Aim

A collaborative approach was taken to the development of the management measures, with the MMO working with stakeholders. This approach represented a new way of working for MMO's Fisheries Management Team (FMT). This process evaluation captures lessons learned and supports the MMO's future approach to collaborative fisheries management.

Introduction and methodology

From 2017, the quota for Dover sole in ICES Area 7.e roughly doubled. Stakeholders reported that this had led to an increase of vessels in the area, greater fishing activity and more competition for space. There were concerns about the impact of this on the sole population, the marine environment and on local communities. In response to these concerns, MMO began collecting evidence to understand the social, economic and ecological scale of the problem. This was collected through collaborative engagement, a consultation, quayside engagement, a facilitated workshop to develop new management measures to deal with these issues.

Research comprised a document and data review, qualitative interviews with the wider delivery team and Lyme Bay stakeholders, observation of an MMO stakeholder workshop, and a survey targeting Lyme Bay stakeholders. It looks at the collaborative approach taken by MMO and evaluates the processes used to develop management measures.

Results

The evaluation looked at *What activities occurred to inform the development of fisheries management measures in Lyme Bay, and how feasible were they to deliver?* This was broken down into pre-consultation (the Lyme Bay Steering group and Pre-consultation interviews), consultation implementation (in-person port visits to discuss consultation questions and quayside events to help stakeholders fill in the consultation and raise awareness), and post-consultation phases (consultation workshop). The evaluation identified various factors which helped implement the management measures such as facilitating 'offline' engagement by allowing stakeholders to hand write responses, MMO staff taking responses for stakeholders who struggle with reading and writing, and working with MMO Coastal Officers. The evaluation also highlighted factors which hindered implementation such as the difficulties in balancing views and louder voices in the facilitated workshop, scheduling in-person meetings at inappropriate times for fishers, time commitments and the wording of consultation questions.

The evaluation also looked at *What level of participation was achieved and why?* Again the findings are broken down by into 3 phases; pre-consultation, consultation implementation, and post-consultation. Findings from qualitative interviews suggest the collaboration activities were largely effective in providing equal access to commercial fishers, who were the primary focus of the collaboration activities. Inputs were gathered from fishers of different size vessels (under 10m and over 10m), using a variety of gear types, and from various home ports (including those with home ports within Lyme Bay, as well as visitors). Members of the delivery team felt satisfied that the views of all key types of commercial fishers landing Dover sole from Lyme Bay were captured through the collaboration efforts. It was suggested that MMO would benefit from working with

recreational anglers more closely in future collaboration activities, noting that recreational fishing was listed alongside commercial fishing in the 2020 Fisheries Act.

Finally, the evaluation looks at *How effective were the activities at fostering a collaborative, participatory process and why?* Interviewed stakeholders were very positive about the MMO's engagement activities. They welcomed the additional routes to participation in the consultation offered by MMO, particularly the quayside consultations. Views on the extent to which stakeholders felt listened to were mixed, some felt some of the trust gained during the consultation phase was lost due to a lack of transparency at the decision-making stage. The extent to which the collaboration activities had impacted fishers support for the final management proposals was unclear.

Conclusions and recommendations

Overall, the collaboration activities in Lyme Bay were implemented effectively and viewed positively by many stakeholders. There was evidence to suggest the activities were contributing to some of the desired impacts. However, there were some challenges and considerations for future collaboration activities undertaken by MMO.

There were four key learnings identified in the evaluation:
1. Alternative routes to stakeholder collaboration help to support greater participation.
2. However, the burden of collaboration activities on stakeholders may negatively impact participation.
3. Consideration should be given to location and structure of in-person collaboration activities.
4. Improving the transparency of decision-making will enhance the relationship between MMO and its stakeholders.

MMO comments

The results of this evaluation will be used to improve the collaborative approach taken by the MMO to fisheries management in the future. This was a new way of working and the MMO will consider the how best to use the key learnings from this project in future engagement with stakeholders. It forms part of the MMO evidence base for engagement work done by the MMO.

Further information

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