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North Devon Marine Pioneer

North Devon's Marine Pioneer journey

About the Pioneers

The North Devon Marine Pioneer is one of the UK's four Pioneer projects testing innovative ideas for improving and restoring the health of the environment.

Cumbria:
catchment



North Devon:
landscape



Greater Manchester:
urban



North Devon and Suffolk:
marine



The Marine Pioneer has two hosts: Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the North Devon UNESCO Biosphere Reserve; the latter hosts both the Landscape and Marine Pioneer projects.

The Pioneer projects have four aims:

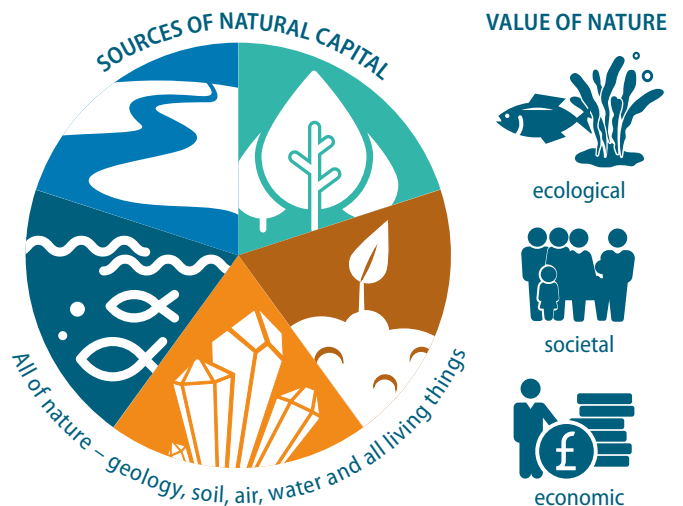
➤ **Test new tools and methods as part of applying a natural capital approach in practice**

How can we use guidance, models, databases and plans to enhance marine natural capital; how effective are they and how can they be improved?

National context

Following the UK's National Ecosystem Assessment and Natural Environment White Paper in 2011, the Government set up a Natural Capital Committee to advise on how to use the environment sustainably.

The Committee recommended a long-term environmental plan with four pilot projects to test some of the new approaches they proposed. The Government's A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment, aims to leave the environment in a better state for the next generation. Four Pioneer projects were asked by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) to test delivery of the plan.



➤ **Demonstrate a joined-up approach to planning and delivery**

How can partnerships, communication and local people help those governing the marine environment to improve natural capital in a long-term, sustainable way?

➤ **Pioneer and scale up the use of new funding opportunities**

How can governance and research to support the natural environment be funded in a sustainable way? Where are the gaps and how can they be met?

➤ **Improve our understanding of what works**

How can the Pioneers’ achievements be replicated elsewhere? What are the barriers to natural capital growth and what are the successes?










North Devon Marine Pioneer

The North Devon Marine Pioneer’s boundary was defined through work with the local fishing sector. The boundary covers the North Devon Biosphere Reserve’s marine component and extends out 20 nautical miles from the coast and into Cornwall Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) waters, eastwards to the Special Area of Conservation at Bridgewater Bay; landwards to the mean high water of spring tides and the tidal limits of the Taw and Torridge rivers, where it joins the boundary of the North Devon Landscape Pioneer.

In North Devon our work has been guided by the five steps recommended in the Natural Capital Committee’s *How To Do It: A Natural Capital Workbook*.

Step 1: Setting out the vision

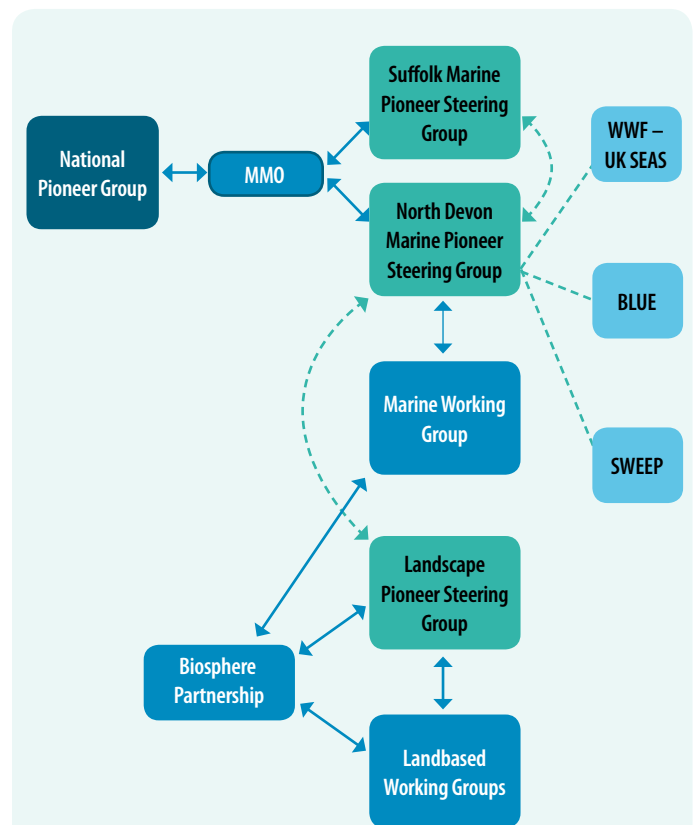
Prior to the launch of the 25 Year Environment Plan, North Devon Biosphere’s Marine Working Group developed an ambitious long-term vision for North Devon Biosphere’s marine environment, with nine goals:

	Improve local fisheries management and seafood sales		Develop sustainable tidal stream energy
	Develop sustainable aquaculture		Define and implement a response to climate change
	Protect biodiversity		Promote sustainable coastal tourism and leisure
	Reduce marine litter		Create jobs in marine industries
	Increase local decision making		

These locally defined goals turned out to be a good fit with the 25 Year Environment Plan.

Step 2: Understanding where you are starting from

This step has involved taking stock of our current assets through building up an Asset and Risk Register, and improving our understanding of governance and stakeholders, and decision-making processes. In carrying out this stock-take, the Pioneer has had the benefit of expert inputs and resources from the South West Partnership for Environmental and Economic Prosperity (SWEEP) and the WWF-led UK SEAS projects, as well as others that contribute to the Pioneer steering group. In addition, the Marine Working Group (the Biosphere’s stakeholder group) provides expert input to the stock-take, verifying outputs and making recommendations.



North Devon Marine Pioneer Steering Group

- North Devon Biosphere – **host organisation**
- Natural England, Devon and Severn IFCA, and Marine Management Organisation (MMO) – **statutory organisations**
- Plymouth Marine Laboratory and the University of Plymouth – **academic institutions**
- Blue Marine Foundation and WWF – **NGOs**

North Devon Biosphere’s Marine Working Group

To meet the needs of the Marine Pioneer, this group has expanded to include business, tourism, conservation, recreation, decision makers’, fishing, retail, education, community and a range of other interests.

Step 3: Building the evidence base

This step has involved generating more evidence to inform the application of a natural capital approach to a variety of marine sectors and management operations.

Gathering data

The Marine Pioneer is working with expert groups to generate information on how to improve and restore nature. This is being applied and tested in: the [WWF UK SEAS project](#) on Marine Protected Areas; the [Biosphere's saltmarsh project](#); [Blue Marine Foundation's herring project](#); and other [fisheries projects](#) jointly managed by the industry, Devon & Severn IFCA, scientists, and the North Devon Biosphere. Partners are also contributing research and information on governance, sustainable finance, the benefits of co-design, incorporating social values, and development of a framework for local delivery of the 25 Year Environment Plan (the [Marine Natural Capital Plan](#)).

Working with stakeholders to both input new information and share outputs and lessons is vital. North Devon Marine Pioneer has provided:

- evidence of what natural capital we have, what condition it is in, what management measures are in place, and what are the risks and benefits
- a local perspective, through the Marine Working Group, that is also relevant to the rest of England, including a long-term vision, directing activities, understanding issues and benefits, and contributing to the Asset and Risk Register
- understanding of how improvement of nature might be incorporated into decisions
- the first steps towards an investment plan and how that might be delivered.

Working with stakeholders

There has been a high level of local stakeholder engagement throughout the Marine Pioneer. We have studied who our key stakeholders are, and whether they are properly represented throughout the programme. We are working to identify which industries and groups might be missing and to engage with them; and to ensure those involved are relevant

to the location (North Devon, North Cornwall, West Somerset) and the issues (e.g. policy, data, industry).

Based on a short survey, we have changed how we define the people who contribute their time to the Marine Working Group. The survey asked what people's interests are, and revealed that members are about more than the organisations they represent – for example, an individual representing a local conservation club may have a marketing or finance background. This has helped us gain a good spread of expertise relevant to the marine environment.

The cross-sector Marine Working Group has helped define investment opportunities. We hope this rejuvenated group will form the voice for the marine component of the North Devon Biosphere after the Marine Pioneer, which is due to end in March 2020.

Step 4: Identifying and weighing up options

The Marine Pioneer is testing the [natural capital approach](#) as well as other methods that aim to restore and enhance the natural environment, including how decision makers can incorporate natural capital, and methods for sustainable finance.

We are developing a [delivery framework](#) to help those responsible for governance to identify and weigh up their options.

The information gathered has been collated into a [geodatabase](#) and a [Natural Capital Asset and Risk Register](#). Building a robust geodatabase has been challenging due to the gaps in our knowledge about some parts of the marine environment. Although much of the mapping is based on modelling, the added value of the Pioneer is that maps of ecosystem services can be ground-truthed through the Marine Working Group. The more the information is tested and used – for example to identify where lucrative fishing grounds are, or to identify key wildlife sites – the greater the confidence will be. Other tools and projects that have been developed for identifying and weighing up options are:

- [Marine Protected Area toolkit](#) from the UK SEAS project, covering stakeholder engagement, writing



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Partnership working brings synergies

For example, the SWEEP team supported North Devon Council's 2018 water sports survey by providing spatial data and an understanding of the economic benefit of water sports to the area – with mutual benefit to the Marine Pioneer and the local authorities.



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a management plan, government structures for managing Marine Protected Areas, and evidence

- Guidance on how to incorporate consideration of natural capital into sustainability appraisal of any plan or project, led by Plymouth Marine Laboratory with the University of Plymouth Marine Institute
- Who Is In Charge Around Here? – a report from UK SEAS on people's perceptions of what marine governance looks like in North Devon
- A new tool by SWEEP, with the North Devon Biosphere, on taking a natural capital approach to creating saltmarsh
- A UK SEAS survey tool, the Compass survey, for evaluating the effectiveness of management and governance of Marine Protected Areas
- The Blue Marine Foundation's herring project identifying important habitats for fish
- Devon & Severn IFCA's future work on an ecosystem approach to fisheries management, linking fisheries management to conservation measures and added value.

Step 5: Implementation and evaluation

Future actions

The North Devon Biosphere and the Marine Working Group will implement this work with local authorities and other decision makers. The lessons from the Marine Pioneer, which are contributing to local delivery of the 25 Year Environment Plan, will be shared with Defra and other relevant government delivery bodies, as well as being rolled out around the North Devon coast.

The lessons and best practice information will also be available to partnerships and NGOs that are interested in using this approach to improve and restore the environment.

We will deliver a Marine Natural Capital Plan to deliver the 25 Year Environment Plan locally. This will include the development of useful governance methods, and potentially a Natural Capital Trust, providing a basis for work towards restoring and enhancing the natural environment.

The work of all four Pioneers is being evaluated. There has already been an evaluation of all four by Defra, and local monitoring and evaluation will also be included in the Marine Natural Capital Plan to ensure that evaluation by the Biosphere Partnership continues.

Sustainable financing

WWF is looking at how to develop sustainable financing mechanisms that can be used to enhance the North Devon Marine Natural Capital Plan, in particular for Marine Protected Areas. The project has identified finance models to help identify investment opportunities and enable effective partnerships with the private sector, including a place-based portfolio model and a marine improvement district model as described in the report.

The next steps are to identify potential investable projects (expanding on ideas from the Marine Working Group and expert panels) and to develop trial projects. This work is underpinned by the links between assets and ecosystem services, and flows of benefits identified in the Natural Capital Asset and Risk Register.

For updates visit the North Devon Marine Pioneer website (<https://www.northdevonbiosphere.org.uk/marinepioneer.html>)

