



Aim

To investigate stakeholders' awareness, understanding, experience and views of past communications and engagement in marine planning. In addition, to investigate stakeholders' drivers, motivations and general ability to engage in marine planning in both current and future contexts.

Introduction and methodology

This project is part of a body of work carried out under the Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement in Marine Planning project. It included fieldwork relating to England's eleven marine plan areas to gain insights from a sample of stakeholders of their awareness, understanding, experience and views of past communications and engagement in marine planning to date. The fieldwork also investigated stakeholders' drivers, motivations and general ability to engage in marine planning.

To collate stakeholder experiences and insights engagement with marine planning to date, the project adopted a three phase approach;

- Literature review – to prepare for further activity including identification of target groups and cohort sizes, relevant subject matter topics and best practice etc.
- Stakeholder telephone interviews - to explore the experiences of individuals
- Online stakeholder survey - to broaden data collection including to stakeholders not included at interview.

Results

There was great range and variety in stakeholder attitudes and behaviours with regards to engagement in the marine planning process. For nearly all stakeholders, the motivation to engage, and the value attached to engagement, was directly related to the perceived relevance, and therefore value, of the planning process.

Whilst personal contact and good working relations with the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) representatives was highly valued amongst stakeholder, there was evidence to suggest that many people thought that the MMO could be better in its marine planning communications and engagement. It was felt that both written communication (emails, newsletters) and in meetings (at workshops, in local MMO offices and on other committees), could be tailored to better suit the context and people involved in ways more appropriate to their circumstances.

Some confusion and misconceptions occurred in all sectors resulting in uncertainty and a level of anxiety. People had a misconception that the plans will tell them in detail what they can and cannot do. They do not appreciate the value of the plan is strategic, by dictating broad areas for certain activities, rather than giving specific detail that will decide licensing questions, for



example. Stakeholders who had contributed to workshops and submitted evidence expressed frustration that they could not see, or demonstrate to others, the value of their contribution.

Some stakeholders expressed confusion about how the marine plans would fit alongside the work of other bodies such as the Environment Agency, Defra, Local Enterprise Councils, Local Planning Authorities, Planning Inspectorate, London Port Authority and others.

Conclusions and recommendations

A total of 19 recommendations were made to enhance the MMO's stakeholder engagement. They are split into two groups that aim to:

- Broaden engagement to new contacts. These describe mechanisms that can be used to widen the reach of the engagement process, involving more stakeholders in the planning process.
- Deepening the engagement of current contacts. These are intended to make the experience more meaningful to the stakeholders and, in turn, bring an enhanced quality of contributions to the engagement activities undertaken by the MMO.

The report also identified five Key Performance Indicators which could be used to help evaluate the effectiveness of future stakeholder engagement. Further to this, six guiding principles for future engagement were proposed to serve as a constant checkpoint against which any future stakeholder engagement activity can be referenced and assessed, prior to and/or after its implementation.

MMO comments

This report provides insights into stakeholders' views of the MMO's past engagement and also what motivates stakeholders to engage, or not, in the marine planning process. This report will be used to inform future stakeholder engagement to enable the MMO to fulfil the commitments set out in the Statements of Public Participation as fully and effectively as possible.

More effective engagement of the people and organisations who use the marine environment underpins the development, implementation and monitoring of marine plans around England.