

A Marine National Park for Britain's Ocean City

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Why Plymouth is growing the UK's first community-focused Marine National Park

Plymouth is Britain's Ocean City. The sea, coastline and the maritime heritage of Plymouth Sound are some of the regions greatest assets. The waters and seabed of Plymouth Sound and Tamar estuaries are internationally recognised for supporting diverse and productive marine life and the area has numerous marine protected areas. Our city's maritime heritage has deep blue roots with a long, prestigious and sometimes notorious maritime history that plays an important role in our community identity and sense-of-place, as well as figuring centrally in the nation's seafaring heritage.

Plymouth is synonymous with the Nation's global influence from Francis Drake's circumnavigation of the globe, the Pilgrim's voyage on the Mayflower to establish a colony in the New World, Captain James Cook's exploration of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, Darwin's voyage of the Beagle, and the convoys of ships departing from Plymouth Sound on D-Day. Since 1700, the Royal Navy's base at Devonport has grown to become the largest naval base in western Europe. Plymouth also supports a thriving commercial port and has been a nationally significant fishing port since the 11th century. In 2015, Plymouth had the highest quantity of fisheries landings in England (13,400 tonnes), with a value of £15 million.

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 and The Shark Trust. Partnerships between Plymouth and Exeter Universities, UTC Plymouth, Babcock and many high-tech engineering companies at the Oceansgate development have created a nationally significant marine technology hub in the heart of Plymouth.

Today, the busy waters of Plymouth Sound support a wide range of recreational activities, tourism and industry and our community is experiencing a growing appreciation, love and care for the sea. Plymouth has recently been awarded the UK's first 'Plastic Free Communities' status for its iconic waterfront. A vision for the nation's first Marine National Park is now rapidly gaining momentum with objectives that align with the broader city-wide vision for the future (Plymouth Plan 2011-2031). The Plymouth Plan is of a healthy and vibrant city tackling inequality in health and wellbeing, creating

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economic growth and promoting community-based initiatives. The Plan outlines the intent for Plymouth to be recognised as a premier UK destination harnessing the benefits of the city's outstanding waterfront and maritime heritage and recognised internationally for its approach to sustainable development and enhancement of its natural infrastructure network.

MarCoPol recognise that a Marine Park will help address these objectives by boosting sustainable tourism, deepening value for marine and maritime heritage and enabling greater community participation in marine and coastal activities, with significant benefits to local community prosperity, health and wellbeing.

The full potential of Plymouth marine assets is yet to be realised. 2020 celebrates the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower setting sail for North America providing a big opportunity to connect all that is marine with the people of Plymouth and visitors under the banner of a Marine Park in time for the 2020 celebrations.

MarCoPol's vision of a Marine Park

MarCoPol defines a Marine Park as: ***an ocean and coastal space defined by local knowledge to recognise its special importance for community health and wellbeing, with the intention of encouraging greater prosperity and responsible enjoyment, deepening knowledge, appreciation and respect for the marine environment.***

MarCoPol recognises enormous potential for the Marine Park branding for enhancing the marine profile of the area, lifting civic pride and ambition and allowing broader socio-ecological objectives to be met without additional legislation.

MarCoPol proposes a Marine Park for the Plymouth region that is not a new type of marine protected area and does not need to be a statutory designation to achieve a wide range of positive benefits for both the people of the Plymouth region and the marine environment. A wide range of well-managed marine protected areas already exist in the Plymouth region with a primary focus on biodiversity conservation.

MarCoPol proposes a community-focused Marine Park that operates as a collection of local initiatives coordinated by a multi-sectoral steering body that represents the interests, aspirations and needs of the people of the Plymouth region.

The aim of the Marine Park would not be to add to existing conservation designations but to enhance socio-economic activities whilst respecting these designations and potentially utilising them to attract visitors, increase local participation in marine activities and increase awareness, appreciation and care of Plymouth's marine and coastal assets. Next steps must include consultations between all relevant local authorities, community groups and the formation of a multi-sectoral forum.

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