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Solent Forum Hard to Reach Stakeholder Workshop 10/10/18 – A Report on the Workshop Findings (Part of MMO1152)



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MMO1152: Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement

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Executive Summary

1. “Hard to reach” stakeholders are people who currently have no or very limited knowledge of the MMO’s marine planning; they are predominantly non-statutory authorities. They also include people who may have knowledge, of but are intentionally or unintentionally difficult to engage in marine planning.
2. Organisations with statutory functions are generally aware of the plan and their duties relating to it. However, this does depend on their role within the organisation; knowledge and engagement varies depending on roles and responsibilities.
3. Some stakeholders who are active members of representative bodies, like user groups, had limited knowledge of the plan via those bodies. Stakeholders with no formal representation were unaware of the Plans and do not know who the MMO are.
4. To date, the main information source on the South Plan for many Solent hard to reach stakeholders, especially those that are not statutory authorities, has come from its coastal partnership (Solent Forum).
5. Currently there is an overall ambivalence about the Plan, it’s felt to be too high level and needs to be interpreted and translated for people to explain how it relates to their daily lives. User groups are reluctant to tell their members about the Plan unless they have specific tailored knowledge about what it means for their members.
6. The workshop had made the attendees start to realise that the Plan may be more relevant to local people than they initially thought.
7. People are not clear on the exact roles of the MMO and other Defra umbrella bodies and how they interact, they need a simple guide to explain these relationships.
8. Currently people feel the MMO uses too much ‘stick’ when speaking about the Plan. Marine Officers *‘just keep quoting it’s a statutory plan,’* this is not helpful to stakeholders, especially those with no statutory functions. They would prefer a ‘carrot’ approach, for example develop the ‘ensuring sustainable growth’ strapline, to show them how the using the Plan can benefit them.
9. The MMO need to make clear what they think a marine plan does and say so in an explanatory leaflet or similar. This must be written in plain English with no ‘planning speak’. Case studies and worked examples written in conjunction with ‘sector champions’ would be helpful.
10. There is a need to manage expectations, people appreciated being asked their views at the workshop and welcome the opportunity to have ‘a voice’, but asked how will you maintain this engagement over the twenty year plan timescale? Many stakeholders said they will engage with the Plan in time when they need to, for example, when planning development or updating strategies and documents.
11. Delegates thought that the most cost effective way for the MMO to engage with stakeholders is to use coastal partnership networks where they exist. Some organisations now use Partnerships to undertake stakeholder engagement work on their behalf, e.g. the Environment Agency in the Solent.

Introduction

The Solent Forum held a workshop on the 10th October 2018 in Southampton, for task 7 of the MMO EMFF funded Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement Project (ESE). A wide range of stakeholders from across the Solent were invited. Approximately half the delegates were existing Solent Forum members. There were 35 delegates, five facilitators and a Chair. The Solent Forum provided the Chair and three facilitators; two local marine planning officers also acted as facilitators.

There were three workshop presentations planned, two from the MMO updating delegates what had happened between the South Plan consultation and adoption and a second introducing MMO implementation work for the adopted South Marine Plan. The Solent Forum introduced delegates to this EMFF funded project and set out the workshop tasks. Presentations have been uploaded to:

http://www.solentforum.org/services/Current_Projects/MMO_ESE/.

To supplement the workshop findings, when out around the coast, Forum staff have been asking local people about their knowledge of the South Plan and explored how they would like to receive information about marine planning.

Workshop Tasks

Two tasks were set for the workshop, these were designed to answer the objectives in the ESE 'Hard to Reach Stakeholder Brief' set out below:

1. who each plan areas hard-to reach stakeholders are and their most common sectors
2. why they are 'hard-to-reach'
3. what their drivers, motivations and priorities are to engaging in marine planning
4. establish the most effective methods of engaging these stakeholders
5. learn from existing mechanisms of engagement from other relevant organisations.

The second part of the workshop focussed on marine plan implementation and monitoring, reflecting that the adopted South Plan is in stage 10 of the planning cycle.

Task 1

Discussion of how to engage local stakeholders with the marine plans focusing on those that may not be currently be involved. Review how the South Plans are relevant to the people of the Solent, what existing resources and mechanisms are already in place to inform local coastal stakeholders about the plans, what new mechanisms or materials may be needed and how can we take these forward.

Task 2

Discussion on implementation and monitoring of the South Marine Plans; what are the most effective ways for the MMO to get its monitoring and evidence requirements

needs to a wide range of local people. What work, research or data collection is currently being undertaken by local stakeholders that can support plan monitoring? How can existing work streams and data collection help to monitor Plan use and success? What support or materials do local stakeholders need to facilitate their input into plan monitoring?

Task 1 – Workshop Findings

1. Awareness of the South Marine Plan

The statutory authorities were aware of the Marine Plan but there was a mixed response as to which of them had used it, some had but others just knew it had been adopted but hadn't looked at it. It was reported that its early days yet and people are likely to use it more when they need to as directed by their work.

Those that were aware of the Plan mostly received their information via the coastal partnership or local statutory authorities rather than the MMO direct. Most non-statutory authorities were either vaguely aware through third parties or their representative bodies that there was a plan or had no knowledge of it.

It was suggested that there is no need for individuals or small businesses to know about the Plan, until they wish to undertake plans or projects in the marine environment. Stakeholder groups will wish to be aware, but until they are directly impacted through their own or other's projects, they will be unlikely to proactively engage. The MMO should undertake a stakeholder analysis (or publish it if you have one); this would have been helpful in advance of the workshop, then those in the room could have commented upon it rather than start with a blank page.

2. Knowledge of and Contact with MMO Staff

The smaller stakeholders, such as recreational users and local boatmen, mostly hadn't heard of the MMO and had no knowledge of what it does. Representatives of user groups thought that contact may have been made at national/regional level but not at local level. There is still confusion about the roles and responsibilities of the Defra umbrella bodies, some thought that the Marine Plans were written by Defra. Statutory authorities had been to past MMO workshops so have followed the Plan progress; some had attended recent implementation meetings with MMO staff.

When people had spoken to MMO staff they said they were helpful, people would prefer face-to-face meetings in the first instance. Most correspondence with MMO staff to date has been by email. There was frustration at the turnover of local marine officers and that people aren't told of staff changes, this means they can't see the point of investing time in building relationships. The perception among attendees was that local marine officers did not adequately understand the marine environment and how it works as they have never been 'mariners'. They felt that this knowledge was more important than staff having 'good knowledge of planning matters'. There were offers for marine officers to spend a day out with local people to improve their knowledge.

3. Where has Information on Marine Planning come from in the past?

Statutory authorities had been informed directly, some non-statutory stakeholders had had information passed on via these authorities; the Solent Forum was the main source of information on the South Plan for most of the delegates. A few were on the Marine Planning newsletter circulation list, but they noted that it was them who needed to be proactive about accessing MMO information.

Some delegates asked what links there are between the MMO and regional flood coastal committees or the Eastern Solent Coastal Partnership (which focuses on sea defences). These relationships and the links with local work need exploring.

4. Marine Plan knowledge throughout sector of interest

There was a mixed response as to whether information is filtered through organisations and areas of interest. It depends on the organisation and individuals, as an example with the Solent Forum news mailing list, some people only want one person from their organisation on it whereas others want multiple. Local authorities thought that there was a need to educate senior management (CEO level) to ensure information is filtered throughout the organisation. Within recreational sectors, care needs to be taken not to group them together for convenience as they have different needs, for example charter angling boats are different to recreational land-based anglers.

The general consensus is that individuals and small business working in the marine environment and the general public have no knowledge of the marine plan; as it stands it is not relevant to them. There is a need to educate them about who the MMO are first and their duties. There is still confusion about the roles and responsibilities of the Defra umbrella bodies.

Delegates said they had seen no information on marine plans in general planning publications from the RTPI or web resources and this should be addressed. For some harbour authorities there are difficulties arising from inconsistent knowledge and application between the multiple local authorities that they deal with. There is a need to ensure that there is a consistent approach from local authorities to using the Plan throughout the whole Solent.

A delegate from industry (BP) noted that when they had spoken with senior consultants about marine planning, they had never heard of the South Marine Plans. They also mentioned that many planning consultants and environmental groups, such as the Campaign to Protect Rural England, are not aware of the MMO or the marine plans.

When it comes to dredging, delegates from BP said that they are aware of licensing, so they will usually go to their last point of contact in the MMO Licensing team and take it from there if they need to speak to MMO staff.

5. Are Marine Plans useful to your work?

For statutory authorities with relevant duties the answer is yes, to most others the answer is no. The Plan is seen as too high level and technical to have any relevance to what is happening locally at the coast. Delegates thought it needed to be 'translated' as to what it means for local coastal users. A flowchart of how to use the Plan was suggested. Some delegates found the Plan overwhelming and would like to explore how it can be broken down more usefully to guide what happens on the coast. Organisations that develop plans of their own or guides noted the time lag as they could include information on the South Plan when they are updating documents, but the content would need to be appropriate for their target audience. If 'translated' information is freely available they would look to use it.

Many statutory authorities said that the Plan would not make much difference to their work as the concepts and principles of it are already well established in their organisation's policies. They did think it was important for the MMO to help explain clearly how the Plan would affect the people that they have to regulate. Delegates also asked for an explanation of how a high-level Plan can be used to support local policies. For example, Natural England officers need to understand how Plan policies on mitigation should be interpreted in local agreements and policies.

Delegates asked for an explanation of what the risks are to organisations if they do not take account of the Marine Plans. There is an air of 'status quo' and people feel that they maybe have a false sense of security that things will continue to be the same as they are now. The workshop had made the attendees start to realise that the Plan may be more relevant to local people than they initially thought.

Delegates felt that if the MMO was to have "plan-led" licensing, they need to understand how planning and licensing work together. For example, how do licensing decisions impact on an area and policy implementation? They find it hard to identify where marine licences applications are in an area and have difficulty travelling through the licensing system.

Statutory consultees wanted more guidance as to the meaning of value words, rather than definitive words, such "all unavoidable plastics". They suggested that after they have had the opportunity to use the Plan, a local meeting/Forum between statutory consultees and the MMO would be helpful to discuss how they have responded to consultations and how the MMO had interpreted their comments.

6. What is the best way to get information to local people?

As it stands, delegates weren't prepared to forward details of the South Plan on to people in their sectors or colleagues until it had been translated to be meaningful. They said there was no point as it's not written for their 'target audience' and people wouldn't understand it. What is important is to 'get the message right' before you look to engage people with it.

Suggestions for informing people include the use of coastal partnerships and their communication channels, Harbour and Mariners Handbooks, the publications and newsletters of governing bodies or via regional flood coastal committees. There was a

mixed response to the use of social media, such as Twitter, Facebook and Google queries, some people like it but others don't citing 'twitter fatigue'. Delegates suggested that the MMO should have a regular attendance at major maritime events like Seawork, Cowes Week and the Southampton Boat Show.

Delegates would like the MMO to provide a working list of organisations they interact with and who they feel is missing from that list. It would be useful if this was an active document that people can refer to to understand who the MMO is engaging with.

7. Suggest new ways of communicating information about the South Plan

Educating sector champions to spread messages is seen as a good way forward, MMO staff could work with them to translate the Plan to be meaningful for that sector. Governing bodies are good at communicating with their members, but aren't prepared to do this unless the information is relevant to them. In the Solent, that has numerous harbours, Harbour Offices are the main source of local information for coastal users and harbour staff can act as 'local champions' for their area.

Task 2 – Workshop Findings

8. Have you or people in your field of interest looked at the Plan Policies?

Most people from non-statutory bodies haven't looked at the adopted plan policies, however some had looked at the policies in the draft plan when they had an opportunity to comment. Most people from statutory authorities had looked at the policies but that did depend on their role within the organisation. Comments were made that the policies just reflect the 'status quo' of existing work and that they should be more progressive. Some delegates said that it was not clear how policies apply to specific areas and that a visual aid is needed to explain why something might be an issue.

9. Would you like communication from the MMO about how plan policies are relevant in your work area?

Most smaller stakeholders answered no to this question. The policies are too high level for them to see the relevance. People queried the hierarchical and sometime conflicting nature of the policies – "*you can find a policy to support what you want to do and one that doesn't support it, which takes precedence?*" When decisions are made people want them to be transparent and the reasoning clearly explained.

The preferred method of communication if people were to contact the MMO is face-to-face contact. Some delegates expressed frustration at the difficulty of being able to contact MMO staff. There is confusion about the role of local and national staff and which office to contact for their requests. A simple directory of where to go for information on specific topics would be helpful.

Delegates said that they would like to receive more information about how to use policies, but it would need to be bespoke/tailored to them and written in layman's

terms. Local authority delegates said that they would like examples of where other authorities have used the plans and at what stage they should be using them. Delegates from local conservation groups said that rather than the MMO “scaring” them by keeping referring to the Plan as a ‘statutory document’, it should “sell” the Plan to them, providing a positive approach on why they should be using it and pointing out the benefits of doing so.

10. Can you think of existing work that is implementing South Plan policies?

Larger organisations have project work and strategies that are implementing plan policies, there is a need to recognise this and spread good practice. These sometimes involve small stakeholders and individuals and this should be noted. People currently aren’t linking back their existing work to delivery of the policies. It would be helpful for the MMO to review and recognise what policies are being addressed by existing work. There are ongoing Solent projects such as ‘The Ecological Enhancement of Coastal Defences’ and ‘Beneficial use of Dredging’ that whilst bringing about environmental benefit, still need to be scrutinised by statutory consultees for their effects on the environment. Delegates were not clear how the South Plan can be used to help with these judgements. It was suggested that a Forum would be useful to discuss such issues.

Local Authority delegates mentioned that they have policies in place to protect the coastal zone which probably cross over with some of the Plans’ policies. There are also coastal protection schemes where the EA is leading, so they would assume that the EA would be aware of the plan: there were questions about the extent to which partners are informed about the Plans.

11. Do you think we should prepare sector specific case studies?

A big yes all round to this point. Case studies and worked examples are seen as very helpful, but they need to be written in conjunction with ‘sector champions’. People also thought that there was a need for topic case studies, for example, ‘A guide to marine planning and water quality’. They also suggested a ‘Marine Plans and Port and Harbour Authorities’ guide would be useful. This should show simply and clearly how the Plan is relevant to those people who live and work within harbour environments.

Delegates thought that an invitation should be put out inviting people to help write case studies; the RYA was suggested as a key contributor. An idea was expressed to copy the Welsh plan model to have a series of scenarios built around policies; the RYA helped develop these scenarios.

It was suggested that it would be helpful for the MMO to speak with attendees before meetings and workshops to find out what the key activity or issue is in an area, so that they could tailor any examples accordingly and show where there is an overlap with the plans.

12. Are you aware of or have you used MMO evidence studies?

There is a total lack of awareness of evidence studies, the only time people were aware of them was via the Solent Forum informing them. Delegates wouldn't know where to find the studies or how to input into them. They do not know how to submit data they collect to the MMO or what data parameters they may need to adhere too. A simple guide on this topic would be very helpful. Some smaller stakeholders found these studies more interesting than the Plan.

Future studies on Marine Protected Area Management, unmarked fishing gear, natural capital and ecosystem services were suggested. There was a suggestion for the MMO to produce a mind map, to help identify gaps in its evidence base, and to help delegates identify where they might be able to input information.

13. Do you have monitoring data that can support the plan?

Some delegates have anecdotal evidence about their sector's activities and others have monitoring data and statistics, but they have no idea of its relevance to the Plan or whether it could be used as evidence. For example, the RYA has an Atlas of Recreational Boating and Hants and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust have monitoring data on many habitats. Some of this data is already in the public domain on websites, but delegates said they did not have the time or resources to send this to the MMO, so the onus would have to be on the MMO to find it. The Solent Forum publicises local information via its news service and records it in the Solent Information database (<http://www.solentforum.org/publications/sid/>).

A simple guide on how local monitoring/data collected/statistics could be used in the Plan and what is relevant would be helpful. People thought that there is a need to 'ground truth' data with local stakeholders to check its accuracy. Generally, people are happy to share data if it means their sector gets better representation, or they can receive reciprocal information that would be of use to them.

14. Would you adapt work streams to help monitor and implement the South Marine Plans?

This question was most applicable to statutory public authorities as they have a duty under the Marine and Coastal Access Act to make decisions that are in accordance with, or have regard to, marine plans (depending on the nature of the decision). The need for coordination with work streams was thought important as this is seen as a two-way process between Marine Plans and other statutory documents.

Some local authority delegates said that they might consider more active implementation work (rather than purely statutory compliance) if the MMO could agree a way that would be beneficial to them, as they are scrutinised in the way they use their limited resources and funding.

Delegates suggested a unique common platform, where everybody could input data as well as collect information, would be a win-win situation for all. This would also help optimise resources and avoid duplication of research.

Harbour Authority officers will brief from Board to staff level; some may invite MMO planning staff to brief partnership meetings. When considering their own regulatory processes they will take the Plan into account, but many of the policies and principle are already covered off via existing measures, legislation and controls. The same applies for when they are considering their own development proposals.

15. What is the most important factor in getting a wide range of stakeholders engaged in the South Plan?

People want the MMO to recognise their local knowledge in setting policies and how marine planning can affect local users. Any communication is seen as better than none, but this must be consistent over time and written appropriately. There is a need to manage expectations about how the MMO will interact with smaller stakeholders in the long term.

Local people would like to be able to raise issues that they are concerned about and be shown how the Plan could address them, for example, how to conserve recreational access when major schemes are proposed or help improve water quality. People want the MIS and MCMS to be more user friendly, they suggest the MMO ask what people want from it and get them to help develop it to meet their needs, e.g. set up a user working group. People mix up the two systems and this confuses them as to which one to use.

Increasing local awareness of who the MMO is and what it does is seen as key. Communications material explaining who the MMO is and the benefits of the Plan, written in layman's terms, would be helpful to reach a wider audience. Industry delegates said that they need specific contacts; they usually go to the local council to find out what to do for a proposed development, they would hope that the council would know how to contact/refer them to the MMO.

It was suggested that the MMO attend general meetings of professional bodies, environmental groups, CPRE, trade associations and user groups for example, to see if there would be a slot for a guest speaker. They would get a captive audience at such events.

Delegates asked how the EMFF project came about, for example, did someone complain that the MMO were not talking to the right people? It feels like the MMO is searching for justification of what they've done, as the focus shifts on to how the Marine Plans are used. Explaining the rationale for the EMFF project would be helpful. Some commented that the MMO, at a senior level, needs to set their agenda and replicate this across the country and be more engaged, as there is obviously an appetite for it.

Delegates thought that improving the MMO licencing team's engagement with stakeholders at a local level was important. This is where stakeholders are more likely to interact with and contact the MMO. There is a parallel in land planning i.e. harder to reach stakeholders usually only get involved when a planning application has relevance to them, and it is often only then that they may look to a Local Plan to see where the application fits (or doesn't fit) with Plan policies.