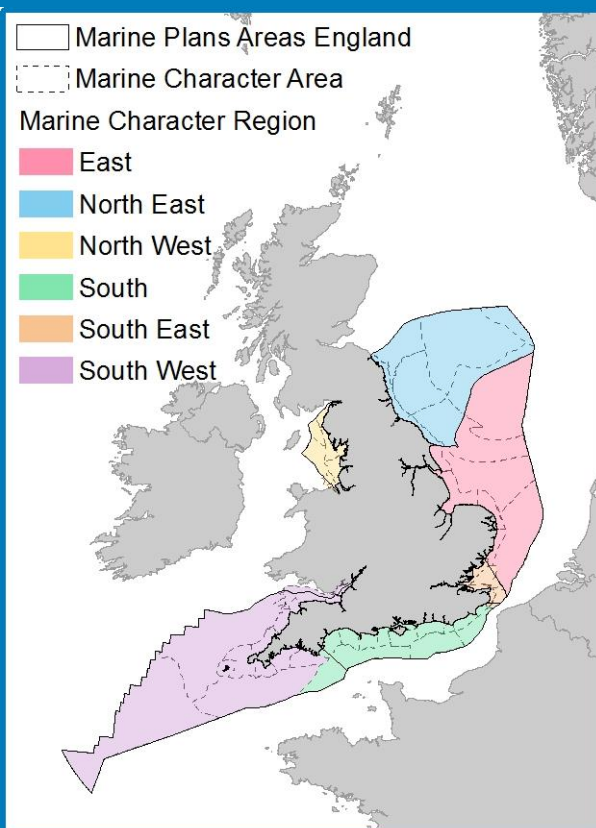




## Aim

This project establishes seascape character assessments for the north east, north west, south east and south west marine plan areas. These assessments are presented as 4 separate reports and a combined seascape Geographical Information System (GIS) data layer for all marine plan areas was produced for the Marine Management Organisation's (MMO) Marine Information system (MIS) and Data.gov.uk for download.



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## Introduction and methodology

The MMO required character assessments for the north east, north west, south east and south west marine plan areas to support decision making through the marine planning process. This follows previous character assessments completed for the south and east marine plan areas. The [Marine Policy Statement \(MPS, 2011\)](#) (2.6.5.2) states that, when developing marine plans, visual, cultural, historical and archaeological impacts should be considered for all coastal areas. The MPS adds that any wider social and economic impacts of a development or activity on coastal landscapes and seascapes should also be considered, taking into account existing character and quality (2.6.5.3).

The objectives of this project were:

- to produce a report for each of the 4 marine plan areas (NE NW SE SW), comprising the marine character area profiles (map, overview and key characteristics)
- to create a single, unified GIS data layer – a national map of seascape for all marine plan areas.
- to use stakeholder engagement to validate, refine and agree the seascape character assessments

The desk-based analysis followed the principles set out in Natural England's [An approach to Seascape Character Assessment](#) (NECR105) and visual resource mapping elements follow the approach prepared for the MMO during the preparation of the south seascape assessment ([MMO1037](#)).



The approach for the character assessment is described in the technical sections of the 4 reports so that it can be replicated where necessary. The approach to preparing visual resource mapping can be found in the technical report for the seascape assessment for the south inshore and offshore marine plan areas.

## Results

Following a review of evidence and consultation with stakeholders the boundaries, marine character area names and key characteristics for each of the marine character areas has been agreed for north east, north west, south east and south west marine plan areas.

Each of the 4 reports has a technical section detailing the methodology used, including data gathering, the use of visual resource mapping and stakeholder validation. The main body of the reports detail the marine character area profiles for that marine plan area, including a character area map, a profile description and a list of key characteristics.

## Conclusions and recommendations

This seascape assessment has been produced for marine planning purposes. It fulfils a requirement outlined in the Marine Policy Statement. The project presents a character study and visual resource mapping for the north east, north west, south east and south west marine plan areas. When this information is combined with the 2 previous studies for the east and south all of English waters now has a baseline character assessment.

It should be noted that the assessment is an objective not a subjective view of seascape character and visual resource.

## MMO comments

The seascape assessments are valuable in the development of an evidence base for marine planning purposes. The assessments can be used to aid developers and decision makers in making the correct decision when considering proposals in the marine area. They also add a 'sense of place' to the marine plans.

It is expected that the seascape character assessments will reduce the burden on decision makers and developers during the application process.

Further work is needed on seascapes to meet the MPS requirements for marine planning purposes. Now we have described the existing character across all of England's marine plan areas we will consider how to assess the quality of seascapes, how highly they are valued and an areas ability capacity to accommodate change, specifically for any development.