

Cabinet

Plymouth Sound National Marine Park Update – Briefing Report



1.0 Introduction

In January 2019 Plymouth City Council took on the leadership role in developing the UK's first National Marine Park (NMP). Plymouth Sound is a beautiful and unique natural environment that is integral to what makes Plymouth special. Currently in the UK there is no formal way that allows us to celebrate and value the significance and diversity of Plymouth Sound and other fantastic marine sites across the country.

The origins of the NMP idea can be traced as far back as 2012 when the idea was first socialised by Plymouth University's Marin Attrill; since then many have worked together to take the concept forward. More recently in 2018 a national conference 'UK Marine Parks' was organised by Blue Marine Foundation, supported by Plymouth City Council. The conference attendees concluded after a day reviewing international examples that Plymouth Sound was the best place to test and develop a new National Marine Park model for the UK. The momentum that has been developed around this proposal can be attributed to many organisations and individual including Luke Pollard MP and Lewis Pugh (UN Patron of the Ocean); all of whom have advocated for the Park's creation.

Creating the UK's first National Marine Park (NMP) will change this and allow us to turn the volume up on what is already brilliant within and around the Sound and make it more accessible to everyone. The Sound's high quality environment supports a naval dockyard, commercial ports, a tourist destination, a natural playground, a marine research cluster, a base for a fishing fleet and fish market, somewhere to unwind or get an adrenaline high and wildlife that is internationally important. Nowhere could be better placed to develop the NMP concept than Plymouth.

2.0 Progress to Date

Engagement and the Declaration of Intent

In September 2019 we celebrated the signing of the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park Declaration of Intent.

Months of engagement preceded the celebration and was used to inform the drafting of the Declaration. In January 2019 we commenced a public engagement exercise which was then followed by engagement with over 75 organisations from across the City and communities that surround the Sound. This exercise provided insight into opportunities and challenges for the NMP as well as highlighting what is already valued within the Sound.

The Declaration of Intent signing enabled stakeholders from across the City to come together to support the NMP proposal and provide a show of confidence that the City has the will and capability to develop a blueprint that can be replicated nationwide. The Declaration was signed by representatives from the Council, business, education, science and research, tourism, environment as well as UN Patron of the Oceans Lewis Pugh. It was also signed by individuals

who attend the NMP celebration party on the Hoe on the 14th September. An event to highlight all the exciting elements that make up the Sound and to engage even more people with the NMP proposition. By the end of the day the Declaration Boards were full of signatures from people pledging their support.

National Recognition

The proposition to develop the NMP is twofold. A NMP that is locally designed and delivered that celebrates and amplifies all the unique features of Plymouth and encourages more people to engage with the marine and maritime environment. In addition we also want to share our learning from this with national stakeholders and government so that what we do in Plymouth can be replicated across the nation.

To support the national ambition we submitted representations to the Glover Landscape Review and shared our proposition with DEFRA. Both responded with strong support for the proposition.

Theresa Villiers, the Environment Secretary (September 2019), said:

“Our seas provide great economic opportunities for our world-leading marine sector but they also need our protection.”

“I wholeheartedly support the creation of the first National Marine Park in Plymouth Sound, backed by government funding.”

“This local initiative shows how communities can come together to protect our marine environments whilst developing their economic potential for the industries that rely on them.”

Julian Glover’s Landscapes Review, 21 September 2019 p124 states:

We heard the case for a Plymouth Sound National Marine Park, an initiative being developed in part by Plymouth City Council, and we strongly support it in principle.

Funding

We have secured funding from the Marine Maritime Organisation to develop a feasibility study for the NMP. This will investigate the best ways to create a NMP locally and how the blueprint we develop could be replicated nationally. This work will complete in Autumn 2020.

In autumn 2019 the National Heritage lottery fund launched a new programme called ‘Horizons’ which was seeking projects that were looking for funding to support transformational, innovative and collaborative projects. The NMP proposal aligned completely with this programme and an expression of interest was submitted. After being shortlisted and completing a successful presentation in front of the Horizons board we have now been invited to submit a full bid by November 2020.

The focus of the Expression of Interest was threefold:

- Social infrastructure – connecting people to their environment and heritage
- Physical infrastructure – enhancements improving access to the water
- Digital infrastructure – making the NMP widely accessible

If successful up to £9.7million will be secured to support the delivery of the NMP.

Plymouth Sound National Marine Park Board

Developing the NMP for Plymouth Sound into a successful reality can only be achieved in collaboration with other stakeholders across the City. To support this and ensure all sectors can inform the development of the NMP a cross sectoral Board has been established. The Board members represent the Navy and ports, business, tourism, education and young people, environment, science and research. Cabinet member for the Environment Cllr Dann and Shadow Leader Cllr Ian Bowyer also sit on the Board which is chaired by the Leader of Plymouth City Council Cllr Tudor Evans OBE. The Board first met on the 28th January 2020 and will now meet regularly to support the NMP's development.

3.0 Next Steps

Over the last year significant progress has been made in developing the NMP but it is acknowledged that there is still a lot to do to bring the concept to life and ensure we gain the greatest benefits from creating a NMP in Plymouth Sound.

The next stage of work will be the development of the feasibility study and the Business Plan. This will also be used to inform the content of the National Lottery submission. As part of that process, commencing this Spring, we will bring together stakeholders with diverse areas of interest, supported by independent facilitation, to help inform the next stage of the NMP development.