

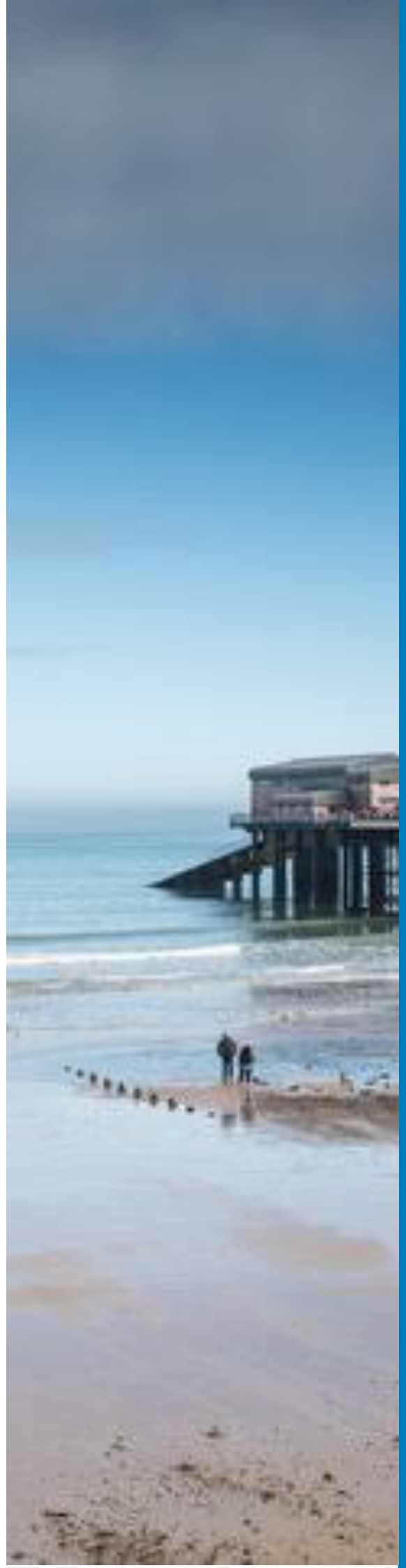


Marine Management Organisation

East Inshore and Offshore Marine Plan Areas

Statement of Public Participation:

April 2026



Introduction

The Marine Management Organisation's purpose is to protect and enhance our precious marine environment and support UK economic growth by enabling sustainable marine activities and development. We are driven by the government's aim for clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas. As England's marine manager, we protect and develop our seas, coasts and communities for the benefit of generations to come.

Adopted in April 2014, the [East Inshore and East Offshore Marine Plans](#) were the first English marine plans to be prepared by the Marine Management Organisation.

In 2023, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs agreed with the Marine Management Organisation's recommendation to replace the East Inshore and East Offshore Marine Plans. The adopted East Inshore and East Offshore Marine Plans will be replaced with a new 'East Marine Plan' which will be the first of a second generation of plans for English waters. The new document will be referred to as the 'East Marine Plan'.

Marine planning

Marine planning ensures the right activities are carried out in the right place, at the right time, and in the right way. It enables sustainable development whilst protecting the environment and heritage, recognising the needs of all.

Marine plans provide a framework that shapes and informs decisions over how an areas' waters are developed, protected and improved over the 20 years lifetime of a marine plan. Through its vision for economic, environmental and social prosperity, marine plans ensure the effective and sustainable use of the space and resources available, whilst taking account of the area's distinctive characteristics.

Marine plans form part of the government's long-term vision for the environment. Marine plans provide long-term policy direction and legal clarity to underpin confidence for decisions made in the marine area. They support for transparent and streamlined decision-making, reducing the regulatory burdens on industry and providing certainty for developers. For marine developments, marine plans will reduce the time from concept to consent, helping to operationalise investments sooner, so they can make an earlier contribution to the economy.

The marine planning process is comprised of 12 stages, from draft plan development to plan adoption and plan monitoring once a plan has been adopted. There are two statutory engagement points set out in the [Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009](#) including the Statement of Public Participation consultation and the draft East Marine Plan consultation. Although stakeholder engagement underpins all stages of the process.

For more information about the marine planning process [visit our webpages](#).

A Statement of Public Participation

A Statement of Public Participation is required for each marine plan area under the [Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009](#). The draft Statement of Public Participation was consulted on in early 2024, was subsequently approved by the Secretary of State and the final Statement of Public Participation was published in April 2024¹. Its publication formally commenced the beginning of the preparation of marine plans. A single Statement of Public Participation has been produced for the east inshore and offshore area as they share features and activities, many reliant on both areas.

During the pre-election period for the July 2024 General Election, and for a short period thereafter, activities were paused with stakeholder engagement resuming in November 2024. This pause impacted the plan development timeline. Subsequently, the East Marine Plan Statement of Public Participation timeline has been updated.

The East Marine Plan Statement of Public Participation sets out how, when and why we will engage with stakeholders and what we will do with the outcomes of any views and opinions. It ensures transparency around how we will consult throughout the development of the East Marine Plan.

It is important that all those with an interest in the UK's marine environment can have their say in the process to replace the East Marine Plans and contribute to shaping the east marine plan areas' seas and coast.

The MMO will keep the Statement of Public Participation under review and revise, if necessary, as required in the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009². Find out more about the [Statement of Public Participation](#) on gov.uk/mmo.

¹ The SPP relates to retained functions for the purposes of Section 60 of the Act.

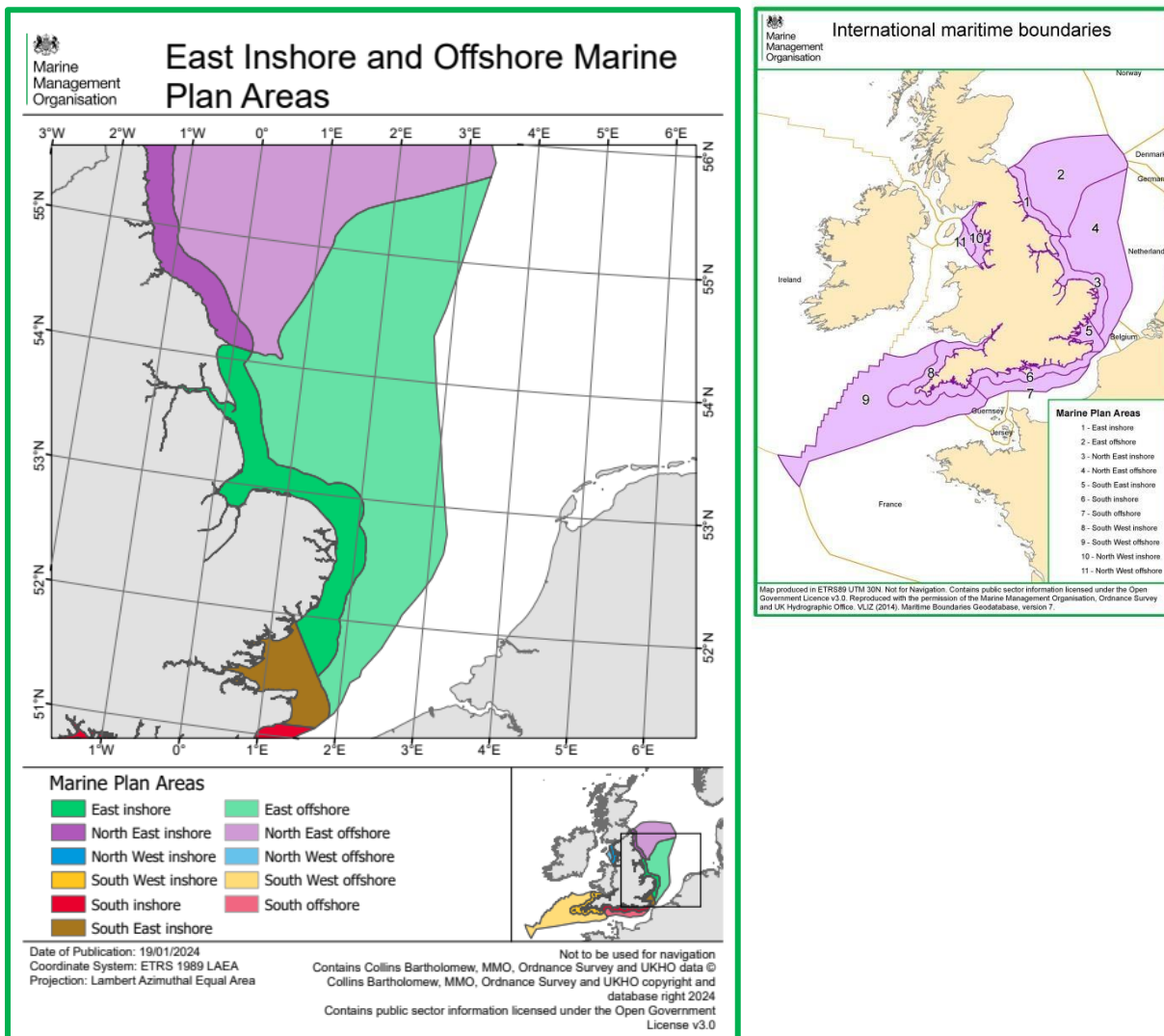
² As per the [Marine and Coastal Access Act](#), Schedule 6 Paragraph 7.

East marine plan areas

The east marine area includes two plan areas, the east inshore and the east offshore marine plan areas.

The east inshore marine plan area covers 6,000 square kilometres of sea. It stretches from mean high water springs to 12 nautical miles offshore along the coastline between Flamborough Head and Felixstowe.

The east offshore marine plan area extends from the outer boundary of the east inshore area to England's borders with the Netherlands, Belgium and France. This is a total of about 49,000 square kilometres of sea.



A more detailed map is available from the [Explore Marine Plans](#).

Matters to be included in the East Marine Plan

The East Marine Plan objectives will be based on the economic, social and environmental high level marine objectives as set out in the [Marine Policy Statement](#). Economic, social and environmental objectives will be considered equally alongside one another and applied in an integrated way.

The East Marine Plan's policies will support the delivery of the marine plan objectives and seek to address the issues identified through the Plan's consultation and development. Where a marine plan objective cannot be achieved through existing legislation, policy or management measures, new marine plan policies will be prepared. Policies will cover a wide range of topics including activities and uses, economic, social and environmental considerations, and cross-cutting issues such as integration of decision-making on land and at sea.

Policies in the adopted East Inshore and Offshore Marine Plans generally apply across both inshore and offshore marine plan areas or are in accordance with spatially specific considerations. The marine plan must be read as a whole, taking all plan policies together rather than each policy in isolation.

The Sustainability Appraisal

The Sustainability Appraisal is an iterative process that considers the economic, social and environmental impacts of an emerging marine plan. The Sustainability Appraisal is a statutory requirement, and this work is subject to full consultation throughout the marine planning process (detailed in Table 1).

Habitats Regulations Assessment

The Habitats Regulations Assessment assesses the implication of a proposed marine plan on all European designated sites in view of the sites' conservation objectives. The Habitats Regulations Assessment is prepared with and subject to scrutiny from the statutory nature conservation bodies in parallel to the marine planning process.

What we will do

We will identify key stakeholders and ensure that they and other interested parties have the opportunity to input into the development of the East Marine Plan.

We will keep stakeholders informed of the East Marine Plan's progress and provide feedback on the views and representations made through our consultations.

We will consider all stakeholder responses, and where appropriate, integrate them into the development of the East Marine Plan, taking into account factors such as legal constraints and the need to operate within national government policies. All responses will be assessed on their own merit whether received once or in multiple instances.

A summary of consultation responses will be published, including acknowledgment of where responses have shaped the plan, and where our ability to implement recommended changes has been restricted by the need to balance wide ranging views or overriding factors and/or constraints. We must also publish a summary of the differences between the draft East Marine Plan (which is subject to public consultation), and the final adopted East Marine Plan, including a statement of the reasons for any changes³.

Read the [list of stakeholders here](#). This list is not exhaustive, and we continually identify new stakeholders and interested individuals. If you or your organisation would like to get involved, please email planning@marinemanagement.org.uk to be added to our distribution list.

How we will do it

Engagement will include both formal consultation and informal engagement, making sure that stakeholder's specialist and local knowledge and experience informs all stages of [plan development](#). It will also help to maintain transparency throughout the marine planning process.

We will use a mix of communication channels and activities to support and encourage stakeholder participation. All engagement will be inclusive and adhere to our principles of engagement (outlined on the following page), which are based on how we believe we should work and how you have told us you would like us to work.

Read the [communication channels here](#).

³ As per the [Marine and Coastal Access Act](#) (Schedule 5 Paragraph 11)).

Principles of engagement

We will:

- involve people early in the marine planning process and in developing policy within the framework provided by the Marine Policy Statement
- engage with interested people and organisations at the appropriate time using effective engagement methods and allowing sufficient time for meaningful consultation
- be adaptable, recognising that different consultation methods work for different people and that a “one size fits all” approach will not work
- respect the diversity of people and their lifestyles and give people a fair chance to have their voice heard regardless of gender, age, race, abilities, sexual orientation, circumstances or where they live
- be clear in the purpose and timing of any engagement, and how you may contribute
- let people know how their views have been taken into account within agreed timescales
- make documents publicly available on [our website](#)
- communicate clearly with people using plain English and avoiding jargon and acronyms as much as possible

When we will do it:

Engagement activity will be ongoing throughout the development of the East Marine Plan. This will include informal consultation and engagement at key phases of the marine planning process. At the end of each marine planning process stage, the outputs of that part of the process will be shared.

The [Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009](#) requires that before preparing a marine plan a Statement of Public Participation must be prepared and published. This document must include a timetable for the preparation and publication of the consultation on the draft East Marine Plan. Engagement on the East Marine Plan Statement of Public Participation took place in January 2024. Consultation on the draft East Marine Plan is expected to take place at the end of 2026 and will last for up to 12 weeks.

Following public consultation, we will review and consider all stakeholder feedback and responses and amend the draft East Marine Plan where appropriate. This document will then be submitted to government departments for consideration, before being submitted to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for approval to be adopted and published by the end of 2027.

The tables below outline the plan development activities and the proposed engagement for consultation purposes. The timetables for plan development engagement and draft plan engagement can be found [here](#).

Table 1 – Proposed pre-plan preparation engagement timetable

Activity	Content	Estimated timing
Marine planning webinar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to marine planning • Promotion of consultation on the draft East Marine Plan Statement of Public Participation • Assessments Process 	January 2024
East launch events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate informal engagement opportunity to provide input to draft Statement of Public Participation 	January 2024
Consultation draft Statement of Public Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of the draft East Marine Plan Statement of Public Participation consultation • Information on online consultation and documents 	15 January 2024 – 12 February 2024
Sustainability Appraisal Scoping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability Appraisal Stage A – Consultation with designated Strategic Environmental Assessment consultation bodies and other relevant stakeholders on the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal 	Spring 2024 – Summer 2024

Table 2 – Proposed plan development timetable

Activity	Content	Estimated timing
Gathering issues and evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues with supporting evidence 	Spring 2024 – March 2025
Vision and objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update to issues with evidence • Use of the Marine Policy Statement⁴ high level marine objectives • Vision development 	October 2024 – April 2025
Options process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable alternatives • Plan policy compatibility 	January 2025 – September 2025
Policy development / Plan drafting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing existing policies • Policy development 	Summer 2025 – Autumn 2026
Sustainability Appraisal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of options reports for the East Marine Plan 	Summer 2025

⁴ [Marine Policy Statement](#) (Chapter 2)

Table 3 – Proposed plan development engagement timetable

Activity	Content	Estimated timing
Gathering issues and evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public call for issues with supporting evidence with support workshops 	Winter 2024
Vision and objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objectives development – Consultation with designated consultation bodies and other relevant stakeholders 	Summer 2025
Options process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Options development – Consultation with designated consultation bodies and other relevant stakeholders 	Summer 2025
Policy development / Plan drafting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public engagement on objectives, options and policy development with support workshops and progress updates. 	Autumn 2025 to Summer 2026

Table 4 – Proposed draft plan consultation engagement timetable

Activity	Content	Estimated timing
Public consultation on draft plan and associated documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch of consultation on the draft East Marine Plan and associated documents. (including the Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulations Assessment and Impact Assessment) 	December 2026 – March 2027
Review plan proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement with stakeholders to clarify responses to the public consultation (where necessary) 	March 2027 – August 2027
Plan proposal amendments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publication of changes to the draft East Marine Plan following consultation feedback 	March 2027 – August 2027
Independent investigation (if required)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement to be determined, but will be set out in appropriate documents separate from the East Marine Plan Statement of Public Participation 	Estimated summer 2027 but TBC if required
Adoption and publication of the East Marine Plan (and supporting documents) ⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders will be alerted to the adoption and publication of the marine plan (and supporting documents) 	End of 2027

Sustainability Appraisal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final Sustainability Appraisal and Sustainability Appraisal Statement 	Summer 2027
Monitoring plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although the legislation focusses the Statement of Public Participation on marine plan development and adoption⁶ this stage is included here for completeness Will be set out in documents separate to the Statement of Public Participation including the relevant Implementation and Monitoring Plan or associated documents 	Ongoing process after adoption

⁵ The Secretary of State decides to adopt the East Marine Plan, developed in collaboration with the marine planning programme board.

⁶ [Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009](#) (S6, 40 to 6)

Making representations on the draft outputs of the marine planning process

When consulting or seeking representations on draft marine plans, we will clearly set out how long you have to make your views known and how best to do so. Comments at each of these iterations must be made through the web-based tool, in writing via email or letter.

Public consultation on the draft East Marine Plan will take place for up to 12 weeks using a web-based consultation and will be publicised by email, gov.uk, social media and publication materials distributed to local authorities for public information. Any representations made via the draft East Marine Plan consultation may be included as part of an independent investigation and used as evidence. More information on the process of the independent investigation is available on the [Planning Inspectorate website](#).

To ensure all engagement and consultations are inclusive, any materials and supporting documents will be available in other formats on request.

All information gathered from stakeholders will be used and disposed of in accordance with The Data Protection Act 2018.

Get involved

Keep up to date with the East Marine Plan and sign up to our newsletter via email at planning@marinemanagement.org.uk including your name and organisation.

To understand how we will use your personal data please follow the link to our Marine Management Organisation [personal information charter](#).

Follow us on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) or [Facebook](#) or [read our blog](#).

Take part in our consultations: email planning@marinemanagement.org.uk

To contact our coastal marine planners please follow the link to our [marine planning webpages](#)

Write to us at: Marine Planning Team, Marine Management Organisation, Lancaster House, Hampshire Court, Newcastle Business Park, NE4 7YH.