



Marine
Management
Organisation

East Marine Plan Development: Engagement Summary Sept-Oct 2025



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Executive summary

This report summarises feedback from stakeholders during the engagement period for the Plan Drafting and Policies stage for the replacement of the East Marine Plan (see Figure 1).

Between 16 September and 8 October 2025, the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) invited stakeholders - including local planning authorities, industry, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), other MMO teams and other organisations - to learn about progress on the plan and share their views on draft policies and key themes.

We received 608 responses, with comments and suggestions on how the policies are worded and what they aim to achieve. These will be reviewed and used to help shape the next stage of policy development, and the replacement East Marine Plan, which will be shared for public consultation in summer 2026.

You can find the full timeline for developing the East Marine Plan in the [Statement of Public Participation \(SPP\)](#), published in April 2024 and updated in April 2025. Figure 1 (on page 7) shows the steps involved in the marine planning process. There will be more chances to get involved, and the MMO will be in touch over the next year. If you'd like to stay updated, [sign up to our newsletter](#).

1. Introduction

The East Inshore and East Offshore Marine Plans were the first of England's six marine plans, adopted by the MMO in 2014.

In 2023, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs agreed to replace these plans, following a recommendation from the MMO that accompanied the Three-Yearly Report. This decision was based on changing context in the marine plan areas, advances in marine planning, updated government priorities and laws, and better evidence to support emerging activities and technologies.

Work on the new East Marine Plan began with the [Statement of Public Participation \(SPP\)](#), published in April 2024 and updated in April and October 2025.

After the SPP was released, the MMO moved into the next stage: identifying key issues and gathering supporting evidence. This included collecting feedback from stakeholders about challenges and opportunities in the east marine plan areas.

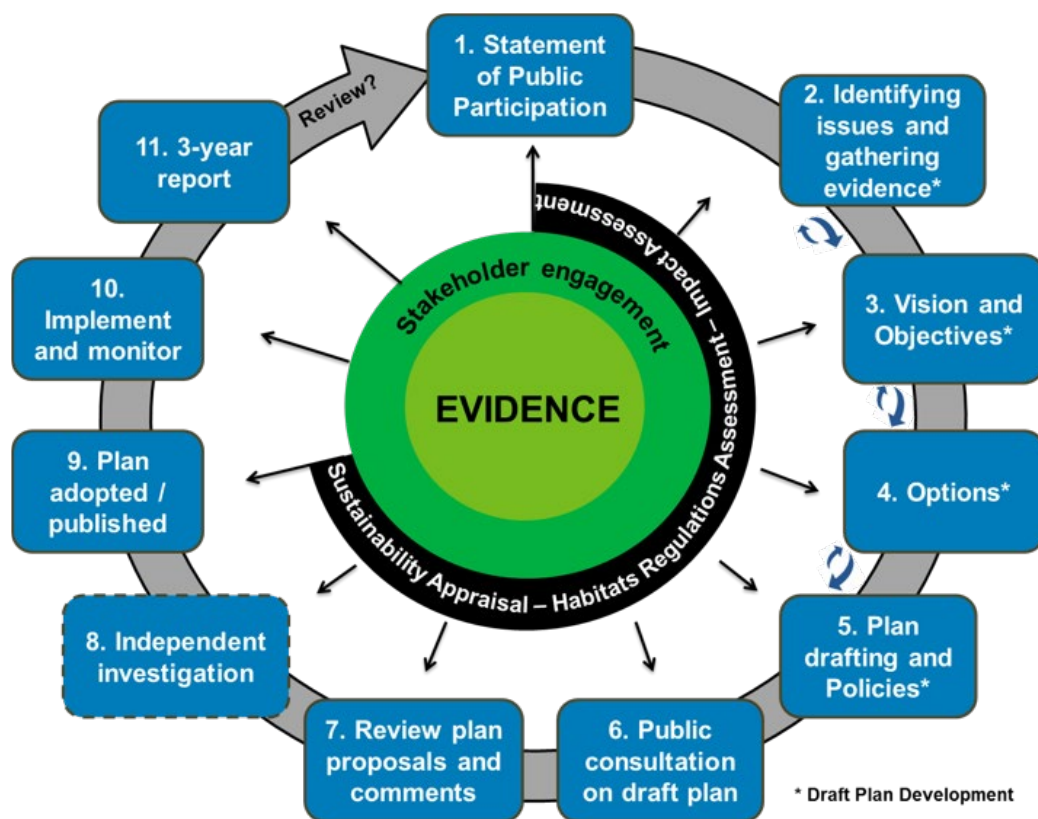
The MMO is now developing policies for the new East Marine Plan, following earlier work on evidence gathering, setting the plan's vision and objectives, and exploring different options. As part of this process, draft policies were shared with stakeholders to gather feedback and test ideas.

Policy drafting began in summer 2025, supported by engagement events in autumn. This informal round of feedback helped the MMO understand how well the draft policies were received before the formal consultation planned for summer 2026.

This report shares key feedback from a wide range of stakeholders during the draft policy stage of the new East Marine Plan. It also explains how this input will help shape the next steps in developing the plan.

Figure 1 below details the stages of the marine planning process. It should be noted that marine plan development is iterative, therefore if new issues and evidence are raised, they can be incorporated into the planning process at later stages.

Figure 1: The marine planning process.



2. Purpose and approach

The MMO is committed to involving stakeholders in shaping the new East Marine Plan. Understanding stakeholder views is essential to creating a well-informed and balanced plan. Feedback from this engagement will help refine the draft policies and highlight which ones may need changes.

This engagement period aimed to:

- share updates on progress so far
- encourage open conversations between the MMO and interested stakeholders
- gather feedback on draft policies and broader questions raised during the drafting process

2.1 Engagement

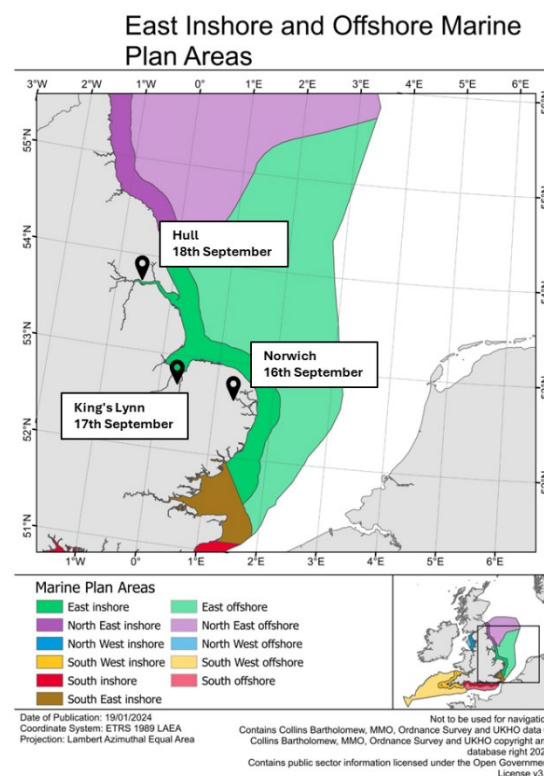
Stakeholder engagement took place in early autumn 2025, with a mix of in-person and online events. Three in-person events were held in Norwich, Kings Lynn, and Hull (see Figure 2), along with two online events for MMO staff and two public online events. All events ran between 16th September and 8th October and covered the same content, with slight adjustments for online participants. Each included updates and hands-on activities.

The marine planning team welcomed input from a wide range of sectors, including but not limited to local planning authorities, ports, the fishing industry, environmental organisations, aquaculture, and consultants.

Events began with an update on the East Marine Plan's progress, covering work on options, objectives, and development so far. This was followed by practical sessions:

- Session 1: Stakeholders reviewed and commented on draft policies
- Session 2: Explored interest in more spatially focused marine plans
- Session 3: Open discussion on four key issues: Climate Change, Cumulative Effects, Co-existence, and Natural Capital

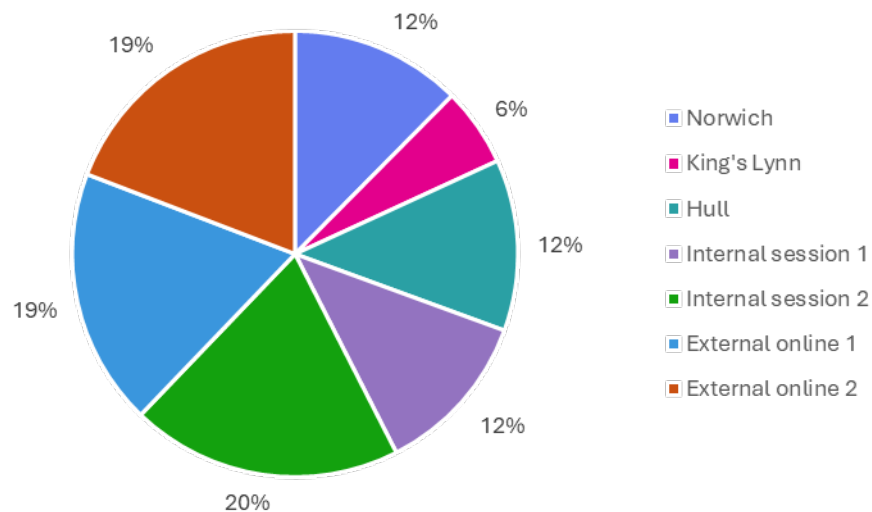
Figure 2: Locations of the engagement events



3. Engagement summary

A total of 193 stakeholders took part in the engagement events. Figure 3 shows how attendance was spread across the different sessions.

Figure 3: Attendance by engagement session



3.1 Key Findings

Session 1: Review of Draft Policies

Stakeholders were shown 71 draft policies developed for the new East Marine Plan.

They were asked to rate each one as either:

- Agree
- Amendments needed
- Disagree

Of the responses received:

- 57% agreed with the policy wording
- 40% suggested changes
- 3% disagreed

These results are shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Proportion of policy feedback responses

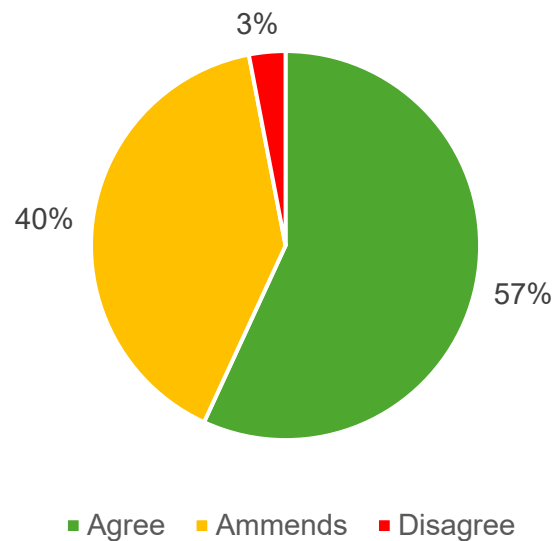
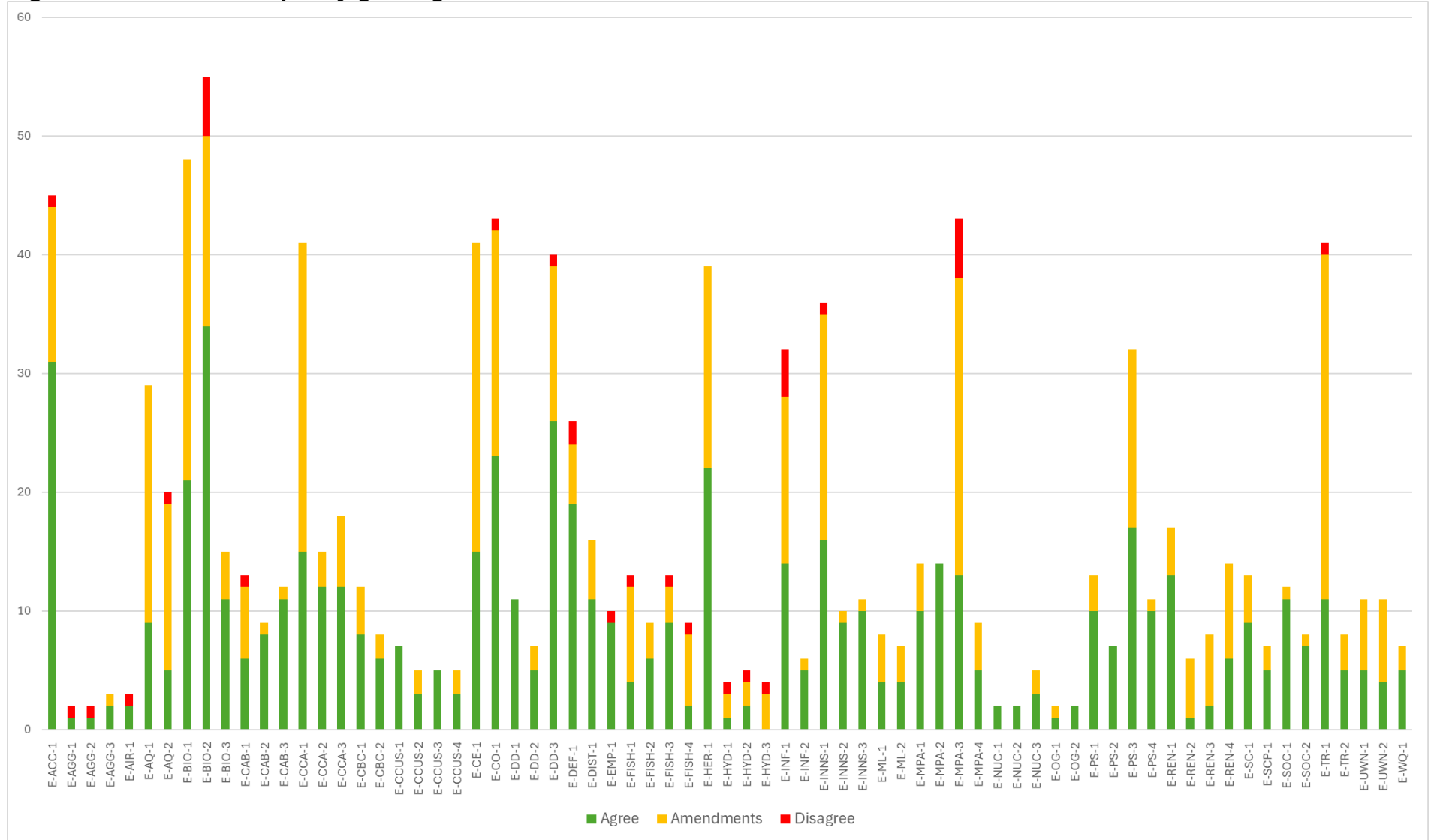


Figure 5 shows how each draft policy was rated by stakeholders. Feedback highlighted that several policies need further review—especially those related to Biodiversity, Climate Change, Cumulative Effects, and Marine Protected Areas. This reflects the importance of these topics to many stakeholders.

In total, 608 written comments were received. Suggestions covered social, environmental, and economic policies fairly evenly. Many comments called for stronger links to nature and the local environment, and for recognising possible negative impacts of certain policies. Some concerns were also raised about the wording used in the policies, which will be reviewed in the next stage of drafting.

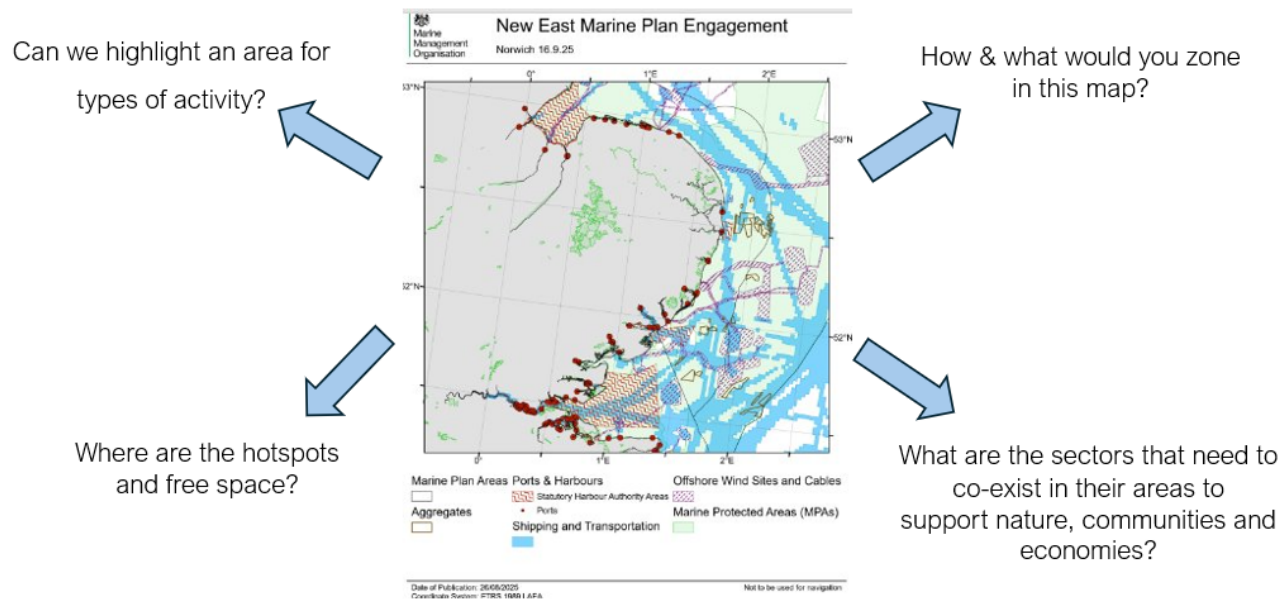
Figure 5: Breakdown of policy grading



Session 2: Developing a more spatially prescriptive marine plan

Stakeholders were shown a map of the east marine plan areas to spark discussion about making the plan more location specific. The map (shown in Figure 6), created using data from [Explore Marine Plans](#), helped participants consider whether a more spatial approach would be useful.

Figure 6: Session 2 activity



Stakeholders discussed the idea of making the East Marine Plan more location specific. Using a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats), they shared a range of views. Figure 7 shows the number of comments received under each discussion prompt. Overall, there was no clear preference for or against a more spatial approach - stakeholders highlighted both potential benefits and challenges in equal measure.

Figure 7: comments received on a spatial plan



Figure 8 highlights the main strengths and opportunities of a more spatial approach identified by stakeholders. In particular, it was noted fisheries could benefit from a clearer spatial understanding of where activities take place and the opportunities this could afford for the co-existence of fisheries activities with other development.

Many comments focused on the need for clearer, sector-specific guidance and better support for interpreting and applying policies. Stakeholders also suggested that a more spatial approach could improve the consenting and decision-making process.

Figure 8: Word cloud displaying the most prevalent topics for the strengths and opportunities prompt



Figure 9 shows common concerns raised by stakeholders concerning the weaknesses and threats to activities which could occur through making the marine plan more spatially prescriptive. Some examples. Stakeholders were worried about the lack of existing data and evidence with which to justify a prescriptive spatial planning approach. Others felt that a more prescriptive approach could reduce

flexibility and limit innovation - especially during times of environmental or economic change.

Figure 9: Word cloud displaying the most prevalent topics for the weaknesses and threats prompt



Session 3: Planning scenarios – strategic opportunities

Four alternative planning scenarios were presented to stakeholders to consider what success would look like, using the current spatial requirements for offshore wind, aggregates, tourism & recreation, and the distribution of harbour seals as a lens through which to consider the scenarios:

- Natural Capital – how to ensure natural capital is incorporated into marine plans
- Climate Change - climate change adaption in marine plans
- Co-existence – opportunities for co-operation, ensuring best outcome for nature
- Cumulative effects – how to apply a cumulative effects assessment to policies

Stakeholders shared 80 comments on four different planning scenarios. There was strong support for including natural capital and cumulative effects in all decision-making. Flexibility was also highlighted as important—especially for non-static habitats and species that move or change due to climate impacts. The idea of co-existence was well received, though some noted that it already happens unintentionally and could be explored further.

We are now reviewing these comments and using them to help shape the next phase of draft policy development.

Some key themes raised from all engagement sessions included:

- the need to clarify the strength of individual policies through the use of correct and consistent terminology used within policy text
- the need for clear and concise word choice to ensure that the policy intent is clear, as this directly impacts accessibility and overall useability of the plans
- the practicalities of more spatial prescription may not align with the changing environment under climate change, mobility of species and activities

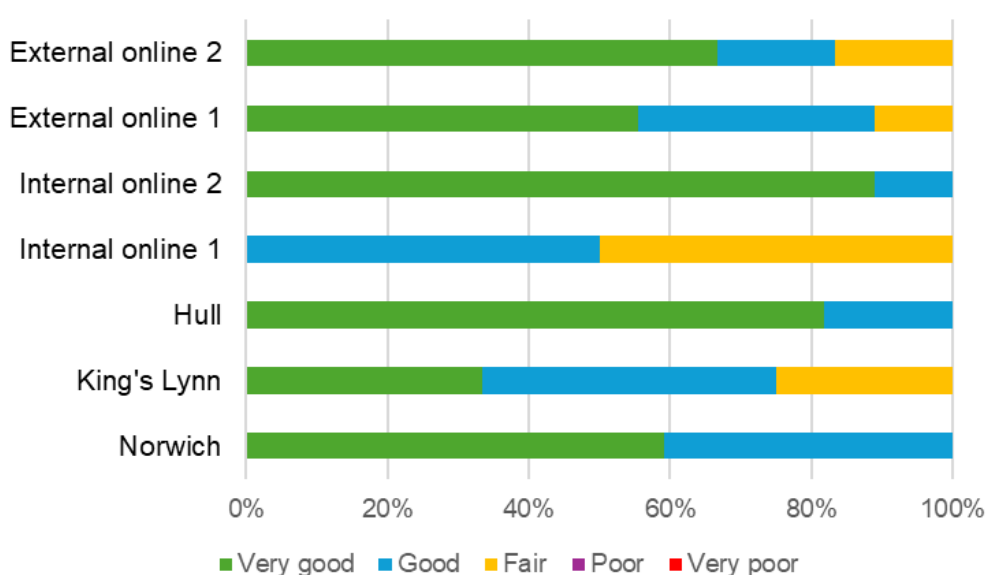
3.3 Participant Feedback

Overall, feedback from the workshops was positive. On average, 91.7% of attendees rated the sessions as good or very good, appreciating the quality of the content, the openness of the discussions, and the chance to be involved in shaping the East Marine Plan. Feedback from both in-person and online events is shown in Figure 10.

The marine planning team used feedback throughout the engagement period to improve each subsequent session—for example, adjusting timings, refining activities, and improving how discussions were run.

Looking ahead, future engagement may include sharing materials in advance or using a different platform for online sessions, as a few accessibility issues were raised during the online sessions.

Figure 10: Average stakeholder feedback across seven engagement sessions



4. Conclusion and next steps

This engagement aimed to update stakeholders on the progress of the East Marine Plan and gather feedback on draft policies and key themes.

A wide range of comments were received throughout all the exercises, especially on the draft policies - most of which suggested changes rather than simply offering support or asking questions. This feedback is vital to ensure the final plan is relevant and effective for the east marine area.

All comments will be used to help shape the next version of the plan. The next opportunity to get involved will be during the public consultation in summer 2026, when the full draft plan will be shared for review and comment. The final plan is expected to be adopted in summer 2027, as outlined in the Statement of Public Participation (SPP).

Thank you to everyone who took part and shared their views.

The MMO will carefully consider all feedback, and there will be more chances to get involved as the plan continues to develop.

To stay updated, [sign up to our newsletter](#). For more information, please see our [guidance note](#) and the [East Marine Plan Statement of Public Participation](#).