



## Aim

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) had a responsibility for monitoring marine plans under Section 61 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. To help understand policy effects and the effectiveness of marine plan policies in securing the objectives of marine plans an annual survey is conducted. The survey responses are used to inform the three-yearly reports to Parliament, which fulfils the monitoring requirement.

## Introduction and methodology

Marine plan monitoring surveys were carried out between the 5<sup>th</sup> January and the 7<sup>th</sup> March 2022 for the North East, North West, East, South, South East and South West Marine Plans. This is the first time since adoption that surveys have been conducted for the North East, North West, South East and South West Marine Plans. The surveys were followed by verification interviews with selected stakeholders. Verification interviews are follow-up conversations to go through some of the survey responses with the aim of gathering further information.

Building on lessons learned from previous surveys several amendments were made to the surveys. These were, amending the survey format, increasing the number of general reminder emails, prompt emails to those who had started but not completed the survey, and involving our area specific marine planners throughout the survey and verification interview process to help increase response rates.

Surveys were promoted through direct email to our stakeholder contact list, social media posts, the marine planning newsletter, the Communications and Management for Sustainability newsletter, and email signatures.

## Initial findings

Across all marine plan areas, 134 responses to the surveys were received. Of these, 37% indicated that they were 'another stakeholder type' (e.g. recreation organisation or individual) and 24% 'a decision-making authority'. Further analysis revealed that 22% of coastal Local Planning Authorities across all marine plan areas responded to the surveys.

When compared to the previous round of monitoring surveys, which were carried out for the north east, north west, south, south east and south west marine plan areas, there was a small overall decrease in response rate of 10%. This is despite the additional general reminder email and the prompt emails to those who had started but had not completed the surveys. Surveys were not carried out for the east marine plan areas in the previous round of surveys, so a comparison was unable to be made.

Of the 80 stakeholders that agreed to a follow-up verification interview, 38 stakeholders were interviewed across all plan areas.



## Conclusions and recommendations

To help understand policy effects and the effectiveness of the marine plan policies in securing the objectives of the marine plans, further analysis of the survey and interview responses is required. This will be undertaken in due course and will be fed into the development of the next three-yearly reports.

Initial findings observed a small reduction in the survey response rate, and a variation in responses from each stakeholder type, this could be attributed to the time of year the surveys were conducted. Previously surveys have been carried out in the autumn prior to Christmas leave, whereas this survey period was after the Christmas leave period. This could have impacted on the capacity/resource stakeholders had to respond to the surveys. The differences in response rates from the various stakeholder groups will need to be taken into consideration when further analysis is carried out, however, this provides a baseline for future targeted stakeholder engagement.

It is difficult to determine why prompt emails to those that started the survey had little success, but options could include, that respondents don't use marine plans, the survey was too technical, the respondent didn't have capacity to complete it, or the survey was too long. This will be fed into implementation and survey development.

Recommendations and considerations for future surveys include:

- frequency and timing of surveys
- how surveys are conducted and engaged on
- format of the surveys
- the target audience

The MMO works in collaboration with stakeholders to ensure that the surveys are inclusive and will continue to develop the process in line with the Organisation's values.

## MMO comments

As stakeholder surveys receive proportionately low return rates, compared to the wide range of Plan users, whilst valuable, insights gained from analysis are restricted which must be taken into consideration when used in reporting on the plans. Improvements continue to be made to help increase response rates and reduce ambiguity.

We would like to thank all of those that have participated, and previously participated, in the surveys and verification interviews. Thank you for your help in strengthening our monitoring data.

## Further information

Please direct any correspondence to the Marine Planning Team  
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