provides the highest levels of environmental protection, for example on issues such as marine protected areas (MPAs), water quality, protection of coastal habitat for their ecosystem services and contribution to climate change adaptation.

Across the range of marine plan objectives, stakeholders consider option 3 would facilitate more of an Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) approach, recognising the importance of ecosystem services and allowing more “win win” solutions, such as the co-existence of marine activities.

It is the role of plans to set a clear vision and increase certainty for developers whilst supporting the delivery of sustainable development. Without such an approach the planning process becomes moribund and begins to lose its purpose. However, there are benefits from cross-sectoral learning and communication that are direct consequences of the process itself. A prescriptive option allows for a more comprehensive and robust marine plan with an appropriate level of policy being planned according to specific requirements. This provides clarity to both decision-makers and developers when using the plans.

There were concerns about whether, in its current form, this option has gone far enough to resolve the potential conflicts and compatibility issues between the environment and those topics or sectors that have a similar priority. If this cannot be resolved some stakeholders would support option 1 instead. Use of exception clauses (eg “d: the case for proceeding with the proposal if it is not possible to minimise or mitigate adverse effects”) within option 1 should be very clear about which situations they should be used in, to further enhance the value of the plans and clarity in decision-making.

Another concern was the general feeling that ‘emerging sectors’ have not been considered and that, particularly under option 3, there may not be the flexibility to accommodate them.

4.2 Comments on topics/sectors addressed (annex 3 of the options report)

The overall preferences for options expressed below for each topic or sector reflects numerical analysis of stakeholder views. The summary of comments then provides an illustration of the range of views of consultees on each of the topic or sector policy variants that formed each option. As noted above they are not intended be a comprehensive list or verbatim comments, but provide a snapshot of responses from consultees. The comments are not the views of the MMO and are without prejudice to the MMO’s analysis which is now underway to consider all comments.

Climate change

- Preference is for options 1 and 3, with limited support for option 2.
- The inclusion of separate objectives on climate change was supported, as well as embedding climate change into other objectives. The desire to reduce coastal squeeze and give support to ecosystem services provided by coastal habitats was also supported.
- It was suggested that option 3 be strengthened to differentiate it from option 1 through an amendment so that activities “significantly increase their contribution to climate change mitigation”.
- The focus on coastal squeeze is raised as questionable and possibly unrealistic, as plans cannot prevent all factors that may cause coastal squeeze (e.g. storms).
- Plan provisions need to address the effects on the coastline and access through flooding and coastal change.
- The policies are not explicit enough to understand what would be done in practical terms to address climate change.

MPAs

- Preference is for options 1 and 3, however, flexibility is also important.
- Option 2 may not be compliant with the Habitats Regulations.
- Given the high values derived from MPAs (nature conservation, fisheries, recreation and tourism) they need strong protection to retain their resilience (as per option 3).
- There will be other threats that may impact on MPAs to those indicated in the report.

- There are too many MPAs. From a commercial viewpoint the proximity to a MPA causes major problems in the planning process for development or application for any marine licence.

Good environmental and good ecological status

- Preference is for option 3.
- A number of policies in the options can be seen to contribute to marine strategy framework directive (MSFD).
- Assessment of cumulative impacts needs to be holistic including impacts of all development in the area, and not be limited to developments of a similar type.
- The need to tackle marine litter is a common concern.
- Concern for eradicating non-indigenous species.

Ecology and ecosystem services

- Policies under this heading could be stronger and more prescriptive.
- Option 3 policies are too strong and restrictive to new activities.
- There needs to be scope for industry and natural protection to evolve together.

Disturbance

- Preference is for options 1 and 3.
- Noise issues must be considered a priority as we are still uncertain of the long term effects of noise upon marine species.
- There is too much emphasis on noise and no mention of other disturbance.
- Activities that do create disturbance should still be able to function.

Water quality

- Preference is for options 3 and then 1.
- Water quality is important for recreational activities.
- Support for developments which improve water quality.
- Estuarine water quality should be monitored especially if discharging into the sea.
- Re-suspension of sediment not always a 'risk'.

Displacement of marine activities and access

- Preference is for option 1.
- Displacement of marine enterprises should be avoided.
- There needs to be firm policing of displacement activities.
- Recognition of tourism and recreation as a significant sector within option 3.

Heritage assets

- Preference is for options 1 and 3.
- General feeling that marine plans were adding value in terms of newly discovered and non-designated assets.
- Allowing for new discoveries and further investigation is welcomed.
- The assumption that all designated assets will be fine is incorrect.

Seascape

- No preference as all narratives were the same.
- The options are all identical however a flexible approach would be preferable.
- One man's view is another man's eyesore.
- There must be clearer priority given to protecting seascape which in many cases is integral to adjacent landscape.

Colocation and mitigation of conflicts

- Preference is for option 1.
- Colocation is central to marine planning and more emphasis should be placed on it.
- Co-location is activity dependent. Those activities which can be co-located should be encouraged whilst those that cannot should be given opportunity to be located elsewhere where this is possible.
- More prescriptive option 3 provides greater certainty for sectors and proposed future development which requires investment confidence.
- Option 3 may be prejudicial to activities with a national influence and favour of more localised ones.

Infrastructure

- Preference is for option 1.
- Increased co-ordination with land-use infrastructure requirements.
- It is not clear how aspirations of marine plans will work with terrestrial strategies and plans regarding development of infrastructure.
- Subsea cables are an important part of infrastructure development for the country and with the right techniques can limit their impact on other activities and must be allowed to develop with ease.
- Option 3 best supports the growth of ports as it does not support activities with an adverse impact on ports, protects shipping routes and would permit an increase in the footprint size of ports or other selected activities. In addition, the option prioritises other important activities in Southampton such as aggregates.

Support for regeneration and diversification of activities that improve socio-economic conditions

- Preference is for option 1.
- Support for regeneration of marine activities and industries.
- Option 3 would seem to provide more flexibility for the marine aggregates industry.
- Not always possible in reality to create employment in local communities especially where specialist skills and facilities are required.
- Much of the detail here seem to be matters addressed by terrestrial planning frameworks, so it is difficult to identify the option that is best delivered by marine planning.

5. Next steps

All comments have been entered onto a database which will be used by the MMO to identify a coherent preferred option. As the most popular option varied across topics or sectors as described in section 4.2, the preferred option may combine different elements of the three consultation options. For each of the topics or sectors, policies within the preferred option will be used as a starting point for revisions when taking account of comments.

Once a preferred option has been developed with a compatible set of policies, the MMO will draft supporting text to complete the first draft South marine plans, drawing on material developed in previous stages. Plan drafting will develop a balance of policy (marine plan matters) and signposting (non-marine plan matters and existing measures) in light of comments.

This early draft will be the basis for informal consultation with government departments and others. A full draft South Inshore and South Offshore Marine Plans document can then be recommended to the Secretary of State for publication for formal consultation following government sign-off. The intention is to publish the consultation draft early in 2016.

The sustainability appraisal, habitations regulations assessment and impact assessment processes all have a role to play in helping to shape the preferred option and resulting South marine plans. The sustainability appraisal has appraised the different options and has made recommendations on them, giving an idea of how they differentially contribute to sustainable development in the South marine plan areas. These recommendations are being considered alongside consultation responses and will inform the choice of the preferred option. The preferred option will be assessed by the sustainability appraisal, which will make further recommendations to help achieve sustainable development across all the topics identified through the sustainability appraisal process.

The habitats regulations assessment will look at the draft policies in the South marine plans and run a screening process on them, to assess their impact on protected sites and species and conduct further assessment on those that may have an impact, either solely or in combination with other policies. The impact assessment process is looking at the options to assess what impact they have that is

different to a baseline prediction of economic growth, and to each other. This information will inform the development of the plan and will give an indication of the potential economic costs and benefits of the South marine plans.