



## Aim

The aim of this project was to scope out the challenges, opportunities and barriers to local decision-making within a marine planning context. This is the first step in exploring work towards a multi-level, nested marine planning approach to deliver a more equitable, participatory and inclusive approach to decision-making.

## Introduction and approach

The project took a learning-based approach to understanding existing governance structures in a marine and coastal context to consider how these processes could be enhanced to support and deliver marine planning. The project engaged with the MMO's marine planning team, as well as academic and practitioners with a specialism in local decision-making, to collectively consider what localised marine planning could look like, how it could be delivered and the benefits of this approach. The project delivered a literature review and workshop which informed a roadmap for delivery of a pilot.

## Results

The literature review highlighted the wealth of evidence, from international to smaller scale domestic examples, of multi-layered governance structures that have embedded local engagement and co-development of plans and policies in their approach, to successfully manage the marine area for the benefit of people and the environment. The workshop provided the opportunity to bring together the wealth of experience in the marine planning team and to find common ground and agree the value local decision-making could bring to marine plans and the need to further explore this through a pilot project.

The workshop recognised that there were legislative and other government drivers for more local decision making, as well as needs for fair, just and equitable decision-making, improved land-sea interface planning and better ownership of marine plans. The value of local decision making in addressing spatial conflicts and trade-offs was also recognised. The expected outcomes of more localised marine planning included greater social equity, more integrated and effective management and stronger evidence. Funding and resources, adding additional complexity, determining appropriate boundaries and scale and the need to change mindsets and behaviour were the key challenges identified. A clear mandate, additional resource and capacity, and stronger collaboration and coordination would be required for a local approach to planning to be implemented effectively.

## Conclusions and recommendations

Through the literature review, workshop and other meetings, a consensus emerged regarding what we want to explore in 2024/25. These principles describe what we want to deliver, on what scale and who we should be working with. A number of potential pilot options are also presented alongside a roadmap to take forward the work in 2024/25.



The key conclusions were that developing a local approach to management is an increasingly strong ambition across many policy areas and jurisdictions, recognising the critical role of effective engagement and collaboration in the delivery of equitable outcomes. However, it is not a straightforward process and there are many aspects to be considered during the development of new approaches and to be reflected upon as they are implemented.

The roadmap developed proposed a further scoping phase to inform the development of a comprehensive pilot, followed by implementation of that full pilot, and the potential for full implementation no sooner than 2026.

## MMO comments

This project has provided the MMO with the foundation to further scope the development of a local marine plan as part of a pilot. The value has been in coming together across multiple MMO teams to consider what we can deliver, how and the benefits of it. While there is much work to be done and the delivery of a local pilot project is somewhat off, this project has started the conversation and provided momentum to develop this work in 2024/25. Expanding the work into a full pilot phase will require additional funding and resource to be identified.

## Further information

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