

# PLYMOUTH SOUND NATIONAL MARINE PARK

Creating The UK's First National Marine Park: A Prospectus

December 2018



---

**“My vision of the National Marine Park is of a designation that enables people to understand marine protection and connect better with the ocean, bringing more people into contact with the sea through education, exploration and employment.”**

---

Back in the 2017 I proposed the idea of creating a National Marine Park (NMP) in Plymouth Sound as part of my election campaign. This was not an entirely new concept, but it had not enjoyed widespread public support to that point. As a proud Janner I know just how amazing our marine environment and coastal waters are off Plymouth. As a city we are world-class at so many things from marine science and conservation to marine engineering. There is one thing that we are better at than all those and that is not telling anyone how good we are. I wanted to change that and over the last year we have debated, discussed and explored what marine parks are and how we could create the UK's first National Marine Park in Plymouth Sound.

My vision of the National Marine Park is of a designation that enables people to understand marine protection and connect better with the ocean, bringing more people into contact with the sea through education, exploration and employment. It does not have to be a legal framework, indeed, there are merits for it being flexible and malleable in its early phases to perfect the ideas and implementation in order to create something that genuinely engages and brings new understanding to the marine protections that already exist. It is not about stopping anyone doing anything but about encouraging sustainable economic activity to sit alongside a sustainable environment.

This proposal document is the output from the first year of our city's collaboration with local, national and international partners to explore how we can designate Plymouth Sound and use that new status to promote our city, enhance our economy, creating jobs and ensuring that use of the Sound and our precious coastal waters is truly sustainable. The opportunity to do something incredible that will define the future of coastal protection in the UK is within grasp.

This document is designed to provoke, explain and inspire. We want to make a robust case that Plymouth Sound should not only be the first National Marine Park in the UK but that it should be a concept that is then rolled out across the nation. With the threat of dangerous climate change there has never been a better time to create truly sustainable jobs in coastal communities. I am excited by this opportunity and hope you will be too.

**Luke Pollard MP**

*Member of Parliament for Plymouth Sutton and Devonport and Shadow Minister for Water, Fisheries, Flooding and Coastal Communities*

This prospectus is the result of a year of exploration, discovery and discussion in Plymouth, led by Luke Pollard MP into the opportunity to create a National Marine Park in Plymouth Sound. This work has been developed alongside our key partners: Plymouth City Council, University of Plymouth, Plymouth Marine Laboratories, Marine Biological Association, the National Marine Aquarium and Destination Plymouth.

---

**“Plymouth Sound is a beautiful and unique natural environment that is integral to what makes Plymouth special, it is a place where people and nature coexist.”**

---

As Britain's Ocean City, Plymouth's marine environment provides a link to our proud heritage as well as being integral to our future, prosperity, well-being and culture. Plymouth Sound is a beautiful and unique natural environment that is integral to what makes Plymouth special, it is a place where people and nature coexist. This high quality environment supports a naval dockyard, commercial ports, a tourist destination, a 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 more deserving of special recognition.

There are however currently no marine designations that allow us to celebrate the significance and diversity of Plymouth Sound. This needs to change. Plymouth Sound is a unique asset and we need to be able to celebrate all of the features that make it so special, from the people to the wildlife, from our heritage legacy to our commercial future. We need to do this in a manner that is meaningful at a local and national level. Developing a marine designation that can be applied nationally but is first declared in Plymouth would provide the recognition the area so deserves.

There are challenges to turning the concept of a National Marine Park for Plymouth Sound into a reality but nowhere is better placed to meet that challenge than Plymouth. We have the knowledge, expertise, a legacy of collaborative partnerships and a passion to make this happen, lets get started!

**Sue Dann**  
*Plymouth City Council*







---

**“NMPs will provide a vehicle for public engagement with the marine environment, which will not only enhance understanding and ownership, but also result in extensive social, economic and health and wellbeing benefits.”**

---

The Plymouth Marine Science community is fully supportive of the concept of National Marine Parks, having initiated the idea in 2012, and we are energised by the prospect of a potential National Marine Park (NMP) for Plymouth Sound.

We see this as an analogue to land national parks, but working in a very different way to suit the marine environment – it is indeed a new concept that can be applied round the UK. In particular we see NMPs as a way of demonstrating that we value our seas, they are as important to the UK as our land, and will enable the benefits of sustainable use and conservation of marine natural and cultural heritage to be far more visible.

Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, NMPs will provide a vehicle for public engagement with the marine environment, which will not only enhance understanding and ownership, but also result in extensive social, economic and health and wellbeing benefits. The aim is to get far more people in, on, under and by the sea, whilst highlighting the value of clean, safe, biodiverse oceans that are of great importance to our city and the nation.

We therefore encourage everyone in Plymouth and beyond to provide as much support as possible to make real the ambition of developing the UK’s first National Marine Park in the waters off the city.

This will make a clear and bold statement that the UK values its marine environment as much as our ecosystems and cultural heritage on land and that Britain’s Ocean City leads the way in creating a sustainable future for our seas

**Marine Research Sector**



# Why should we create the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park?

**Plymouth Sound and Tamar Estuaries Marine Protected Area covers 405 km<sup>2</sup>, over five times the size of the city.**

**The marine sector in Plymouth employs over 13,000 people.**

**Plymouth is home to the second largest fishmarket in England by value and an incredibly important asset for the fishing industry.**

Plymouth is Britain's Ocean City. The sea, coastline and maritime heritage are some of Plymouth's greatest assets. Plymouth is world renowned for marine science and engineering and home to the National Marine Aquarium, Plymouth Marine Laboratory, Marine Biological Association, The Marine Institute, the Diving Diseases Research Centre, The Shark Trust, UTC Plymouth, the Devonport Naval Base, a commercial port and the new Oceansgate development. Plymouth has a prestigious place in the Nation's maritime heritage. Together these make Plymouth a world-leading centre for marine research, education and maritime cultural heritage.

However, the full potential of Plymouth is yet to be realised. In 2020 we celebrate the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower setting sail for the North America with pilgrims in search of a new life. This event is just one of the many moments in history, which makes Plymouth a centre for marine and maritime heritage. We now have an opportunity to connect all that is marine with the people of Plymouth and visitors under the banner of the "Plymouth Sound National Marine Park".<sup>1</sup>

Plymouth Sound's waters which are already recognised for their national and international importance for wildlife and heritage. This is evidenced in the number of designations laid through the site, including Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Marine Conservation Zones, Natural 2000 sites, protected wreck sites and intertidal SSSIs. These designations are important but research shows that people are confused by the numerous designations and what they mean to them.

The public are passionate about marine conservation like never before. Blue Planet II was watched by millions of people across the world. The vivid imagery of plastic pollution changed behaviour, regulations and laws around the world to make protecting our oceans a priority. In the UK, Sky News has pioneered their 'Ocean Rescue' campaign and the UN's Patron of the Oceans, Lewis Pugh, has not only swam the length of the English Channel to highlight the need for better marine protection he has lent his support to this proposal also.

<sup>1</sup> MarCoPol

## HMNB Devonport, the largest naval base in Western Europe is located off Plymouth Sound.

There is political support for marine conservation from both main political parties.

The Government has pledged to support the protection of 30% of the world's oceans by 2030 and the Labour Party has pledged to support the creation of National Marine Parks as part of its blue-belt policy for UK coastal waters.

The Government is reviewing the framework for National Parks and this offers an opportunity to join the work happening in Plymouth around National Marine Parks directly into the highest levels of government policy.

In 2017 the campaign was launched to designate Plymouth Sound as the UK's first National Marine Park by Luke Pollard MP and local marine representatives.

This prospectus is the output of the first year of work to create a viable proposal for the UK's first National Marine Park that is nationally recognised and locally valued.







## Current management structures

Estuarine and coastal waters are characterised by many overlapping statutory authorities and functions which means that the management of the water is not in the hands of any one single organisation. This is certainly true of Plymouth Sound and the Tamar Estuaries which has over 18 authorities with responsibilities for the waters.

For nearly 25 years, these organisations have been working together through the Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum, delivering collaborative management focusing on managing the site for its environmental designations whilst delivering a sustainably managed estuary and coast.

## What is a National Marine Park?

---

**“A Marine Park is a specially recognised coastal or marine space important for its environment and community health and wellbeing. Marine Park status will encourage greater prosperity, responsible enjoyment, deeper knowledge and enhanced appreciation of the natural world and our place within it.”**

**MarCoPol/Blue  
Marine Foundation**

---

Marine Parks are not a new concept with examples existing around the world. Each of these marine parks are slightly different with different regulatory and environmental protections. An early challenge for the campaign was to define what we mean by a National Marine Park. Working with the University of Plymouth's MarCoPol centre and the Blue Marine Foundation we propose the following as a definition.

The title of 'National' Marine Park makes what we already have sound more 'special' to the public. Currently we do not have the level of designation that is designed to engage the public. Instead, we have a series of technical designations but none that are explicitly targeted at increasing public awareness and engagement as National Marine Parks would be.

### What a National Marine Park is not

A wide variety of statutory conservation designations already exist which recognise the rich natural and cultural heritage of our coastal waters. The aim of the marine park would not be to add to existing conservation designations, but make the current designation work harder in a more integrated way. We want people to understand the designation and enhance socio-economic benefits, utilising them to attract visitors and increase awareness and appreciation of our coastal waters'.

The vision is therefore to include people and economic activity in the marine environment rather than exclude by regulation.<sup>2</sup>

This means that fishing, military use and commercial shipping will continue to exist alongside marine protection, habitat restoration and species reintroduction efforts. We want we build on the success of existing forums that integrate marine environmental and recreational management and extend it to other uses over a wider area.

---

<sup>2</sup> MarCoPol

## Why Plymouth Sound?

**“People were awestruck when Blue Planet II hit our TV screens this year. But what people in Plymouth, let alone the wider world don’t realise is that in Plymouth Sound we have magic of Blue Planet II right here in our waters.”**

**Professor Martin Attrill,**  
*Plymouth University*

Plymouth Sound is unique among the UK’s coastal waters for the variety of marine wildlife, its multiplicity of use and the concentration of marine engineering, science and research expertise in the city of Plymouth. It is the world’s third largest natural harbour behind San Francisco and Sydney and is home not only to rare marine mammals but also to marine wildlife found nowhere else.

There are few stretches of water that can boast nuclear submarines, warships, fishing, marine science and the development of the world’s first ‘smart sound’ fully wifi-enabled underwater testing areas for autonomous marine vehicles.

Plymouth Sound also has a global reputation as a key diving area made even more prominent since the sinking of former HMS Scylla in 2004 creating an artificial reef off the Cornish coast.

Since 1994, Plymouth City Council has hosted the Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum, which brings together those organisations with marine responsibilities and has delivered effective collaborative management for the waters of Plymouth Sound and the Tamar Estuaries.

We believe that Plymouth and Plymouth Sound therefore not only has the environmental credentials to be the UK’s first National Marine Park, but that we also have the expertise in collaborative marine management, marine science, marine protections, marine engineering, tourism and marketing to make the whole concept a success.

## Campaign objectives



# Timeline



## National Parks and National Marine Parks: What is the difference?

**90%**  
of people in  
England say  
National Parks  
are important to  
them

**96%**  
say they want  
every child to  
experience a  
National Park  
first hand

The UK has a long tradition of protective environment statutory designations, with 19 listed on the Government's JNCC website, and a further 14 non-statutory designations. Of these National Parks were created under the 1949 National Park and Access to the Countryside Act following the Second World War, to get people into nature. As part of this, acres of generally unproductive upland were designated with a purpose to conserve and enhance natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, and promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of their special qualities.

The Parks are landscapes with millions of people working and living in them and so they have a duty to foster the social and economic wellbeing of the local communities within the National Park in pursuit of their purposes. The land is generally in private hands, although there is right of access to much of it. Development activity is restricted within National Parks as all statutory decisions need to be made having regard for their primary objective whilst protecting the landscape.

National Parks around the world are, however, viewed somewhat differently, with the IUCN defining them as "large natural areas set aside to protect the ecology of the area whilst also providing a foundation for environmentally and culturally compatible spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities" and it goes on to say that they should be largely free of human habitation and activity.

Howsoever they are defined, 90% of people in England say National Parks are important to them and 96% say they want every child to experience a National Park first hand; we believe there is a clear opportunity to create this level of support for the marine environment to generate similar positive behaviours.<sup>3</sup> There are currently no equivalents to National Parks in UK home waters.

However, the Government has recognised that the existing designation framework is nearly 70 years old and as such might need updating in order to identify how designated areas can boost wildlife, support the recovery of natural habitats and connect more people with nature whilst also supporting DEFRA's 25 Year Environment Plan.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.nationalparksengland.org.uk/love-your-national-parks>

---

**Like National Parks on land, there is a huge level of support for and interest in the marine environment with 116 million day trips to the coast recorded in 2017.**

---

The marine environment clearly differs from areas currently within National Parks in that much of it is in the ownership of the Crown Estate and therefore a quasi-publicly owned asset, although there is some that is in private ownership. The public has a right of access through navigation although this can be temporarily suspended by harbour authorities, and whilst people work and depend on the water, they do not necessarily live in or on it. However like National Parks on land, there is a huge level of support for and interest in the marine environment with 116 million day trips to the coast recorded in 2017.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand the marine environment is a more complex area to manage and therefore requires a new approach to spatial management; from down at the seabed, right up through the water column to the surface. It also requires a temporal approach as different activities take place at different times of the year and needs to recognise how dynamic the marine environment is in terms of tide, weather, migrating fish and birds and the complexity of usage and management. This level of complexity means that it is possible to integrate different uses, for example in different parts of the water column or at different times, thereby enabling sustainable economic activities whilst also delivering the existing environmental protections.

This approach is at the heart of the proposal to create Britain's first National Marine Park and since there is no legislation to define it, we would like to explore with the Government if and what legal wording would be required to designate areas of water, foreshore and river catchments as National Marine Parks.

That is not to say the marine environment is not protected. Far from it, there are many different legal protections for marine areas such as Marine Protected Areas, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Marine Conservation Zones, Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)/Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs), Ramsar sites and Marine Nature Reserves (MNRs).

<sup>4</sup> Great Britain Day Visitor 2017 Annual Report [https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/Documents-Library/documents/England-documents/260139488\\_-\\_kantar\\_tns\\_-\\_gb\\_dvs\\_2017\\_annual\\_report\\_v5.pdf](https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/Documents-Library/documents/England-documents/260139488_-_kantar_tns_-_gb_dvs_2017_annual_report_v5.pdf)



---

**National Parks are also significant economic drivers for their local region bringing in tourists from outside of the region and generating jobs for the local community.**

---

The main concern over existing marine terminology, in comparison to national parks, is that its complexity and lack of a single, umbrella term is a barrier to public engagement.

The disadvantages of existing terminology from SACs to SSSIs is this is that it is difficult to find a single member of the public who can recall any one of these protected classifications, what it means or point to one on a map or chart. As such, we believe there is a need for plain English marine protection that first helps members of the public understand marine protection, which then fosters a value in protecting our marine environment.

There is also a belief that a National Marine Park could be more socially inclusive than in land National Parks. Comparably easier access to seaside towns than to for example, the Peak District means that seaside visits are more likely to be taken by families and are more likely to be taken by those in the less affluent social grades. Research has demonstrated that engaging with the marine environment has major health and wellbeing benefits, particularly its restorative capacity to protect mental health.

National Parks are also significant economic drivers for their local region bringing in tourists from outside of the region and generating jobs for the local community. Dartmoor and Exmoor attract 5 million visitors every year with an estimated economic value of over £200 million.

The National Marine Park concept has the opportunity, if rolled out across the UK, to generate further value from our marine environment and supplement traditional seaside economies based on fishing by boosting tourism and creating jobs.

Ensuring that National Marine Parks are more than just a rebranding exercise, and demonstrably improve engagement and awareness whilst delivering economic return, will be important in proving the long-term viability of this designation and their benefit to coastal communities.







## What is a National Marine Park in Plymouth Sound?

---

**A National Marine Park would be a beacon for tourism, discovery about the marine environment and help promote and protect our coastal waters.**

---

The National Marine Park in Plymouth Sound will create a plain English description that covers the marine protected areas, rivers and coastal waters as far as the eye can see. It would include areas of protections for our previous coastal waters including Marine Protected Zones, Marine Protected Areas and areas of marine conservation.

It would build on our current successful governance structures through existing legislation that protects our coastal waters, provides for access by naval and commercial shipping and supports the sustainable use of these waters.

It would be a beacon for tourism, discovery about the marine environment and would help promote and protect our coastal waters.

The Plymouth Sound National Marine Park will not be a new type of marine protected area. It is not a marine reserve. A range of existing managed spaces already exist in the Plymouth Sound area with a focus on biodiversity conservation. Therefore, the NMP entity could not be criticised as a 'paper park' since the objectives are not focused on biodiversity conservation. By enhancing the marine profile of the area, the NMP would allow broader socio-ecological objectives to be met without additional legislation.<sup>7</sup>

As such, creating a National Marine Park in Plymouth is not simply about direct conservation policy. Creating a plain English definition, like that which we have for national parks, is a statement that UK marine environment matters as much as our land. We believe that the increase in public and business ownership buy-in and engagement with our marine space that this new definition will cause, will in turn lead to greater social and economic benefits.

---

<sup>7</sup> MarCoPol

## What should the new National Marine Park be called?

Identity is key if the potential of the marine park is to be achieved. It needs to be recognisable with a clarity of location and simplicity to enable members of the public to instantly understand the designation of a 'National Marine Park' and the specific positioning.

We, therefore, propose the working title of "Plymouth Sound National Marine Park" as a headline identity that would encourage greater awareness of the different parts within the marine park, such as the MCZ and SSSI for instance and refers directly to the name of the waterbody.

## How big should the Marine Park be?

Marine Parks internationally are normally large. By comparison, the areas of water currently protected in the UK is very small indeed. Just 7km<sup>2</sup> by some estimates, the same size as Richmond Park in London. This new type of designation offers the chance not only to include coastal waters as marine parks but also tributary rivers, the foreshore and areas of the marine environment out until the legal limit of 6/12 miles or the mid-point between two nations. In short, the concept means marine parks can be small or they can be large. The key thing is that need to be special.

In Plymouth Sound we have a very special area of water and already many of the formal and informal regulatory systems we need to make a marine park work. As such we propose building on the bodies that already work such as the Tamar Estuary Consultative Forum, Port of Plymouth Authority and the Marine Conservation Zones and Marine Protected Areas already designated by Government. The current Plymouth Marine Protection Area might also serve us well as an initial phase with the addition of extension out to the marine legal limit.

We recognise that marine parks are a new designation and as such it may take time for the desired and true and full geographical extent to be achieved. But partners wanted to be bold and as such we propose an initial area and an extension area approach to geographical area.

## Proposed initial area

- Plymouth Sound from the Hoe to Rame Head in the west and Warren Point in the east (broadly the area covered by the current Plymouth Marine Protected Area).
- Continued south to the Eddystone Reef.
- The rivers that flow into Plymouth Hoe covered by the Tamar Estuary Consultative Forum (TECF) and the River Plym which currently is not within the TECF area.

## Proposed extension area

- Subject to the agreement of Devon, South Hams and Cornwall Councils the National Marine Park boundaries would be extended from the initial area as outline above to start at Salcombe in south Devon in the east to Looe in Cornwall in the west.
- Extending out to the full 6-12 mile legal limit in the south
- Building on the work of the successful Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum area the extended National Marine Park would include the rivers of the Plym, Tamar, Lynher, Tavy as well as the Avon, Erme, Yealm and Seaton

There is currently discussion about how much of the foreshore it should include, and if it should extend back in to the city. We propose a 'fuzzy line' to include the foreshore but not be prescriptive about how far from the coast the National Marine Park should extend.



# When should Plymouth Sound be designated as a National Marine Park?

Our proposal to Government is a simple one: let us test the concept, let us improve it and let us work with Government officials and its agencies to define what action is required by Ministers either through formal regulation or informal standard setting to create National Marine Parks.

Without any legal obstacles it is possible to designate Plymouth Sound as a National Marine Park swiftly, but we propose to take the appropriate time to get this right so that the concept is fully developed, the risks and opportunities better understood, and the public engaged in this development process.

As such we propose the following timetable:

**December 2018**

- Publication of the prospectus by Luke Pollard MP and partners
- Publication of Luke Pollard MP's White Papers Issue 2: Marine

**Spring 2019**

- Establish a NMP Task Force to enable collaborative approach to the development of the NMP designation
- Gain support from Government for Plymouth Sound to be the first NMP
- Engagement commences on the proposal

**Autumn 2019**

- Engagement process feedback
- Further development of the designation process

**Early 2020**

- Evolved proposal published and formally presented to Government
- Government to report on the National Park framework review and include marine parks

**Summer 2020**

- To coincide with the Mayflower 400 commemorations Plymouth City Council and partners to locally designate Plymouth Sound as the UK's first National Marine Park

# Creating National Marine Parks elsewhere in the UK

We believe that the time is right for the development and roll out of National Marine Parks right across the coastline of the United Kingdom. There is increasing public awareness of the challenges of protecting our marine environment from plastic pollution, over-fishing and inappropriate development as well as a growing appreciation of the diversity of marine life in our coastal waters.

As we seek to address damaging climate change we will need an even greater collective effort to protect and value our coastal waters. With the Government's timely review of the framework around National Parks we believe this is the perfect opportunity to explore the development of not only the Plymouth Sound National Marine Park as the first of these parks but of a type of designation that could work around the country's diverse and important coastlines.

This means having non-hierarchical principles for this status rather than strict requirements. For example, the Jurassic Coast will have very different ecological and geographical settings than Plymouth Sound, the Firth of Forth or Goodwin Sands, for instance.

We propose that Plymouth Sound is the first National Marine Park and used as a test bed to trial and perfect the concept and framework for consideration before it is rolled out across the country.



For more information please contact:

- Luke Pollard MP  
luke.pollard.mp@parliament.uk  
01752 717255
- Cllr Sue Dann  
sue.dann@plymouth.gov.uk
- Council Officer Kathryn Deeney  
Kathryn.deeney@plymouth.gov.uk



UNIVERSITY OF  
PLYMOUTH



DESTINATION  
PLYMOUTH

**PML**

Plymouth Marine  
Laboratory

**NMA**

NATIONAL  
MARINE  
AQUARIUM



Est. 1884  
Incorporated by  
Royal Charter