

## **Plymouth Sound National Marine Park Update Horizons Project & NMP Development Progress Report**



### **Summary**

The Plymouth Sound National Marine Park (NMP) will reconnect an entire city to the Sea, rekindling a golden thread between citizens, the marine environment and its history. It will nurture our natural and cultural heritage for the benefit of current and future generations, whilst aiming to develop a sense of marine citizenship and support sustainable heritage management. This report provides an update on the NMP Development Work and on the Horizons Project, the first of the NMP projects that is starting to bring the Park to life.

### ***NMP Development Work***

This report provides an update on the significant progress made to date in establishing the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park, the first of its kind in the UK. Key achievements to date:

- Artwork project Millbay
- Delivery SailGP Inspire and Impact programme. 0.5m people heard about the National Marine Park on Sky TV
- Queens Green Canopy Kelp Award the only award of its kind given by H M Queen Elizabeth. Global reach 2 billion.
- Vision for the NMP developed and agreed by the Board
- >£400,000 in new projects being developed or in flight

### ***NMP Horizons – Year of Listening Progress Update***

The UK's first National Marine Park (NMP) will create opportunities for residents and visitors to reconnect with and explore the ocean in exciting ways. Only a community-led approach will ensure we met our ambition of establishing the Plymouth Sound NMP as the people's 'Park in the Sea'. The NMP Horizons project is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and is the first major investment. At its core focus there is a focus on inclusive engagement and will therefore start to create the new relationship between people and the Park.

To ensure the project enabled an inclusive approach to designing the NMP Horizons project with communities a year of listening commenced in April 2022. The goal is to engage a diverse range of people with the project, from those who are already passionate about the NMP to those who have never visited before. The engagement approach is set out in the Activity Plan for the development stage of the project and was brought to scrutiny in February of 2022. The purpose of the

development stage Activity Plan is to enable a test and trial approach to the engagement to see which activities and approaches communities really liked, to enable the identification of the current barriers to a greater number of people enjoying the Park and what people would like enhanced as part of the project.

Since April the project has delivered a number of mass engagement events including an open weekend at the National Marine Aquarium in April where thousands of people attended over two days to find out about and give their views on the NMP and the Big Blue Splash in July where people could try for free lots of different ways to get in on under and next to the water and over 74% of attendees tried something new. This has been complimented with small scale more bespoke engagement including the mini blue splashes where groups that had little or no contact with the NMP participated in a range of activities and provide hugely valuable insights into how the Park could become more accessible for them. The NMP team has also attend other events to talk to people about the Park and gain their views including the Sail GP weekend, respect festival and community led events.

This paper includes information on activities and consultation which have happened since April 2022, the insights and learning from the programme so far and the next steps for the project leading to the submission of the Delivery Stage bid in summer 2023.

## **NMP HORIZONS PROJECT: YEAR OF LISTENING – PROGRESS TO DATE**

### **Background**

Our goal is to establish Plymouth Sound NMP as the people's 'Park in the Sea' and that can only be achieved through an enabling an inclusive approach to engaging and empowering communities.

As a reminder of the process the NMP project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) Heritage Horizon Awards is subject to a phased funding approach as follows:

- Development Stage that runs until summer 2023 - £921,500 of NLHF secured for this stage.
- Submission of Delivery Stage bid summer 2023 - non-competitive application stage where we need to present a delivery project that meets our original ambitions.
- Delivery Stage – Winter 2024 to winter 2028 (exact dates dependant on NLHF decision timelines) – around £8.66million of NLHF ring fenced for this stage.

The development phase Activity Plan which was presented to Scrutiny in February 2022 has been driving the inclusive engagement programme since April. The activities are grouped under eight programme headings to ensure that the project begins to create a new relationship between the city

and the ocean, through community led engagement and that by the summer of 2023 we have developed a fully inclusive bid that we will be proud to submit to the NLHF.

### **Year of Listening – Activities to Date**

A detailed update on activities that have been undertaken since April are presented in full in Appendix A. The table in Appendix A lists the Activity Plan work programmes and progress against each one to date. The NMP Horizons summer report also provides a brilliant visual summary of the work that has been happening.

In summary the year of listening has to date included:

**Large Scale Engagement Events:** NMP Horizons project directly produced events that enabled the team to talk to a wide section of the community about the NMP. The events had inclusion planned in as a core element and everything from the way the tickets were distributed to how the events were planned and delivered encouraged a broad audience. These events included the NMP Open Weekend at the National Marine Aquarium in April and the Big Blue Splash in July. Thousands of people took part in these events and we connected with a huge audience through our social media activity.

PSNMP channel reached **139k people** across social media channels linked to the events.

**Focused and Targeted Events** – The large scale events have been complemented by a programme of more focused events and activities designed to ensure inclusion in our approach. This has included for example:

- Sea in the Park – taking the wonders of the NMP to communities;
- Mini Blue Splashes – small scale events testing activities with smaller groups to help ensure the design of the Big Blue Splash encouraged as many people as possible to participate.
- NMP BOX takeover – taking NMP activities and engagement to the Box over the summer to engage with different audiences and gain different views.
- Marine Archaeology camp – 2 schools participated in a pilot archaeology camp uncovering the exciting history of Plymouth Sound out onsite and in the mud!

**Connecting with Others** – In addition to curating events direct the NMP Horizons project attended lots of other events to talk to people about the NMP with the idea it would broaden the projects reach to engage with different communities. This including attending SailGP in the blue/green village, the Respect Festival, Queens Green Canopy event, the (successful!) Merfolk world record attempt. The Ranger team have also co-designed activities with other including the Plymouth youth service, Swim Safe and Hope refuge centre.



The 5 key barriers that have been identified so far are as follows:

- Knowing where to go, the different venues and what is on offer there and when.
- The cost of getting to the NMP, whether bus, ferry, walk or car.
- The lack of access to kit such as wetsuits, snorkels, buoyancy aids etc. to borrow rather than buy.
- Fear of the unknown - trying new things, putting a wetsuit on, feeling silly, not having the correct equipment, sharks in the water, not being able to swim, what to do if they got into trouble in the water, lack of lifeguards.
- Wanting to enjoy the NMP but not in an active, getting wet way, and feeling there is no dry option.

We also want people to help shape what the project delivers and so they have been sharing thoughts on things they would like to see change as a result of the project including:

- Enhanced water quality
- Good access/ pathways into the Sea
- Spaces and infrastructure that enable quiet enjoyment of the NMP without getting wet.
- Information on the wildlife of the Sound and surrounding green spaces
- Better transport options

Our engagement activities are enabling people to get across their views in many ways, from online questionnaires and face to face conversations to drawings. Much of the information will enable a quantitative review of ideas and views but due to the inclusive approach to engagement we are also getting lots of qualitative feedback and some insightful comments, such as:

- *'We had the best time. My children were able to do something they've never done before. It was amazing!'*
- *'The SUP YOGA was insane! So much fun. Instructor was amazing, kind, encouraging and fun. Great activity. Thank you'*
- *The big blue splash was an absolutely brilliant idea – I hope something similar is repeated again. My main comment is that there needs to be more and better access to the water around Plymouth Sound. Some of the steps and railings have been improved but there needs to be more done.*
- *'It was a wonderful weekend of fun and happiness. Plymouth has so much to offer.'*
- *'I was only volunteering for one day, but I have had a lot of fun, I asked to volunteer again. I am learning about Plymouth by volunteering for the NMP.'*

The outcomes of the engagement activities to date are being used to enable us to identify any gaps in terms of people or places we still need to link with and gain views. We will be seeking to ensure we have a good level of coverage by the end of our year of listening.

All of the insights, comments and identified barriers are being used to inform all aspects of the NMP Horizons project from the capital programme interventions to what goes into the Delivery Stage activity plan.

### **Next Steps**

The year of listening is already given hugely valuable direction to the development of the NMP Horizons project and we will continue to listen, learn and evolve the project as a result. All the work will help shape the bid that will be submitted to the NLHF next summer. With the warmer, calmer season behind us for this year there will be a focus on engaging people with the Park in different ways, which are a bit drier! This will include:

- Commencing our digital NMP engagement work – testing and trialling approaches to bringing the treasures of the Sound to life and discovering new ways of connecting with people through innovations in digital;
- Developing plans to enhance the wildlife of Plymouth Sound – co-designing a marine nature recover project with communities and stakeholders;
- Continuing to pilot our NMP Ranger team;
- Integrating the engagement work insights into the designs for the physical changes to the NMP gateways to help overcome barriers to access and enjoyment;
- Deliver a pilot NMP schools programme – generation ocean;
- Develop the Delivery Stage bid.

## **NATIONAL MARINE PARK - DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**

The NMP Horizons Project is the first large scale investment in the NMP but it won't be the last and has a specific focus. This report provides the opportunity to update on progress on the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park (PSNMP) development programme to date.

### **Work to Date**

The work to establish Plymouth Sound National Marine Park began in earnest in March with the appointment of the Interim CEX. The task is to develop a credible PSNMP that within two years will be self-sustaining and able to deliver the Vision and Purpose for the marine park.

Since March much of the work has focused on engaging with people and organisations to bring them up to date with the process of setting up the NMP and ensuring a clear and consistent message for all. The two year hiatus whilst we all dealt with Covid has not helped the process and anxieties and pre-conceptions of what the park will be have developed and it has taken some time to unpick this.

### **Early wins**

Whilst developing the necessary structural elements of the PSNMP there have been opportunities to deliver and support delivery of a number of great projects including Bath Street hoarding, SailGP and the Kelp Award.

#### ***Bath Street***

The old HSL site is what greets visitors and people disembarking from the ferry. We wanted to create an eye-catching statement of welcome that aligned with our brand narrative.



#### ***SailGP***

The NMP co-ordinated the Inspire and Impact programmes for the SailGP event. An incredible week and amazing weekend of sport, community engagement and delivery of climate change projects. A few highlights NMP highlights:

- 250 physically disabled young people and adults on the water, many for the first time ever

- 400 young people involved in STEM events to encourage them to continue with these subjects
- 4 community groups now have solar panels to help offset their energy bills and reduce carbon
- Half a million plus views of Beneath the surface – a film all about Plymouth and The Sound

### ***Kelp Award***

Lewis Pugh was appointed as the NMP Ambassador and worked with HM The Queen and Queen's Green Canopy to secure the only kelp award for the UK. This generated huge international interest with press reach worth millions.



### **Delivery Strategy**

The early request from the Board was to develop a delivery strategy that articulates what needs to be done and when but not the detail of the delivery. This is being used as a roadmap for the delivery of the PSNMP.

There are 4 key themes for the strategy:

- Vision and development plan
- Engagement plan (this includes comms)
- Strategic opportunities
- Funding

Following extensive discussion the Vision, Purpose and Delivery themes for the marine park have now been agreed and are given below. This then forms the framework for the development of governance and strategy.



### ***Vision***

Our National Marine Park will value the environment, heritage and tradition of Plymouth Sound and its estuaries. It is where people and planet will come together to realise a new, sustainable relationship with the sea.

### ***Purpose***

- Take us back to the sea
- Inspire each and every generation
- Restore a sense of pride and identity for the city
- Enhance our marine environment
- Improve the health and wellbeing of people through better access
- Support the development of a truly sustainable economy

### ***Delivery***

- **Blue-green economy** - The blue economy can be defined as “the exploitation, preservation and regeneration of the marine environment” and this is what we plan to do. Plymouth is a coastal city with a thriving maritime economy but there are huge opportunities for expansion of the blue economy. Key areas are aquaculture, marine innovation and renewable energy. By 2030 the blue economy will be worth £3.2 trillion and Plymouth needs to be part of this
- ***Marine nature recovery (TECF lead)*** - Our oceans, including Plymouth Sound face some serious threats: from pollution, from climate change and from non-native species. All of these will require us to enhance and sustain vital habitats in order to ensure that our marine environment here in Plymouth can be as resilient. This work is led by TECF and the NMP will support.
- ***Marine science, education and skills*** - With 3 universities and 2 leading marine research establishments in the city the role of the NMP is to work with all of them. However there are significant skill gaps in the city notably in marine innovation and through the Horizons project and beyond we will work to reduce these. We need to ensure that the skills of the next generation match the needs of industry.
- ***Cultural identity and engaged communities*** - This work strand is all about developing the sense of place and pride in the city. The culture work will be delivered through the network of culture-based organisations across the city, working to develop the marine identity for the city and its citizens through a broad range of interventions. Alongside this we are working with Destination Plymouth and Plymouth Culture to ensure brand alignment and a common platform for developing placemaking in the city.

- **International recognition** - Working with the city to show what it has to offer to an international audience, through events, conferences and raising the profile of the city.

### **Project Development**

Against the 5 themes a number of projects are already in development, working with a range of local organisations to facilitate delivery. Currently there are 15 projects being scoped under the five headings; these include projects as diverse as aquaculture and the arts.

Work has already progressed well on drawing together partnerships; in collaboration with the university funding has been secured for a Knowledge Transfer Officer to enhance communications between the University Plymouth Marine Labs and the MBA all of which will support the development of key projects for the marine park.

In partnership with the South West Aquaculture Network and MBTC we are looking at opportunities to bring aquaculture to Plymouth, starting with a project with the university to understand the opportunities and constraints involved.

Working with Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum and other conservation bodies we are soon to submit a saltmarsh restoration and recreation project. Saltmarsh is a very important habitat for fish and invertebrates; for specialist plants such as samphire and sea lavender and importantly also they are huge carbon sinks and are able to take up carbon which supports our journey to net zero as well providing natural flood defences.

Within the culture work stream we are supporting a local CIC to develop and deliver a sea festival next summer. This will be an art festival with content generated by the people who live in the community and will culminate with a celebration of the sea.

Working with Pam Buchan and the Ocean Conservation Trust we are developing the work on ocean literacy and marine citizenship to build a body of evidence that will help us understand how we can transform our city into ocean citizens who will love and respect the sea.

### **Public Relations**

It is vitally important that as many people as possible know about the marine park. SailGP and the kelp award have both brought press column inches. To support this there is also an NMP newsletter, a blog and a series of podcasts all linked to marine issues. Members can sign up to receive the newsletter from the website.

### **Next Steps**

The next stage in the process will be to develop the governance and funding arrangements for the NMP that can deliver the scale of our collective ambitions. Until an entity is created it is difficult to secure funding. Alongside the governance work we will be developing the funding strategy that sets out a longer term robust model to ensure that the NMP can operate into the future.

### **Recommendations**

**Recommendation** – Note the National Marine Park updates

**Reason** – Acknowledge the progress that has been made on the development of the National Marine Park and the engagement work that has been conducted by the NMP Horizons project that is informing the development of the Development Phase bid.

**Recommendation** – Instruct officers to return to scrutiny in spring 2023 with a report that sets out the framework for the NMP Horizons Delivery Stage bid.

**Reason** – To enable Members of the scrutiny panel to review the content of the NLHF bid and provide recommendations for any changes and/or additions.

**Recommendation** – Request the NMP Interim CEX returns to scrutiny in 6 months' time with a more detailed update on progress.

**Reason** – The NMP programme will be more advanced in 6 months' time and will enable Scrutiny Members to have the opportunity to input into the development of the UK's first National Marine Park.