



Diverse Marine Values

Integrating Diverse Values into Marine Management

SMMR Diverse Values: Scotland Workshop – Summary Report

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1 Background

Funded by the Sustainable Management of Marine Resources (SMMR) Research Programme¹, the 'Diverse Marine Values' project is driving an innovative agenda of transdisciplinary research to advance our understanding of values-informed marine management. Through the project, we are exploring marine decision making in a system-based way and trialling innovative approaches to engagement across three case study areas - the Shetland Islands (Scotland), Upper Severn Estuary (Wales) and Portsmouth (England).

Building on the learning so far, through Work Package 5 the project aims to enhance national approaches by working with marine management institutions and stakeholders in Wales, Scotland and England to develop understanding around the change that is needed, along with practical actions which could help to better incorporate values into decision making.

Our Scotland workshop was held on Wednesday 27th September 2023 (virtually), and working with the Marine Directorate of Scottish Government and other stakeholders, we reflected on the work undertaken as part of the Diverse Values project, including experience of arts-based methods (ABM) across the case study areas, then explored key decision-making processes including National Marine Plan 2 (NMP 2) to identify challenges and consider opportunities to better reflect diverse values in marine management. The sections below provide a summary of the workshop discussions and will be further considered through on-going work with key institutions.

2 Entry points and Opportunities

These observations relate to the points in the process to develop or enhance approaches to inclusion of values in decision-making:

- The National Marine Planning Forum and the NMP2 Steering Group (established to provide technical advice on the statutory assessments) present two entry points / convening spaces which could be used to bring in new perspectives / values in the process design and outcomes. Is there opportunity to manage these groups and meetings differently to achieve these aims?
- The NMP2 statutory consultation process will include drop-in events / roadshow with Q&A – these could potentially be run in a more engaging way as part of a wider engagement strategy including capacity building and outreach on purpose and outcomes of engagement.
- Island Communities Impact Assessment presents particular opportunities for islands in terms of context-relevant engagement.
- Socio-economic Impact Assessment (SEIA), alongside Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), forms part of the Sustainability Appraisal of social, economic and environmental impacts of plan and policies, including marine policies and high-level projects with national impacts including MPAs, NMP2 and sectoral planning for offshore wind. SEIA can include activities such as focus groups with coastal communities that are likely to be impacted and presents a critical framework for stakeholder engagement on national marine decision-making. The SEIA guidance for inshore MPAs is available online².

¹ <https://www.smmr.org.uk/>

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/marine-protected-areas-inshore-waters-guidance-undertaking-socio-economic-impact-assessments-seia/>

- Working with Regional Marine Planning Partnerships provides an opportunity to engage stakeholders given their remit and role at the regional level.
- The on-going NMP review process provides opportunity for building learning and engagement over the planning cycle.
- We need to think about what can or should be changed within existing processes.

Thinking more broadly about the opportunities:

- Existing organisations which already seek to represent people can play an important role in capacity building / reaching people e.g. Community Councils, Coastal Communities Network (CCN), NGOs, etc. Are these being utilised effectively? Could greater collaboration lead to better representation?
- ABM can be used as a platform & stimulus for further discussion - not always about obtaining answers, but they can also inform *how* you ask the question to get the response that is needed.
- Theatre piece or screening might bring people into a consultation who were previously not engaged.
- There is potential for innovative funding and partnerships with organisations operating this space, e.g. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation³.
- Can we look at existing policy lock-ins and how they are limiting progress and opportunity? This includes questioning legacy approaches to data collection and how they might be revised.
- Working with local arts organisations could support developing ABM relevant to the consultation process.
- There are opportunities to bring conflicting groups together over specific issues and use approaches like Community Voice Method (CVM) as a conflict resolution tool.
- Translating the 'decision' (e.g. policy articulation) into something meaningful is needed for communities to get their views. This is not always the case and considering how views at local scale, 'scale up' to influence national policy is needed.
- We need to communicate better such as by developing manageable or 'bitesize' interventions – this could be supported by technology, for example, what role does social media play and could this enhance outreach and engagement?
- Developing a pilot of ABM in a decision-making process could explore the potential of this type of approach further and support tailoring an approach to suit the topic and process in question.

3 Challenges

A number of challenges were raised around changing how we do things to better capture values, and generally fall under the following themes:

Clarity of purpose

- Being clear on the purpose and influence on the outcome is critical, including convincing the public that they are being heard, informing the process, and contributing positively towards policy development. For example, in NMP2, is engagement needed to inform policy, how that policy is applied, or what the impact of policy implementation will be? How would values inform trade-offs between policy outcomes?
- Understanding the process is important and there is a need for communication of policy objectives and development process.

³ <https://gulbenkian.pt/en/>

- There can be a lack of transparency / clarity of purpose of engagement and it is important to communicate to the public as people, rather than as experts, and to manage expectations. For example, engagement may influence policy but there will be other factors including legal requirements informing final decisions. This needs to be explained so that the anticipated influence on the outcome is realistic and justifies engagement. Engagement followed by lack of consideration of outcome is detrimental and participants need to understand limits as well as influence of results of engagement.
- Additionally, certain policy values have already been decided through historic process and may need to be explained as these are not necessarily for debate but need to be recognised and can sign-post to where values could be considered in the future.
- Engaging the public must be undertaken at their level of expertise and knowledge. There may be nuances of policy wording (particularly from legal perspective) which they may have no knowledge of or expertise in and legal consultations are very inaccessible and questions are long.
- SEIA should be done alongside policy development, but can sometimes be too late in the processes for e.g. site designation (MPA) therefore consultation for meaningful influence may not be realistic.
- Recognition of different ideologies is challenging but necessary - NMP is inherently linked to the idea that the government should manage marine spaces and there may be other perspectives on this fundamental approach.
- How to phrase questions is important – reducing overwhelm and focussing on meaning.

Cost / capacity

- There are cost / efficiency concerns of more in-depth engagement methods and the perceived cost of data collection processes which are less familiar. Some of those featured in research are likely to be cost prohibitive for governments so we need to find ways to fit in with budgets, timescales, and improving existing consultation processes.
- Budget limits means there is focus on legal obligations only (the minimum requirements). Budgets are stretched and limited for trialling new/creative methods of data collection and it easier to stick to what has been done before.
- There is a trade-off between efficiency (time/money spent on planning) and effectiveness (how much people feel engaged and the level of influence that engagement can have on outcomes).
- There are resource challenges in government who are juggling many demands. Marine planning overall is resource-constrained.
- There is a broader lack of capacity for engagement including in representing organisations like Community Councils.
- Efficiency is needed in both directions – all sides are constrained with risks of stakeholder fatigue.

Representation

- How do we capture DV to ensure they are representative of the population?
- How do we develop methods which are scalable – i.e. in-depth, effective and innovative but can be used widely?
- Justice as recognition - do stakeholders and communities impacted feel recognised/listened to within the process? Some of this may be addressed through explanation of the process and the rationales that sit within it.
- Raising awareness amongst communities a key step in engagement.

- Consultation responses are not representative of wider society; those who respond are usually those negatively affected or concerned or have a vested interest in policy. We are not getting a balanced view from consultation alone.
- There are difficulties accessing 'general public' compared to a particular sector / stakeholder group. Reaching the general public as legitimate 'stakeholders' is needed for a truly democratic process with the gold standard being citizen assembly.
- 'Usual suspects' can be problematic during consultation – the "loudest voices" can often dominate conversations.
- Different groups of "public" - what to do when values contradict?
- Short-term values vs. long-term values - one person may have both, and they may conflict.
- Understanding the role of values – how do decision-makers distinguish fact from opinion and their relative weight; how do we ensure well informed representation of values rather than poorly informed opinions?
- Scale – social values tend to focus on local/regional issues but policies (e.g. NMP2) address national objectives, and there can be a disconnect between them. This means that social values may be too detailed to inform high-level objectives and national objectives too high-level for communities to understand how their issues, concerns or values can be considered.
- Similarly, for fisheries, a small economic impact at a national scale might have a very large impact on the specific community (economic, cultural, etc).
- In terms of geography of those engaged, seemingly 'landlocked' communities and businesses also have marine values, and effects on the marine area but are not always engaged.

Validity of methods / evidence

- How to make sure the questions are actually eliciting the insights needed.
- How can you ensure that opinions are well informed (links to Ocean Literacy)?
- There are different perceptions of the value of different types of evidence and data - especially qualitative data.
- 'Datasets' generated by ABMs are not always understood, trusted, or easily integrated into current decision-making processes.
- Using organisations and representative groups requires being comfortable with using data collected by others.
- We can possibly challenge the cost considerations of social data compared to data collection for natural and physical science, it's not that large, but the *perceived* cost may be a barrier. This also comes back to the point on resource and budget only being available for the minimum requirements – there are often strict legal requirements for the collection of specific environmental data, but not necessarily for social studies.
- There is a lack of process for including non-numerical evidence/ data in decision-making. Quality assurance can also be challenging.
- Separating opinions on *process* from opinions on *impact* of the decision is needed.
- Gathering information needs to be useful for robust reporting/analysis.

4 Enabling Actions

Specific ways forward considered were:

- Expanding the development of ocean literacy so that communities can engage in decisions including discussions about trade-offs. This needs to include 'process literacy' - explaining the process including the purpose, making things clear. Reflect on whether someone "outside" of the process would understand things clearly and whether there is room for interpretation.

- NMP2 provides an opportunity to create a framework to encourage more participatory processes at a sub-national scale, e.g. regional planning.
- Can we use the existing and developing evidence base; what is already there on values and how can this inform decisions?
- Connect with and understand the capacity of existing groups to represent communities, including 3rd sector and volunteers and work with them on capacity building to support engagement.
- Develop the 'business case' for new methods and approaches to justify investment in them.
- Piggy-back on other exercises to gather views, such as the national ocean literacy survey.
- Possibility to link to wider budgets if looking across government at the localisation agenda (e.g. local governance more broadly).
- Consider how actions could be at a "higher level" than the decision we are looking at, i.e. acknowledging wider politics and processes.
- Focus on unleashing technology for scalability of new engagement methods.
- Take a place-based approach to understanding values.
- Don't let precedence be the enemy of innovation!

5 Summary

This discussion between decision-makers, inter-disciplinary researchers and other participants, gave insight into the decision-making processes and techniques to reconsider how values are addressed within them. Creating change in long-standing processes, when resources are limited, is challenging and will take time, and collaboration across the marine community is needed to develop our understanding of the problems, what is needed and how they can be addressed. This work will be considered by the Diverse Values project team in our ongoing research and engagement with decision-makers and stakeholders, including to develop more specific understanding of change at the level of national decision-makers, and the capacity building needs to support this.

6 Workshop Attendees

Kirsten Dinwoodie (Marine Directorate, Scottish Government)
Louise O'Hara Murray (Marine Directorate, Scottish Government)
Kay Barclay (Marine Directorate, Scottish Government)
Reme Diaz (Marine Directorate, Scottish Government)
Lily Braid (Marine Directorate, Scottish Government)
Lyndsay Cruickshank (Marine Directorate, Scottish Government)
Daniella Laing (Marine Directorate, Scottish Government)
Georgina Reid (Marine Directorate, Scottish Government)
Chris Leahey (NatureScot)
Elaine Azzopardi (University of York)
Rachel Shucksmith (NAFC)
Alan Munro (Coastal Communities Network - CCN)
Lucy Greenhill (Howell Marine Consulting – HMC)
Beth Siddons (HMC)
Kathryn Fradera (HMC / NAFC)
Sam Collins (HMC)
Emma McKinley (Cardiff University)
Cressida Bowyer (University of Portsmouth)
Tim Stojanovic (University of St Andrews)