



# 55th Annual Conference

Shellfish Association of Great Britain

#SAGB55



Marine  
Management  
Organisation

# Spatial Squeeze from a fisheries and management perspective

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## Who Are Marine Planning and Marine Licensing?

**Marine Planning** and **Marine Licensing** play a vital role in how we manage and protect the marine environment in England.

**Marine Planning** provides a framework for making decisions about how our seas are used. It helps balance activities like shellfishing, conservation, tourism, and offshore energy, ensuring that marine resources are used sustainably and fairly.

**Marine Licensing** regulates certain activities at sea — such as laying moorings, building structures, or depositing materials — to protect the environment, other sea users, and coastal communities.

For those in the **Aquaculture sector**, Marine Planning helps shape the long-term future of where and how activities can thrive, while Marine Licensing ensures any marine developments or changes support healthy seas.

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## Why?

- Increasing and competing use of marine space and resources, impacting on sustainability
- Marine planning** makes sure the **right activities** happen in the **right place**, at the **right time** and in the **right way**, placing **sustainable development** at the centre of all decisions.

## What?

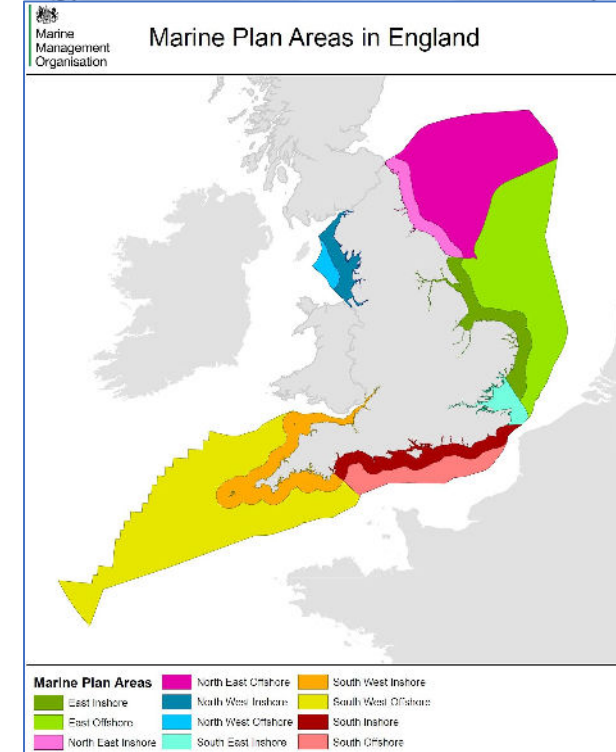
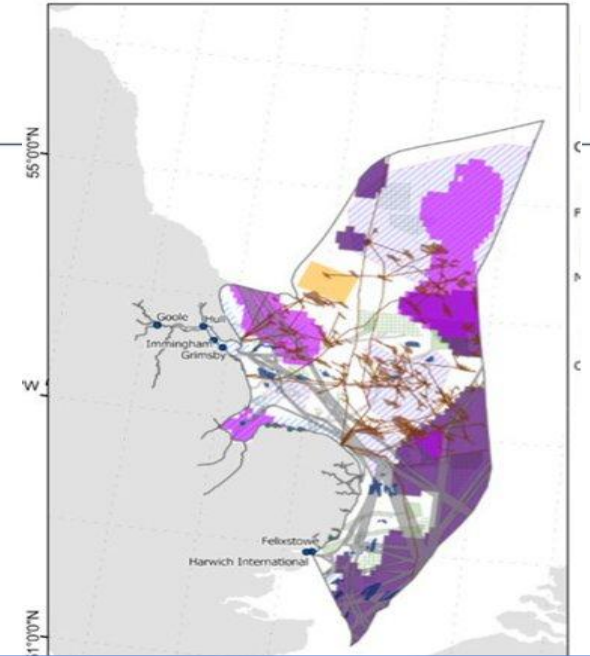
- Integrated and balanced approach across all interests and sustainability (E, E, S)
- Forward-looking - planning for the future
- A public process with regular and active stakeholder engagement

## Who (legislation/policy)

- Defra SoS is the planning authority, delegate most work to the MMO who...
- ... develop marine plans translating national policy into 'regional' policy & spatial guidance
- ALL decision-makers take account of the marine plans

## Where?

- Effectively 6 plans, in place for all waters around England since summer 2021
- Rest of UK (nearly) and all bordering countries, e.g., Belgium, Germany, Ireland
- 2<sup>nd</sup> generation - Starting with the East Marine Plan as its the oldest



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### Why do you need to take account of marine plans?

It is a legal requirement for marine plans to be considered in all decisions that affect England's marine area, now and into the future.

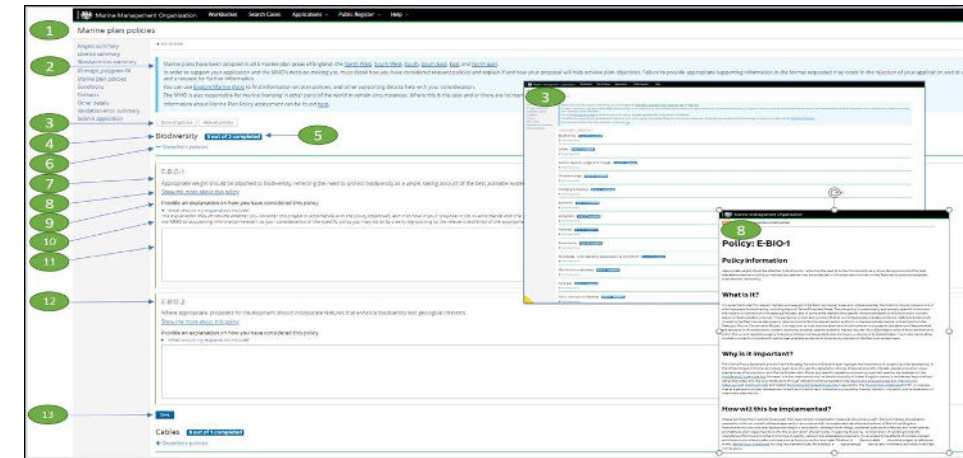
Decisions that take account of marine plans:

- have a reduced risk of legal challenge
- are informed by the best available evidence
- and are considered against wider context, both on land and at sea

This means that England's marine area is managed sustainably and time and money can be saved.

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- In June 2021 Marine Plans were published for NE,NW,SE and SW
- In May 2022 we front loaded the marine plan policy assessment process so that it is applicant led and facilitates better quality applications. This has led to reductions in case team processing time and reduced customer costs.
- Improved engagement with applicants delivered through updated training, including effective communication and customer training delivered to entire marine licensing team.
- Improved working with The Local Government Association (LGA) Coastal Special Interest Group (SIG) with a training session/workshop for SIG members and LPA planners held in January 2023. The aim of the workshop was to upskill all on the marine licence application and environmental impact assessment processes.



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A statutory requirement (MCAA Section 54 and Section 61) and informs a decision about whether to replace or amend a marine plan.

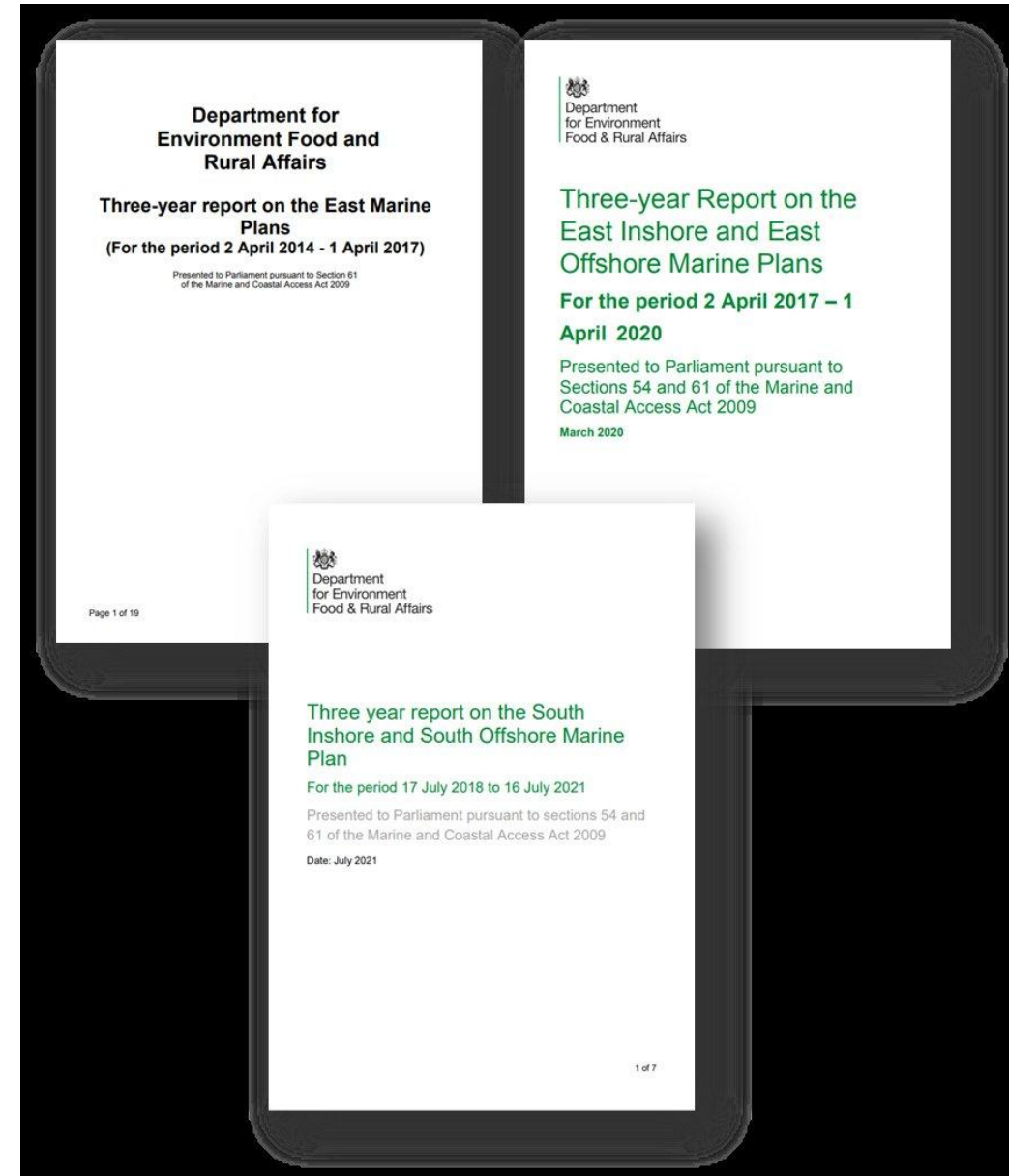
This ensures that Marine Plans remain fit for purpose and are delivering on the MMO Mission and the marine plan objectives.

**Monitoring:** collection of data to inform evaluation of the plans

**Evaluation:** Analysis to establish if the intervention has worked as intended; policy effects, effectiveness and progress towards objectives

**Reporting:** Present findings of monitoring and evaluation, produced **every 3 years** post adoption and laid before Parliament

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The MMO is responsible for licensing development in the UK Marine Area.

When making Licence decisions the MMO takes account of the UK Marine Plans to help deliver the objectives of each plan for the English coastline.

The plans help us take account of multiple industries, the UK government agenda and consider how development interacts with other industries such as fishing.

This image shows strategic areas for sustainable aquaculture for example. Having strategic areas such as this helps us to make decisions on applications with aquaculture projects in mind.

Whilst our marine planning system is in place it is designed to balance competing needs of sea users, rather than establish an agreed hierarchy of priorities.

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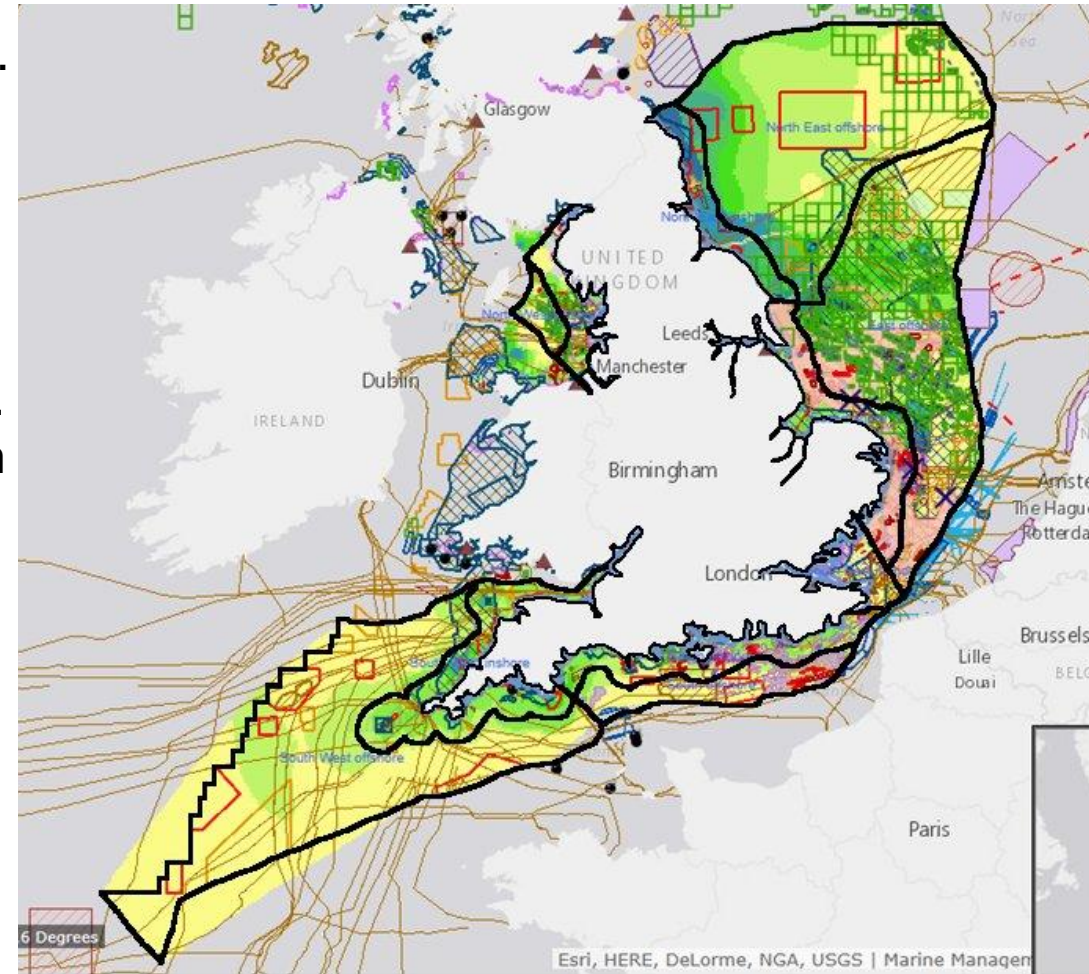


The marine environment is under increasing pressure from the scale of development happening now and forecast for the future.

Spatial squeeze risks the delivery of one or more government targets.

The aquaculture industry for example is at risk from spatial squeeze from nationally significant industries e.g., offshore wind. This could force aquaculture to move offshore which comes with far higher financial costs.

Defra's cross-departmental Marine Spatial Prioritisation Programme was set up to meet these challenges. The MMO is engaged with this.



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Since 2021, the MMO has contributed in a number of ways:

- Led two modelling projects with The Crown Estate and partners to identify priority areas for offshore wind development in English waters and inform the optimisation process, including cross Defra group working to develop cumulative effects assessments and better consideration of environmental data in the model to. Both projects have informed ministerial discussions and decisions.
- Developed a new methodology and mapped important fishing areas/grounds in English waters.
- Provided technical input to the development of co-existence guidelines.
- Modelled the value of different shipping routes to inform prioritisation decisions.

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The MMO will continue to make plan led Licensing decisions. It is critical that all sea users are engage in the planning process so that policy development is robust as possible.

Routes to co-existence and management of a finite space is challenging.

Government and policy direction influence Licensing decisions.

Strategic thinking will be critical moving forward as Marine Planning and Marine Spatial Prioritisation evolve.

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