

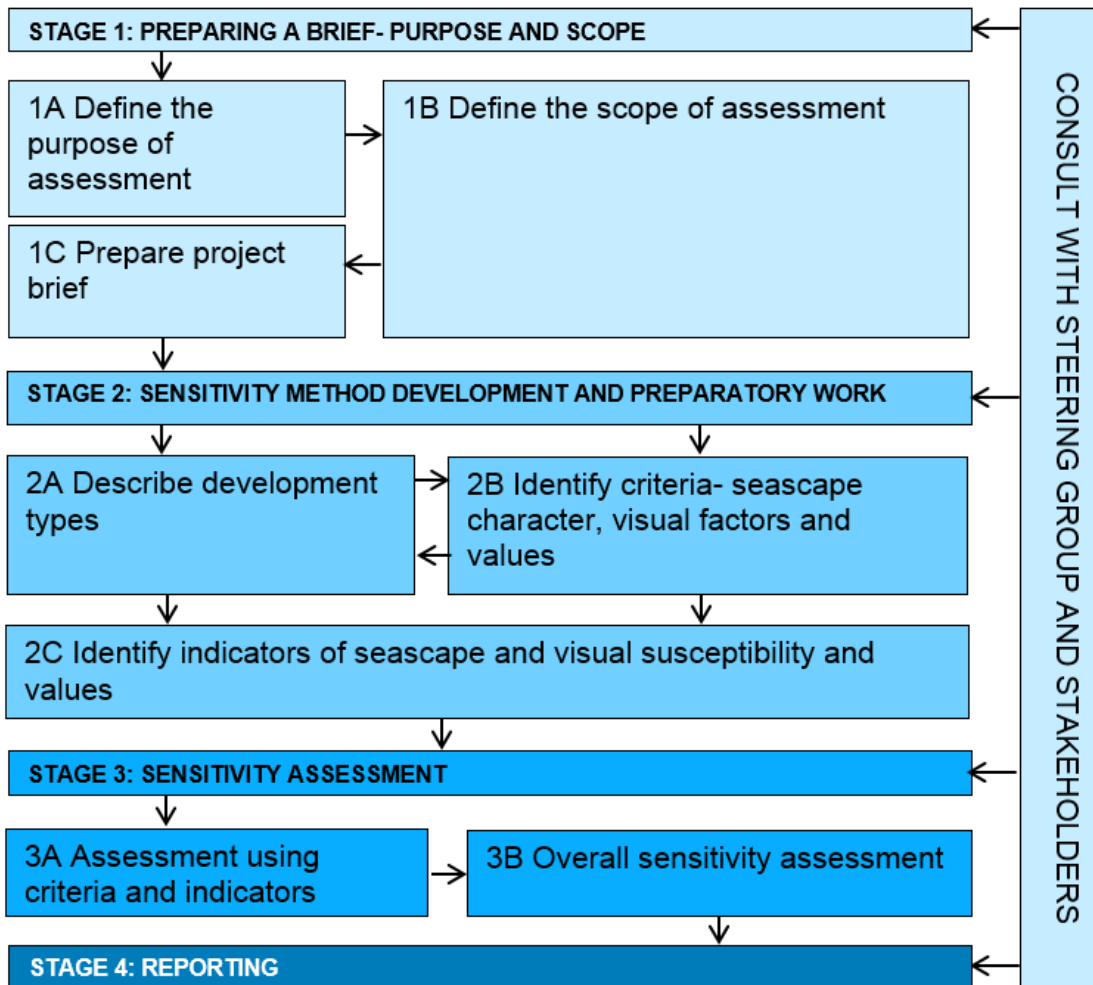


### Aim

The aim of this seascape sensitivity assessment is to help stakeholders assess the sensitivity of Marine Character Areas/ Seascape Character Areas to defined development types and scales of change incorporating the consideration of seascape quality and value.

**Figure 1: Seascape character and visual sensitivity process (abridged)**

(Note: informed by Natural England (2019))



### Introduction and methodology

The UK Marine Policy Statement (MPS) states that “...when developing Marine Plans, marine plan authorities should consider visual, cultural, historical and archaeological impacts that are particularly important for seascape...” Seascape and marine character assessments now cover all of the English marine plan areas through the implementation of project [MMO1134](#), this fulfilled the initial part of the Marine Policy Statement seascape requirements, namely ‘character’. The MPS goes on to state that ‘the marine plan authority should take into account existing character and quality, how highly it is valued and its capacity to accommodate change specific to any



*development....*' This approach now considers how to assess quality, value and capacity to accommodate change.

This project looked to create an assessment approach through a literature search of the current developments in this area combined with an expert working group to further develop the proposed approach.

### Results

The suggested process for carrying out a seascape character sensitivity assessment consists of four steps:

1. Define purpose and scope.
2. Gather the information to inform the sensitivity assessment.
3. Assess seascape sensitivity of the assessment units.
4. Reporting.

In step one the client will need to carefully consider the purpose and scope of the assessment, including how the assessment will be used, by whom and how the outputs will be assessed, this will be detailed in the project brief:

Step two involves an iterative process of defining development types, establishing the appropriate size of assessment units and identifying criteria and indicators of susceptibility related to the development types.

Step three is the sensitivity assessment, this should be prepared for each unit/area being assessed related to each relevant type of development or change. This should consider all the factors influencing susceptibility and value and arrive at an overall judgement on sensitivity.

### Conclusions and recommendations

The findings of this project have led to a preferred approach for assessing seascape character sensitivity. This is set out in the Approach document. The Approach should be read as a complementary document to the approach to landscape sensitivity assessment, Natural England (2019). The accompanying technical report in this project shows two worked examples of how this approach could be implemented, one offshore in Seascape Character Area - SCA1 Dogger Bank and the other inshore in Marine Character Area - MCA31 St Bees to Haverigg Coastal Waters.

### MMO comments

This project has created a new and innovative way of considering Seascape when looking at marine developments. It will assist stakeholders and decision makers in properly implementing marine plan policies on seascape sensitivity. The MMO will now be looking to test the approach.

### Further information

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