

Plymouth Sound National Marine Park – Horizons Project Update Report July 2023



Executive Summary

The UK's first National Marine Park (NMP) will value the environment, heritage and economy of Plymouth Sound and its estuaries. It is where people and planet will come together to realise a new, sustainable relationship with the sea.

It will create opportunities for residents and visitors to reconnect with and explore the ocean in exciting new ways. Working alongside residents and the wider community is key to changing the way a city interacts with its environment; to care for, protect it and use it in different ways to develop a healthier and more harmonious relationship with the ocean. To help deliver this ambition the City secured funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) Horizons Fund in 2021. Initially the city received 10% of the nearly £10million of funding to complete a 'Development Phase'.

The development phase of the bid was designed to test and trial approaches to ensure more inclusive engagement with the NMP in line with the Parks ambitions. It was also used to design capital interventions and develop plans for the Digital Park, interpretation strategy and nature restoration projects. The development phase is now nearly complete and the delivery stage bid, which will secure the 90% of the allocated funding, needs to be submitted in September 2023.

During the test and trial phase we have spoken directly to 10,000 people, inspired over 7,000 school children, reached millions through our digital engagement and motivated over 200 people to become volunteers. The project team and partners have worked with our communities to provide genuine engagement and a deep understanding of how this project can drive a very positive transformation for people, the environment and Plymouth.

The Scrutiny Committee has reviewed the project before, in November 2021 when the development stage began and in February 2022 with a specific focus on the Activity Plan, which set out how the inclusive engagement work would be delivered. This paper provides a summary of all the activities that have happened during the development stage, what has been learnt and the principles that will be included in the delivery stage bid.

Development Stage

Activity Plan – Test, trial and learning.

The Committee previously reviewed and endorsed the methodology and engagement detailed within the Activity Plan. Over the past 2 years the project has ensured inclusive engagement has enabled communities to shape the project that will be submitted at the next stage, as well as ensuring people had the opportunity to interact with the NMP in new ways. Over the development period the project delivered:

- **Sea in the Park** – Cross city events taking the NMP to the communities with interactive activities, 16 events, 938 attendees
- **Meet the Marine Park** – Focused group sessions with 137 young people
- **School Archaeology Camp** - 24 attendees pupil premium
- **Swim Safe** - 59 attendees at 5 locations
- **Big Blue Splash** – ‘Have a go’ festival 2,200 attendees
- **Mini Blue Splashes** – Smaller group ‘Have a go’ events 390 attendees, including children with trauma and SEND.
- **2 NMP Open Weekends** – Hosted at the National Marine Aquarium over 5000 people attend this year. 57% of people attending came from groups we had a focus on engaging
- **Integrated schools programme**, visits and virtual tours - trialling new ways to teach about the NMP in line with curriculum requirements, 27 schools, 749 children
- **NMP Walks** – 6 events, 48 people
- **Art sessions** – 3 events at 3 different locations - 42 attendees
- **Over 155 community groups engaged** – throughout the period
- **STEM events** – 400 pupil premium Key Stage 2 pupils over 2 days
- **Volunteer programme** – 656 volunteer hours (March 23 figures)
- **Community event attended** - 42 community events
- **Youth Work Patrols with detached youth workers:** 22 patrols
- **Digital demonstrators** – 5 cohorts, focused sessions and pop up events
- **Workshops, interviews and meetings** – to shape the capital interventions

The test and trial programmes, co-design workshops and in depth discussions have resulted in inspirational ideas and new connections. This has shaped design proposals and will ensure the communities aspirations and needs are integrated throughout the project. All of these insights are being incorporated into the delivery phase bid as they enhance the proposal and ensure it is being truly shaped by the communities. Our top six learning points are as follows:

1. **Greater understanding of our communities' aspirations and challenges:** Communities aspirations, barriers to access and ideas have been key to steering the evolution of the project. Both the design work and the planning for the delivery stage activities. Using the approach of a year of listening the project has been able to gain a greater depth of understanding of the needs and aspirations of our communities and individuals who current have little or no current engagement with the NMP. Approaches which have built trust in the community have enabled new barriers to be identified but also the solutions to overcome them.
2. **Barriers for communities to access the NMP benefits are complex** – The barriers to access and enjoyment are numerous, complex and interlinked including, cost, accessibility, confidence and awareness. Fundamentally there are deep societal issues which prevent communities accessing the benefits of the NMP that need a transformational approach to unlock. The current cost of living pressures and post Covid world have further exacerbated pressures on our communities. Throughout the development phase as barriers were identified we have worked with communities to trial solutions which we are now embedding in the delivery stage programme.
3. **Water confidence and understanding** - the lack of confidence in being by the water often linked to lack of swimming ability and knowledge of how tides and weather affect a visit to the NMP is a much larger barrier than anticipated and a shock in an ocean city. We tested some solutions to this which we will expand on in the delivery phase.
4. **Practical Barriers to Access** – We always recognised that the physical nature of access to the NMP would be something that would require innovation and co-design to overcome. These barriers include for example, transport and physical access for people with additional needs.
5. **Complex community needs** – The work has identified lots of complex needs but also huge opportunities for impact. A few examples include - current anti-social behaviour happening in waterside locations, neighbourhood level concerns and opportunities, requirement for more activities that enabled a connection without getting in the NMP.
6. **Integration, integration, integration** – The NMP is a huge undertaking and has significant opportunities for positive influence. However to maximise the benefits it must be joined up and integrated across the city and link with other projects that have the same ambitions. Some examples where this has happened – sustainable transport, learning from experience of managing

our green estate being translated into Blue, working with existing partnership on marine restoration projects such as TECF, aligning funding and responding to our changing coastal environment.

Nature

Our bid has nature restoration as a key theme. The enhancement of the wildlife of the Sound can be delivered in a number of ways and during the development stage we sought ideas and crafted solutions with a wide stakeholder group. The development stage included:

- 1:1 interviews conducted with 35 key stakeholders, aiming to understand their constraints, concerns, and aspirations, which reflected their statutory responsibilities or strategic aims.
- Stakeholder workshop series – identifying where the NMP could deliver impact integrating with all the brilliant work already happening in the Sound.
- Call for ideas from communities across Plymouth - Campaign generated 40 submissions from the public, voluntary and community groups, local charities and organisations.

All the ideas have been reviewed and influenced the 'Nature Boost' programme which will form part of the submitted bid.

Capital

Having listened to thousands of people about what barriers currently stops them accessing the NMP and what they would like to see more of as part of the Park's development. We used all the views to shape the capital interventions within the Park. All of the feedback has been feed into the designs which the NMP Horizons Project team have consulted people on at numerous workshops. We have also consulted on the plans during other NMP events such as the over 5000 people that attended the recent open weekend held at the National Marine Aquarium. Planning applications are now submitted for sites at Mt Egdcumbe, Mt Batten and Tinside. Designs for Ernesettle Creek and Firestone Bays have been co-developed with the communities.

Digital

The Digital Park is a very exciting component as it will bring the heritage treasures of the NMP to life in an inclusive and inspirational way. It is essential in our Park delivery as due to the nature of our park in the sea many of the greatest elements will be unseen and inaccessible without an innovative approach. During the test and trial the project:

- Researched 'the art of the possible' for the digital park looking for international best practice.
- Gained an understanding of barriers to people engaging with the Park digitally and solutions to issues raised.

- Led delivery demonstrator projects working with communities this includes for example:
 - 360 content development workshop series inspired by NMP locations, experiences and themes.
 - Development of a STEAM focused education session and digital resource using the pickles collection at the Box, many species of which are no longer found in the NMP due to climate change.
 - Work with communities to look at the art of the possible specifically linked to digital access and inclusion.
- Development and testing of a web application to support NMP digital content and connectivity.

Interpretation and Evaluation.

All of the consultations and engagements have been fed into plans for interpreting the site. It is also informing how we evaluate the delivery stage. It is vital that we learn throughout the process and deliver the greatest impact.

Delivery Stage Bid Submission – Principles

The delivery stage of the bid will catalyse work to deliver the NMP vision - The UK's first National Marine Park (NMP) will value the environment, heritage and economy of Plymouth Sound and its estuaries. It is where people and planet will come together to realise a new, sustainable relationship with the sea.

The integrated programme of work including the Activity Plan, capital enhancements, nature restoration, digital park and interpretation has been designed to enable the new sustainable relationship with the sea. By removing identified barriers to access, it will enable communities across the city to engage with the NMP in a manner that is relevant and beneficial to them. There will be a focus on working alongside communities that currently have little or no engagement with the NMP. This will deliver significant benefits and ensure that the NMP is inclusive and welcome for all. Detailed below is an explanation of the different components of the bid, shown as separate elements in the paper but will be delivered as an integrated programme.

The principles within the bid are proposed as follows:

Activity Plan

The Activity plan has been designed to respond to all the conversations and learning that occurred during the test and trial stage development stage. The resulting programme has been designed to enable communities across the city to participate in activities, events and programmes that

- engage and inspire;
- provide opportunities for learning and discovery;
- enable connection and positive action to support the long term care of the NMP.

Inclusivity is at the heart of the activity plan but there is always more that can be learnt and developed to improve further. The activity plan will therefore be under constant review and evolution through the 5 years to ensure that community voices continue to shape the programme going forward.

The activity plan includes 4 interconnected programmes of work:

- *Reconnecting Citizens to the Sea* – Activities designed to inspire and engage including Activate, community archaeology, NMP Festival, mini – splashes, NMP Swim Safe, NMP Pathways, coastal cleans and art engagement;
- *Marine Learning and Futures* – Activities designed to enable learning and discovery including a 5 year schools programme with 30 schools, teach the teacher programme, digital curriculum platform, Blue pathways, FE/HE student programme and social enterprise support;
- *Creating Marine Ambassadors* – Activities to enable people to connect with the Park and to enable positive action including a significant volunteer programme, volunteer pathways to enable growth and progression, internships skills development and work experience;
- *Activating Communities* – Place based activities to continue further work with Ernesettle and Firestone, plus support for three new communities to develop what they want from connecting with the NMP.

Nature

The nature boost programme includes 4 integrated programmes:

- Habitat Boost – Supporting the restoration of key habitats across the Sound including, reefs;
- Species Boost – Supporting the enhancement of iconic species of the Sound;

- Community Nature Boost – Enabling communities to lead their own projects to enhance the wildlife of the NMP. This programme includes a small scale community grants scheme that anyone from across the City will be eligible to apply for to support nature in the NMP;
- Nature Credit Boost - Building on our Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund project we will continue work to develop a verifiable carbon and nature credit to enable greater levels of funding to be secured for seagrass meadows restoration.

Capital

- *Tinside Lido* - the terrace at the top of the lido will be reimagined to provide a welcoming place to enjoy the amazing view of Tinside and the NMP. The first floor of the main Lido building will be restored and repurposed as a multi-purpose space and café/bar, for use by the community, particularly to enable youth progression activities. In addition, 'Building B', located between the Lido pool and Tinside Cove, will be refurbished and brought back into use as a youth outreach/watersports hub. This will enable youth workers to support young people to build confidence, develop skills, undertake marine-related training and learn about blue sector career opportunities in Plymouth. All the capital works are designed to enable an inclusive welcome to one of the City's greatest assets. The physical changes will enable a significant programme of activities that will help people build the skills to engage with the Park from swimming and snorkelling to pathways to gain skills and employment.
- *Mount Batten Peninsula* – the activity gateway to the NMP. The works will enhance and bring to life the heritage of the historic peninsula and make the outstanding nature more easily understood. Physical work will ensure the peninsula is more welcoming and inclusive. To remove barriers to access the Mt Batten Watersports and Activities Centre will undergo a transformation to enable more people to access the water and be inspired. Works include a new more accessible pontoon, changing room facilities that cater for all and significantly enhanced public realm to ensure more people can experience the spectacular locations. There will also be sensitive works to the Mount Batten Tower plateau, a scheduled ancient monument to improve access and interpretation of one of the best views of the NMP.
- *Mount Edgcumbe* - refurbishment and opening up of the Garden Battery building will provide improved access and enjoyment of this undiscovered coastal fort defence. It forms part of Palmerston's fort defences for Plymouth. Works will enable the community and visitors to experience the extraordinary interior. This access will enable people to see this important part of the maritime heritage of Plymouth Sound.

- *Ernesettle Creek* – the community have co-designed the sensitive interventions proposed at Ernesettle creek. Enabling better access, enhancement of the nature of the site and interpretation.
- *Firestone Bay* – also co-designed with the community, including interventions to support access to and activities in the water.

These capital interventions will support the programme in the activity plan, so not only will there be new and enhanced sites they will be activated in a manner which encourages new users to visit and be part of the NMP.

Digital Park

Digital will be an essential part of bringing the wonders of the NMP to life and enable everyone to experience the treasures below the waves. The innovation of the digital park will be the blending of in person engagement opportunities with the creation of a digital community. Collectively this blended approach will enable people to be excited about the Park, discover new things and be inspired to act to support the NMP. The digital park will for example:

- Be fully integrated with the new capital enhancements – enabling every hub to digitally link to the Park but also a point where people can connect with the digital park community;
- Deliver inspirational digital experiences to enable the city to be fully immersed in what the Park has to offer and how they can get involved. This will bring the hidden world of the Sound above the waves using technology, people and places across the city to deliver something transformational not seen before;
- Provide an inclusive platform to enable community led digital NMP movement;
- To provide a platform for learning materials linked to the schools programme.

Interpretation

Interpretation will tell the stories of the NMP. Features will be located at the capital hubs and gateways and areas away from the waterfront. In all the interpretation points' local stories from across the City will be included. The narratives for the interpretation include;

- Arrivals and Departures, Attack and Defence, Lost and Found, Work, Rest and Play, Science and Discovery.

Finance and Fundraising

The original bid to the NLHF totalled £14.6m for the delivery stage. The development stage has enabled much more detailed costs to be developed for the evolved programme. The current position with the project finances across the different elements of the project are as follows:

Project Delivery Element	Amount
Activity Plan (Including Cross Programme Staffing)	£5.01m
Digital Park	£1.09m
Nature Boost	£1.002m
Capital	£9.5m
Interpretation	£0.25m
Evaluation	£0.12m
Contingency + Inflation	£2.12m
Total	£19.09m

The development stage bid to the NLHF for the project used figures originally submitted in the EOI in 2019, and the world has changed dramatically since then. The bid included a £921k NLHF contribution for the development stage and proposed £8.7m contribution to the delivery stage. Plymouth City Council committed £2.5m to the overall programme and there was proposed targets for match funding requirements of £2.2m and in kind match funding.

During the development stage more detailed work on all elements of the programme have been undertaken and more detailed costings are now available. One of the outcomes of this work is a detailed understand of the impact of inflation on all aspects of the programme but particularly the capital elements since 2019. The current position is that due to inflation the capital build is now £3.1m over budget. This has been discussed with the NLHF and they are open to a discussion about an increased bid request due to the inflation. Therefore further discussions with NLHF will be taking place over the coming weeks.

In addition there are a number of bids currently being considered by other funders which should return a decision in the near future which if successful will meet the existing match funding requirement and could support the current over programming amounts. To enable a successful bid further work to identify value engineering options, income generation opportunities and further fund raising will continue.

Summary

Collectively the programmes presented will come together to catalyse delivery of the NMP vision in a creative, inclusive and transformational way. Each element of the programme is designed to support a step change for the Park in a way that embeds sustainability to ensure continuation of the benefits beyond the 5 year project horizon.

The bid submission in September would result in a decision from the NLHF by the end of 2023. Subject to receiving a positive outcome the delivery stage would begin in spring 2024 and run for 5 years.

Recommendations

- The Mount Edgumbe Committee notes the project progress through the development stage.
- The Committee endorse the approach to the delivery phase bid of the NMP Horizons Project and supports submission of the bid in September 2023.
- The Committee requests that the project team return at regular intervals during the delivery stage to update on the progress of the project.