# The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) response to 'Supporting the Use of Environmental Remediation to Improve Water Quality in the South Marine Plan Areas'

**Important Note:** This response is based on information presented in the full report that should be read alongside the recommendations made below, and considered in light of current Government policy (National Policy Statements, Marine Policy Statement etc.).

Link to Full Report used as basis for this response:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/XXX

## Introduction

Under the Marine and Coastal Access (2009) the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) has responsibility to develop marine plans for the English inshore and offshore marine area. Plans for the south inshore and offshore marine area, which runs from Folkestone to the Dart estuary, are under development.

As part of the marine planning process specific issues within each plan area are identified with supporting evidence. During the development of the South marine plan one of the issues identified was poor water quality in coastal and estuarine areas. There are several sources of poor water quality in the South marine plan area, many of which are diffuse. Treatment for improving coastal water quality can be expensive, therefore alternative solutions should be explored.

MMO has sought to explore the possibility of utilising various environmental remediation options to improve water quality in the South marine plan areas. The report explores in more depth the specific water quality issues affecting some parts of the south inshore plan area and reviews the potential environmental remediation options to address these issues. Report objectives include:

1. Review and summarise existing available information on the use of different remediation approaches in the improvement of water quality.

2. Provide criteria by which potential sites for environmental remediation might be identified and mapped using GIS and, if feasible, map sites for environmental remediation in the South Inshore Marine Plan Area.

3. Draw conclusions with regards the feasibility of using the different environmental remediation approaches to help improve water quality for the South marine plan area.

4. Provide recommendations regarding the next steps required to enable use of environmental remediation in the South marine plan areas, including practical advice on establishing and implementing the approaches.

5. Summarise how the outputs of objectives 1-4 link back to draft plan policies. In addition, consider how the outputs might inform the monitoring approach for the South marine plans to facilitate evaluation of the potential effectiveness of water quality policies.

The project report was published by MMO in February 2016. This document is the MMO response to that independent report.

## Approach

The project was awarded following a competitive tendering exercise through MMO's Scientific Framework Agreement.

## Results and recommendations

This project has provided a useful review of the potential environmental remediation options available in the South Inshore Marine Plan Area. It also highlighted many of the challenges that face an environmental remediation approach to improving water quality in an area that has many competing demands for space.

One of the major issues highlighted by this report is that of scale. Environmental remediation options would need large areas to be dedicated to them to achieve appreciable benefits over an extensive area. The ability to dedicate areas to environmental remediation in the busy South marine plan area is limited, particularly where there is competition for space between existing marine users. There were several other technical and feasibility issues highlighted by this report.

The evidence presented within this report has been used to inform policy development in the draft South marine plan in relation to water quality. Despite not requiring a specific policy to encourage environmental remediation the draft South marine plan encourages proponents to consider ways in which they can improve water quality, where relevant, including through the use of environmental remediation. The results also highlighted the importance of existing habitats and species assemblages within the South Inshore Marine Plan Area for regulating water quality.

## Next steps

The results of this report have been used to develop several policies within the draft South marine plan. This report also has some use in identifying key areas to focus future ecosystem service assessments, if required. The general habitat level results are applicable to all plan areas and may therefore be used in draft policy development in the remaining plan areas.