Partnerships for Marine Nature Recovery

An evaluation of the effectiveness of coastal, estuary and marine partnerships to support marine nature recovery

JP072

April 2026

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The Coastal Collaborative Ltd. was established to support The Coastal Partnerships Network charity.

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Foreword

Building partnerships for nature recovery is essential to the delivery of much of the work of Natural England. Partnership working is fundamental to organisational delivery of the goals defined in the UK Governments 25 Year Environment Plan (YEP) and the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP). Partnerships enable us to work with and through a wide range of people to re-build sustainable ecosystems and thereby protect and restore habitats, species and landscapes.

In the context of marine environments, the 25 YEP and EIP set legally binding targets to restore 70% of designated features in Marine Protected Areas to a favourable condition by 2042 and 15% of priority habitats along the English coast by 2043. In parallel key policy initiatives including Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), Marine Net Gain (MNG), green/blue finance markets and Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are developing to strategically deliver against these recovery and restoration targets.

Natural England's social science team recognises that the success of these policy initiatives in delivering for nature in England's coastlines and therefore achieving marine environmental targets are contingent on effective collaborative working at an ecosystem scale. We are convinced that coastal partnerships are likely to be critical in supporting collaborative working through providing links and coordination amongst key local stakeholders around the English coast. These place-based coordinated networks are invaluable to understanding local challenges and opportunities as part of strategic marine planning. The collaboration and coordination facilitated by coastal partnerships is important to implementation of the key policy initiatives for Natural England named above, in the context of emerging green/blue finance markets. It helps bring top-down and bottom-up driven aims together. Therefore, this research set out to explore how coastal partnerships could provide support.

This project commissioned by Natural England's social science team and funded by Natural England's research and development capital budget aimed to better understand what characterises effective coastal partnerships for supporting and delivering marine nature recovery, particularly in the context of these emerging policy initiatives. The research sought to address this knowledge gap by advancing understanding of the governance structures of coastal partnerships and how these relate to dimensions of efficiency, effectiveness, equity and legitimacy in delivering for nature.

The Coastal Collaborative (TCC) Ltd. supports The Coastal Partnerships Network charity and was commissioned by Natural England to undertake this project. Their collective experience, proximity, unparalleled access and knowledge of coastal partnerships

nationally, made them uniquely positioned to lead this project. It was Natural England's intention that the research participants recruited by TCC largely worked in, or with, coastal partnerships. Therefore, the findings do not present an external view of coastal partnerships effectiveness, instead providing valuable insights from within the partnerships to fill a knowledge gap. The research did not intend to fully answer the question of whether coastal partnerships are fit for purpose, but furthered understanding of the location, extent, governance, challenges and opportunities for them to support marine nature recovery. For this reason, there is no expectation that Natural England would follow through on all the recommendations before further independent assessment/review. The projects' Expert Advisory Group provided input and guidance to the research process and additional evidence.

The report itself provides insights that will help Natural England to better understand the role of coastal partnerships in nature recovery and their ability to support emerging policy and market mechanisms intended to meet national and international targets as defined by the 25 YEP and EIP. The findings contribute directly to Natural England's social science and green finance evidence base, compliment work conducted as part of the DEFRA funded marine Natural Capital Ecosystem Assessment programme and will be of interest to Natural England's area teams whose remit includes the coast. Although, the findings of this research are not just relevant to Natural England. They have real value for other statutory bodies, host partners, practitioners and many coastal and marine stakeholders. The common challenges and experiences provide a powerful narrative with which to take forward the implementation of this much needed work.

Natural England commission a range of reports from external contractors to provide evidence and advice to assist us in delivering our duties. The views in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of Natural England.

Dart Estuary, South Devon (Photo credit: Natasha Bradshaw)

Executive Summary

The Coastal Collaborative Ltd.[1] was commissioned by Natural England to advance understanding of the governance structures of existing partnerships with a focus on Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships (CEMPs) and similar initiatives. The aim was to consider how their governance related to dimensions of efficiency, effectiveness, equity and legitimacy and how they could support marine nature recovery (MNR). This report summarises work that provides new insights into the role of CEMPs which are relevant for Natural England and other Government Departments.

Three decades of partnership working at the local level have evolved in over fifty coastal locations. CEMPs support collaborative governance, providing coordination between decision-makers and local communities. Their largely informal status presents many 'soft' governance qualities which facilitate collaboration. Their place-based networks are potentially invaluable for understanding local challenges and opportunities to fulfil strategic marine objectives. However, there is limited up to date knowledge of what characterises effective partnerships and their role in supporting and delivering marine nature recovery.

This research involved a mixed methods approach with a survey disseminated through the existing UK Coastal Partnerships Network (CPN), This was followed by interviews with a representative sample of survey respondents. Together with insights from background literature about CEMPs and desk-based research into finance mechanisms, the initial results were presented at a workshop to explore future finance which could support partnerships to design and deliver MNR.

An overview of different types of partnerships for rivers, coasts and the sea were presented. The spatial extent of CEMPs was mapped alongside identified MNR projects and initiatives. This illustrated an extensive landscape of CEMP and MNR activity around the English coast. It was found that most CEMPs are led informally by public sector partners, most with no formal status but with governance secured through informal operational structures such as Terms of Reference or Memorandums of Understanding. A third of CEMPs have charity or company status. Overall, CEMPs reported good levels of achievement against their aims, but there are no standard metrics for monitoring CEMPs performance. This research showed how CEMPs experience of navigating multiple partners is useful for initiating and supporting the governance of MNR projects/initiatives

[1] On behalf of the Coastal Partnerships Network (CPN) which at the time of the research was an emerging charity, supporting individual Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships across the UK voluntarily since 2006. The CPN was registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation on 25th June 2024, registration number 1208806. Further information: https://www.coastalpartnershipsnetwork.org.uk/

and their delivery. CEMPs were shown to have the structures, knowledge, experience, local respect and trust, but need guidance on how to prepare to support higher levels of investment in MNR.

Exploring the extent of current involvement with MNR, the survey data showed half of CEMPs were ‘significantly’ involved, a third ‘involved’ and a quarter ‘somewhat’ involved in MNR. Most CEMPs support others to realise MNR ambitions through delivery projects or other partnerships. However, their potential support is limited due to the need for remuneration for their time and capacity to develop projects and support delivery.

There are strong variations in the scale, type, status and function of CEMPs and similar initiatives, with common ground around the perception of barriers and opportunities for engagement in MNR. CEMPs recognise their valuable role in facilitation and coordination and the opportunities this could bring for MNR. However, barriers to CEMP engagement in MNR are clearly around capacity and finance, as many CEMP officers already work at full capacity. For them to support MNR project and programme development, the initial conversations required to develop plans and convene partners need to be funded.

Valuable international and national insights from research into existing and emerging finance mechanisms was provided. The workshop, held with partnership representatives and advisors, explored how to enhance opportunities around finance mechanisms for coastal and marine restoration opportunities at the local, regional, and national levels.

Social impact and nature recovery investment mechanisms were explored as possible future finance sources. CEMPs and similar initiatives are well placed to function as connectors between social impact and nature recovery investment. Further research is needed to uncover the social impact potential of CEMP networks and potential new social impact partners and investors. A blended finance model can be developed that supports a pathway from inception to completion for MNR projects and programmes that brings these investment opportunities together, enabling social impact to be fully realised within MNR projects.

Four quality criteria (efficiency, effectiveness, equity and legitimacy) were defined and explored with specific recommendations around how to enhance performance. These included guidance to CEMPs regarding the opportunities for their involvement, taking a closer look at pioneering models of MNR partnerships, and a new public-private-charity sector working group.

A suite of recommendations is provided under these three headings.

- Building capacity in CEMPs (led by CPN, CEMP hosts and their core funding partners)
- Funding pathways for CEMPs to support MNR (led by NE, CEMP hosts and potential project partners, CPN)

- Further research and advocacy (led by NE, EA, TCE, MMO, LGA Coastal SIG, Heritage England and CPN).

The whole suite of recommendations is provided to Natural England who in collaboration with Defra, the Environment Agency and others, can build on this research and help to realise the additional benefits to be gained from investing in the longevity of partnerships to support MNR.

Crantock, North Cornwall (Photo credit: Natasha Bradshaw)

“Our partnership is…held together by the personalities that are driving it…key people, linchpins for funding, getting the right people doing things. We would like to find a way of building it back up into a core service…to do more than just the bare minimum…and be a little bit more forward thinking” (ID17).

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List of Abbreviations

BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain
CCA	Coastal Communities Alliance
CIC	Community Interest Company
CIO	Charitable Incorporated Organisation
CaBA	Catchment Based Approach
CoBA	Coastal Based Approach
CPN	Coastal Partnerships Network
CEMP	Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnership
EIP	Environmental Improvement Plan 2023
EA	Environment Agency
EDI	Equality Diversity and Inclusion
EMS	European Marine Site
EN	English Nature forerunner to Natural England 1990 and 2006.
FCERM	Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management
FCRIP	Flood and Coastal Innovation Programme
HPMA	Highly Protected Marine Area
ICZM	Integrated Coastal Zone Management
IQ	Interview Question
LA	Local Authority
LGA Coastal SIG	Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group
LNRS	Local Nature Recovery Strategies
MCZ	Marine Conservation Zone
MNG	Marine Net Gain
MNR	Marine Nature Recovery
MMO	Marine Management Organisation
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPA	Marine Protected Area
NbS	Nature Based Solutions
NCTA	National Coastal Tourism Academy
NE	Natural England
NFCC	National Framework for Coastal Coordination
RQ	Research Question
RS	Research Summary
TCC	The Coastal Collaborative Ltd.
ToR	Terms of Reference
25YEP	25 Year Environment Plan
UKMS	UK Marine Strategy (UKMS)
WEIF	Water Environment Improvement Fund
WFD	Water Framework Directive

1 Introduction

1.1 Context

Natural England's (NE) priorities are to secure a healthy natural environment; a sustainable, low-carbon economy; a thriving farming sector and a sustainable, healthy and secure food supply. Building partnerships for nature recovery is a core part of NE's mission, recognising that NE cannot achieve nature recovery alone[2].

> "National government, local government, communities and families all have a key role to play through policies, through delivery of services and through the choices we all make daily in our lives". Theresa Coffey, Foreword to the Environmental Improvement Plan (2023).

NE's social science directorate commissioned The Coastal Collaborative Ltd. on behalf of the Coastal Partnerships Network (CPN) to advise on 'What makes effective partnerships for marine nature recovery?' The project was funded by Natural England's research and development capital budget and aimed to generate new knowledge and understanding to explore how to maximise the potential that local place-based partnerships such as Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships (CEMPs) could have in enabling the delivery of Marine Nature Recovery (MNR).

The research was designed to contribute directly to Natural England's social science and green finance evidence base, as well of be of practical interest to Natural England's area teams whose remit includes the coast. The project findings also compliment work conducted as part of the DEFRA funded marine Natural Capital Ecosystem Assessment, place-based decision making workstream.

1.2 Aim

NE sought to generate new insights to improve the way in which we do partnership working in coastal and terrestrial environments. These insights will help NE to better understand the role of partnerships in nature recovery, particularly marine nature recovery and their ability to support emerging policy and market mechanisms which are intended to meet national and international targets as defined by the 25 Year Environment Plan (25 YEP) and Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP). NE were especially interested in understanding what makes an effective partnership and how to scale them up to deliver nature recovery across marine, coastal and terrestrial environments nationally.

[2] Further information about the Authority can be found at: Natural England.

1.3 Objectives

The aims of this research were addressed through two objectives:

1 To characterise the existing national landscape of the coastal partnerships in England, including relevant legal and governance structures.

2 To explore how these different legal and governance structures relate to efficiency, effectiveness, equity, and legitimacy of coastal partnerships and how they enable or prohibit their capacity to support the delivery of nature recovery.

The evidence generated by the research aims to inform emerging areas of marine policy, in particular generating important insights relating to:

- How effective Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships (CEMPs) might be configured/enabled to support the efficient delivery of MNR under new funding streams (e.g. Marine Net Gain, Marine Recovery Fund).
- The role of CEMPs in supporting strategic planning for MNR and how it connects to coastal and upstream planning.
- The wider value of CEMPs in facilitating MNR and the economic case for supporting them.

Through this project NE explored the value of coastal partnerships' ability to support the delivery of emerging policy mechanisms.

2 Background

2.1 The Role of Partnerships

The Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2023 (p.17) recognises the need for systems approaches to navigate complexity, enable strong coordination of policy and actions, and realise co-benefits from collaboration. This is particularly important for coastal restoration due to the different governing arrangements across the land and sea.

Partnerships enable NE to work with and through a wide range of people and organisations to re-build sustainable ecosystems and thereby protect and restore habitats. Partnerships are important mechanisms for delivery of the Government's key environmental targets defined in the 25 YEP and the EIP (Defra, 2018; 2023). These set out ambitious and legally binding targets for marine nature recovery and restoration: to restore 70% of designated features in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) to a favourable condition by 2042; and 15% of priority habitats along the English coast by 2043. In parallel, key policy initiatives including Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), Marine Net Gain (MNG), green/blue finance markets and Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS), are developing to strategically deliver against these recovery and restoration targets.

NE considers that the success of these policy initiatives in delivering for nature around England's coastlines, and therefore achieving marine environmental targets, are contingent on effective collaborative working at an ecosystem scale. Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships (CEMPs) are likely to be critical in supporting collaborative working through providing links and coordination amongst key local stakeholders. These place-based networks provide understanding of local challenges and opportunities which can inform strategic coastal and marine planning. The collaboration and coordination facilitated by CEMPs could be key to implementing current and future policy initiatives. However, there is limited up to date knowledge of what characterises effective partnerships for supporting and delivering marine nature recovery, particularly in the context of emerging policy initiatives. This project addressed this knowledge gap by advancing understanding of the governance structures of CEMPs and how these relate to dimensions of efficiency, effectiveness, equity and legitimacy in delivering for nature.

The role of partnerships to support policy delivery is well recognised in literature and the EIP highlights how partnerships are key to driving multiple benefits across sectors and achieving delivery through shared incentives and finance. It reflects a wide range of examples such as Defra's investment in the Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) for terrestrial freshwater catchments. Defra supports catchment partnerships for greater integrated water management as a framework for coordinating action between the public, private and third sectors, but there is no equivalent centralised mechanism to support partnerships for the marine environment. Despite this, local CEMPs have evolved from the 'bottom-up' over the past few decades. Practitioners working at the land-sea interface are exploring how to strengthen, monitor and evaluate CEMPs through the Environment Agency's (EA) 'Championing Coastal Coordination' (3Cs) programme. A central strand of NE's Nature Recovery Network (NRN) Programme is to draw together national and local partners to increase action and funding for nature. This research therefore set out to discover how the existing and potential role of existing CEMPs could support and deliver MNR.

2.2 Marine Nature Recovery

Marine Nature Recovery (MNR) is needed to reverse past declines in wildlife and habitats and bring our seas back to more life, so that they are healthy and thriving now and into the future for people, climate and nature. The marine environment is an essential component of the global life-support system, but has been subjected to decades of overfishing, pollution and unplanned coastal development which has led to resource depletion (UNEP, 2016). Estuarine, coastal and marine ecosystems provide many essential services to people, including flood and coastal defence benefits, carbon sequestration, nutrient absorption, provision of nursery sites and supporting fisheries, enhanced biodiversity and improved water quality, as well as socio-economic benefits relating to recreation, tourism and improved health and well-being. Over the long term, human activities from both land-

based and marine sources have degraded estuarine, coastal and marine ecosystems. This, in turn, has impacted human health, prosperity and wellbeing (Environment Agency, 2023). The ocean is the planet's support system and humanity's greatest ally against climate catastrophe, as highlighted by David Attenborough's Ocean film in 2025.

To rebuild the marine life-support systems that deliver the many benefits that society receives from a healthy ocean we need urgent action. This includes:

- A growing and resilient MPA network designated and managed for nature conservation, including Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs);
- Habitat restoration and creation within and outside the MPA network to help restore ecological processes and connect marine wildlife populations.
- Building resilience to climate change, including acting to protect, restore and expand vital 'blue carbon' assets and the ecosystem services that they provide.
- Enabling people to enjoy, understand and connect with nature at sea, benefitting health and wellbeing (Christie, Williams and Sugar, 2021).

Achieving ambitious MNR targets are contingent on effective collaborative working at an ecosystem scale. The success of strategic delivery mechanisms aimed at achieving these targets are also contingent on effective partnership working. NE were particularly interested in understanding what makes an effective partnership and how to scale up partnerships to deliver nature recovery across marine, coastal and terrestrial environments nationally. This was explicitly expressed as an evidence gap by NE's area teams whose remit is to support place-based nature recovery in marine environments. Little is also understood about the preparedness of existing partnerships and networks to engage with emerging policy initiatives to deliver MNR.

This research compliments the findings of Natural England's scoping study on Social accountability for place-based nature recovery (Natural England, 2025) and Marine recovery and restoration practice: Financing options, stakeholder perspective and measuring gains (Natural England, 2023).

2.3 Natural England's Inheritance

Background knowledge of NE's historic role in the formation of existing Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships (CEMPs) may support a forward look at the value of partnership working to support MNR. Over thirty years ago, English Nature (NE's predecessor organisation) ran 'Campaign for a Living Coast' which included a strategy for the sustainable use of England's estuaries (English Nature, 1993). It was recommended that sustainable use would be supported through the preparation and implementation of integrated management plans, developed and supported by the users and authorities themselves, through the formation of estuary groups to guide and implement them.

Nearly £1 million was invested by English Nature in 27 projects covering 32 estuaries. A review of their effectiveness (Morris, R, 2008) concluded that the foundations for wide participation, effective consultation, a consensus-based approach and successful implementation had been established. However, improvements could be made including balanced representation of stakeholders, encouraging industry involvement and ensuring wide consultation. The partnerships were recognised as a model for wider coastal zone management projects. By mid-1994 there were over 60 coastal and estuary management plans, local authority coastal strategies and management fora (Coastline, 1994). English Nature established a maritime team in 1994 and became very active in this area, as evidenced by publications regionally and nationally.

> "The conservation of England's maritime environment is a priority for English Nature. Over-exploitation and lack of proper care seriously threaten our estuaries, our coastline, and the species living in the sea around them. EN has launched a long-term conservation programme designed to ensure that all those concerned about the issue work effectively together to ensure that future generations will still be able to enjoy a rich and varied maritime environment". Campaign for a Living Coast, English Nature (1993).

However, the Estuaries Initiative ended in 1997, with the intention of shifting resources to local offices and project officers to oversee implementation of the voluntary plans. Coastal Partnerships obtained some ongoing support from English Nature but increasingly relied on financial support from a variety of local authorities and other partners. Since the formation of Natural England in 2006, the organisation has remained engaged with many CEMPs at the local level, but the amount of involvement across the country varies substantially. NE core funding was largely discontinued around 2012, and any further financial support of CEMPs from NE was achieved through project funding.

There are several new policy mechanisms designed to create and restore natural habitats: Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), and Marine Net Gain (MNG), emerging green blue finance markets and LNRS being led by local authorities. It was identified by NE's social science team in 2023, that more up to date information was needed about the status of CEMPs and their potential to support MNR.

Over the past three decades, the existence and focus of CEMPs has changed due to the variability and availability of core and project funding. A widespread decrease in the availability of core funding from the public sector for the main convening role of the partnerships has been a major factor in their survival and evolution over the past decade. Building partnerships for MNR is a renewed opportunity for CEMPs to support NE's ambitious targets.

2.4 Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships: Origins and Purpose

Alongside the momentum provided by the English Nature in the 1990s (as illustrated above), there was a focus on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) policy led by the European Commission and Defra from the late 1980s up to the mid-2000s. In the UK, local partnerships supported the delivery of ICZM principles (European Parliament and Council, 2012). However, their experiences have been mixed, with some enduring many policy and societal changes, others going into abeyance and new partnerships forming (Stojanovic and Barker, 2008; CPN 2013; CPN 2020). They are hosted by different types of public, private and charity organisations and in general are sustained by local partner and project funding. Most pre-date CaBA Partnerships, but by contrast they have not been led or financed nationally, relying on the support and buy-in from local partners whilst co-developing and managing funded projects. Their geographical coverage is therefore not complete (unlike CaBA Partnerships which were created for all river catchments). The scope and scale of coastal partnerships varies but they are defined as:

> Cross-sectoral place-based partnerships advocating for the system level approach, sustainable use of marine resources and integrated, coordinated management across a stretch of coastline or estuary' (CPN, 2020).

Further background to the definition of Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships (CEMPs) is provided by a background report on the National Landscape of Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships (Bradshaw, 2025). CPN identified through an audit in 2020-2022 (Bradshaw, 2022) the increasing reach of existing partnerships into a marine perspective with evidence of rebranding and the formation of new 'marine' partnerships.

To drive effective coastal and marine nature recovery and restoration, more understanding is needed about the successes, challenges, barriers and opportunities to harness the existing CEMPs. There is no direct policy umbrella under which they operate, but CEMPs support many national and local policy priorities and are unique in their cross-sectoral, bottom-up led evolution and leadership.

It is therefore timely that NE commissioned this project, seeking to generate new insights to improve the way in which they do partnership working in coastal and terrestrial environments, understand the role of partnerships in nature recovery and how to scale up partnerships to deliver nature recovery across the marine, coastal and terrestrial environment nationally.

2.5 The Coastal Partnerships Network

The Coastal Partnerships Network (CPN) connects 55 Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships (CEMPs) and 30+ similar coastal initiatives around the UK. Initiated in 2006

as the Coastal Partnerships Working Group, its aims were to provide a platform for knowledge exchange between local CEMPs; a conduit to share best practice at the national level between CEMPs and other sectors; and provide a voice for local partnership working at a national and government level. Until 2018 it was run by a dedicated and voluntary committee of ten CEMPs with some support from the Environment Agency (EA), ensuring knowledge exchange through a quarterly newsletter and annual forum. Dedicated funding from 2018 - 2024, hosted via the Thames Estuary Partnership (TEP), has enabled the CPN to increase activity and broaden collaboration across coastal fora. Throughout this time, the CPN:

- Secured resources to fund a full time National Coordinator (2018-2021).
- Co-founded the OneCoast Coalition with the Coastal Communities Alliance (CCA), Local Government Coastal Special Interest Group (LGA Coastal SIG) and the National Coastal Tourism Academy (NCTA) (2018).
- Collaborated with The Rivers Trust on the Wholescape Approach to Marine Management Project (WAMM, 2019-2020).
- Enabled the CPN Committee to undergo a Theory of Change to form a 10 Year Strategy and formative 10 year Business Plan (2020-2021).
- Supported the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation funded Marine CoLABoration initiative.
- Provided the co-secretariat for the Coastal Communities All Party Parliamentary Group with the OneCoast Coalition (2020 to date).
- Created a database of almost 400 coastal projects and campaigns that enable collaborative cross-disciplinary development and delivery analysis (including 29 community-led coastal resilience projects).

During the above period of strategic development, three key areas for support were identified by CEMPs: knowledge exchange and communications; learning and development support; and collaboration support for project co-design and delivery. The CPN began to develop these areas of support starting with the Learning and Development Programme, which is now in its third year of evolution with a dedicated and funded Learning and Development Manager.

In 2020-2021, CPN collaborated with other sectors on a call for a ‘Coastal Based Approach’ (CoBA) mirroring the financial and learning support that Catchment Partnerships have received through the Catchment Based Approach (CaBA). CoBA highlighted that the Catchment Partnership model was directly influenced by the CEMP model. In 2021, the EA announced funding to improve governance and coordination along the coast through a new Championing Coastal Coordination (3Cs) fund. The CPN successfully secured 3Cs funding year on year 2021-2025 to lead a large scale national, cross sectoral collaboration to co-design and fulfil the need for a flexible and enabling ‘National Framework’ for coastal coordination. Several High-Level Objectives were identified as the supporting elements of a National Framework, which are described in the

CPN 3Cs Pilot Report (2021-2022). This included wider recognition and coordinated support to deliver their neutral convening role; improving their ability to increase collaboration across sectors and engage coastal communities in decision-making. In turn, this would improve their ability to promote consistent and coherent integration and implementation of national policy at the local scale. It would help to deliver benefits across socio-economic and environmental challenges and targets in a more integrated way than currently experienced.

Otter Estuary restoration scheme, East Devon (Photo credit: Natasha Bradshaw)

3 Method

3.1 Approach

Natural England sought the identification of research questions (RQs) and a methodological approach suitable for addressing the objectives (Section 1.2). The project team defined research questions and work packages based on CPN's background knowledge, published and unpublished literature, as illustrated in the next section. A mixed methods approach was used to obtain new knowledge, using quantitative and qualitative data due to the strength of combining different sources of information. A survey was disseminated through the existing CPN network, followed by interviews with a representative sample of survey respondents. Four regional researchers supported the process by encouraging participation and working with the project team to select locations and then conduct the interviews. Finally, a workshop was held to share the initial results and explore future finance mechanisms to support partnerships in delivering MNR.

To support data collation and analysis different software tools were used. Assimilation of spatial data from CPN, the project survey and other sources, was supported by ArcGIS mapping software. Qualtrics software was used for the survey, with analysis of quantitative and qualitative data supported by Microsoft Excel. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and imported into NVivo software to support qualitative analysis. The following background research reports provided further information about the approach, and backed up the findings summarised in this main report:

- The National Landscape of Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships (Bradshaw, N. and Benson, N. 2024a)
- Characteristics of Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships for Marine Nature Recovery (Bradshaw, N. and Benson, N. 2024b)
- Funding Mechanisms to Strengthen Marine Nature Recovery Opportunities (Pryor, A. and Benson, N. 2024).

An Expert Advisory Group (EAG) was appointed to utilise the knowledge and experience of former CEMP leaders, consultants and independent researchers (see Appendix 3 for a list of members). They supported survey design and delivery, conducted interviews, and provided specific additional insights to respond to the research questions. Their expertise on social science methods from theory to practice, helped to mitigate against any risk of bias arising from the project leaders' close ties with CEMPs.

A Project Summary flyer was prepared at the outset to share insights into the aims and objectives with research participants and other interested parties (see Appendix 1). Progress was reported on a fortnightly basis to NE and discussed through six meetings of

the EAG. A summary of findings flyer was produced to aid dissemination of the findings, linking to outputs available online.

3.2 Research Questions

The research was structured around six research questions (RQs):

1) To what extent is the English coast and marine landscape covered by Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships (CEMPs) and similar initiatives? (RQ1).
2) What legal and governance structures are in place for existing CEMPs? (RQ2).
3) Where are marine nature recovery projects and how do they utilise CEMPs and similar initiatives? (RQ3).
4) What characteristics of CEMPs and similar initiatives present barriers and opportunities to supporting marine nature recovery (MNR)? (RQ4).
5) What experience and opportunity exists to broaden the funding base to support MNR projects and what (if any) role could CEMPs support? (RQ5).
6) What trends can be identified between CEMPs legal and governance structures (RQ2) and their ability to pioneer and support delivery of MNR projects (RQ3)? (RQ6).

There were six work packages (WP) derived from the project objectives and RQs, as described below and detailed in background reports listed in Section 3.1 above.

3.3 Work Packages

3.3.1 Verification of Approach (WP1)

The purpose of WP1 was to ensure that there was a common understanding amongst the project team and Expert Advisory Group, about the RQs and the methodology. WP1 enabled verification of the proposed approach and elaboration of detail as required by NE following award of the contract. NE and the EAG were presented with existing evidence and background research from the literature, CPN and The Coastal Collaborative Ltd (TCC) as described fully in the methodology (Appendix 2).

The methodological approach was confirmed by the EAG, utilising CPN consultants, independent researchers, and CEMP Officers. Their input through the EAG supported survey design and delivery, interview design and conduct, workshop design and participation, plus a preview of findings. Table 1 shows how the EAG were engaged with work packages throughout the project timeline. The objectives, RQs and WP structure were verified by NE following the award of the contract and the 1st meeting of the Expert Advisory Group (EAG) in October 2023.

Table 1. Timeline of Work Packages and Expert Advisory Group engagement

Expert Advisory Group Number	Expert Advisory Group Date	Work Packages
1	September 2023	WP1 review and verification of methodology
2	October 2023	Characterisation of the national landscape of CEMPs, meeting with NE senior management
3	November 2023	WP2 & WP3 review of CEMP and MNR mapping and WP4a) interviewee selection and interview design criteria
4	November 2023	WP4b) interview design verification
5	February 2024	WP4 verification of analysis and WP5 plan
6	March 2024	WP6 review of project findings and potential workshop

3.3.2 Characterisation of the CEMP landscape (WP2)

New survey work built on the existing data held by CPN to identify geographical coverage, the legal status of partnerships (or lack of) and governance structures in place. The CPN audit and previous mapping work (Bradshaw, 2022) was used as a basis for new mapping and evidence gathering through the project's survey.

Preparation of the project survey entailed NE ethics approval was granted by NE's ethics committee on 27th October 2023 (approval code: 23032). The CPN contact database was used to disseminate the survey to over 50 known CEMPs, plus 30 similar coastal initiatives. Similar initiatives were previously identified by CPN as partnership arrangements operating at or around the coast with different origins to CEMPs (as described in Section 2.4). They include some National Landscapes (former Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), Landscape Partnerships, Coastal Groups for flood and coastal erosion risk management and Local Nature Partnerships which had responded to previous engagement opportunities with CPN. It was also extended to other initiatives such as Defra funded FCRIP project partnerships which were identified by the regional researchers. Part 1 of the survey also asked participants for their knowledge of other (nearby) partnerships to further build on previous mapping work. The rationale for including this range of CEMPs and similar initiatives was to be able to compare their legal

and governance structures (RQ2) and the barriers and opportunities to support MNR (RQ4).

The survey (see Appendix 4) was designed and disseminated using Qualtrics software, comprising of three parts:

- Part One: Location of Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships
  Name, location, extent and geographical focus
- Part Two: Governance and Finance
  Status, governance structure, stakeholder representation, funding (core & project), staffing and volunteers, aims and effectiveness.
- Part Three: Marine Nature Recovery
  MNR engagement (habitat focus, level of engagement, status – past/present/future), aspirations/opportunities and barriers.

For parts one and three of the survey, a mapping tool was offered to gather spatial data, which was later transferred into ArcGIS software. For part two, a typology of legal and governance structures was developed and reviewed by the EAG as part of the survey design, to ensure that a full range of governance options were offered (see Q4 and Q5 in Appendix 4). The governance typology and mapping were further developed based on the results as discussed in Section 4.1 and are backed up by a separate research report on the national landscape of CEMPs (Bradshaw and Benson, 2024a).

3.3.3 Mapping of MNR projects/initiatives alongside CEMPs and similar initiatives (WP3)

Baseline data from other projects/initiatives were available from previous research: NE's list of known MNR projects; mapping work undertaken by ABPmer and partners, for The Crown Estate's Offshore Wind Evidence and Change Programme funded Strategic Marine Net Gain Task and Finish Group, and APBmer's 'OMReg' database (a copy of which was obtained for the purposes of this project)[3]. To this was added new knowledge of past/present/future MNR projects which CEMPs cited, gained from part three of the survey. It was agreed at the EAG4 meeting (November 2023) that the intention was not to prepare a fully comprehensive map of all known MNR projects/initiatives but focus on exploring potential linkages between CEMPs and MNR initiatives. Knowledge of MNR locations and their connectivity with CEMPs informed the selection of locations for interview.

[3] https://www.omreg.net/

3.3.4 Exploration of legal and governance structures and their qualities (WP4)

Data from part two of the survey identified a range of legal and governance structures in operation by CEMPs and similar initiatives (WP2). Together with the results of initial mapping (WP3) locations were identified for interview. Criteria for selection included their governance type (host, status), funding (range of partners, balance of core vs project income), geographical spread across the English regions (at least three per region) and their level of engagement in MNR. The rationale to select and invite CEMPs for interview (from the 41 survey participants) was based on their survey response analysed against the following criteria: location (three from each region of England); level of engagement and proximity to MNR projects/initiatives; governance type (scale, type, status, function, host); representation across sectors; a range of funding partners/host bodies; and including harder to reach CEMPs.

An exploratory approach was applied to conducting semi-structured interviews based on the projects' RQs, survey responses and our existing understanding of CEMPs. The use of regionally based researchers was designed to increase the opportunity to engage CEMPs where the local/regional context was understood. Interview questions and guidance were provided to the four regional researchers who liaised with and set-up individual interviews online with the partnership officer/host/manager (see Appendix 5 for participants brief and consent form). Interviews were conducted in January-February 2024. The interviews were semi-structured to cover similar ground to the survey questions but explored governance, finance and MNR engagement in more depth. The four quality criteria sought for assessment: efficiency; effectiveness; equity; and legitimacy, were elaborated to inform question design and to offer a focus for analysis of the results (see Appendix 6 for interview questions and guidance for regional researchers).

Sixteen interviews of between 60-90 minutes were conducted online, engaging a total of 38 people. Each CEMP interview typically included the lead officer, chair and/or a host partner. This sampling approach was used to obtain more than one person's response to questions and encourage discussion, because in some cases the host/partner may have been involved for longer than the lead officer employed by them and together this provided deeper insights. Regional researchers were involved in recording and cleaning the interview transcripts before they were imported into NVivo software for qualitative analysis. Data from part 2 of the survey (WP2) was combined with the results of semi-structured interviews (WP4) to explore CEMPs legal and governance structures and their qualities. The interviews allowed deeper exploration of the aims, strategies and targets which CEMP hosts and their partners are working with. These provided a basis from which to identify their priority towards coastal and marine nature recovery.

Table 2 shows the interview number (used for analysis in NVivo software) followed by the English region, name of the CEMP/similar initiative, its acronym and the number of

interviewees per interview. The project ID reference stems from the survey response which preceded the interviews and is used in this report for referencing.

Table 2. CEMPs interviewed

Interview number (NVivo ref)	Name of CEMP/similar initiative	Acronym	Number of people in interview	Project ID from survey	Region
1	Yorkshire Marine Nature Partnership	YMNP	3	41	NE
2	Stronger Shores	SS	3	32	NE
3	Berwickshire and Northumberland Marine Partnership	BNNMP	1	3	NE
4	Sefton Coast Partnership	SCP	1	27	NW
5	Morecambe Bay Partnership	MBP	1	21	NW
6	Solway Firth Partnership	SFP	1	30	NW
7	Coastal Partners (Eastern Solent)	CPES	3	5	S
8	Isle of Wight Estuaries Partnership	IOW	3	17	S
9	Dorset Coast Forum	DCF	3	9	S
10	Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum	TECF	3	35	SW
11	Severn Estuary Partnership	SEP	2	28	SW
12	South Devon National Landscape Estuaries Partnerships	SDNL	3	31	SW
13	Deben Estuary Partnership	DE	3	7	SE
14	Sussex Marine and Coastal Forum	SMCF	2	34	SE
15	The Wash and North Norfolk Marine Partnership	TWNNMP	3	39	SE
16	Medway Swale Estuary Partnership	MSEP	3	19	SE

3.3.5 Funding mechanisms to strengthen MNR opportunities utilising CEMPs (WP5)

Independent advisors were engaged to explore existing and future investment mechanisms for MNR, to add to the evidence gained through the online survey and interviews ahead of the workshop. This enabled exploration of how the CEMPs legal/governance characteristics, experience and outlook could support MNR. Three topics were covered by the advisors through desk-based reviews. Background reports from each are available on the CPN website:

- LeTissier, M. (2024) International Examples of Marine Nature Recovery
- Ronish, Y. (2024) Social Impact Investment: Blue Finance for Marine Nature Recovery
- Hilburn, H. (2024) Social Impact Investment: Creating cross-sectoral investable business models.

The independent advisors' research and recommendations were brought together with preliminary information from the surveys and interviews to design an interactive workshop delivered on 11th March 2024. The workshop was attended by 69 people, including survey and interview participants, NE staff, the EAG members, Regional Researchers, independent researchers and the project team with facilitation supported by CPN. The objectives of the workshop were to:

i) Share findings from the survey and interviews: characterisation, governance and involvement in marine nature recovery;
ii) Explore the challenges, opportunities and a 'recipe for success' for CEMPs role to support marine nature recovery.

The format of the workshop involved presentations by the principal researcher, Dr Natasha Bradshaw followed by initial project insights into financial mechanisms provided by Amy Pryor and advisors Martin LeTissier, Yarema Ronish and Heather Hilburn. Following discussion, a workshop activity involved breakout groups to discuss the findings shared. The workshop agenda and breakout group findings are provided in Appendix 7.

The workshop explored different roles that CEMPs could deliver within a funded MNR project using different finance mechanism scenarios. The skills required and governance scenarios needed for each were also explored along with the capacity building (or other support) that a CEMP would require to undertake these roles. Preliminary understanding of the appetite for any capacity building and governance change that may be required was gauged. Feedback obtained through the workshop informed the recommendations for next steps within this report. The independent advisors' research and the workshop findings were summarised in a background research report (Pryor, A., and Benson, N., 2024).

The findings were used to develop a causal explanation of how CEMPs could support MNR. The research aimed to provide a detailed understanding of the mechanisms

(processes and pathways) that enable CEMPs to bring about change, as well as their strengths and weaknesses. It also aimed to provide insights into how CEMPs could be adapted and/or supported to improve their ability to support and deliver nature recovery. The findings would be used to understand why nature recovery projects supported by CEMPs “should work” and guide any future project implementation.

Whitby Harbour (Photo credit: Niall Benson)

4 Results

4.1 Overview of findings

The following sections of this report provide an overview of the findings of the research and how they are presented, signposting to background evidence.

The National Landscape of Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships (Bradshaw, N., and Benson, N., 2024a)
Background evidence for RQ1 and RQ2:

- To what extent is the English coast and marine landscape covered by Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships (CEMPs) and similar initiatives? (RQ1)
- What legal and governance structures are in place for existing CEMPs? (RQ2).

The findings of this research are summarised in Section 4.2 (The National Landscape of CEMPs) and Section 4.3 (Legal and Governance Structures).

Characteristics of Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships for Marine Nature Recovery (Bradshaw, N., and Benson, N. 2024b)
Background evidence for RQ3 and RQ4:

- Where are marine nature recovery projects and how do they utilise CEMPs and similar initiatives? (RQ3)
- What characteristics of CEMPs and similar initiatives present barriers and opportunities to supporting marine nature recovery (MNR)? (RQ4).

The findings of this research are summarised in Section 4.4 (Marine Nature Recovery Engagement) and Section 4.5 (CEMP Characteristics for Supporting MNR).

Funding Mechanisms to strengthen MNR opportunities utilising CEMPs (Pryor, A., and Benson, N., 2024)
Background evidence for RQ5:

- What experience and opportunity exists to broaden the funding base to support MNR projects and what (if any) role could CEMPs support? (RQ5).

The findings of this research are summarised in Section 4.6 (Funding for Future MNR Initiatives). The above evidence is used to respond to RQ6, with a focus on the four quality criteria (efficiency, effectiveness, legitimacy and equity):

- What trends can be identified between CEMPs legal and governance structures (RQ2) and their ability to pioneer and support delivery of MNR projects (RQ3)? (RQ6).

The response to RQ6 is within the discussion of findings in Section 5.

4.2 The National Landscape of Coastal Partnerships

This section of the results responds to the following research question (RQ1):

To what extent is the English coast and marine landscape covered by Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships (CEMPs) and similar initiatives?

This section draws on background literature including CPN data, part one of the survey findings (Q1-3) and insights from the interviews. An overview of key findings is presented in Box 1 below.

Box 1: Key Findings

An overview of the role and evolution of partnerships for the coast are provided. Background literature contextualises the role of coastal partnerships to support collaborative governance. The evolution of CEMPs some three decades ago is described, together with a definition of their role. The current extent of their operation is mapped, showing the location of over fifty CEMPs and thirty similar initiatives. Survey participants (*n*=41) indicated that 70% of CEMPs focus on the coast and estuaries, with 20% on marine and 10% on catchments. Over half have a combined geographical focus across coastal, estuary and/or marine areas. The location, geographical focus and known extent of existing CEMPs are mapped to present the latest knowledge of the national landscape of coastal partnerships.

4.2.1 Background Literature: Partnerships and Governance

To support characterisation of the landscape of CEMPs, the context for partnership working has been described from background literature on participatory and collaborative governance approaches.

The purpose of partnership working is founded on increasing recognition of the value of public participation in environmental decision-making which is 'well-matched' to socio-ecological conditions (DeCaro and Stokes, 2013). There is often too much reliance on (top-down) ad hoc consultation approaches as opposed to (bottom-up) long term participative approaches. In addition, it has been recognised that there is a need for more integrated planning and delivery for our coast and seas because there remains a governance gap between the management of land and sea. There is therefore value in improving community engagement and place-based governance for our coasts and seas (Lannin, 2021; Bradshaw, 2022; Slater and Claydon, 2020).

Participatory governance approaches are now widespread with a range of mechanisms evolved to facilitate communication, information exchange and participation in decision-making (e.g. Wesselink and Hoppe, 2011; Stafford, 2018). There is some recognition of

the role of partnerships to support watershed and coastal governance – but the extent to which these initiatives fit within more formal approaches to governance is less clear. It is recognised that partnerships are well placed to engage stakeholders at a 'place-based' scale which people can identify with (see for example Bavikatte, 2014), but there is limited evidence to demonstrate whether CEMPs offer the appropriate scale to support collaborative coastal and marine governance in England. However, building place-attachment is likely to support sustainability and could be better recognised in governance arrangements.

Collaborative governance is offered as a lens to strengthen local coastal/marine governance through deliberation and consensus-building, to create a more comprehensive approach to planning and policy implementation than government could achieve on its own (Gray and Purdy, 2018). It expands conventional government policy processes by facilitating collaboration between the public, private and community sectors to achieve more than any one sector could achieve on its own. This has been recognised by the Environment Agency who drive the Catchment Based Approach (CaBA), but there is no equivalent driver for collaborative governance to implement the UK Marine Strategy at the ecosystem scale. There remains a gap between legal and policy ambitions towards transitional and coastal waters, their practical implementation, and the equivalent landscape scale-approach to support delivery.

A range of powers and duties exist to support collaborative coastal governance such as the duty to cooperate, statement of common ground, coastal concordat and planning tools. However, there is a lack of consistency in their application or measurement of success. It has been suggested that for the existing regulatory framework to function properly, it is important that there are genuine engagement opportunities (Long, 2012), therefore increasing interest in collaborative approaches around place-based governance is important. Whether driven from the 'top-down' and/or 'bottom-up', collaborative processes are a core function of CEMPs. To varying extents, they bring these two approaches together to fill a governance gap (Bradshaw, 2023), sometimes referred to as the 'missing middle'.

An overview of different types of partnerships for rivers, coasts and the sea are provided in Table 3, contextualising the evidence of over fifty CEMPs. It illustrates the institutional lead, legal basis/policy driver (if any), national/regional/local co-ordinating network (if any), their governance/accountability and approximate number of each type of partnership. Each of these partnerships/committees has different governance and accountability models and combinations representing public bodies, civil society spokespersons and in some cases private/commercial interests.

CEMPs role in supporting coastal and marine governance has not been consistently monitored, with scattered evidence of their value. Nevertheless, they provide services to a wide range of partners and engage coastal communities in decision-making and practical

activities. Due to their non-statutory function, they are financed on a voluntary basis. Justifying investment demands more evidence of benefits vs cost, particularly as the more effort invested in co-creation and co-delivery the more reward is likely from the delivery of common outcomes. This narrative provides helpful context for further exploration of the current landscape of CEMPs in England.

Table 3. Partnerships and joint committees with relevance to the UK coast at the regional and local levels (Bradshaw, 2023)

Function	Institutional lead/responsibility		Legal Basis/Policy Mechanism	National level network	Regional/Local level networks Hosting arrangements & partners.	Governance & Accountability	No.
Coastal Community Teams (CCTs)	MHCLG	Local Authority	Coastal Regeneration in English Resorts (CCA Handbook, 2010) Coastal Towns Working Group	Coastal Communities Alliance (CCA) Secretariat at Lincolnshire County Council	Coastal Community Teams (CCT) led by local champions, often supported by Local Authorities.	Boards with independent members, some established as charities/companies	350+
Heritage Coasts (HCs)	NE	Local Authority	Defined rather than designated (Paragraph 114 NPPF, 2012)	See below (CEMPs)	Local Authorotoes	A non-statutory status defined by agreement between the relevant local planning authority and Natural England	32
Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships (CEMPs)	None	Various hosts	Defra ICZM Strategy (2008) EC ICZM Recommendation (2002)	Coastal Partnerships Network (CPN)	Coastal, estuary and marine partnerships (where they exist) hosted by LAs, NE, Harbour Authorities, Universities and others.	Committees made up of partners and stakeholders. A small number have established their own legal status as charities/companies with independent trustees.	55+
Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)	DEFRA	NE	Habitats & Species Directives, MaCAA & Wildlife & Countryside Act	European Marine Site Management	Regional project groups identified suitable sites, but ceased operation when Defra	Management Boards comprising relevant authorities and Natural England.	175

Function	Institutional lead/responsibility		Legal Basis/Policy Mechanism	National level network	Regional/Local level networks Hosting arrangements & partners.	Governance & Accountability	No.
			[EC Marine Strategy Framework Directive]	Groups supported by NE.	withdrew funding support (e.g. Balanced Seas, SE England). Local Wildlife Trusts and others remain active.		
Protected Landscapes	DEFRA	NE	National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949), CROW Act etc.	National Parks Association, National Landscapes Association,		National Park Boards, National Landscape Partnerships	24
Catchment Partnerships (CaBA)	DEFRA	EA and delivery partners	EC Water Framework Directive River Basin District Plans	Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) working group(s)	Catchment partnerships (CaBA) hosted by The Rivers Trust, Wildlife Trusts and others	Most have legal status as Charities/Companies with independent trustees	106 (56 with TraC waters)
Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs)	DEFRA	NE, EA, Forestry Commission, MMO	Natural Environment White Paper (2010)	Defra / NE Ecosystems knowledge network	Variety of hosting arrangements including Wildlife Trusts, LAs, Environment Agency, universities and independents.	Advisory boards – LAs with charity sector representation	47
Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs)	DEFRA	EA and LAs	EA Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy	Local Government Association – Coastal Special Interest Group	Coastal Groups	LAs	22

Function	Institutional lead/responsibility		Legal Basis/Policy Mechanism	National level network	Regional/Local level networks Hosting arrangements & partners.	Governance & Accountability	No.
Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authorities (IFCAs)	DEFRA	MaCAA (2009)	Marine Policy Statement	Association of IFCAs (AIFCA) Secretariat	Regionally focused Committees made up from LAs and MMO appointees	Committee made up of local authority members, officers and MMO appointees	10
Regional Flood and Coastal Committees (RFCC)	DEFRA	EA	The Regional Flood and Coastal Committees (England and Wales) Regulations 2011. Flood & Water Management Act (2010)	Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA)	Regionally focused Committees made up from LAs and EA appointees (11-25)	Environment Agency, LAs and independent appointees	12
Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS)	DEFRA	NE	Environment Act (2021). 25 Year Environment Plan. Net gain consultation (2019)	Nature Recovery Network (NRN) Delivery Partnership	Uncertainty at the time of writing over whether NRN will extend into coastal/inshore marine environment	Responsible authority (e.g. County Councils) LNPs and NRN delivery partners. Landscape Recovery projects to be established.	10
Landscape Partnerships			Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000)	Heritage Lottery Fund	Often linked to National Landscapes	Within host body e.g. National Landscape Management Group: LAs, Parish Councils	12

Function	Institutional lead/responsibility		Legal Basis/Policy Mechanism	National level network	Regional/Local level networks Hosting arrangements & partners.	Governance & Accountability	No.
Ports and Harbours (Statutory Harbour Authorities)	DfT	DfT, 2018)	Local Acts of Parliament, Harbour Revision or Empowerment Orders and other legislation	British Ports Association	Regional groupings such as the South West Ports Group	Individual harbour boards with local appointees whether private/trust//LA owned. Majority operate on a commercial basis.	300+

2.2 Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships (CEMPs)

Evolution

Three decades ago, English Nature's Campaign for a Living Coast and the Estuaries Initiative laid the foundations for coastal partnerships. The background is described above in Section 2.3 (Natural England's Inheritance) and Section 2.4 (CEMPs origins and purpose). The most recent evidence suggests that there are 55 active CEMPs and an estimated 30+ similar initiatives (Bradshaw *et.al*, 2022).

Definition of CEMPs

There has been no widely recognised definition of a CEMP. They are generally recognised as non-statutory collaborative groupings of stakeholders with an interest in a local coastal area, providing a holistic approach to address coastal sustainability issues through the active involvement of key agencies and stakeholders. They have been described as 'an approach within the regional and local scales of government, where the issues of coastal management are translated from policy into plans and actions by distinct organisations for discrete sections of coast and estuaries' (Stojanovic & Barker, 2008, p.345). They have been recognised for playing an influential role in the development and delivery of the management of coastal areas and estuaries for several years, representing experienced and diverse hubs at strategic locations (Coastal Partnerships Network, 2014). The CPN previously defined CEMPs as 'strong local networks for all those with an interest in the coast, providing a focus for effective communication, greater understanding of issues and solution development' and 'enabling coastal communities to embrace the future' (Coastal Partnerships Network, 2020). In 2020, the CPN was funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation to undergo strategic development towards professionalising the Network through a Theory of Change process and establish a 10-year Business Plan and Strategy. Through this collaboration, a definition was agreed:

> 'Cross-sectoral place-based partnerships advocating for the system level approach, sustainable use of marine resources and integrated, coordinated management across a stretch of coastline or estuary'.

Increasingly, new or existing partnerships are using the term 'marine' within their remit, therefore for the purposes of this project the definition of coastal partnerships was expanded to include coastal, estuary and marine partnerships (CEMPs).

Current Extent of Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships (CEMPs)

An audit undertaken by CPN from 2018-2020, indicated that of the 60 local CEMPs identified as active in 2008 (Stojanovic & Barker, 2008), 55 were still active, but over a third had evolved beyond their original form. For England, it was identified that just under half remained approximately the same, a quarter went into abeyance, and a quarter showed a positive trend in activity through a name change such as to include 'marine'.

The membership of each CEMP reflects its local context, but generally includes government agencies, local authorities, non-government organisations, businesses, regulators, landowners, and interested individual members of the public. Although there is no compulsion to join CEMPs, many coastal and marine actors have recognised their value as a mechanism to support co-operation between coastal activities and enable individual coastal actors to undertake their roles more effectively and efficiently with a financial benefit associated with it (Entec, 2008). However, there is very little published knowledge about the efficacy of CEMPs.

This project presented an opportunity to deepen knowledge around the geographical coverage of CEMPs activity and the legal and governance arrangements in place to support their work.

4.2.3 The National Landscape of CEMPs in England

CEMPs and Similar Initiatives

'CEMPs' are cross-sectoral place-based partnerships advocating for the system level approach, sustainable use of marine resources and integrated, coordinated management across a stretch of coastline or estuary (Bradshaw *et al.*, 2022). "Similar initiatives" are partnerships working around the coast with similar overall aims (integration, collaboration and coordination) but their origin and/or specific aims are different – often more sectoral and time-limited with project and/or central government funding. For example, included in this research were a few current flood and coastal erosion risk management projects/programmes funded by Defra or the National Lottery (e.g. Our Future Coast, Seascapes, Making Space for Sand). Designated areas (e.g. MCZs, EMS sites) are not identified unless there is an active partnership focused on their specific delivery – in most cases within/adjacent to a CEMP area.

Location of CEMPs

From pre-existing data (described in Section 3.2), ArcGIS software was used to show the known location of CEMPs. This previously known data on 55 CEMPs was combined with new mapping of their geographical extent obtained through this project. Responses from 41 CEMPs and similar initiatives verified the location of known partnerships were and new ones were added to GIS maps. Partnership officers were asked to indicate the geographical extent of coverage, with the aim of working towards a 'heat' map of partnership working.

Of the 41 responses to the survey shown in Table 4 below, 18 CEMPs and similar initiatives were verified on the map provided, 8 survey participants were unsure (e.g. because they couldn't load the map) and 15 weren't already shown. The latter were added to the map as shown in Figure 2. Respondents identified one relatively new CEMP (Our Dee Estuary) and 6 other initiatives, some which involve MNR (Dorset 'Wild Seas'; Norfolk

and Suffolk Coast and Estuary Conference; Solent Seascape; Mersey Estuary Gateway Trust; Nature North; Morecambe Bay seascape restoration).

There are different levels and scales of coastal partnership activity around the English coastline. The current mapping shows the location of all known partnerships and the geographical extent of approximately half of them as a result of this project.[4]

Table 4. CEMP and other initiatives which responded to the survey (n=41)

Name of participating CEMP or similar initiative	Participant ID
Alde and Ore Community Partnership	1
Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities	2
Berwickshire and Northumberland Marine Nature Partnership	3
Blyth Estuary Partnership	4
Coastal Partners (East Solent)	5
Coastal Partnership East	6
Deben Estuary Partnership	7
Dee Estuary Coastal Partnership	8
Dorset Coast Forum	9
Durham Heritage Coast Partnership	10
Durlston Marine Watch	11
East Anglian Coastal Group	12
Exe Estuary Management Partnership	13
Fowey Estuary Partnership	14
Hamble Estuary Partnership	15
Irish Sea Network	16
Isle of Wight Estuaries Partnership	17
Making Space for Sand (part of the DEFRA/EA FCRIP)	18
Medway Swale Estuary Partnership	19
Mersey Estuary Conservation Group	20
Morecambe Bay Partnership	21
North West Coastal Forum	22
Our Future Coast (x2 merged)	23

[4] CPN will aim to obtain spatial data from the CEMPs that did not participate in this project's survey, to create a fuller ‘heat-map’ of coverage.

Name of participating CEMP or similar initiative	Participant ID
Revitalising our Estuaries	24
SeaScapes Tyne to Tees Landscape Partnership	25
Sefton Coast Landscape Partnership	26
Severn Estuary Partnership	27
Solent Forum	28
Solway Firth Partnership	29
South Devon AONB Estuaries Partnership	30
Stronger Shores	31
Suffolk Coast Forum	32
Sussex Marine and Coastal Forum	33
Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum (TECF)	34
Tees Estuary Recovering Nature national nature recovery project	35
Thames Estuary Partnership	36
Thanet Coast Project / NE Kent Marine Protected Area	37
The Wash & North Norfolk Marine Partnership (WNNMP)	38
Wyre Estuary Group	39
Yorkshire Marine Nature Partnership	40

Geographical Focus

Survey participants (*n*=41) showed that overall, 35% of CEMPs and similar initiatives were focused on coasts and 35% on estuaries. Of the remaining 20% their focus was on the marine environment and 10% on catchments, as shown in Figure 1 below. Of those that identified a primary focus, this was on estuaries (*n*=10), coast (*n*=7), or marine (*n*=2) with none focused primarily on the catchment. Over half had a combined geographical focus (*n*=23) which was coastal, estuary and marine (*n*=6), coastal, catchment, estuary and marine (*n*=5), coastal and estuary (*n*=5), coastal and marine (*n*=4), coastal, catchment and estuary (*n*=2); catchment and estuary (*n*=1). There is therefore diversity in the scale and extent of their activity.

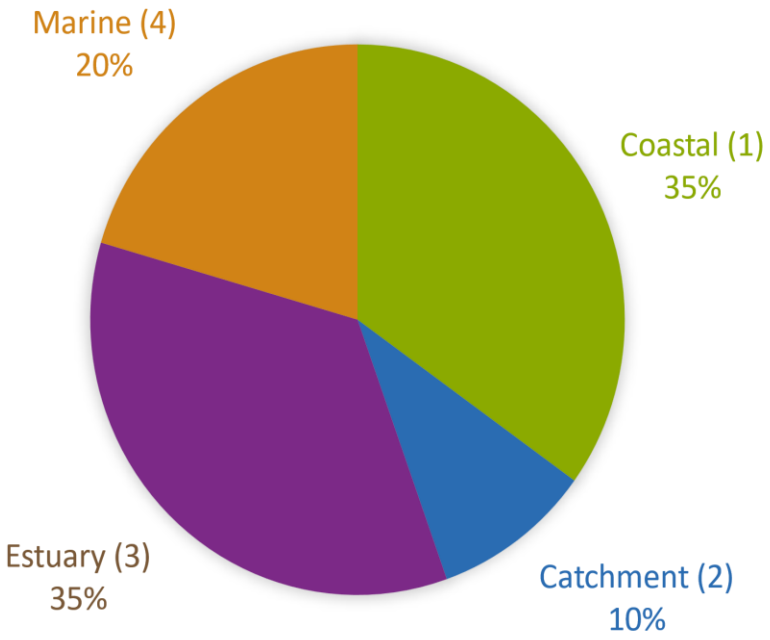

Figure 1. Geographical focus of partnerships across the coast, catchment, estuary and marine areas (combined totals)

Geographical Extent

Survey responses (Q1-Q3) enabled the production of GIS maps to show the locations of known CEMPs and other initiatives, plus the geographical extent of their coverage, as illustrated in Figure 2 below. From the response to the survey, 29 CEMPs and other initiatives were mapped for their geographical extent, as shown through the Natural England Partnerships for Marine Nature Recovery.

This research combined previously known data on the location of over 50 CEMPs with new mapping of their geographical extent. Through responses from 41 CEMPs and similar initiatives, the locations of known partnerships were verified and a small number of new ones added to the ArcGIS platform. This research has not mapped *all* relevant partnership initiatives for marine recovery but is thought to present comprehensive and up to date information at the time of production (Autumn 2024). It is also important to note that the frequency of partnership initiatives forming (or closing) means that the information is not static. For example, since this data was collated, a new CEMP has emerged for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly supported through the Environment Agency's 3Cs funding. The word 'marine' is increasingly being used within existing and for new and reforming CEMPs (Bradshaw *et.al*, 2022) as demonstrated by Sussex Marine and Coastal Forum, The Wash & North Norfolk Marine Partnership and the Yorkshire Marine Nature Partnership:

> "To work collaboratively to generate a change in the way people view and use Yorkshire's marine and coastal environment - from isolated pockets of interest with

> little connection to wider society, to a rich environment which sustainably underpins all aspects of our history, economy and culture" (ID14).

This project has helped to verify and expand on knowledge about the location of CEMPs and similar initiatives. Figure 2 shows CEMP point, extent and data source for CEMPs and similar initiatives. It maps the location of the 41 CEMPs listed in Table 4 which were verified through this research by survey participants. It also shows CEMP locations previously known to CPN but who were not a survey participant in this research.

Figure 2. CEMP point, extent and data source

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- **Dark green circles** indicate responses to the survey.
- **Orange circles** represent CEMP records from the existing 2022 Coastal Partnerships Network (CPN) audit (Bradshaw *et.al,* 2022).
- **Teal polygons** illustrate the known spatial extent of CEMPs as compiled from multiple sources.

The data shows broad national coverage, with particularly high concentrations of CEMPs along the South Coast, North West, East Anglia and the North East. There are different levels and scales of partnership activity from small estuaries to large marine regions. The extent of their geographical operation was mapped for approximately half of the known CEMPs, bringing new insights into their coverage of the coast. Some areas have a high number of coastal/estuary/marine partnerships operating at different scales (e.g. NW England) and other areas are less obviously active, but there is further scope to extend the spatial mapping to fill known gaps. CPN will seek ongoing verification and spatial data from the CEMPs that did not participate in this project survey, to create a fuller 'heat-map' of coverage.

4.3 Legal and Governance Structures

This section of the results responds to the following research question (RQ2):

What legal and governance structures are in place for existing CEMPs?

This section reports the findings of part two of the survey (Q4-11) on CEMPs governance, partner representation, funding, staffing, their aims and perceptions of their own effectiveness, plus insights from the interviews. An overview of key findings is presented in Box 2 below.

Box 2: Key Findings

Most CEMPs are led informally by public sector partners, usually with no formal status and secured through informal operational structures such as Terms of Reference. One third of CEMPs have charity or company status and one quarter are reviewing the possibility of changing their governance status. Overall, interviewees considered that CEMPs achieve well against their aims to support sustainability, resilience/recovery and conservation, but the balance of core vs project funding and implications for consistency in staff capacity are an ongoing issue. There is no standard metric for CEMPs performance monitoring. This research explored 'hard' governance factors and 'soft' governance factors, for which the latter were generally considered to be more important.

4.3.1 Governance Status and Operational Structures

Survey responses (Q4-6) showed that over half of CEMPs have no formal status but most were found to have secure informal operational structures through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or Terms of Reference (ToR). A third have charity or company status (with Articles of Association, Trustees and/or Directors) but there were no limited partnerships, social enterprises or co-operatives identified. The most common operational structure is an informal arrangement led by a non-legally binding steering/management group or committee. There is often a host body with statutory or legal status (for example a County Council or Charity) providing in-kind support for the partnership staff. The survey findings showed the diversity of governance arrangements in operation by CEMPs and begins to shape a typology:

- CEMPs with informal governing committees and a host body;
- CEMPs established as charities/companies with independent networks; and
- Similar initiatives which have some characteristics akin to CEMPs but are typically less established, multi-year grant-aided and/or more focused on sectoral delivery.

The 'pros of informal status were identified by:

- Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum (ID35) a long-standing CEMP, who are strongly supported by a host Local Authority, but decisions are made in line with an MoA and ToR between multiple statutory bodies and other stakeholders, through a two-tier informal voting system. They recognise the efficiencies associated with operating with an MoU because anything more formal would require a large overhead and the value is largely in using it as a fallback position.

- Yorkshire Marine Nature Partnership, a relatively young CEMP, were considering the advantage of getting something written down, as *"…it would probably make our lives easier with MoUs in place…"* especially to help secure the future when personnel change (ID41).
- Other CEMPs reported that these informal agreements gave a structure/premise for existing cooperation (ID31) or as a backdrop and a "nice space to hold to account the kind of direction that the forum is heading in" (ID34). It also brings flexibility and adaptability (ID19).

The 'cons' reported were around the length of time it may take to set-up written operational procedures and whether they are too weak, especially if not renewed (e.g. ID19), the extent to which people take notice of them [if] not having a mechanism to be funded as a standalone entity (ID31), and being reliant on a host body to enter into a legal agreement (for example for project funds).

Several CEMPs mentioned that their MoUs/ToRs were quite old (ID28, ID19) or probably needed updating (ID3, ID34), rarely actively applied (ID28), had been tightened up (ID31) or that they worked well for setting something up but not necessarily in the longer-term (ID32). Overall, there was a sense that the informality of no formal status with an MoU/ToR gives flexibility to focus on collaboration between existing partners and be open to working with new partners, with less emphasis or time demanded through organisational issues or more formal governance structures (e.g. ID9). However, many are using the backup of a host body, especially when funding opportunities require a legal agreement.

A quarter of respondents indicated that discussions were taking place about the possibility of changing their governance status. The pros and cons of informal governance vs. charity status were elaborated by information from the interviews. Several partnerships reviewing their governance structure are considering charity status in one shape or another for the perceived opportunity to attract more and diverse funding. However, CEMPs provided feedback that the charities commission does not easily recognise the values associated with ICZM principles (ID27, ID22) which underpinned the formation of many CEMPs several decades ago. Charity status may therefore affect the CEMPs relations with core funders or host bodies, where it's focus is re-oriented towards projects rather than co-ordination between partners:

> "So, the charitable sector is very much focused on impact and what people, organisations, etc. are giving their money [towards]…what is it that they are supporting? And so that's why the coastal partnership type model of bringing people together, facilitating that type of thing is, you know, nobody can deny it's really important, but it doesn't hit charitable buttons" (ID21).

Nevertheless, there is a perception that funding opportunities may be more accessible if charity or other governance status is gained. Table 5 shows the rationale for CEMPs considering a change in governance status.

Table 5. CEMPs and similar initiatives considering a change in governance status

Partnership Name	Reason for Possible Change in Governance Status
Blyth Estuary Partnership	Future charity
Dee Estuary Coastal Partnership	Will develop MoU and ToR shortly
Medway Swale Estuary Partnership	Would like greater independence and opportunities to apply for funding.
North West Coastal Forum	We have applied to become a charity, but the Charity Commission does not understand integrated coastal zone management - the scope of our interests is causing them issues in accepting we are purely charitable. Note: Charity status was achieved in 2024.
SeaScapes Tyne to Tees Landscape Partnership	The legacy and how that is handled may change things. As a minimum, the project will create a legacy agreement for all partners to sign.
Sefton Coast Landscape Partnership	Legal structure to take advantage of funding opportunities - form of which has yet to be determined.
Severn Estuary Partnership	Currently undergoing a partnership and governance review, the outcome of which may result in a change in status.
Solent Forum	Looked at other models but we feel current model suits us best.
Tees Estuary Recovering Nature national nature recovery project	No explanation provided, but the only respondent to indicate 'yes' in response to the question.
Thanet Coast Project / NE Kent Marine Protected Area	Remaining the same at present: but continuity issues - particularly related to funding of the Thanet Coast Project to help implement management actions.

Feedback from the interviews indicated that if core funding and the engagement of statutory partners and key stakeholders could still be secured (and any new arrangement was not considered to be a competitor – ID31), a form of charitable status (such as CIC, CIO) was attractive to enable scaling-up of delivery activity. However, the balance of effort between supporting collaboration between statutory decision-making partners, seeking wider representation, and undertaking community engagement activity needs to be carefully considered (ID35, ID28).

> "I think people are broadly happy with the governance. And I think to be honest, if we did change it, that would then require a lot of input from me, would take

> away from core delivery. So, it's the sort of thing that actually could take up most of my role for the next year if we actually did it" *(ID3).*

The decline of and limitations around relying on core funding from the public sector, are driving an increasing reliance on project funds. CEMPs are aware of the potential availability of grants or private sector investment if charity/company status is gained. However, there may be a trade-off involved if project deliverables alter the focus of the CEMP away from core services for ongoing collaboration between key partners. In addition, any change in governance status may require the aims of the CEMP to be revised.

4.3.2 Partner Representation and Funding

Survey responses (Q7, Q8) showed that most CEMPs are led informally by public sector partners with high representation from biodiversity conservation NGOs, the EA, NE and Local Authorities. Lower representation is evident from marine industry, commercial/recreational fisheries, Parish/Town Councils, the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and heritage interests. However, there is huge diversity, with some more strongly led by harbour authorities and the active involvement of community/user groups.

Partner representation in the governance of CEMPs and their funding partners present unique, often complex arrangements and histories in each CEMP. It is therefore not appropriate to generalise, however a simple comparison of the survey results on partner representation (Q7) and core funding partners (Q8) is possible (n=41 CEMPs).

For every CEMP, the number of partners represented was higher than the number of core funding partners. The most difference was shown with the MMO which is represented on 38 CEMPs but only 4 CEMPs receive core funding. NE and EA were represented on 38 CEMPs, with NE core funding 14 and the EA 22 (it is likely that some of the EA's core funding is linked to delivery of the Catchment Based Approach for estuaries and coasts and/or FCRIP programmes). Community organisations, recreation/tourism/beach management interests and heritage/local history interests are well represented (n=31, 34, 34 respectively) but provide only a small number of CEMPs with core funding (n= 4, 6, 5 respectively). Even water companies/water quality and catchment interests (n=36) and port/harbour authorities (n=36) are much higher represented than supportive through core funding (n=10, n=13).

Core/long-term funding providers were most frequently the public sector local authorities: District, Unitary and County Councils. The EA, and NE in particular, are the highest individual providers of core and project funding, due at least in part to 'other' partnership initiatives which are currently in receipt of large grants. The MMO is a lower funding partner compared to other decision-making bodies.

In most cases, core funding (unrestricted) from regular partners doesn't cover full running costs, which are supplemented by project income and/or in-kind support from a host body. There is a flexible approach to varied levels of funding from different partners (even of the same 'type') depending upon perceived need/interests and affordability. There also appears to be goodwill around what many partners expect for their core funding contributions for example, an understanding that they are contributing to the general running costs for cooperation services – meetings, forums, newsletters etc. Even though some CEMPs have partners paying similar amounts (ID9), there are certainly no 'equitable standards' set by CEMPs locally or nationally.

Table 6 below shows how the LA's and EA provide core funding to around 20 CEMPs. It highlights that NE are providing funds to more CEMPs through projects (*n*=25) than core services (*n*=14). The MMO is much lower, providing core funding to 4 CEMPs and project funding to 8 CEMPs. Organisations more frequently providing project than core funding include Parish/Town Councils (*n*=16 core/9 project) and consultancies (*n*=15 project/4 core), commercial/recreational fisheries (*n*=9 project/4 core).

There is huge diversity in funding sources between core/long-term funders and project/short-term grants, especially when the 'major' funders are considered. Interview findings suggest that there has been a general downward trend in the provision of core funding over the past two decades, with some CEMPs struggling to replace it with project/grant income. This leads some CEMPs to consider the possible benefits of changing governance to be more formal and lever in more project/grant income. Regarding the other similar initiatives in receipt of large multi-year large grants for flood/coastal erosion risk management, seascape or nature recovery operating on a partnership basis, it is not yet clear whether their level of activity will be sustained, or their aims will change.

Retaining a good balance of core and project funding is important to avoid being pushed in any single direction, retaining independence/neutrality and contributing to the costs of hosting and maintaining a good range of funding partners. The results didn't show much correlation between representation and governance status, although marine industry was most strongly represented where company/charity status existed, or the host was a port/harbour authority. There does appear to be some link between partner representation and income levels where the LA's are core funders and consistently well represented.

Table 6. Partners total, core and project funding to CEMPs (Q8a and 8b)

Partners supporting CEMPs	Core	Project	Total
Natural England	14	25	39
County Council	19	16	35
Unitary Authority	17	16	33
Environment Agency	22	4	26
Parish Town Council	9	16	25
District Council	17	6	23
Other	10	9	19
National grant giving bodies Charitable trusts	8	11	19
Consultancy	4	15	19
Biodiversity conservation non-governmental organisation	14	2	16
Port harbour authority shipping	13	3	16
Water Company water quality catchment management	10	6	16
Management fees full cost recovery from project income	10	4	14
Commercial/ recreational fisheries	4	9	13
Marine Management Organisation	4	8	12
Local or regional grant giving bodies Charitable trusts	7	4	11
Industry local business	7	4	11
Developer contributions	5	6	11
Business donations	6	4	10
Recreation tourism beach management	6	3	9
Heritage and local history	5	3	8
Gifts from individuals	5	3	8

Partners supporting CEMPs	Core	Project	Total
Regeneration and economic development	4	3	7
Marine industry renewable energy, cabling	4	3	7
Community organisation	4	3	7

4.3.3 Staffing and volunteers

Survey responses (Q9) showed that there is a large difference in the number of people employed, with a third employing 1 to 3 FTE (full time equivalents); a quarter employing 'none' (relying on partners time or volunteers), and a fifth employing >5 FTE (through new grant-aided 'other initiatives'), as shown in Figure 3 below.

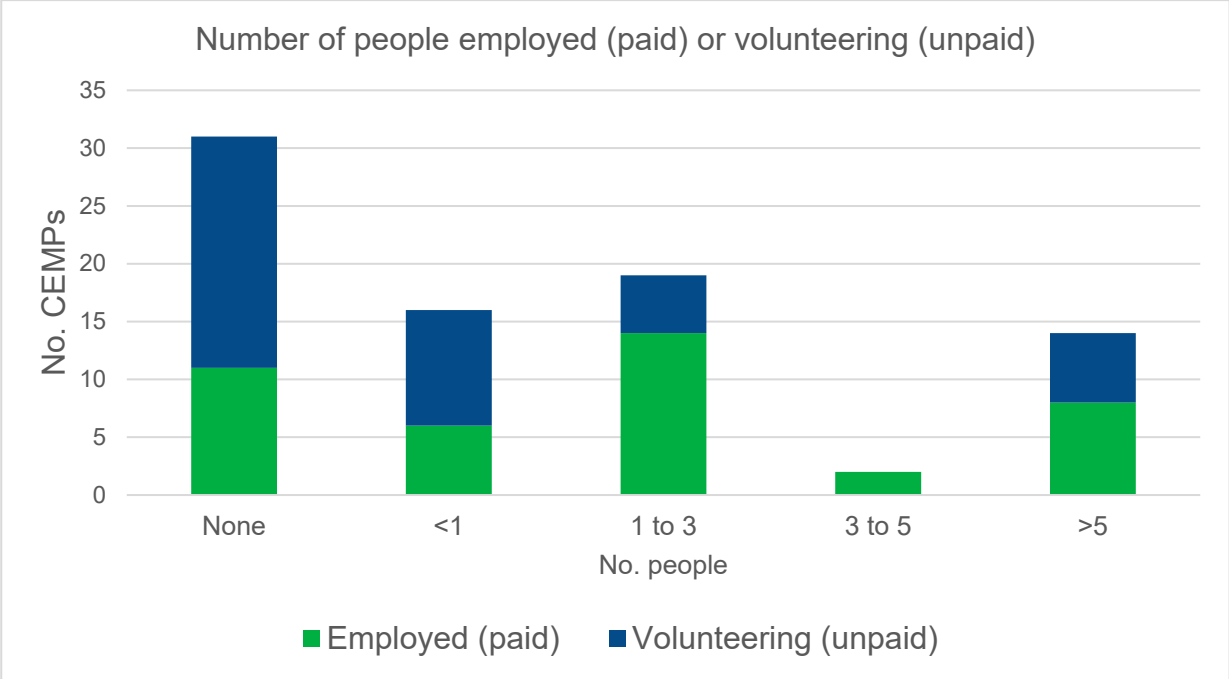

Figure 3. Number of people employed (paid) or volunteering (unpaid) by CEMPs and similar initiatives (Q9)

Approximately half of the CEMPs have no FTE volunteers, with a quarter relying on less than 1FTE and the multi-year grant-aided partnerships or charity-based CEMPs using more than 5 volunteers depending upon project needs. A small number of 'other initiatives' employ a much higher number of staff than 'traditional' CEMPs. For example, Coastal Partners (East Solent) has 67 FTE posts under its umbrella across multiple Local Authorities; Coastal Partnership East (East Anglia) has approximately 30 FTE.

Continuity of employment and legacy planning are an issue for many CEMPs, therefore many operate at a fairly high level of risk.

> "Currently in between funding bids. So staff team reduced therefore ability to support/work with volunteers also reduced at present" (ID25).

> "We have a network of over 100 volunteer coastal wardens that help with coastal stewardship and help run the main educational events and activities" (ID38).

The pressure CEMP officers are under is made clear by several survey participants:

> "We need more staff to cover the work that the partnership undertakes" (ID13).

> "We employ student placements on a hourly basis to support core activities such as comms, this varies on an annual basis" (ID28).

> "Yes ... not enough ... but feeling of limited capacity to make changes" (ID31).

The interview findings suggest that staffing and volunteers are largely influenced by the balance of core and project funding described above. Overall, the results show that the number of volunteers is similar to paid employees, therefore the in-kind support generated by CEMPs is providing high returns on partners' investment.

4.3.4 Aims and Effectiveness

Survey responses (Q10, Q11) showed that the primary aim of CEMPs is to support sustainability, resilience/recovery and conservation. As previously described, their origins vary from the momentum provided by English Nature (see Section 2.3), to advocating ICZM, providing secretariat services for different purposes, bringing decision-makers and communities together to support decision-making. Some large partnerships have recently formed with Defra grant-aid, to support FCERM, resilience planning, seascape and nature restoration. Examples include the Coastal Partners (East Solent) and Coastal Partnership East in East Anglia highlighted above (Section 4.3.3) for their high levels of staff. Some of the smaller partnerships have not been able to sustain previous levels of activity due to resource/capacity constraints, particularly due to local government budget cuts and wider austerity issues. Examples include the South Devon National Landscape which consolidated individual estuary partnerships; and The Wash and North Norfolk Marine Partnership were consolidation has also taken place. However, most survey participants felt that the CEMPs have or are achieving the aims they were set up to achieve – some two or three decades ago.

> "I believe the partnership has exceeded expectations by bringing passionate people together to provide multi disciplined skills to deliver more in house, whilst reducing the net cost to the partner authorities" (ID5)

Many identified approved plans or strategies, action plans, improved communication, excellent attendance, good balanced representation, dependable and supportive members and reducing the net cost to the partner authorities. Where frustrations around achieving aims were identified, the reasons given were the absence of some key partners, limitations around information sharing, or changes in personnel and lack of available resource/time or continuity. Most CEMPs, as convenors, bring together statutory and non-statutory partners but have little direct control over decision-making. Overall, CEMPs appear to have achieved well against the aims they were set up to achieve. However, there is not (yet) any standard metric for CEMPs to monitor progress/performance across England.

The effectiveness of CEMPs has been explored in terms of ‘hard’ governance factors and ‘soft’ governance factors. The former ‘hard’ governance factors refer to the aims (as above), staffing, partner representation, number and balance of core/project funding partners, host, governance status and operational structure – factors that were explored through the survey and interviews (as described in Sections 3.2 and 3.3 above). However, the survey revealed that participants consider ‘soft’ governance factors to have more of an influence over their effectiveness. These factors were the ability of the CEMP to support collaboration, offer knowledge and facilitation skills, promote trust and understanding. Having the capacity to develop leadership and a track record through adequate capacity were also frequently cited. The individual role and skills of the CEMP officer is key to the building of trust between partners and the hosting of a place-based local knowledge hub.

Overall, the aims of CEMPs are being achieved through the enabling capacity of diverse partners and the commitment of many individuals, including dedicated and passionate CEMPs who build up strong local knowledge networks. However, their effectiveness is not monitored and could be enhanced with better recognition of their unique role in supporting decision-making and raising community awareness of the value of coasts, estuaries and marine ecosystems.

Middleton-on-Sea (Photo credit: Natasha Bradshaw)

4.4 Marine Nature Recovery Engagement

This section of the results responds to the following research question (RQ3):

Where are marine nature recovery projects and how do they utilise CEMPs and similar initiatives?

The findings presented in this section are sourced from existing datasets, participants

Box 3 Key Findings

MNR projects and initiatives were mapped and combined with CEMP mapping. Survey data showed that half of the CEMPs were 'significantly' involved in MNR, a third 'involved' and a quarter 'somewhat' involved. Most support others to realise MNR ambitions through delivery projects and partnerships. However, their potential support is limited due to the need for renumeration for their time and capacity, particularly at the early stages of design where they could make a substantial difference to identifying initiatives and engaging key partners. Evidence showed that CEMPs experience of navigating multiple partners is useful for supporting the governance of MNR projects/initiatives and their delivery.

response to part three of the survey (Q12-13) and interviews. An overview of key findings is presented in Box 3 below.

4.4.1 Location of MNR projects in relation to CEMPs

MNR projects and initiatives from three data sources were mapped onto the CPN ArcGIS platform. Firstly, the EA and ABPMer supplied access to the OMREG dataset which showed the current, known locations of around 200 MNR projects across the UK at the time of the research. These were typically localised sites where delivery was underway or progressing towards delivery. The spatial extent of these restoration initiatives was often local and site-specific. Secondly, NE provided a list of MNR initiatives across England from previous research for the Local Marine Nature Recovery Project (LMNRP). These 30 initiatives were often 'umbrella' projects bringing partners together who are seeking to identify MNR delivery opportunities. Thirdly, 30 of the survey participants for this project (Q13, *n*=30/41) identified 73 MNR projects across England which were a combination of delivery sites and umbrella project initiatives, including some not identified by either of the existing ABPmer or NE datasets. The new MNR point and extent data provided by CEMPs typically represented larger areas of scope for MNR activity. Some overlap was identified between the three datasets but has not been removed, in order to retain knowledge of the MNR projects/initiatives identified by the CEMPs.

Figure 4 shows the locations and extent of MNR projects/initiatives:

- Dark green stars represent individual MNR project points identified by survey participants.
- Brown transparent polygons indicate the spatial extent of MNR projects identified by survey participants.
- Purple circles show Local Marine Natural Recovery Pilot (LMNRP) locations.

- Blue circles mark ABPmer restoration project points, and light blue polygons show ABPmer project boundaries.

The combined mapping showed clusters of activity around the Solent in southern England, between the Solway Firth to the Dee Estuary in NW England, from Berwickshire to the Humber Estuary in NE England, and South Devon in SW England where multiple restoration efforts are underway. Potential gaps or low levels of CEMPs and MNR activity were identified around the Kent coast, north Cornwall and south of the Humber Estuary.

The combined MNR data, together with the mapping of CEMPs, provided new and novel data to explore connectivity between the established partnerships and their involvement in MNR projects and initiatives to answer RQ3.

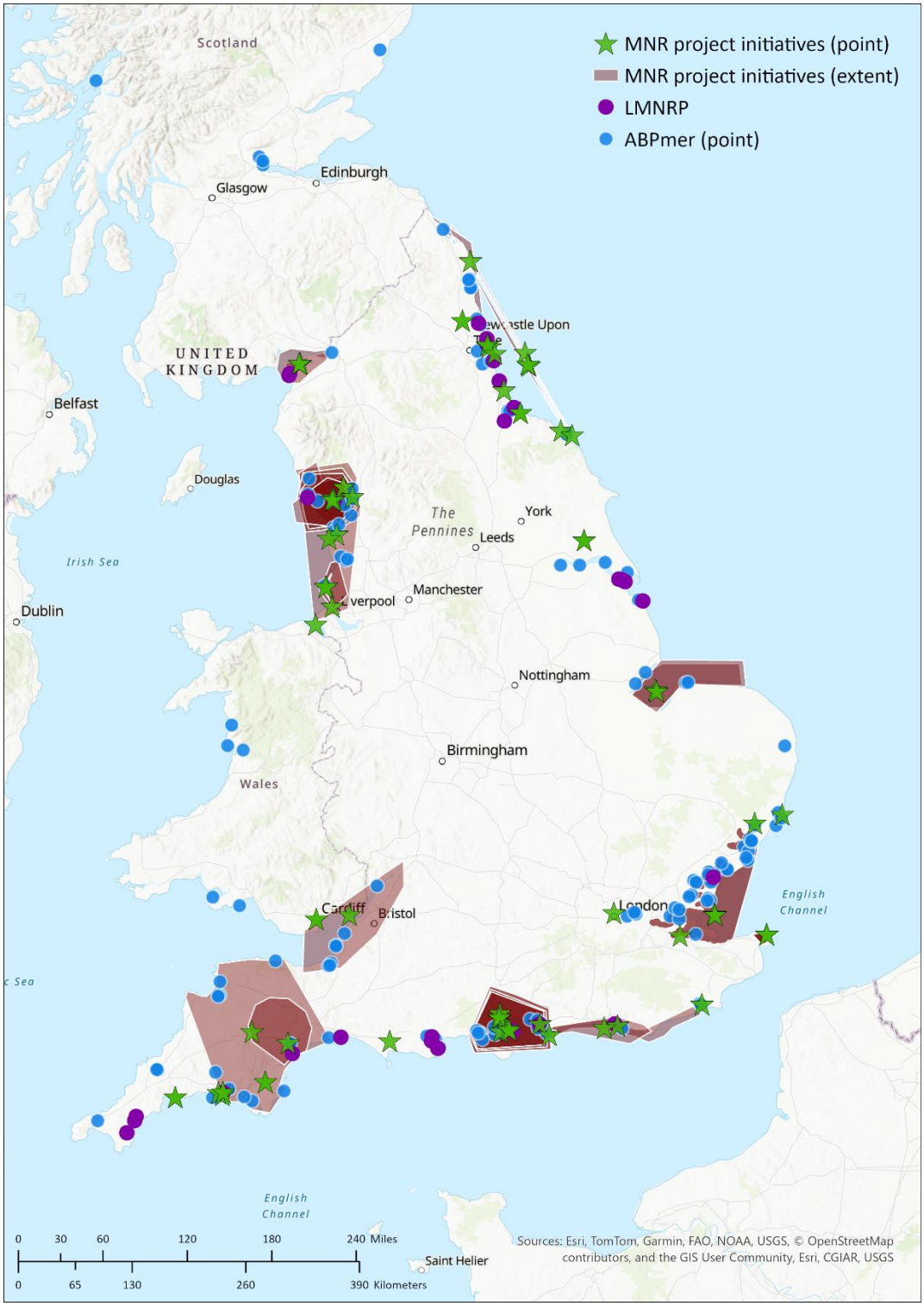

Figure 4. MNR project locations (ABPMer, 2023) combined with NE LMNRP data and MNR projects/initiatives identified by CEMPs across England.

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4.4.2 CEMPs Involvement in MNR

Through part 3 of the survey (Q13), CEMPs (*n*=30) provided information about the habitat focus and their level of involvement in each MNR initiative (*n*=73).

The main habitat focuses of the MNR projects identified by survey participants were 52% intertidal (*n*=64), 32% subtidal (*n*=39), only 6% offshore (*n*=7) and 10% 'other (*n*=13). Where 'other' habitat focus was cited (*n*=10) the involvement was more service-oriented than a project to restore habitats directly. Examples included the marine element of an LNRS, species-related work, place-based initiatives which may encompass MNR, source to sea/catchment work, or general updating of an existing strategy/plan for the area. Specific roles which CEMPs cited to support MNR, included initial strategic thinking (as highlighted above) and the value of informal connections between organisations and individuals (ID3), community engagement (*n*=2: ID32, ID21), independence/conflict resolution (*n*=1: ID9), continuity of an individual (*n*=2: ID17, ID32) and leading/bringing together partners.

Nearly half of the CEMPs (45% *n*=33) were 'significantly' involved, a third (30% *n*=22) 'involved' and a quarter 'somewhat' involved (25% *n*=10). The vast majority of MNR projects identified were currently underway (78%, *n*=58) with thirteen identified as 'future' projects and only three 'past' projects. The type of involvement varied from working to develop a strategic regional approach to marine restoration (e.g. supporting marine extensions to LNRS), awareness raising, project planning (e.g. for MCZs/MPAs, coastal squeeze on FCRIP/WEIF projects) and working to reduce pressures (e.g. from recreational impacts). Eleven (out of 41) CEMPs provided no information on MNR engagement which may indicate that a quarter of them are not actively engaged. This included other 'similar initiatives' (as opposed to CEMPs) which have a more specific focus

(i.e. EMS, FCERM)[5] or are servicing a larger cross-sector regional network. This result suggested that smaller place-based CEMPs are most actively involved in MNR.

Table 7 below shows the number of MNR projects identified by CEMPs which provided a basis for selection for interview.

Table 7 CEMPs and similar initiatives interviewed and MNR projects/initiatives identified by them (Q12)

Interview number	Name of partnership	Acronym	Project ID	Region	Number of MNR project/initiatives identified
1	Yorkshire Marine Nature Partnership	YMNP	41	NE	5 or more
2	Stronger Shores	SS	32	NE	1
3	Berwickshire and Northumberland Marine Partnership	BNNMP	3	NE	5 or more
4	Sefton Coast Partnership	SCP	27	NW	2
5	Morecambe Bay Partnership	MBP	21	NW	4
6	Solway Firth Partnership	SFP	30	NW	2
7	Coastal Partners (Eastern Solent)	CPES	5	S	0
8	Isle of Wight Estuaries Partnership	IOW	17	S	2
9	Dorset Coast Forum	DCF	9	S	1
10	Tamar Estuaries Consultative Forum	TECF	35	SW	4
11	Severn Estuary Partnership	SEP	28	SW	3

[5] Association of Severn Estuary Relevant Authorities, East Anglian Coastal Group, Coastal Partners (East Solent), Coastal Partnership East, Making Space for Sand, Durlston Marine Group, Irish Sea Network, NW Coastal Forum, Seascape Tyne to Tees Landscape Partnership, Suffolk Coastal Forum.

Interview number	Name of partnership	Acronym	Project ID	Region	Number of MNR project/initiatives identified
12	South Devon National Landscape Estuaries Partnership	SDNL	31	SW	5 or more
13	Deben Estuary	DE	7	SE	1
14	Sussex Marine and Coastal Forum	SMCF	34	SE	5 or more
15	The Wash and North Norfolk Marine Partnership	TWNNMP	39	SE	2
16	Medway Swale Estuary Partnership	MSEP	19	SE	2

4.4.3 MNR Engagement Experience

Through interviews with CEMPs (*n*=16) deeper insights were gained from 11 CEMPs who were significantly involved, about their MNR engagement experiences. The most involved CEMPs (in >3 MNR projects) tended to be involved in intertidal, subtidal and possibly offshore restoration, whereas the less involved (<3 MNR projects) tended to be involved in just one intertidal project.

Further explanation of CEMPs roles to support MNR were provided through interviews. The first example illustrates the role which CEMPs could fill in brokering opportunities between communities and the regulators who may share joint ambitions, from the perspective of a Local Authority:

> "We are lacking that professional or at least semi-professional group who can take community concerns, turn it into a funding application, apply to the likes of us or groups that we know of for funding, to then bring about the change the communities want…without that, we're just left at the role of regulator and member of the public, and that's a difficult one to reconcile" (ID31).

The following response illustrates how a CEMP considers MNR activity fits easily alongside their existing role:

> "I see opportunities growing, but I think a lot of the MNR stuff that we do already fits in with the way we manage and broker projects anyway. We can have an extra column in our project file saying it's an MNR project and I think that…we'll be able to get a quantifiable output…so there is an enormous amount of opportunity in the future" (ID35).

To explore this further, the ways in which CEMPs have engaged in MNR project design and delivery were further explored through interviews with eleven of the CEMPs who had been most significantly involved in MNR (as indicated in Table 7 above).

Further explanation of CEMPs roles to support MNR were provided through interviews which led to the following key findings:

- Established CEMPs support new program partnerships

Long-standing CEMPs can support the set-up, maintenance and legacy of (larger) programme or project partnerships, particularly helping to address the governance challenges.

- CEMPs bring partners together for MNR

CEMPs facilitate collaboration to instigate MNR projects/initiatives, identify funding sources and provide a platform to support their delivery.

- The public sector and NGOs could benefit more from utilising CEMPs

CEMPs support public bodies and NGOs to realise MNR ambitions. However, their potential support is limited due to the need for remuneration of their initial time and capacity, and to ensure their longer-term engagement (e.g. coordination of activities, monitoring success/failures). There are barriers around time/capacity when revenue cost is not made available.

- Finance availability and continuity

MNR potential and the value of stacking benefits through blended finance models may be constrained by the limitations associated with short-term project financing. Frustrations were expressed around the availability, accessibility and continuity of finance for MNR:

> "It's very frustrating when you see one partnership getting X and another partnership getting Y…with no real explanation as to how that works (e.g. the catchment partnership thing - there was a drive for coastal CaBA). It's just this thing of consistency - for a host authority it is very difficult. It does add to the strength and sustainability of a partnership if you know where there is core funding, I would look to see it being consistent and equitable" (ID41).

> "…in the past when we had European funding, we used to be able to deliver two, three, even four year projects, which would then give you a bit of breathing space. It takes a large amount of time to put together funding applications to develop your project costs…and then there's a lot of…things like monitoring and evaluation which [aren't] covered by the actual costs of the project. So there's a lot of things that are mopped up by our core funding which you can't get within the project funding" (IF30)

- Specific and unique roles provided by CEMPs for MNR

CEMPs can reach into communities for their engagement and improve socio-economic outcomes, garner opportunities from a holistic and long-term perspective, and encourage different people and organisations to work together. The following quotes provide some specific insights into the role CEMPs are providing to support MNR related projects and initiatives.

> "Wyre council recognised that community engagement in the coastal marine work is better done by trusted charities than it is by local authorities" (ID21).
>
> "I think it's important to have someone in place [with] a degree of time to be able to go out and have discussions and go to conferences and learn…discuss and network, to see [what] could be best for the partnership and the region" (ID32).
>
> "It's a really good example of everybody working together to support conservation - it's nobody kind of pushing something through and taking the lead, having a negative impact on everybody else, its everybody working towards that aim" (ID9).

In contrast to the above MNR engagement experience, survey participants who identified no MNR activity included ASERA (Severn), Blyth Estuary Partnership, Coastal Partners, Coastal Partnership East, Durlston Marine Watch, East Anglian Coastal Group, Irish Sea Network, Making Space for Sand, NW Coastal Forum, SE Nature Partnership, Seascapes Tyne to Tees Landscape Partnership, and Suffolk Coast Forum. Their comments about barriers to future MNR engagement (Q14) indicated they had other priorities, or it wasn't relevant [to their aims] (ID11, ID12, ID16), there was a lack of time (ID22) or no experience (ID26). No explanation was provided by six, mainly similar initiatives (ID2, ID4, ID5, ID6, ID23, ID33), implying it's not within their remit or aims.

To scale-up opportunities for future MNR engagement, the following two examples indicate how CEMPs could further support and develop collaborative governance and long-term commitment.

- Coastal Partners (East Solent) made a recommendation to gain legal advice on different delivery models to respond to climate change pressures and explore the value of establishing Teckal companies as centres of excellence around the country in a similar manner to a shared service partnership (which they operate for FCRIP purposes). This was considered preferable to substantial work being undertaken by consultants (ID5).
- Coastal Partners work with the Chichester Harbour Trust to purchase land for restoration (ID5) and with the Solent Seascapes project to link with industry and universities to develop longer-term relationships.

There is a wide variety of MNR experience reported by many CEMPs who have supported project design, development and engagement.

In summary, CEMPs could fill a bigger role in brokering opportunities between communities and regulators who may share joint ambitions around MNR, particularly where they have a long-standing reputation locally/regionally. They are supporting others to realise MNR ambitions through the set-up, maintenance and legacy of (larger) programme or project partnerships. However, their potential support is limited due to the need for remuneration for their initial time and capacity and to ensure their longer-term engagement (e.g. in coordination of activities and monitoring success/failures) and share experience. When revenue funding is not made available it makes it particularly challenging for CEMPs to develop 'shovel-ready' projects, as officers rarely have the capacity to speculate with their time. Larger NGOs such as the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), Blue Marine Foundation and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) have more flexibility within their larger organisations to invest time towards seeking larger grant funding, out-competing smaller charities and CEMPs. However, evidence showed that CEMPs experience of navigating multiple partners is useful for supporting the governance of MNR projects/initiatives and their delivery.

4.5 CEMP Characteristics for Supporting MNR

This section of the results responds to the following research question (RQ4):

What characteristics of CEMPs and similar initiatives present barriers and opportunities to supporting marine nature recovery (MNR)?

The findings presented in this section are sourced from existing datasets, participants response to part three of the survey (Q14) and the interviews. An overview of key findings is presented in Box 4 below.

Box 4 Key Findings

There are strong variations in the scale, type, status and function of CEMPs and similar initiatives, with common ground in the perception of barriers and opportunities for engagement in MNR as they recognise their valuable role in facilitation and coordination. Barriers to CEMP engagement in MNR are clearly around capacity and finance as many CEMP officers already work at full capacity.

4.5.1 Characteristics of CEMPs for MNR

The characteristics of CEMPs have been described above in terms of their origins and purpose (Section 2), the national landscape of CEMPs and their legal and governance structures (Section 4.2 and 4.3) A typology of CEMPs governance was identified through survey results (Section 4.3.1) based on their legal status, host bodies, operational structures, partner representation, funding partners, aims and effectiveness, balance of

core vs project funding, staffing and volunteers. These factors were considered to be ‘hard’ governance factors. Additional ‘soft’ governance factors were characterised and shown to be important for CEMP’s effectiveness: collaboration, skills, trust, capacity, understanding, funding, leadership, a track record and independence.

Based on the above evidence, key findings that are considered important to MNR engagement and delivery are considered in this section:

- Over half of the English coast has an active CEMP. They have and (increasingly) focus on marine as well as coastal and estuary interests.
- The national landscape of CEMPs across England suggests these long-term place-based arrangements of partners are suited to supporting and engaging in MNR project design and delivery. They have a track record of supporting sustainability and a legacy of engaging multiple partners.
- The governance typology shows that most of the CEMPs have voluntary status, but well-established operational governance. A small number have established charity/company status or formal partnership/shared service agreements which may have enabled them to attract higher levels of investment.
- CEMPs aims will typically involve supporting statutory bodies with decision-making and bridging links through consultations and community engagement.
- The existence of core/long-term service funding alongside project/short-term funding supports longevity which suits the needs of achieving MNR (i.e. partner and community buy-in).

Governance ‘soft’ factors are likely to be as (if not more) important than the ‘hard’ governance factors that make up the CEMP typology. Soft factors include the skills and knowledge of the individual CEMP officers, their leadership, facilitation and conflict resolution skills which support integration and develop trust between partners and communities. Longer-term and consistent financial support would increase capacity to build on these qualities and scale-up the effectiveness of CEMPs to support MNR, particularly to help initial scoping and project design if reimbursement of time is made available.

In summary, CEMPs believed that they could realise their full potential if supported with more core/service funding, especially through involvement in identifying and supporting restoration/MNR projects with LNRS underway. CEMPs are interested in supporting MNR and would be willing to strengthen governance if necessary - but are cautious of additional burdens & possible tensions. Fewer CEMPs consider their role as the lead for MNR delivery but would expect to play a key role in establishing & maintaining partnership working to support design and delivery. Other initiatives (e.g. FCERM partners) are well placed to share experience over how to scale-up investment potential.

4.5.2 Opportunities for MNR

Opportunities for more engagement in MNR would be welcomed by most CEMPs as they recognise their valuable role in facilitation and coordination, bringing partners and communities together (Section 3.2.1). The survey results indicated in Figure 5 below, show that over 60% of CEMPs would like to be more involved, 32% (*n*=13) significantly more involved in MNR projects/initiatives. Only 12% (*n*=5) said 'little or not at all'.

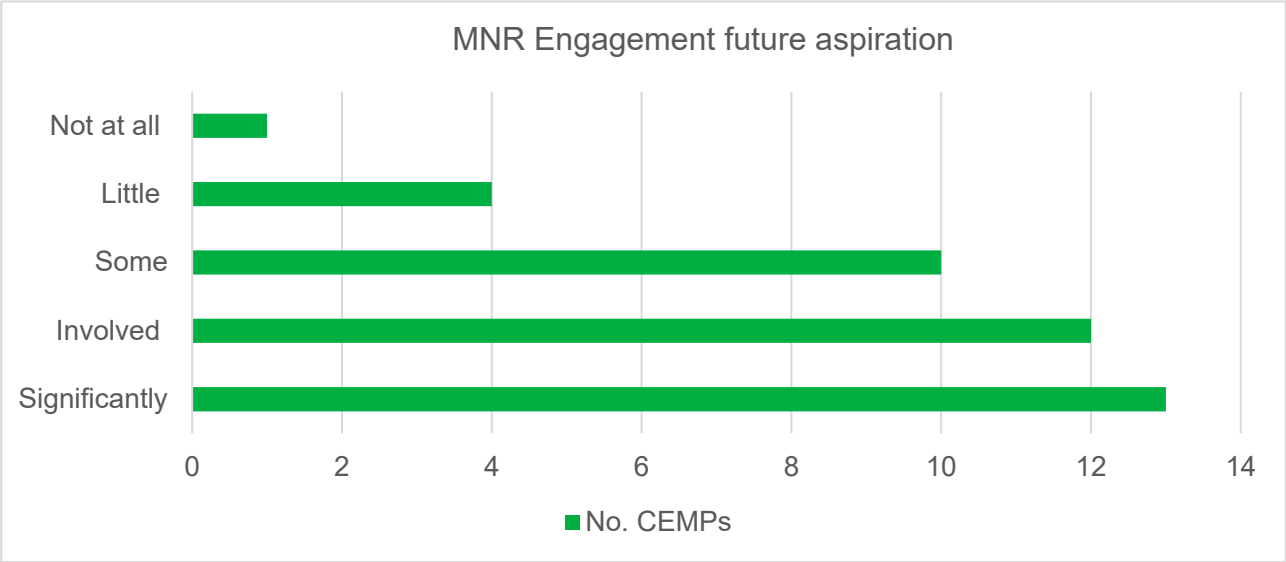

Figure 5. CEMPs interest in being more engaged in MNR projects/initiatives (Q13)

Interviews responses identified that there was a range of perceived value/opportunity associated with MNR projects/initiatives utilising CEMPs, many for their 'softer' governance factors. Specifically, 7 CEMPs recognised the facilitation role they offered as a potentially independent partner (e.g. ID35) and their involvement at a strategic level (ID3) as illustrated by Berwickshire and Northumberland Marine Partnership:

> "The strategic stuff bringing partners together is actually a really important bit for coastal recovery and we still do that so that even if we're not leading on it, we can provide the room and bring people together in a space where they all trust each other and have an interest in organising it. So, I think we do have an important role to play in that even if we never did anything practical ourselves" (ID35).

Interviewees commented on the scale of MNR opportunity (*n*=5 CEMPs) with the CEMP having a larger-scale, holistic, regional and cross-border approach in some cases (e.g. ID28, ID32). This observation is backed up by the MNR mapping which showed that the MNR projects/initiatives identified by CEMPs were often looking for strategic opportunities rather than delivering site-specific recovery solutions. An example was provided by the Solway Firth Partnership:

> “People really appreciate the opportunity to come together with their counterparts because they sometimes don't get very many opportunities to do that, especially, you know, the likes of Natural England and Nature Scot” (ID30).

However, CEMPs do not necessarily see themselves in a leadership role (*n*=4) but involved and supporting, as illustrated by the Severn Estuary Partnership:

> “I think we'd be keen to be involved…expanding the kind of areas that SEP is involved in, but I don't think we would look to lead - I think we'd be more of a supporting partner…facilitating discussion around potential sites or stakeholder consultation on those sites” (ID28).

There is interest in the potential role of CEMPs to harness opportunities for MNR through the planning process (for example via mitigation tariffs) particularly in relation to the recreational impacts associated with new housing development (ID27). There is a perception that opportunities may arise through landscape-scale initiatives such as marine extensions to LNR strategies (e.g. ID27) and biodiversity net gain:

> “Biodiversity net gain in marine environment, marine recovery, statutory plans, they're emerging left, right and centre. I do think there's a whole new suite of potentially very significant core funding opportunities” (ID17).

In response to the interview question about future roles in MNR, CEMPs (*n*=16) identified a high number of factors (*n*=164 references) which included:

- Working with government bodies (*n*=14) including NE (*n*=12), EA (*n*=9), MMO/IFCAs (*n*=8), LAs (*n*=8) and The Crown Estate (*n*=1).
- A role in marine extensions to LNR strategies (*n*=9 CEMPs)
- Attracting private investors such as water companies (*n*=8 CEMPs)
- Adaptation planning in relation to flooding and coastal erosion risk management (*n*=8) including supporting responsive, flexible and smaller-scale action, providing a platform to co-ordinate long-term investment
- Supporting the European Marine Site network (*n*=4)
- Working with NGOs, charities and voluntary groups (*n*=4)
- Research and knowledge co-ordination (*n*=4).
- Biodiversity Net Gain and Marine Net Gain (*n*=3)
- Supporting politically balanced, regional approaches (*n*=3).

CEMPs role was described as potentially leading (*n*=8), bringing partners together (*n*=6), facilitating (*n*=5) in particular to bring bottom-up and top-down approaches together (*n*=2), and participating (*n*=3). By way of example, the following quote is from a CEMP which is a charity and anticipates they could play a stronger lead role:

> “So, I think from our perspective we would play a leading role if we could see that the [restoration projects] were going to actually deliver some really solid outcomes, probably in the area which Morecambe Bay has highlighted as most important, around this recreational disturbance issue, which is massive. We can take funding from whoever and then distribute it to other organisations in the

> area, so we become a sort of a broker. That would involve a bit of a change to a setup and constitution, but that sort of leadership role where we're securing funding and then distributing it to those that are better placed to deliver, absolutely could be something that we would get involved with, definitely". (ID21)

CEMPs are bringing partners together and facilitating collaborative governance:

> "[There is an] enormous chasm between what goes on nationally and what goes on locally and very few means of communications between the two. One of the things we've been trying to do, is have shovel ready projects. Through workshops and things like that [we've] been looking into what marine nature recovery look like on [our] coastline, to try and get into that place, because there's nothing worse than…here we go there's a funding stream, you've got a month to apply and then two months to spend the money so everyone scrambles around and [then] we can't spend it anyway. It goes back to having people at the table that have been around for a long time. Different organisations do their own thing and actually we need more collaboration. So, trying to get into that space where we are collaborating and we can look at what kind of survey work is needed [would] help a lot of different organisations and ultimately help the environment" (ID41).

> "We've got connections to all the partners…where we've delivered local projects as well…we've already got all those links in place if anything needs to be delivered locally" (ID9).

CEMPs often have a reputation for building community engagement and trust:

> "I think as we going forward with nature recovery we've got to aim big, otherwise it's not going to work. They are also going to take a long time and we need to build up that trust with the local communities. Long term isn't politically long term, it isn't two years, it isn't five years. It's really properly long term that we've got to start thinking" (ID5).

> "Often the most challenging part about all these projects is the politics, the community politics…where there's conflict and contention about what should be done, particularly in the face of climate change and coastal erosion, coastal flooding, people get very nervous, very upset, very excited. They don't want change. And here we are all coming along doing projects, looking at that change. Some people might say it's wonderful, other people think it's awful and that, you know, the politics of a project can be underplayed - we'll deal with it as we go along - but actually, the politics of a coastal project really ought to be centre stage and the neutrality of a project is essential" (ID9).

In response to the interview question about future finance for MNR, CEMPs (*n*=14) identified the following issues.

- The need for investment longevity (*n*=5)
- Competition between charities for finance (*n*=5)
- Uncertainties around the role and responsibilities of private investors (ID17)

- Transparency and equity in the design of programmes (ID41)
- The possible role of conservation covenants and mitigation tariffs, particularly to offset recreation impacts (ID27).

> "We have to have a rolling program funding. If the government wants to deliver on this 25 year plan, we can't do it going for funding bids, which are large. And then they say, you've got to deliver. You've got to spend £2 million in the next two years. It's just not going to happen. What we really need is an investment adaptation plan that takes that long term view with adaptive pathways and certain triggers that everyone buys into – that then, the six-year programme of FCERM aligns to (ID5).

> "The forum could be a solution to this problem…the duplication of effort that there might be amongst organizations either doing extremely similar projects or, you know, going for the same funding pots…actually the forum could help alleviate those issues" (ID34).

There was recognition of the limitations of CEMPs with informal governance in leading MNR:

> "In many ways, the work of the partnership is to bring all those relevant people together to help deliver the project…but it depends on the nature of the funding. If it's for charities we can't lead. (ID19).

Further exploration of future finance options for MNR and the role of CEMPs is provided in the background research report (Pryor, A. and Benson, N., 2024).

Evidence from the mapping, survey and interviews therefore showed that CEMPs could particularly support the scaling-up of MNR opportunities due to their holistic, regional, cross-border and cross-sector approach. Whilst most CEMPs currently consider their role as being involved and supporting, they could take a stronger leadership role given adequate capacity and legal accountability. This could be provided through charity status or the legal status of a host body/partner. Many are aware of new opportunities through the planning process, LNRS, private investment, adaptation planning and BNG. There is an appetite to collaborate and share pooled knowledge for the generation of 'shovel-ready' projects so that when funding opportunities arise there is less competition (e.g. between charities) and a longer-term approach is taken towards investment. This will also enable the CEMP and partners to build trust with and amongst coastal communities. Future finance for MNR needs to be multi-year and longer term rather than annual, with more transparency and equity to encourage collaboration rather than competition and to ensure private finance (when available) will be efficiently handled.

4.5.3 Barriers for MNR

The main perceived barrier was around funding/finance (n=20) and the process for gaining permissions/licences (n=11). Skills was identified as 'somewhat' a barrier (n=16). Access to shared knowledge and expertise was not considered to be a major barrier and the

identification of opportunities were considered to be the least barrier (*n*=13) followed by access to knowledge (*n*=13) and partner buy-in (*n*=10). These results are shown in further detail in Figure 6 below, where six types of barrier were rated for their relevance.

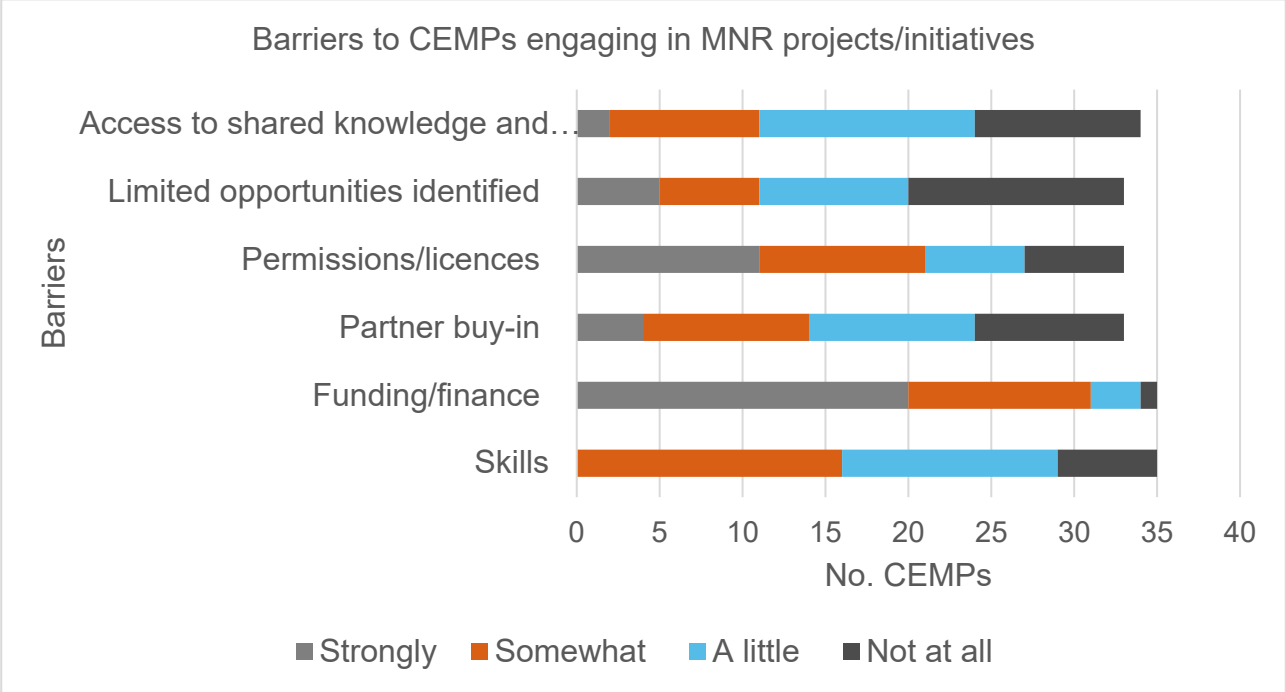

Figure 6. CEMPs and similar initiatives perceived barriers to engaging in MNR (Q14)

There appeared to be a tension around whether it was appropriate or not for the CEMP to seek to take a more active leadership or facilitation role. However, the main explanations were around the lack of staff time and resources, plus compatibility with the CEMPs broad aims and the potential leadership of their partner(s) and whether there was a mandate for the CEMP to take a strong lead role – facilitation was considered more certain.

Visualisation of the interview results reinforced how finance issues are the largest barrier (n=15 CEMPs, 62 references). These issues included time/capacity and cash-flow, the short-term nature of financing, its availability, the admin/paperwork and hosting.

> "If I were full time or there was more of me, we could do more, I think, and probably do it better as well and at greater depth than I'm able to achieve" (ID3).
>
> "Funding… needs to be longer term. If it's short term, that then acts as a massive disincentive to potentially putting the time in to apply" (ID27).
>
> "No time to then do all the paperwork and processes that they need us to do. So there's this kind of mismatch between grants and revenue, which is causing councils across the country, particularly the smaller ones like us, all kinds of problems" (ID17).

Licencing bureaucracy was described by 5 CEMPs in the interviews. The onerous process, amount of time it takes and the cost are barriers, especially if the applicant isn't a regulator. However, it is hoped that the MMO (and The Crown Estate) are learning about the needs for MNR, especially small-scale projects that help to build towards a larger contribution.

Risk management is a barrier to support from CEMP's host authority from a financial perspective (ID41, ID9) especially if leading a large project (ID28) with cash-flow inconsistencies (ID9). Many CEMPs are small organisations with staff on short-term contracts, limited succession planning (ID30) and high staff turnover (ID39).

The lack of join-up was also identified as a barrier in relation to alignment with other policy areas such as MPAs and LNRS (ID35), joining up academic research (ID7), a lack of join-up between what goes on nationally and locally (ID3), and a lack of guidance on the stacking of benefits and blending funding e.g. for compensation, nitrate removal and carbon sequestration (ID5). Other barriers were identified which are less relevant to the value of CEMPs supporting MNR, but wider context such as water quality (ID31, ID19) and recreational disturbance (ID21, ID27).

In summary, the barriers to CEMP engagement in MNR were clearly around the availability of finance, where many CEMP officers are already working at (or over) capacity, so not available to work on speculative activities. For those that had been involved, the slow process of gaining permission/licences was identified as a strong barrier to future engagement. Other barriers identified were having the right skills (in-house), but access to shared knowledge and expertise was less of a barrier and an asset the CEMPs could offer. There is a divergence of opinion on whether it is within CEMPs remit to lead on MNR or whether they are better placed to support and act as an independent partner facilitating development. In some cases, MNR would need to fit with their existing (charitable) aims which are mainly focused on sustainability and supporting collaborative governance (see RS1). For most CEMPs, it seems that the scale of their future engagement in MNR is dependent upon staff capacity/expertise (core funding, recruitment opportunity) and the ability to manage risk around cash-flow variability.

4.6 Funding for Future MNR Initiatives

This section of the results responds to the following research question (RQ5):

What experience and opportunity exists to broaden the funding base to support MNR projects and what (if any) role could CEMPs support? An overview of key findings is presented in Box 5 below.

Box 5 Key Findings

For MNR project and programme development, the initial conversations required to develop plans and convene partners are not funded. Social impact and nature recovery investment mechanisms are possible future sources of finance to support this. CEMPs and similar initiatives are well placed to function as the connectors between social impact and nature recovery investment. Further research is needed to uncover the social impact potential of CEMP networks and potential new social impact investors. A blended finance model can be developed that supports a pathway from inception to completion for MNR projects and programmes.

Coordination of and collaboration between partners for MNR project development and delivery is critical to achieving robust, sustainable and successful MNR projects that have the full support from a multiplicity of actors including stakeholders and local communities. This is explored in some depth in the background report (Pryor, A., and Benson, N., 2024). The service of supporting initial conversations, strategically developing plans and convening potential partners is currently not financially supported. CEMPs can provide this service through using their core (unrestricted) funding to ‘speculate’ with partners which can result in project co-development and ultimately securing grant funding. However, core funding is decreasing with more CEMPs relying on project (restricted) funding limiting their capacity to ‘speculate’. Once funded, project delivery partnerships often expect the CEMP to provide their convening services and knowledge in-kind, reflecting that the value of their individual or organisational knowledge, networks and expertise is not recognised nor remunerated. This limited capacity to speculate with their time or be adequately remunerated for convening support, can result in the CEMP being in direct competition with larger, better resourced organisations who have less knowledge of local context.

Finance mechanisms in both the social impact and nature recovery investment spaces are still at reasonably early stages of development. Both require hard governance elements that allow the private sector, nonprofits and public bodies to sit in the same space and build investment programmes, usually characterised by long-term lending arrangements and front-end grant funding elements. Governance, policy and legal arrangements are required to construct the space where these parties can come together in a fiscally responsible way. Conceptualising the building blocks of appropriate blended finance options, consultation with likely investors, the expertise and likely costs required, need to be further scoped out in tandem with the mapping of measurable outcomes at both the national and local scale. Each of these elements will require modelling and monitoring investment impact and for instance, establishing maintenance covenants between parties over time.

Currently, funding streams are siloed within and between socio-economic and environmental funding and investment streams, with public funding restricted through short term funding and delivery timescales (within a financial year) which limits the capacity to recruit and retain staff and expertise. Long term, multi-year public funding programmes that support a pathway from inception to completion can support a CEMP to offer their 'core' services that are needed to build an investible MNR project partnership.

From the results of the workshop, CEMPs and similar partnerships/initiatives have a clear role in MNR delivery as a convenor – a neutral, honest broker role – or coordinator of an MNR project partnership, maximising their soft governance attributes: collaboration, skills, trust, capacity, understanding, funding, leadership, a track record and independence. CEMPs and similar initiatives are currently limited in offering a leading role due to their restricted staff capacity, suitable funding support and for some their governance arrangements. Hard governance elements of an MNR project (e.g. fiscal responsibility) would have to be undertaken by a host organisation or project partner who can manage large, complex investment models and the fiscal accountability and risk associated over long periods of time.

CEMPs and similar initiatives could be the connectors between social impact and nature recovery investment. Whilst both areas are still emerging, they are not currently connected with social impact focusing on people focused climate resilience and nature recovery focused on specific species and habitat restoration. These two outcomes are interlinked and must be brought together to maximise impact across socio-economic and environmental challenges.

Further research is needed to uncover the social impact potential of CEMP networks and potential new social impact partners/investors locally, regionally and nationally and how they can be brought into an MNR project partnership to ensure the outcomes benefit both people and nature inclusively. A blended finance model can be developed that supports a pathway from inception to completion for MNR projects which supports the core service a CEMP can provide and maximises their knowledge, networks and expertise whilst remunerating for and building their capacity.

4.7 Limitations of the research

Based on the project methodology described in Section 3, the findings should be considered alongside the limitations identified here.

4.7.1 Research participants

The audience engaged for the research was focused on CEMP officers, managers, host bodies and partners who participated in the survey, with approximately a third then invited to interview and all invited to the workshop. Invitation to participate in the research

stemmed from the CPN contact database of approximately 55 CEMPs and 30 similar initiatives. This approach was verified by NE and the EAG, but to some extent narrowed the potential range of partnership initiatives which could have been invited to participate i.e. more project/short-term partnership initiatives around MNR. However, this was a deliberate approach to the research to focus on gaining deeper understanding of how existing (longer-term and established) CEMPs were interacting with MNR projects/initiatives and could support it further in the future.

4.7.2 Mapping

Of the CEMPs who responded to the survey, approximately 50% provided spatial data to map the geographical extent of their coverage. Other initiatives were not included in the mapping of extent, as the aim was to show the geographical extent of established CEMPs. Therefore, any other spatial data provided through the mapping tool by participants (for example, MCZs) was removed. Further work on the mapping is needed to generate a comprehensive picture and heat-map nationally, however the work to date does already indicate some ‘hot-spots’ of active partnerships operating at different scales.

4.7.3 Survey

Results from other ‘similar initiatives’ has skewed some results especially in terms of partner finance from EA (and NE) for FCRIP, Nature Boost, Heritage Lottery etc., where project or programme partnerships are in receipt of much higher levels of grant-aid from Defra than any individual CEMP. Whilst quantitative data was included from a small number of these types of partnerships, the distinction between CEMPs and similar initiatives/project partnerships was made clear in the description of results of the interviews. This highlighted the fact that true core funding should enable a partnership to convene around any issue over a longer timeframe than specified by any individual funding partner or programme. Observations from ‘similar initiatives’ provided different perspectives especially on governance options, partner representation and funding.

4.7.4 Interviews

All interviews were conducted online rather than in person and collectively rather than individually, (one per partnership, except for ID31 due to availability constraints). This meant that there was a group conversation rather than 1-1 with the lead CEMP officer. Some hesitation was observed by the lead officer or a manager during a small number of interviews, especially over the role of the individual or funding issues. For example, the performance of operational governance structures where the CEMP is hosted by a major funding partner, or the potential benefits of gaining independent status, were sensitive areas to discuss as a group. The advantage of this approach was to sample a wider range of perspectives from each CEMP than would have been achieved if only one individual (for example, the lead officer) had been interviewed.

4.7.5 MNR finance expertise

Three independent researchers were sub-contracted to undertake desk-based research for examples of international MNR initiatives, blue finance and social impact investment. Their reports informed the third background research report which was entirely based on their collective knowledge from literature reviews, and our preliminary research findings from surveys, interviews and the workshop. The project budget and timeline couldn't support further exploration of the results from their perspective, which could give deeper insights into barriers and opportunities for CEMPs and MNR project financing. However, the expertise, research and workshop findings provide a good frame through which we can understand CEMPs current and future potential for accessing finance for MNR and a foundation for further research and capacity building.

4.7.6 Workshop

The workshop was conducted online and over half a day, which presented limitations around being able to share the research findings to date before or during the workshop. This meant there was a lot of information for participants to receive just before they entered a group discussion to look at future options for MNR finance. However, the good level of participation in the workshop was a useful measure of the appetite and skills available within CEMPs for MNR.

Hastings (Photo credit: Amy Pryor)

5 Discussion and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

Natural England's aims from this research were to explore coastal partnerships' ability to support the delivery of emerging policy mechanisms for marine nature recovery. The aims were addressed through two objectives:

1 To characterise the existing national landscape of the coastal partnerships in England, including relevant legal and governance structures.

2 To explore how these different legal and governance structures relate to efficiency, effectiveness, equity, and legitimacy of coastal partnerships (CEMPs) and how they enable or prohibit their capacity to support the delivery of nature recovery.

The evidence generated by the research aims to inform emerging areas of marine policy, in particular generating important insights relating to:

- How effective CEMPs might be configured/enabled to support the efficient delivery of MNR under new funding streams (e.g. Marine Net Gain, Marine Recovery Fund).
- The role of CEMPs in supporting strategic planning for MNR and how it connects to coastal and upstream planning.
- The wider value of CEMPs in facilitating MNR and the economic case for supporting them.

The following sections bring together the findings from the research questions described in Section 4 above. Section 5.2 discusses the findings on CEMP coverage, legal and governance characteristics. Section 5.3 to 5.7 then draw on the findings of the survey, interviews and workshop to look further at four qualities which may affect the ability of CEMPs to support MNR: their effectiveness, efficiency, legitimacy and equity. For each quality, key components are discussed and summarised in Section 5.8.

5.2 CEMP coverage, legal and governance characteristics Objective 1 of the research

Objective 1

Characterise the existing national landscape of the coastal partnerships in England, including relevant legal and governance structures.

was addressed through the following questions:

- To what extent is the English coast and marine landscape covered by Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships (CEMPs) and similar initiatives? (RQ1).
- What legal and governance structures are in place for existing CEMPs? (RQ2).

CEMPs exist in a context of increasing recognition that partnership working is valuable. However, there has been little published information about their location and extent across the national landscape, or their legal and governance structures. Background literature suggests that they are supporting collaborative governance and public participation in decision-making, filling a ‘missing middle’ governance gap, plus addressing a ‘gap in the overlap’ in management across land and sea. Their place-based scale has emerged from the geography of coastal ecosystems and coastal communities. They engage stakeholders across public administration boundaries, working with the private sector and community interests to build place-attachment which supports sustainable management of coastal and marine resources.

Many CEMPs have 30 years of practical experience across over 50 locations, pursuing integrated approaches and engagement opportunities. Many were ‘pump-primed’ by English Nature in the 1990s but have largely emerged from the ‘bottom-up’ and have been sustained by local authorities, public agencies, local ports/harbours and a wide range of other partners. They are all voluntary, non-statutory initiatives but many are hosted by public bodies (e.g. Local Authorities) or have established independent status (e.g. as a charity).

Mapping of CEMPs around the UK coast shows that most of the English coast has an active CEMP in situ or nearby, and approximately half of them have now provided data about the geographical extent of their operation. Three quarters of CEMPs focus on the coastal and estuary environment but increasingly recognize the value they can add by looking further into the marine environment. This is especially important at a time when regional marine plans are being refreshed and new development is being planned offshore, which will connect to onshore demand through coastal communities.

Many CEMPs have been operating for two or three decades, with similar initiatives coming and going. The most recent are grant-aided programs by Defra for flood and coastal erosion risk management and resilience planning, and landscape/seascape nature recovery projects. Together, the national landscape of CEMPs and similar initiatives indicates that investment in co-creation and place-based governance will be rewarded with better decision-making towards sustainability. However, not enough is known about the efficiency and effectiveness of CEMPs. It was therefore suggested that deeper knowledge of their legal and governance structures would be useful.

Over half of CEMPs have no formal status but many have informal agreements between partners that seem adequate to meet their aims. A third have independent charity or company status, but there were no limited partnerships, social enterprises or co-operatives identified. Partnership staff are often hosted by a legally accountable body (for example, Local Authorities, port/harbour authority) who provide support in-kind. Due to the reduction in funding from public sector partners over the past 10-15 years, approximately one-third of existing CEMPs have or are considering a change in their legal/governance status

which could lever in additional finance. Typically, they are looking at different types of charity[6] status as a basis from which there may be more options to attract project funding. However, there is a risk of trade-offs if project deliverables alter the focus of CEMPs away from their (core funded) support to facilitate collaboration between key (statutory) decision-making bodies – one of the original aims they were set up to achieve. Therefore, the aims of CEMPs may need to be revised alongside any change in governance status.

The range of partners represented in any individual CEMP varies between two and >24, some with hundreds of members. Most CEMPs are led informally by public sector partners with high representation from biodiversity conservation NGOs, the Environment Agency, Natural England and Local Authorities. Lower representation is evident from marine industry, commercial/recreational fisheries, Parish/Town Councils, the Marine Management Organisation and heritage interests. However, there is huge diversity, with some more strongly led by harbour authorities and the active involvement of community/user groups.

The range of funding sources presents a similar but not identical pattern to partner representation. There doesn't appear to be much correlation between representation and governance status, although marine industry was most strongly represented where company/charity status existed or the host was a port/harbour authority. There does appear to be some link between partner representation and income where the LAs are core funders and consistently well represented. A distinction is made between core/long-term service (unrestricted) finance and project/short term (restricted) finance which is attached to more specific deliverables. Overall, financial support mainly comes from Local Authorities, the EA, NE and ports/harbours. The MMO is well represented on many CEMPs but is a weak funding partner. Retaining a good balance of core and project funding is important to avoid being pushed in any single direction, retaining independence/neutrality and contributing to the costs of hosting and maintaining a good range of funding partners. It is not yet clear whether other programme initiatives in receipt of large multi-year grants for flood/coastal erosion risk management, seascape or nature recovery operating on a partnership basis, will be sustained in the longer-term.

The average number of people employed in CEMPs is around four FTE, but this varies from none with entirely voluntary partnerships, through to over 100 for grant-aided programmes. Staffing and volunteers are largely influenced by the balance of core and project funding described above. Many benefits were cited over the skills and knowledge of individual CEMP officers, with a pressing need for legacy planning in some locations. Their leadership, facilitation and conflict resolution skills support collaborative governance, integrated management and participation in decision-making. The equivalent number of volunteers to paid employees suggests funding partners and the partnerships are offering good value for money and returns on investment.

[6] CIC = Community Interest Company. CIO = Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

Overall, CEMPs feel their aims are being achieved with approved plans or strategies, action plans, improved communication, excellent attendance at events, good balanced representation, dependable and supportive members and a feeling that they reduce the net cost of coastal management to the partner authorities. Most of the limitations identified could be overcome through longer-term consistent funding which might be achieved by bringing a few key partners into core/unrestricted financing – namely the MMO, water companies and The Crown Estate (which were completely absent from partner representation but own most of the foreshore and seabed). However, there is not (yet) any standard metric for CEMPs to monitor progress/performance across England, and this may restrict the ability of some (potential) partners to invest.

5.3 Key components of CEMPs for MNR

Objective 2 of the research was addressed through the following questions

- Where are marine nature recovery projects and how do they utilise CEMPs and similar initiatives? (RQ3).
- What characteristics of CEMPs and similar initiatives present barriers and opportunities to supporting marine nature recovery (MNR)? (RQ4).

CEMPs involvement in MNR was demonstrated by mapping their engagement experience. The findings indicated how CEMPs could fill a larger role in brokering opportunities between communities and regulators, particularly where they have a long-standing reputation locally/regionally.

CEMP characteristics which could present barriers and opportunities to supporting MNR included ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ governance approaches:

- ‘Hard’ governance factors included legal status, host bodies, operational structures, partner representation, funding partners, aims and effectiveness, balance of core vs project funding, staffing and volunteers.
- ‘Soft’ governance factors (shown to be important for CEMP’s effectiveness): collaboration, skills, trust, capacity, understanding, funding, leadership, a track record and independence.

Many (if not all) of the above CEMP characteristics are likely to be important for supporting MNR, as shown by the MNR engagement experience to date. In terms of ‘hard’ governance factors, the lack of legal or formal status can limit CEMPs ability to lead and deliver larger MNR initiatives. However, the ‘soft’ governance factors were identified as very valuable for bringing partners together in a trusted and collaborative manner. Leadership was identified as important quality to help identify potential MNR opportunities. Limitations on their capacity (due to reductions in core funding) and cash-flow or formal/legal hosting ability, tend to limit their potential to do more, including scaling-up from previous MNR experience.

CEMPs are already actively involved through supporting new programme partnerships and bringing partners together. They offer place-based partnerships that have existed for at least half of the English coastline for up to three decades, with a track record of supporting sustainability and a legacy of engaging multiple partners. Whilst most have no legal status, they have well established operational governance practices which are working well to fulfil their aims. However, those with more formal/legal status or supportive host bodies willing to take the financial risk, were seen to have the ability to attract higher levels of investment. Based on their experiences, it seems that the public sector and NGOs could benefit more from utilising CEMPs, especially if there was more finance availability and continuity.

Four 'quality criteria' from Adgar *et.al*, 2005 (based on the study of successful adaptation to climate change across scales) were framed for further discussion, to explore how CEMPs efficiency, effectiveness, legitimacy and equity may impact their ability to support MNR. The following discussion answers the final Research Question (RQ6):

- What trends can be identified between CEMPs legal and governance structures (RQ2) and their ability to pioneer and support delivery of MNR projects (RQ3)?

The 'four criteria' were elaborated further based on work that CPN had undertaken for the EA through the 3Cs National Framework commission. The following 'critical components' were considered relevant:

- Clear goals and objectives
- Collaborative governance
- Data-driven approaches
- Resource optimization
- Stakeholder engagement
- Adaptability and innovation
- Accountability and transparency
- Leadership.

These critical components were factored into the definition and analysis of efficiency, effectiveness, legitimacy and equity for this research. The following sections address the four criteria using these critical components as a guide to support definition and analysis. For each of the four criteria the current position is given, followed by opportunities identified to harness the positive features of CEMPs and how to address the gaps to help deliver MNR. For each of the four quality criteria discussed below, the following sections provide:

- Definition of the term based on the critical components above.
- Current position based on the survey, mapping, interviews and workshop findings including example quotes from interviewees (see Table 4 for participant ID).
- Opportunities (to harness positive features of existing CEMPs)

- Needs (to address the gaps to help deliver)
- Recommendations

5.4 Efficiency

Definition

Efficiency in relation to climate change adaptation (Adger *et.al*, 2005) entails costs and benefits in economic terms but also public good elements such as social, ecological and aesthetic values. For MNR investment, based on the critical components outlined above (Section 5.3), efficiency involves clarity of purpose with clear goals and objectives, operational processes that lead to resource optimization (staff, time and finances) and adaptable, innovative leadership. It will involve shared decision-making and shared resources such as data to optimise resource allocation. Engaging the right stakeholders at the right time will lead to more efficient management, planning and governance. These aspects of efficiency were demonstrated by the research findings highlighted below. To this are added observations on how CEMPs/MNR projects/initiatives can identify opportunities to harness the positive features and address the gaps to help deliver.

Current position

The existence of clear goals and objectives was identified through most CEMPs indicating their aims (survey Q10a) being around sustainability (*n*=15), conservation (*n*=11), resilience/recovery (*n*=7), flood/coastal erosion risk management (*n*=5) and education/citizen science (*n*=3). This is a generalisation of the way participants described their aims which are diverse and individual, based on the way they have evolved from the 'bottom-up' to serve the needs of the locality. The average age of CEMPs was 14yrs but they range from 1-45 years old. Over half of the survey participants said that the aims had been 'achieved to a high degree' (*n*=10) or 'somewhat achieved' (*n*=12) and a third (*n*=15) 'mostly achieved' with only a few (*n*=3) 'not very much achieved' and none saying 'not achieved at all' due to being less than a year old. Many identified approved plans or strategies, action plans, improved communication, excellent attendance, good balanced representation, dependable and supportive members and reducing the net cost to the partner authorities. The established status of CEMPs, mostly achieving their aims and with experience of forward planning bringing different interests together, suggests they provide a sound basis for supporting MNR policy delivery.

However, resource optimization is an issue. The survey findings on staffing and volunteers showed that one third of the CEMPs and similar initiatives employ 1 to 3 FTE staff, but a quarter employ no staff with only a fifth employing more than 5 FTE. The number of volunteers is similar to paid employees, which suggests funding partners and the partnerships are offering good value for money and returns on investment. However, continuity of employment and therefore service provision and legacy planning is an issue for many CEMPs, who often operate at a fairly high level of risk. Five CEMPs referred to

value for money as a key issue around core versus project funding, where the availability of core funding has decreased from the public sector and increased reliance on project funding, which resulted in less ability to speculate with their time. This is important, as it limits the potential of CEMPs to utilise their knowledge of local networks and apply their trusted, independent role to bring together partners and communities towards MNR aims.

> "We are massively good value for money. So, getting a small amount of core funding can give really big dividends when it comes to delivery on the ground. I personally believe that particularly charities of… small to medium size…around that sort of half-£1 million turnover type size, [require] just a bit of stability even if it's… 60, 70 grand a year, that's all I'm talking about." (ID21)

CEMPs operational structures were shown to be mainly informal supported by ToR and MoU. This brings adaptability alongside accountability and transparency, with most CEMPs reporting satisfaction with these informal arrangements. However, it was recognised that there could be benefits to having more formal governance, particularly for investment purposes and to ease limitations on cash flow availability and encourage more awareness raising and brokering of potential MNR projects.

Opportunities (to harness positive features)

CEMPs future role in MNR was described by CEMPs as potentially leading (*n*=8), bringing partners together (*n*=6), facilitating (*n*=5), participating (*n*=3) and in particular to bring bottom-up and top-down approaches together (*n*=2). CEMPs often have a reputation for building community engagement and trust. Their characteristics for MNR support included the design of new programme partnerships, bringing partners together, exploring finance availability and continuity, and strategic thinking combined with their local networking capacity. CEMPs can reach into communities for their engagement, garner opportunities from a holistic and long-term perspective, and encourage different people and organisations to work together. To scale-up opportunities for future MNR engagement, CEMPs could further support and develop collaborative governance and long-term commitment.

> "A small amount of core funding can give stability by building a jigsaw of funding opportunities and pay big dividends" (ID21).

Needs (to address the gaps to help deliver)

Where frustrations existed around achieving aims, the reasons given were related to partner representation and funding, in particular the absence of key partners such as water companies, the MMO and The Crown Estate. There are also limitations around information sharing (ID15), or changes in personnel and lack of available resource/time or continuity of staff (ID14, ID32, ID39). To optimize resource allocation, the development of a standard metric for CEMPs to monitor progress/performance, may help to demonstrate efficiency.

> "[The CEMP] brings us massive efficiencies, lots of buy in, because 75% of us live and work in our community that we represent. I just think that it's fabulous model" (ID5).

Recommendations

The following recommendations were identified around the efficiency of CEMPs to support MNR: through clarity of their goals and objectives; optimising resources; encouraging their leadership; more knowledge and data sharing; and utilising the accountability and transparency generated by their soft governance qualities:

- Develop metrics to evidence the value of 'soft' governance qualities (e.g. collaboration, skills, trust, capacity, understanding, funding, leadership, a track record and independence) with the ability to monitor the efficiency of CEMPs on this basis.
- Promote greater understanding and the exchange of experience in operational processes which support resource optimization (staff, time and finances). There is huge diversity of experience to share between CEMPs and with NE.
- Encourage public sector partners to provide longer-term core finance to support stability, maximising the utility of the soft-governance qualities of CEMPs.
- To help scale-up, facilitate shared decision-making and resources such as data to improve efficiency, particularly between CEMPs in the same region.

5.5 Effectiveness

Definition

The above observations around efficiency are likely to increase CEMPs effectiveness – there is a close relationship between these two quality criteria. However, effectiveness will also involve critical components around collaborative governance which are highlighted here.

Current position

The 'soft' governance ability of CEMPs to support collaboration, offer knowledge and facilitation skills, and promote trust and understanding came through strongly in the results. However, CEMPs effectiveness is compromised by their need for greater stability in core service funding. Time spent on short-term grant applications, short-term staff recruitment, retention and legacy issues and uncertainty over cash flow limit their ability to invest in exploring collaborative opportunities.

> "Our collaborations mean that if we don't know the answers, we definitely know who to ask to get the right answers" (ID30)

They need the capacity to develop leadership and a track record. The individual role and skills of the CEMP officer is key to the building of trust between partners and hosting a place-based local knowledge hub.

To maximise the effectiveness of CEMPs to support MNR, it is necessary to understand the limitations and opportunities associated with, for example, a Local Authority host, charitable objects etc., when considering project design and delivery. This is currently a key factor in understanding the capacity for CEMPs to support future MNR. With over half of the CEMPs hosted by a Local Authority, tendering and procurement rules and expectations around CEMPs potential role need to be well understood. Much of the energy/inspiration behind CEMPs growth/innovation is down to the individuals that drive it - from the staff to the chair/leaders. The findings of this research around 'soft' governance, suggest that more recognition of the role of individuals - their trusted, neutral, strategic and visionary position which support collaborative governance - would help to build capacity for MNR delivery.

Opportunities

The enabling capacity of diverse partners and the commitment of many individuals, including dedicated and passionate CEMPs, builds up strong local knowledge networks which could be further utilised for MNR. Most CEMP officers are aware of the new and emergent legal and policy context which is leading to MNR. Many are engaging in discussions over marine extensions to LNRS. To maximise benefits from the 'soft' governance factors offered by CEMPs, it would be prudent to invite partnership staff/chairs to early meetings about MNR initiatives. Their convening value is likely to increase the effectiveness of formative MNR project/partnerships as the local decision-makers, stakeholders/users are likely to be well known to CEMP staff. As well as ensuring CEMPs are around the table to help establish effective MNR projects/partnerships, there is an opportunity for MNR investment to support core service and 'soft' governance mechanisms that will be useful for the long-term successful delivery of MNR.

> "So much of our funding is short term rather than longer term…you feel that you're not in a very sustainable organisation if you're constantly chasing very short-term funding that has to be spent by the end of the financial year,…what I'm aiming for is being able to make sure that the staff are in sustainable posts" (ID30).

Needs

Frustrations were expressed around the availability, accessibility and continuity of finance for MNR. The potential and the value of stacking benefits through blended funding may be constrained by the limitations associated with short-term project financing. A recurring theme from many of the interviews was the need to increase stability of the core services provided by partnerships, which would make them more efficient. The heavier reliance on project reduces effectiveness as time is lost and capacity limited by the administration around short-term projects. It causes instability and inconsistency of staff provision due to reliance on short term contracts. Efficiencies could be gained through the provision of a more secure 'core' staff which would support many of the 'soft' governance factors identified as important drivers of efficiency and effectiveness.

> "With more core and reliable funding, you would have a quantum improvement in terms of the outputs and your ability to demonstrate progress against them. In the meantime, what we can do is knee-jerk, sticking-aid projects… They need to have the confidence that we can keep these projects going. And we can't do that at the moment" (ID31).

Recommendations

The following recommendations were identified around the effectiveness of CEMPs, with particular emphasis on how they can facilitate collaborative governance to support MNR:

- Ensure CEMPs are early 'around the table' in the design of MNR projects/initiatives
- Build capacity for CEMPs role in MNR by evidencing the value of CEMP's soft governance qualities.
- Increase stability by enhancing core service provision and maintaining project/grant income.
- Maximise learning between CEMPs and similar initiatives where larger-scale programme funding for MNR projects has been achieved (e.g. Sussex Bay kelp, Solent oysters).
- Develop metrics to monitor the effectiveness of CEMPs.

5.6 Legitimacy

Definition

Legitimacy can be defined as the rules by which decisions are made, the underlying distribution of power, and the extent to which decisions are acceptable to participants and non-participants that are affected by decisions (Adger *et.al* 2005). In relation to our critical components, this suggests that collaborative governance approaches will support legitimacy, with inclusive stakeholder engagement. Operational structures should encourage clear lines of accountability and transparency, around identifying leadership and partner representation. For the existing regulatory framework to function properly, it is important that there are genuine engagement opportunities (Long, 2012 p.57).

Current position

The use of MoU/MoA and ToR appear to be working well for most CEMPs operational structure to support accountability and transparency, although some are not often used or referred to - which can be a sign of positive collaborative governance. For the highest proportion of CEMPs (over half of the respondents) decisions are made by a Steering Group, Management Group or committee with a variety of partners, but there is often a host body with statutory or legal status (for example, a County Council or Charity) providing in-kind support for the partnership staff. Some have voting procedures and others aim to discuss and agree without needing to vote.

Three-quarters of the CEMPs interviewed (*n*=11) discussed the pros and cons of having no formal status through an MoU or ToR.

- The ‘pros’ included: efficiencies associated with an MoU because anything more formal would require a large overhead and it is largely just a fallback position (ID35); the advantage for a ‘young’ partnership of getting something written down promptly to help secure the future when personnel change (ID41); to give a structure/premise for existing cooperation (ID31); and as a backdrop to hold to account - but one that brings flexibility and adaptability (ID19).
- The ‘cons’ were around: the length of time it may take to set-up written operational procedures and whether they are too weak, especially if not renewed (ID19); the extent to which people take notice of them [if] not having a mechanism to be funded as a standalone entity (ID31); and being reliant on a host body to enter into a legal agreement (e.g. for project funds). Several CEMPs mentioned that their MoUs/ToRs were quite old (ID28, ID19) or probably needed updating (ID3, ID34), were rarely actively applied (ID28), had been tightened up (ID31) or that they worked well for setting something up but not necessarily in the longer-term (ID32).

The balance of pros and cons casts some doubt over whether the informal status encourages leadership. Overall, there was a sense that the informality of no formal status with an MoU/ToR gives flexibility to focus on collaboration between existing partners and to be open to working with new partners, with less emphasis or time demanded through organisational issues or more formal governance structures (e.g. ID9). However, many are using the backup of a host body, especially when funding opportunities require a legal agreement.

> “Our management group’s being really anti [formal status] because they see the value of independent neutral status as being much more important than bigger income streams” (ID28)

Opportunities

CEMPs considering a possible change in governance status felt that they may be able to attract more and diverse funding. Four of the CEMPs interviewed mentioned CICs as a possible route in future to become an entity in their own right (ID35); synonymous with a PLC (ID7); or as a way of raising membership income (ID39). However, a concern was raised around the perception for employment as it wouldn’t be perceived to be as secure as a Local Authority host body employing staff (ID39). Retaining broad representation was considered important and any change in governance status should avoid losing this, such as LA engagement when hosting ended and independent charity status was gained (ID21). Partner representation is discussed in relation to equity in the next section.

Opportunities exist for more transparency about the role and value of host bodies, especially where they provide match-funding support and are able to offer a legitimate legal basis for entering into contractual agreements. However, whilst a change in

governance has or is being considered by a quarter of those who participated in this research (*n*=10), half of them (*n*=5) considered that it was to some extent a distraction from their main focus and it has not been proven that it would make them any more effective/efficient or attractive to funding partners (e.g. ID41).

Diverse stakeholder engagement was considered more important in the short-term than the governance status, with a risk that it would dilute the members and momentum. There is also awareness of the amount of paperwork, administration and time taken to prepare for and manage a transition (ID28, ID31, ID39, ID3, ID17). However, there was a general feeling from the interviews that if core funding with the engagement of statutory partners and key stakeholders could be secured (and any new arrangement was not considered to be a competitor – ID31), a form of charitable status (such as CIC, CIO) was attractive to enable scaling-up of delivery activity. The balance of effort between supporting collaboration between statutory decision-making partners, seeking wider representation, and undertaking community engagement activity needs to be carefully considered (e.g. ID35, ID28) . Refreshing MoUs and ToRs would certainly be helpful, as many are in the 'background' and whilst fit for purpose, underpin legitimacy by being made more visible.

> "Building a reputation for neutral facilitation takes time and training but really helps with conflict resolution. The ethos for this comes from the Steering Group" (ID9).

Needs

With so many informal governance arrangements around partnership working, the perceived legitimacy of CEMPs for investment may be questioned. However, many CEMPs have strong records of generating legitimacy through their operational structures backed up by informal agreements between partners as described above. Members and officers are actively encouraging collaborative governance, with partner organisations sharing information and encouraging data-driven approaches which support openness in decision-making. With options to increase the formal (hard governance) status of CEMPs which could support their perceived legitimacy and future investibility, there was a note of caution – focusing on grant/project funding can lead to the loss of/commitment from core funding partners which could affect the momentum behind supporting decision-making between statutory partners and lead to more focus on project deliverables (ID21). For example, the charities commission doesn't easily recognise the values associated with ICZM principles (ID27, ID22) which underpinned the formation of many CEMPs several decades ago.

There is a lack of any national guidance or active exchange of experience around individual CEMPs governance status, although CPN offer a network where individual CEMP officers have exchanged perspectives around the pros and cons of their governance arrangements. CEMPs benefitting from grant-aid associated with charity status could share this experience more widely with other CEMPs who may be considering a change in governance status.

> "Guidance from a national template or 'how to guide' so we don't waste six months trying to see if we can form a partnership. We get the keys to the door so we can all get round the table" (ID5).

Recommendations

The following recommendations were identified around the legitimacy of CEMPs to support MNR through genuine engagement opportunities promoted through collaborative governance, inclusive stakeholder engagement, accountability and transparency and data-driven approaches.

- Balance 'hard and 'soft' governance approaches
- Share experiences of operational structures between CEMPs, particularly the pros/cons of establishing more formal governance such as charity/company status.
- Learn from Local Authority hosting of scaled-up partnership programmes for flood and coastal erosion management (funded by Defra).
- Sustain CEMP governance arrangements and network-building for future place-making
- Support adaptable, innovative leadership and the independent convening role of CEMPs.

> "Trust is massive, neutrality is massive and having an engine or a person that can lead that is really important. Leadership of the forum…the direction of travel...builds momentum and connections…the independence [of CEMPs] can be understated" (ID9).

5.7 Equity

Definition

Equity involves the fair distribution of benefits, dis-benefits and outcomes, deciding who takes decisions and who's involved. Adger *et.al* (2005) recognise that there are diverse principles of equity involved in outcomes i.e. winners and losers. Equity in partnership working for MNR implies fair resource distribution and equal opportunities to access information, be heard, and participate in forward-looking strategies.

Current position

Findings around partner representation and funding partners showed a wide range of public bodies, statutory agencies and stakeholders participating in CEMPs, and in many cases providing core and/or project funding to support collaborative governance. However, some imbalance was identified. This included the MMO participating or utilising CEMPs but rarely providing core funding (*n*=4) compared to NE (*n*=25), LAs and the EA (*n*=20). Organisations more frequently providing project than core funding include the MMO (*n*=8), Parish/Town Councils (*n*=16 core/9 project) and consultancies (*n*=15 project/4 core), and commercial/recreational fisheries (*n*=9 core/4 core)

> “You’re never going to get proper nature recovery when nature takes decades to recover and your funding is in two- or three-year cycles. It’s just never going to happen” (ID32).

There are varying degrees of connection between partners representation in the governance of CEMPs and their funding role with unique, often complex arrangements and histories in each CEMP. It is therefore not appropriate to generalise, however a simple comparison from the survey results of partner representation (Q7) and core funding partners (Q8) is possible (*n*=41 CEMPs). For every CEMP, the number of partners represented was higher than the number of core funding partners – therefore more partners are benefitting from CEMP services than are financing it. The most difference was shown with the MMO who are represented on 38 CEMPs, but only 4 CEMPs receive core funding (and 8 project funding).

Findings from the interviews around funding partners, identified the biggest issue to be around equity (23 references) with partners free to contribute the amount they feel is commensurate to their level of interest, and the partnership officer supporting the case to individual organisations as required to help justify core funding (ID35). Since most CEMPs work on a collaborative basis, with formal voting procedures in place as more of a backup than used in day-to-day practice, there doesn’t tend to be a direct link between core funding and partners representation. However, some evidence was cited of NE - as a regulator - declining voting rights and subsequently not contributing financially (ID39). The biggest discrepancy between representation and core funding (lack of) is apparent in relation to the MMO, as highlighted above.

Whilst most CEMPs have good representation from over 25 different kinds of stakeholders, several CEMPs identified who’s ‘not around the table’ and queried the value judgements which may go into being a partner, where some major stakeholders are missing such as fisheries and the leisure industry (ID31). Previous or potential partners were identified for not being current funding partners and/or actively involved, namely South West Water (ID3). The role of The Crown Estate was not raised through the research, but due to their role as the seabed owner with stewardship responsibilities, warrants consideration.

There is not normally a direct relationship between funding contributions and representation through the operational governance structures of a CEMP. For example, a regulator may sit on a board/management group without providing core funding and are treated as an equal (ID39). Providing funding doesn’t necessarily give a partner a bigger voice and most CEMPs are flexible to any contribution which is affordable, as it keeps the partnership broad (ID3).In two cases (ID17, ID31, ID35) the harbours/ports have taken an increasingly active role, including funding core costs and this has caused some skewing of partnership activity to their needs (ID31). Balancing partners aspirations in an effective way therefore comes down to the approach of the individual CEMPs leadership (ID17,

ID9). In some cases, partners have constraints on their finances which limit their ability to contribute (ID9) year-on-year, but it doesn't usually prevent them from being represented.

> "What we define as something that's equitable…people participating when we would like them to participate…people being invited to fund when we don't think they're funding - by providing them with information against our budget as to what funding levels are right, and regular information updates. I think that's how we define our sort of equitable situation (ID35).

> "You want to be operating in a way that...all your partners are going to get something they want to get out of the partnership, otherwise you run into trouble. But the finance side of that doesn't necessarily influence decision making" (ID3).

Opportunities

The value of core funding to support CEMPs secretariat services has been, illustrated above. There is a key distinction to be made between partner representation and funding; current practice suggests that the two should remain separate. Most CEMPs don't have 'membership' based on financial contributions, although there are exceptions (e.g. Solent Forum). Perhaps equity through CEMPs governance is a unique strength because of this separation between representation and funding, even if challenged on occasion by inconsistencies in partners budget availability and staff time/capacity skewed by the availability of project funding. This is more likely to occur where there are barriers to broadening the funding base of CEMPs, – therefore future funding needs to be more available for core/revenue and long-term service provision to support the 'soft' governance qualities which CEMPs consider most related to their effectiveness.

CEMPs potential to offer informal support, skills and knowledge, engagement with stakeholders and communities and enable local, place based, equitable decision making depends on sustainable financing. It was suggested that CEMPs needed to build up a 'jigsaw' of funding to become less dependent upon single sources of financing (e.g. host partners, time-limited grants). Many felt that a rolling or multi-year funding programme (rather than short-term funded projects) would give more sustainability and allow for legacy planning and more innovative project co-development.

Legal and policy mechanisms were cited for potential opportunities if CEMPs could support them. Opportunities were identified through Environment Act obligations, Section 106 conditions, Environmental Land Management Schemes across the land-sea interface, supplementary planning guidance and other mitigation tariffs. The longevity of the existing CEMPs could help to avoid reinvention, increase efficiencies and enable pilots to be easily established. Many opportunities to broaden the funding base through current policy and planning mechanisms were identified including LNRS, BNG and MNR. Greater utilisation of these policy mechanisms and funding opportunities would enable CEMPs to harness their equitable approach to partner representation (rather than make it increasingly dependent on funding contributions).

Newer funding mechanisms and opportunities for MNR were identified, with a review of the requirements of a management organisation to deliver MNR. Most of these requirements would build on the soft governance qualities of CEMPs such as connecting the national and local frameworks, co-designing plans and strategies, brokering knowledge, building relationships and developing trust. An important feature for a management organisation to oversee MNR activity is that it should have a longevity to adopt a 'lifecycle' approach to 'marry' activity to the timeline of development or activity that it is seeking to mitigate negative impacts, whilst capitalising on synergies, minimising trade-offs and averting unintended consequences. Green/blue finance mechanisms and social impact investment were presented as potential future finance mechanisms for MNR.

> "Certainty of funding in the long term, I think is absolutely critical…especially if we want to get industry involved" (ID5).

Needs

To enable more equitable and broader representation of society in CEMPs it would be prudent to focus on marine industry and fisheries interests most urgently and review the need for more heritage/local history, recreation/tourism/beach management, community organisations and local businesses representation. A better balance of funding from the MMO, The Crown Estate (TCE) and water companies would support legitimacy as well as equity between partners typically represented in CEMPs. It was unclear from our findings whether EDI objectives (crucial for attracting social impact investment) exist adequately in CEMP operational governance structures, therefore future reviews of MoUs and ToRs should encompass this.

Future finance for MNR should be equitable by responding to the need for investment longevity - multi-year funding rather than annual (ID41) which would render it more effective at supporting the soft governance factors. CEMPs had experienced competition between charities for finance (*n*=5) and therefore proposed more transparency and equity, thinking beyond the usual suspects in the development of funds as there are lot of partnerships, people and organisations in this highly competitive space (ID41, ID28). Other issues raised over future finance included the uncertainties around the role and responsibilities of private investors (ID17), transparency and equity in the design of programmes (ID41) and the possible role of conservation covenants and mitigation tariffs, particularly to offset recreation impacts (ID27).

The project workshop showed that CEMPs are very interested in social impact investment potential for financing MNR. They could envisage bringing social enterprises and investors into their partnerships to provide the upskilling that would be required to attract outward investment and ensure that any MNR project activity delivered deeply impactful outcomes for people. This was caveated with the need for building capacity, introductions to those within this investment space, and creating a social and environmental investment 'roadmap' to guide the creation of MNR partnerships and projects with the creation of a

blended finance model that supports every stage of project development from inception to completion.

There is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to securing legitimacy and equity in CEMPs, their individuality should be considered a strength reflecting the legacy and value of individuals' collaborative efforts.

> “True partnership is when funding is sourced, and it’s shared…and I see very little of that happening now. We need to build up a jigsaw of funding opportunities, with core funding giving us the confidence” (ID21).

Recommendations

The following recommendations were identified around the equity of CEMPs to support MNR through partner representation and the balance of funding:

- Seek policy opportunities to enable the MMO, TCE and water companies to become more engaged at the local level.
- Build private & charity sector relationships and investment opportunities
- Recognise key individuals’ role in supporting equity through the soft governance qualities of CEMPs
- Aim for balanced funding sources which keep the door open to wide representation
- Review EDI objectives in operational governance practices to support the case for social impact investment.
- Seek longer term funding security through existing policy and planning mechanisms plus new investment pathways.

5.8 Summary

Table 8 summarises the recommendations from the above discussion of the four quality criteria around the critical components. Note that each recommendation is likely to support more than one criterion or critical component (and more examples could be added).

Table 8. Summary of Findings around four quality criteria and their critical components

Critical component	Efficiency	Effectiveness	Legitimacy	Equity
Clear goals and objectives	Clarity of purpose	Learning & maximising cross-over with 'other initiatives'	Make the most of CEMP governance arrangements for place-making	Recognising key individuals' role
Collaborative governance	Long term funding security	Building capacity for CEMPs role in MNR through collaborative governance	Active Local Authority roles (e.g. hosting).	Increasing MMO engagement at the local level
Data-driven approaches	Shared data	Shared data	Shared data and decision making	Shared data and decision making
Resource optimization	Operational processes that lead to resource optimization (staff, time and finances)	Ensuring CEMPs are early 'around the table'	Realise MNR investment opportunities to further CEMP soft governance qualities	Ensuring CEMPs are early 'around the table'
Stakeholder engagement	Engaging the right stakeholders at the right time	Maintaining strong local networks	Balanced representation	Fair range of core & project funding
Adaptability and innovation	Securing core service provision	Maintaining project/grant income for added stability	Open and transparent governance (e.g. MoU/ToR)	Wide partner representation

The four qualities of effectiveness, efficiency, legitimacy and equity have offered a lens through which to evaluate the ways in which CEMPs could support MNR. Adger *et.al,* (2005) suggests that the sustainability of climate adaptation measures (e.g. MNR) depends on the heterogeneity of adaptive capacity across different stakeholders. This suggests that CEMPs informal governance and operational structures are well suited to

supporting MNR as they are more flexible than many partners standard processes (e.g. LAs formal committee structures). Adger *et.al,* (2005) also advocated that a balance must be found between the four success criteria, otherwise one can be completely disregarded and the consequences of trade-offs between them remains unknown.

The development of a more effective cross-sectoral approach to coastal management is supported by encouraging new forms of collective involvement in decision processes. Such changes in the process of decision making might change the relative weighting that is given to the success criteria (Few et al., 2004). Elements of effectiveness, efficiency, equity and legitimacy are important in judging success, but the relative weight allocated to each criterion is not given. Instead, it is likely to emerge from societal processes of consent and action. CEMPs have some three decades of experience of such processes in their locations, promoting place-based governance, community engagement and supporting decision-making. It is a natural extension of their original aims around sustainability, that they play a leading and facilitating role in MNR. The degree of success critically depends on the capacity they are given to help adapt and innovate, plus the distribution of that capacity. An overview of these findings in presented in Box 6 below.

> “I think it's really important that we don't go setting up a whole load of new organisations to distribute this stuff which we've got a track record in doing…when organisations like mine and others exist and could do that, could absolutely provide that resource” (ID21).

Box 6 Summary of Recommendations

Efficiency

- Promote greater understanding and the exchange of experience in operational processes which support resource optimization (staff, time and finances). There is huge diversity of experience to share between CEMPs and with NE.
- Develop metrics to evidence the value of 'soft' governance qualities (e.g. collaboration, skills, trust, capacity, understanding, funding, leadership, a track record and independence) with the ability to monitor the efficiency of CEMPs on this basis.
- Encourage public sector partners to provide longer-term core finance to support stability, maximising the utility of the soft-governance qualities of CEMPs.
- To help scale-up, shared decision-making and resources such as data to improve efficiency, particularly between CEMPs in the same region.

Effectiveness

- Build capacity for CEMPs role in MNR by evidencing the value of CEMP's soft governance qualities.
- Increase stability by enhancing core service provision and maintaining project/grant income.
- Maximise learning between CEMPs and similar initiatives where larger-scale programme funding for MNR projects has been achieved (e.g. Sussex Bay kelp, Solent oysters).
- Develop metrics to monitor the effectiveness of CEMPs.

Legitimacy

- Balance 'hard and 'soft' governance approaches
- Share experiences of operational structures between CEMPs, particularly the pros/cons of establishing more formal governance such as charity/company status.
- Learn from Local Authority hosting of scaled-up partnership programmes for flood and coastal erosion management (funded by Defra).
- Sustain CEMP governance arrangements and network-building for future place-making
- Support adaptable, innovative leadership and the independent convening role of CEMPs.

Equity

- Seek policy opportunities to enable the MMO, TCE and water companies to become more engaged at the local level.
- Build private & charity sector relationships and investment opportunities
- Recognise key individuals' role in supporting equity through the soft governance qualities of CEMPs
- Aim for balanced funding sources which keep the door open to wide representation
- Review EDI objectives in operational governance practices to support the case for social impact investment.
- Seek longer term funding security through existing policy and planning mechanisms plus new investment pathways.

Beer, Devon (Photo credit: Natasha Bradshaw)

6 Next Steps

The final recommendations are next steps presented in three sections according to their orientation towards target audience(s) for action:

1) **Building capacity in CEMPs**
   Target audience: CPN, CEMP hosts and their core funding partners.

2) **Funding pathways for CEMPs to support MNR**
   Target audience: NE, CEMP hosts and potential project partners, CPN.

3) **Further research and advocacy**
   Target audience: NE, EA, TCE, MMO, LGA Coastal SIG, English Heritage and CPN.

6.1 Building capacity in CEMPs

6.1.1 Sustaining effective partnerships and maximising benefits

The findings have demonstrated that partnership working is valued, but there is a lack of consistent evidence to help strengthen the case for unrestricted/core funding investment. This presents a barrier to growing the potential inherent in CEMPs unique governance arrangements which have been demonstrated in this report. Existing core funding partners, especially those who have been consistently supporting their local CEMP for several decades, could be more involved in advocacy to resolve this barrier. Leadership could come from the LGA Coastal SIG, OneCoast Coalition, NE and/or EA with the CPN helping to design metrics to monitor their impact. The four quality criteria (efficiency, effectiveness, legitimacy and equity) discussed in this report could provide a helpful framework.

The ‘soft’ governance qualities of CEMPs may be less well understood than the ‘hard’ governance factors, but they are often unique and highly valued locally (e.g. the expertise and trust of the individual) and therefore offer opportunities for place-making that other organisations are less well placed to do. Interviewees highlighted the value of ‘soft’ governance factors that CEMPs offer, particularly compared to the role that consultants would have if/when brought in to lead MNR projects – because CEMPs have a longer-term approach to delivery. It therefore makes sense to utilise local place-based partners and partnerships who are working to improve coastal stewardship.

As demonstrated by the findings from this project around the legal status of CEMPs (plus learning from the EA’s ‘Championing Coastal Coordination’ programme where access to funding was limited to charities), future finance to support CEMPs should not be limited to

the charity sector - as only a minority of CEMPs have this status. It would be very helpful if Defra (with NE and/or the MMO's support) could establish a longer-term funding program which enabled CEMPs to apply for unrestricted 'core' funding to support their coordination capacity. It could be used to increase their ability to support MNR projects/initiatives design and delivery. Ongoing FCRIP program partnerships could be eligible to apply. It would also support place-based decision making through facilitating local engagement in marine planning, for which a dialogue with the MMO would be timely. Perhaps Defra bodies could agree a lead agency to facilitate CEMP uptake in conjunction with the CPN's emerging National Framework for Coordination[7].

The value of neutrality and the facilitation/conflict resolution role of individuals working for CEMPs needs to be better recognised as a valuable core/secretariat service and made more investible. Otherwise, CEMPs will need to rely even further on project funding, and this unique role may be lost (two CEMPs explicitly identified compromise in this regard, with others it was implicit). Retaining a good balance of core and project funding is important to avoid being pushed in any single direction, retaining independence and contributing to the costs of hosting and maintaining a good range of funding partners.

Project partnerships and new partnerships with coastal and marine nature recovery in their aims (for example, Vale of Glamorgan) should be encouraged to share their experiences (positive and negative) and participate in the national network, CPN, to support their ongoing impact and effectiveness. There have been some governance challenges with FCRIP programs which suggests that established CEMPs can bring knowledge and experience of how to create and maintain (larger) partnerships due to their longer-term established position. The experience from effectively scaled up program partnerships should also be shared with CEMPs. To do this effectively, the CPN should be supported centrally to enable this knowledge sharing and management of the NFCC for wider sectoral impact and learning.

6.1.2 Guidance for changing CEMP governance status and enabling legislation

This research has demonstrated how useful CEMP's qualities could be for MNR. To increase legitimacy and future investment potential, guidance is needed over future governance options for CEMPs. This is particularly important if the host body is not likely to support their engagement in MNR either at project design or delivery stage.

A change in governance has or is being considered by a quarter of those who participated in this research. There is a lack of any national guidance or active exchange of experience around individual CEMPs governance status, which CPN could provide. If core funding and the engagement of statutory partners and key stakeholders could be secured, then any new governance status (such as CIC, CIO) is less likely to be considered as a competitor. The scaling-up of delivery activity would then be more viable to many CEMPs.

[7] See 'CoBA' paper (Bradshaw *et.al*, 2022).

Equity could be better understood through a full audit of partner and community representation in CEMPs. Evidence now available suggests that CEMPs are engaging a wider range of partners than many other partnership initiatives, therefore it would be worth building and strengthening their efforts. Whilst most CEMPs have good representation from over 25 different kinds of stakeholders, several CEMPs identified who's 'not around the table' and queried the value judgements which may go into being a partner where some major stakeholders are missing such as fisheries and the leisure industry. Previous or potential partners were identified for their ad-hoc support or not being current funding partners or actively involved - namely water companies, TCE and the MMO.

FCERM programme partnerships such as '*Stronger Shores*' and '*Our Future Coast*' have been established utilising existing legislation (i.e. Section 12 of the Flood Water Management Act which enables local authorities to form collaboration agreements; and Section 113 of the Local Government Act which enables a shared service partnership). Legislation which encourages collaborative governance between local authorities to work with marine plan authorities across the land-sea interface would be helpful. Whilst some LAs may be less familiar with FCERM programme partnerships than others, the examples given through this project offer insights to open up legitimate pathways for hosting scaled-up investment in CEMPs and in turn MNR.

6.1.3 National coordination

Ongoing verification of the geographical extent of CEMPs will further reveal hotspots and gaps in coverage of the coast. CPN are well placed to undertake further mapping work.

The definition of a CEMP needs to be more widely understood alongside the term 'project partnerships'. Project delivery partnerships should be recognised as similar initiatives by CEMPs, and included in the CPN network, not least for the shared learning, staff support, professional development and staff sourcing.

A monitoring and evaluation framework is being progressed by the CPN through development of the National Framework for Coastal Coordination (funded by the EA's 3 Cs), which will compliment these research findings. The NFCC will provide new national infrastructure to support coordination across sectors, across socio-economic and environmental drivers, and across catchment, coast and marine. It will be supported by two collaborative platforms – the Coastal Coordination Hub where knowledge sharing, information resources, building capacity and collaboration activities can be supported - plus a Coastal Data Hub which brings together relevant environmental and socio-economic data available in the public realm for evidence based, inclusive decision making at a local and regional scale.

The level of participation in the project workshop and high level of interest in the project findings, is a clear pointer towards professional development and the value of sharing

experience via a national network. CPN obtained charitable status in June 2024, enabling the network to source and distribute grants, provide a professional education and training (building capacity) programme, enable more knowledge sharing between CEMPs and other sectors, and offer a stronger voice for the coast in policy and in central Government.

6.2 Funding pathways for CEMPs to support MNR

The independent researchers' findings and project workshop highlighted potential funding pathways for CEMPs to scale-up their support for MNR. These recommendations aim to enhance the capacity and effectiveness of CEMPs and similar initiatives to deliver MNR projects through strategic financial support, recognition of their convening role and expertise and enabling greater connection into their communities.

Key recommendations for further research and capacity building are listed below, in order of priority, but with 1 and 2 considered overall as joint top priority:

1. **Build capacity in CEMPs to enable social impact through MNR projects**: map social impact organisations and investment potential in local areas through CEMP networks.
    - **Roadmap to investment**. Create a roadmap of likely partners to support CEMPs on the journey to building up investment expertise, match making with investors and creating successful partnerships needed to build investable business models. Building a roadmap will require capacity and funding, with a host that can keep the map updated, interactive and relevant. Ongoing evaluation across social impact and green finance ecosystems will also be needed to contribute to Return on Investment reporting to investors. Once complete a roadmap will provide a resource for CEMPs and MNR projects.
    - **SWOT analysis and 360-degree feedback**: building on this research, complete a SWOT analysis based on the attributes needed for both green/blue finance and social impact investment to indicate where a CEMP needs capacity building and how this can be supported. 360-degree feedback are useful for Social Impact Investors to provide a holistic understanding and well-rounded picture of an organisation's strengths, weaknesses, and potential impact, going beyond purely financial metrics.
    - **Moving the needle on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) leadership and organisational change.** Dedicated support of CEMP's and the MNR network on their EDI journey, with transparent outcomes, needs to be seen as a funding and investment priority, as both a reflection of the environment sector as a whole and organisations therein, to ensure investment readiness. Bringing in lessons learned from the social impact sector and looking to this sector for guidance would go a long way to building a very robust bridge between the social impact and environment sectors and show leadership.

- **Data and metrics**. The network of social impact investors has established a way of working with partners that would allow cross sectoral working and engagement with CEMP's, utilising recognisable metrics and frameworks. Building on this evaluation, a monitoring and evaluation framework that brings together recognised environmental and social impact metrics with support, would be highly beneficial and provide assurance to investors from both spaces.

2. **Establish NE pathways to support CEMPs - for them to offer a role in MNR projects**:

    - **Finance for capacity**: funding to enhance capacity and create space for CEMPs (who are already working at full capacity) to engage with and support MNR project development.
    - **Introduce initiatives to the right people/funders**: Promote CEMPs to key stakeholders and funders to ensure initiatives reach the right audience and enable an inclusive project partnership.
    - **Promote CEMPs as go-go organisations**: Encourage NE and funders to recognise and work with CEMPs, including stipulating collaboration in funding conditions and ensuring budgets include coordination costs.
    - **CEMPs as convenors and coordinators**: Emphasise the role of CEMPs in MNR projects as neutral brokers, leveraging their collaboration skills, trust capacity, understanding of funding, and leadership qualities.
    - **Long-term, multi-year funding programs**: Advocate for extended funding programs that support project continuity from inception to completion, facilitating the recruitment and retention of staff and expertise.
    - **Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund (NEIRF).** Leaders from the social impact investing space and the natural environment were consulted early in the shaping of the delivery of the first wave of the NEIRF investment ready programme. Much can be learned from this and the follow-on programmes. The lessons learned include a gap analysis of costs not originally perceived, operational and legal costs, governance arrangements, etc... bringing some of this to life to the CEMPs and MNR partners specifically would be of great benefit.

3. **Coordination and Collaboration Support**:

    - **Financial support for initial conversations and strategic development**: Recognise the importance of funding the preliminary stages of project development, which CEMPs currently cover within their limited and declining core funding.

- **Recognition and remuneration of convening services**: Acknowledge the value of CEMP services in project partnerships and ensure these are adequately funded.
- **Core vs. project funding**: Address the limitations caused by decreasing core funding and the dependency on restricted project funding, which affects CEMPs' ability to engage in speculative activities and MNR partnership development.

4. **Governance and Investment**:

   Develop governance policies and legal arrangements: Create structures that allow private, non-profit, and public sectors to collaborate effectively in investment programmes. Further research into ideal governance structures for blended finance models for MNR projects, and the appetite for CEMPs to either evolve their own governance structures or enable the creation of MNR project vehicles.

5. **Blended Finance Options**:

   - Explore and develop blended finance models that combine grants and long-term lending arrangements.
   - Investigate the voluntary carbon market and blue bonds further as potential for MNR projects.
   - Develop a blended finance model that brings social impact and nature recovery investments together in a pathway for MNR project inception to completion.

6.3 Further research and advocacy

6.3.1 Mapping Marine Nature Recovery

The new MNR survey data from this project, identifying 73 MNR projects could be provided to ABPMer to cross-check for completeness and to add any MNR projects identified by CEMPs which aren't already included in the ABPMer database. Likewise, Natural England holds a small database identifying 30 ongoing or proposed MNR projects, their partners, scale of the project and habitat types to be restored, which could be added to the ABPMer database for a combined resource

Exploration of connectivity using the mapping, alongside local knowledge of the CEMPs and habitat potential, would further deepen understanding of CEMPs roles to support MNR, and the extent to which MNR projects/initiatives have engaged CEMPs to support project preparation and delivery.

Comparison of the mapping undertaken for this project, alongside EA's habitat potential maps, would help to explore whether the clusters of CEMP/MNR activity are where there are target habitats; and where there is potential but not much CEMP/MNR activity.

6.3.2 Natural England/ Defra mNCEA Programme

New evidence for Defra's mNCEA (and EA/3Cs) programme has been presented through this research. Building the economic argument for partnerships and how they would support NE's MNR policy as well as EA and MMO objectives has been suggested to sustain core/programme funding. This would maintain/increase capacity to maximise effectiveness and efficiency to unlock the ability of CEMPs. There are opportunities around marine net gain to be considered[8].

NE support programmes and other funding bodies, governmental and non-governmental could stipulate that to meet certain policy objectives, grant applicants 'must work with CEMPs' and include budget for their coordination. Blended finance positions will come forward. Support is needed for CEMPs to be in at the beginning, where they are written into tendering processes to enable them to support project design.

NE collaboration with EA would be helpful to influence the criteria for monitoring effective CEMPs. Momentum is already building towards this through the CPNs 3Cs program to establish a National Framework for Coastal Coordination (NFCC).

NE could facilitate connectivity between CEMPs and National Landscape Partnerships to share experiences over different forms of governance and mechanisms to manage the balance between core/unrestricted and project/restricted funding.

6.3.3 A new public/private/charity-sector MNR working group?

This research should contribute to NE's MNR ambitions alongside the EA ReMeMaRe and 3Cs programme, which has worked closely with charities investing in CEMPs. In addition, the EA has identified target areas for restoration based on habitat potential. This could be compared to the mapping from this project to look at routes to delivery i.e. where CEMPs exist in relation to existing MNR projects/initiatives and habitat potential.

CPN is increasingly working with industry to seek private sector engagement and investment. The opportunities for blue/green finance and social impact investment suggest that the findings and recommendations from this research would benefit from pursuit through a public/private/charity-sector working group, which could involve NGOs alongside CPN with its charity status.

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[8] Coastal and marine evolution? https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/2023/12/11/government-takes-a-step-forward-for-marine-nature-recovery/ (accessed 27/07/2024)

6.3.4 A National Framework for Coastal Coordination

The proposed National Framework for Coastal Coordination (NFCC) would secure the role of Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships (CEMPs) into the future and realise additional multiple benefits to society, the economy, and the environment. It was recognised that with dedicated funding CEMPs can:

- Support the integrated delivery and evolution of terrestrial and marine planning: linking Local Plans and Marine Plans for realising wider benefits across the land-sea interface.
- Collaborate with regional Coastal Groups to agree cost-effective and longer-term environmental solutions to shoreline management.
- Facilitate Water Framework Directive (WFD) integration with the EA Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) capital programme and UK Marine Strategy (UKMS) targets.
- Support local and system level coastal habitat restoration, marine planning and marine nature recovery.
- Support transboundary working between Devolved Administrations particularly for cross-border estuaries and MPAs.
- Develop a mechanism to engage hard-to-reach stakeholders and communities to achieve an inclusive participatory approach to decision making.

At the time of publication, the NFCC is in its final phase of development and will establish the governance and collaborative platforms (Coastal Coordination Hub and Coastal Data Hub) needed to support all sectors to collaborate more effectively in partnership - locally, regionally, and nationally. It also involves work to establish a monitoring and evaluation programme for CEMPs which will help to evidence their effectiveness (Buchan & Bradshaw, 2022).

The investment to date in the CPN and CEMPs from the John Ellerman Foundation (JEF), European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF; MMO), Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (CGF) and the Championing Coastal Coordination fund (3Cs; EA) has recognised the need to collaborate across the catchment, coast and marine. It has underlined the opportunity that CEMPs bring to achieving effective collaboration and coordination at the local level, and the need for and value of national leadership and coordination which is being supported by the CPN. With registered charity status gained in June 2024 (registration number 1208806) the network will continue to facilitate the next stage in the evolution of CEMPs, the NFCC and further knowledge and understanding of their role.

Scarborough, Yorkshire – location of the annual Environment Agency ReMeMaRe conference on restoring meadows, marshes and reefs (Photo credit: Natasha Bradshaw)

7 Conclusion

Natural England commissioned The Coastal Collaborative Ltd on behalf of the Coastal Partnerships Network to research what makes effective partnerships for marine nature recovery. Two objectives and six research questions were addressed by the project team, supported by regional researchers across England, Natural England's social science team and independent advisors who collectively formed an Expert Advisory Group.

Background literature provided a theoretical background to the role of partnerships and the evolution of Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships (CEMPs) since many were initiated through English Natures' Campaign for a Living Coast. A survey on the location and extent of CEMPs and similar initiatives, their legal and governance arrangements, plus engagement in MNR gathered insights from 41 participants. This was followed by interviews with 16 CEMPs engaging 38 people in discussion and a workshop with 69 participants considering future financing.

The national landscape of CEMPs in England was mapped, and linkages explored with MNR projects and initiatives. A typology of CEMPs governance was identified to explore whether the characteristics of their legal status, aims, strategic and operational governance were helpful to support the design and/or delivery of MNR. CEMPs involvement in MNR was demonstrated by mapping and obtaining insights from their engagement experiences. The findings indicated how CEMPs could fulfil a larger role in brokering opportunities between communities and regulators, particularly where they have a long-standing reputation locally/regionally. CEMP characteristics were identified as 'hard' and 'soft' governance approaches. 'Hard' governance factors included legal status, host bodies, operational structures, partner representation, funding partners, aims and effectiveness, balance of core versus project funding, staffing and volunteers. Soft governance factors (shown to be important for CEMP's effectiveness) included collaboration, skills, trust, capacity, understanding, funding, leadership, a track record and independence. The 'soft' governance characteristics were shown to be as, if not more important, for their effectiveness.

CEMPs are already actively involved in MNR through supporting new programme partnerships and bringing partners together. They offer unique place-based partnerships that have existed for at least half of the English coastline for up to three decades, with a track record of supporting sustainability and a legacy of engaging multiple partners. Whilst most have no legal status, they have well established operational governance practices which are working well to fulfil their aims. However, those with more formal/legal status or supportive host bodies willing to take the financial risk, were seen to have the ability to attract higher levels of investment for MNR. Based on their experiences, it seems that the public sector and NGOs could benefit more from utilising CEMPs, especially if there was finance available to support their continuity of service. There is not (yet) any agreed national metric for measuring CEMP performance, but a legacy of their work over the past three decades suggests their local knowledge, networks and collaborative governance experience are useful for MNR.

The findings showed an active appetite to be more involved in MNR. The unique attributes of CEMPs were shown, with a large range of partners represented, many providing unrestricted funding for core/long-term services and/or restricted funding for project/short-term activities. CEMP officers, managers, host bodies and partners self-reflected on the effectiveness of their governance arrangements and the opportunities for changing status and/or attracting finance to build and strengthen their role. However, a barrier in the short-term exists with limited spare capacity to ‘speculate’ with their partners/stakeholders to explore MNR opportunities, due to the lack of and diminishing availability of core funding for facilitation and exploratory work. This limits the creative potential of CEMPs to design ‘shovel ready’ projects. Long-term barriers were evidenced as a lack of ability to scale-up and manage larger finance, partly also due to core finance limitations hindering capacity building and talent retention but also due to the informal governance of many partnerships

There is evidence of some reticence or lack of knowledge and time to explore options around governance change. Options were explored to share experience between CEMPs and other initiatives with different governance models. This is important to ensure their future investibility. New opportunities were identified through social impact investment and green/blue finance which could be introduced to CEMPs with the support of CPN. The potential exists to position CEMPs effectiveness for social impact investment – enthusiasm exists but requires commitment to capacity to help coordinate and realise this potential. A blended finance model can be developed that supports a pathway from inception to completion for MNR projects. It would support the core service a CEMP can provide and maximise their knowledge, networks and expertise, whilst remunerating and building their capacity, and bridging the gap between currently siloed funding for people focussed climate resilience and nature recovery. This would also ensure that deeply impactful social benefits can be realised alongside MNR.CEMPs were shown to have the structures, knowledge, experience, local respect and trust, but need guidance on how to prepare to support higher levels of investment in MNR.

A suite of recommendations is provided to Natural England who in collaboration with Defra, the Environment Agency and others, can build on this research and help to realise the additionality to be gained from investing in the longevity of partnerships. The efforts undertaken by Natural England, the Coastal Partnerships Network and specialist advisors, are set to usher in a new era of collaboration and progress in the pursuit of safeguarding and enhancing our valuable coastal ecosystems and supporting our coastal communities.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Project summary

Project Summary

Effective Partnerships for Marine Nature Recovery

'EPMNR'

In a pioneering new project, Natural England have commissioned the Coastal Partnerships Network (trading as The Coastal Collaborative Ltd) led by Amy Pryor, Niall Benson and Natasha Bradshaw, to answer the question '*What makes effective partnerships for marine nature recovery?*'

Building partnerships for nature recovery is Natural England's core mission. Partnership working is fundamental to organisational delivery of the goals defined in the UK Governments 25 Year Environment Plan (YEP). Partnerships work with and through a wide range of people to re-build sustainable ecosystems and thereby protect and restore habitats, species and landscapes.

Coastal and Estuary Partnerships have a crucial role to play in marine nature recovery, but there is a need for comprehensive understanding regarding their efficacy, challenges, and prospects. These partnerships are likely to be critical in supporting collaborative working through providing links and coordination amongst key local stakeholders. These place-based networks are invaluable to understanding local challenges and opportunities as part of strategic marine and local planning processes. However, there is limited up to date knowledge of what characterises effective coastal partnerships for supporting and delivering marine nature recovery.

This project will address this knowledge gap by advancing understanding of the governance structures of coastal partnerships and how these relate to dimensions of efficiency, effectiveness, equity and legitimacy in delivering for nature. The research will employ a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis with a realist approach, to assess the variety of governance structures used and their impact on nature recovery.

The overarching objective of this novel initiative is to maximize the potential of Coastal and Estuary Partnerships and similar initiatives which support collaboration to advance nature recovery. It will gain valuable insights to enhance coastal and marine management at the local, regional, and national levels.

The efforts undertaken by Natural England and the Coastal Partnerships Network are set to usher in a new era of collaboration and progress in the pursuit of safeguarding and enhancing our invaluable coastal ecosystems. The project runs from August 2023 – April 2024.

Key contacts

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Coastal Partnerships Network: https://www.coastalpartnershipsnetwork.org.uk/

The Coastal Collaborative Ltd

Appendix 2: Method: Objectives, Research Questions, Work Packages, Outputs

This project proposal addresses the two objectives set out in the Natural England (NE) brief:

OBJECTIVE 1 Characterising Effective Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships (CEMPs) addressed under the framework of Research Questions outlined below (RQ1-3).

OBJECTIVE 2 Supporting and Delivering Marine Nature Recovery addressed under the framework of Research Questions outlined below (RQ4-6).

Research Method

There is strength in combining a quantitative and qualitative approach to bring a wide range of data to help answer the Research Questions (RQs). We will take a mixed methods approach to data collection and analysis will be undertaken due to the strength of combining different types of data collection and analysis.

Our researchers will approach the semi-structured interviews with an open-minded and emergent approach guided by the principle (not direct application) of grounded theory. The setting of RQs precludes a pure grounded theory approach to meet the aims of the project.

We will apply a realist approach to interviews using semi-structured interviews developed from the RQs and our existing understanding of CEMPs and to account for local circumstances. This is important considering CEMPs have emerged and are supported from the bottom-up with predominantly local and regional funding partners. This local context is central to understanding how different CEMP governance approaches work and why they have emerged the way that they have.

We will use the outputs of this exploratory research to develop a Theory of Change or causal explanation of how CEMPs could support nature recovery. The theory will provide a detailed understanding of the mechanisms (the processes and pathways) that enable CEMPs to bring about change, as well as their strengths and weaknesses. It will also provide insights into how CEMPs could be adapted to improve their ability to support nature recovery. The theory developed can then be used to understand why nature recovery projects supported by CEMPs “should work” and guide any future project implementation.

Whilst using the generic CEMPs we also include other similar initiatives, for example; Marine Planning Partnerships, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Landscape Partnerships, Consultative Fora, Countryside Partnerships, Estuaries Projects, Nature

Conservation Associations, Community Partnerships, Estuary Management Groups and Countryside Trusts.

Our methodological approach will be confirmed by our **Expert Advisory Group (EAG)**, utilising CPN consultants, independent researchers, and CPOs to support survey design and delivery, and conduct interviews prior to approval by NE.

The method will be guided by our EAG and NE as the client. Their expertise on social science methods from theory to practice will help to mitigate against any risk of bias arising from the project leaders' close ties with CEMPs.

Our approach is presented through six work packages (WP) derived from project OBJECTIVES 1 to 2 and framed around proposed research questions, detailed below. WP1 provides for the verification of our proposed approach and elaboration of detail as required by NE following award of the contract.

Proposed Research Questions and Method

To answer **OBJECTIVE 1** we propose the following Research Questions (RQs):

RQ1 To what extent is the English coast and marine landscape covered by Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships (CEMPs) and similar initiatives?

WP1 Verification of Approach

The purpose of WP1 is to present to NE at the outset the evidence we already hold, so there is a common understanding and agreement before RQs and the methodology are verified. Existing data will then be used to design a survey (guided by the EAG) to answer RQs1-3, disseminated through the existing CPN Network and additional recipients.

1a	Gather existing knowledge/literature and background research
1b	Present existing evidence including CPN Audit and coastal initiatives project results
1c	Literature update of relevant legal and governance structures on partnerships, participatory and collaborative governance (inc. non-marine/coastal sectors).
1d	Expert Advisory Group review of above evidence and recommendations to NE
1e	Verification of research questions and methodology

OUTPUTS: Map illustrating coverage, scale and type of CEMPs around England.

RQ2 What legal and governance structures are in place for existing CEMPs?

WP2 Characterisation of Coastal Partnerships Landscape in England

Through new survey work we will confirm current geographical coverage, the legal status of partnerships (or lack of) and governance structures in place. The survey will explore the extent to which different 'voices' (e.g. sectors, including conservation) are represented through the legal and governance structures, as elaborated in WP4.

2a	Survey design
2b	Dissemination of survey via CPN to known CEMPs and similar initiatives (85+) and others as advised by EAG.
2c	Map geographical coverage using GIS to produce a 'heat map' of CEMPs and other initiatives around England.
2d	Combine knowledge of legal & governance structures and develop a typology, to be reviewed by EAG.
2e	Prepare research summary including map and typology

OUTPUT: **Typology** of legal and governance structures of CEMPs, and similar initiatives.

RQ3 Where are marine nature recovery projects and how do they utilise CEMPs and similar initiatives?

WP3 Mapping MNR projects/initiatives alongside CEMPs and similar initiatives

We will identify the location and type of MNR projects and initiatives. An inventory of MNR locations known to CEMPs from the survey (WP2) and the project team will determine those that have experience of working with CEMPs or evolved as stand-alone projects.

3a	Identify knowledge of MNR projects through WP2 survey, input from EAG and other leading organisations involved in MNR initiatives (e.g. EA ReMeMaRe, LGA, RSPB, WWT, BMF)
3b	Develop and inventory of MNR project locations and overlay onto map of CEMP coverage (from WP2)

3c	Identify connection and absence of connectivity between CEMPs and MNR projects
3d	Pre-select potential range of MNR projects/partnerships with and without proximity to CEMPs
3e	Prepare research summary including map overlays of CEMPs plus MNR projects

OUTPUT: **Inventory** of MNR projects/initiatives

Map of marine nature recovery projects showing location in relation to CEMPs.

To answer **OBJECTIVE 2** we propose the following Research Questions (RQs):

RQ4 What characteristics of CEMPs and similar initiatives present barriers and opportunities to supporting marine nature recovery (MNR)?

WP4 Exploration of legal and governance structures and their qualities

Through **semi-structured interviews** with CEMPs (and similar initiatives) officers, partners and members, regional researchers will assess:

- Four quality criteria: efficiency, effectiveness, equity and legitimacy (which enable or hinder representivity of partners interests and therefore their investment in CEMPs).
- Strategies and targets the partners are working with and identify their priority towards coastal and marine nature recovery.
- Perception of CEMPs' role in MNR projects (interviews with officers & partners involved in CEMPs and *not directly* involved: utilising our project database of similar initiatives).
- Wider barriers and enablers to participating in MNR projects.
- Feedback on MNR project performance in relation to the four criteria, regardless of CEMP involvement.

Our approach to interviews will be guided by experience from *realist methodology* which seeks to understand what works, for whom, in what context. It will focus particularly on understanding the causal mechanisms that explain how CEMPs achieve their outcomes and the role of context in facilitating this (e.g. hosting arrangements). This is especially important because CEMPs have evolved almost entirely 'bottom-up' and are consequently diverse in nature.

Analysis of qualitative interview data will be undertaken as a team utilising shared access to an NVivo project, with a coding frame co-developed and iterations of analysis undertaken for analysis to produce robust and impartial findings. We will be looking for evidence of partnership successes and failures including perceptions (using ranking scales/ narrative analysis/ videography) around four qualities.

4a	Identify selection criteria for and decide on **12** locations across **4** regions for further research*.
4b	Design semi-structured interviews in conjunction with regional researchers
4c	Conduct interviews with 3-4 people in each location = approx 40 interviews
4d	Analyse quantitative and qualitative data from interviews
4e	Prepare research summary including map overlays of CEMPs plus MNR projects

***** Identification of locations will be based on selection criteria defined through the typology of CEMPs legal and governance structures (WP2), the map of both CEMPs and MNR project locations (WP3), informed by the PAG and agreed with NE.

OUTPUT: Quantitative data evidencing four criteria. Qualitative interview data for coding analysis. Analysis and reporting from combined evidence.

RQ5 What experience and opportunity exists to broaden the funding base to support MNR projects and what (if any) role could CEMPs support?

WP5 Funding mechanisms to strengthen MNR opportunities utilising CEMPs.

Through WP1-4 the survey, inventory and interviews we will obtain information to support the following needs:

5a	Identify MNR opportunities where CEMPs have played a role
5b	Identify existing sources of funding for MNR (accessed by CEMPs/their partners) and the balance of investment across private/public/charity sectors.
5c	Explore CEMP experience of engaging with private sector partners and funding sources and their perceptions of challenges to accessing funding/finance including the use of market mechanisms

5d	Identify and explore a cross-section of existing and potential future funding pathways (e.g. Corporate Social Responsibility, philanthropic donations, biodiversity net gain compliance and green/blue finance market mechanisms) through 1-2-1 interviews with investors and advocates (e.g. NE Nature Recovery Network, Blue Carbon Forum, EA ReMeMaRe project).
5e	Review of international conservation financing for coastal and marine nature recovery and how they could support CEMPs to achieve NE goals
5f	**Workshop** with project team, NE staff and investors/advocates to explore opportunities*
5g	Workshop report and recommendations

OUTPUT: Workshop reporting recommendations on how to scale-up market mechanisms to support MNR utilising experience of good/bad practice from CEMPs and similar initiatives.

RQ6 What trends can be identified between CEMPs legal and governance structures (RQ2) and their ability to pioneer and support delivery of MNR projects (RQ3)?

WP6 Dissemination of Recommendations

Identify the causes and effects of challenges and opportunities highlighted through the interview process and propose a theory of change to scale-up ambition for MNR utilising CEMPs.

6a	Review of findings and analysis by EAG
6b	Host a **Theory of Change workshop** with EAG and invited guests*
6c	Recommendations presented to NE
6d	Preparation and EAG review of Research Summaries
6e	Preparation and EAG review of online presentation
6d	Preparation and review of draft academic journal paper for peer review.

OUTPUTs:

Theory of change and recommendations on how Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships can support coastal and marine nature recovery.

Summary Report, Research Summaries, Presentation and Academic Paper to share findings and scale-up opportunities for MNR.

Appendix 3: Expert Advisory Group

The Expert Advisory Group comprised the following members:

Dr Sarah Coulthard, Dr Emma McKinley, Dr Pamela Buchan, Dr Martin Le Tissier, Dr Caroline Hattam and Dr Tara Hooper. The group included the Regional Researchers and the TCC Project Team; Kaja Curry, Bill Parker, Susannah Bleakley; Dr Natasha Bradshaw, Amy Pryor and Niall Benson.

Appendix 4: Qualtrics survey (Word version)

OUTLINE

J30303251 - NE_A EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS FOR MARINE NATURE RECOVERY – CPN131123

Survey Flow

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Block: Introduction and Consent (2 Questions)

Standard: PART 1 – LOCATION of COASTAL, ESTUARY and MARINE PARTNERSHIPS (11 Questions)

Standard: PART 2 – GOVERNANCE and FINANCE (22 Questions)

Standard: PART 3 - MARINE NATURE RECOVERY (9 Questions)

Standard: What Happens Next (6 Questions)

INTRODUCTION Natural England are searching for evidence about the capacity and capability of partnerships to support marine nature recovery. You are invited to participate in this survey because of your role with a local coastal, estuary or marine partnership. The aim is to confirm the existing location and character of partnerships, and their links with marine nature recovery projects. This is a key opportunity to influence future

investment. Please refer to the Project Summary for background information about this research.

There are three parts to the survey: 1. Location of coastal, estuary and marine partnerships 2. Governance and finance 3. Involvement in marine nature recovery projects/initiatives. The survey will take approximately **20-30 minutes** to complete. The questions are aimed at partnership managers/officers/co-ordinators and their leaders/hosts or supporting partners. This survey is a first step in the project, to be followed by selecting partnerships for interview. You will have the opportunity to express your level of interest at the end of the survey.

CONSENT
By continuing you are agreeing that your data will be used by Natural England and the Coastal Partnerships Network project team. The preservation of confidentiality is paramount and all measures will be taken to ensure the information you provide is not identifiable to yourself. The project team will work with data associated with your partnership initiative but protect your individual anonymity in any published reports. For further information please see Natural England's social research privacy notice. Participation in this survey is entirely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time by exiting the survey.

- I agree to take part (1)

PART 1 – LOCATION of COASTAL, ESTUARY and MARINE PARTNERSHIPS

PT 1_INTRODUCTION Natural England wish to characterise coastal partnerships across England, so we need to update the Coastal Partnerships Network audit undertaken in 2020.

Please answer this survey based on your role with ONE local coastal/estuary/marine partnership. There is an opportunity to identify other initiatives later in the survey.

Q1_CEMP name Q1 What is the name of your local Coastal/Estuary/Marine Partnership (CEMP) or similar initiative?

_____

Q2_LOCATION map **Location of Coastal, Estuary and Marine Partnerships (CEMPs)**
Please look on the map to see if your partnership is identified and then answer the question below.

Q2a_CEMP shown **Q2 a) Is your partnership/initiative shown on the above map?**
If the map does not load click here to open it in a separate tab or continue to the next question please.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Unsure (3)

Q2b_CEMP not on map Q2 b) If you answered 'no/unsure' to Q2 a) please provide the following information about the partnership you are representing:

- Name(s): (1) _____
- Location (describe): (2)
  _____

Q2c_CEMP others Q2 c) Are you aware of any other coastal/estuary/marine partnership or initiative which is not shown on the above map? If so, please provide the following information:

- Name(s): (1) _____
- Location (describe): (2)
  _____

Q3a_GEO location Please tell us the following information about the location and extent of your local partnership/initiative:

Q3 a) Where are you based (i.e. office location/host body)
Please provide the name of your partnerships' location in the text box.
You can also use the 'Smart Editor' button (lightbulb and pencil image) to draw a polygon or drop a pin on the map below (optional).

_____

Q3_MAP extent

Q3b_GEO extent **Q3 b) What is the geographical extent of your activities?**
Please provide named locations below (i.e. along the coast in both directions, plus upstream and offshore). You can also use the **Smart Editor** feature drawing tool on the map above to mark the extent (optional).
If the map does not load clickhere to open it in a separate tab, or continue to the next question please.

- Location description: (1)
  _____

Q3_Geo focus Q3 c) Is the focus of your partnership/initiative mainly coastal, catchment, estuary and/or marine?

- Coastal (1)
- Catchment (2)
- Estuary (3)
- Marine (4)

PART 2 – GOVERNANCE and FINANCE

Q4 STATUS Status of the Partnership

Q4 a) What legal, formal or informal status does your partnership have?

Tick all that apply

- Charitable status (registered with the Charities Commission) (1)
- Community Interest Company (registered with Companies House and the Office of the Regulator of CICs). (2)
- Private limited company (registered with Companies House) (3)
- Limited partnership (registered with Companies House) (4)
- Ordinary partnership (unincorporated) (5)
- Social enterprise (6)
- Co-operative (7)
- No formal status but have an Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or Terms of Reference (ToR) or similar (8)
- No formal status (9)
- Other (please specify): (10)
  _____

Q4b_STATUS_change Q4 b) Do you have any plans to change the above status?

- Yes (4)
- No (5)
- Possibly - please explain (6)
  _____

Q5 GOV_Type Governance

Q5 What type of strategic governance structure does your partnership have?
We are looking for information about the high-level structure and processes for decision making, accountability and organisational culture.
Tick all that apply.

- Constitution (1)
- Articles of Association (2)
- Trustees (3)
- Directors (4)
- Board Members (5)
- Steering Group (6)
- Joint Advisory Committee (7)
- ⊗None (8)
- Other (please specify): (9)
  _____

Q6_GOV_Descr

Q6 Please describe the governance structure of your partnership and how operational decisions are made?
For example, who takes strategic decisions, who appoints and line manages senior staff, how are partners involved in decision-making?
(e.g. ""“Trustees take strategic decisions, employ staff and are responsible for overseeing operations. Day to day management is delegated to the Senior Management team. A Joint Advisory Committee bring together the stakeholders and funders, and provide a wider input and initial consultation mechanism”).

_____

Q7 GOV_representation

Q7 To what extent are the following interests/stakeholders represented in the strategic governance of your partnership?
Tick all that apply.
For any unanswered questions please click on 'Continue without answering' to proceed to the next question.

	Low representation (1)	Medium representation (2)	High representation (3)

County Council (1)	○	○	○
Unitary Authority (21)	○	○	○
District Council (2)	○	○	○
Parish/Town Council (3)	○	○	○
Natural England (4)	○	○	○
Environment Agency (5)	○	○	○
Marine Management Organisation (6)	○	○	○
Coastal Group (risk management authorities) (22)	○	○	○
Water Company/water quality/catchment management (7)	○	○	○
Port/harbour authority/shipping (8)	○	○	○
Marine industry (e.g. renewable energy, cabling) (9)	○	○	○
Commercial/recreational fisheries (10)	○	○	○
Biodiversity conservation non-governmental organisation (11)	○	○	○
Heritage and local history (12)	○	○	○
Recreation/tourism/beach management (13)	○	○	○
Regeneration and economic development (14)	○	○	○
Industry/local business (15)	○	○	○
Community organisation (16)	○	○	○

Consultancy (17)	○	○	○
Other (please specify): (18)	○	○	○
Other (please specify): (19)	○	○	○
Other (please specify): (20)	○	○	○

Q8a_FUNDING_Partners Funding

Q8 a) Who are the main funding partners for <u>core/long-term services</u> (e.g. secretariat staff)? *The next question will ask about project/short-term funding. We are looking for income rather then in-kind support.*
Please base your answer on last financial year (2022-2023).
Tick all that apply. For any unanswered questions please click on 'Continue without answering' to proceed to the next question.

	Minor funder (1)	Moderate funder (2)	Major funder (3)
County Council (1)	○	○	○
Unitary Authority (27)	○	○	○
District Council (2)	○	○	○
Parish/Town Council (3)	○	○	○
Natural England (4)	○	○	○
Environment Agency (5)	○	○	○
Marine Management Organisation (6)	○	○	○
Water Company/water quality/catchment management (7)	○	○	○
Port/harbour authority/shipping (8)	○	○	○
Marine industry (e.g. renewable energy, cabling) (9)	○	○	○
Commercial/recreational fisheries (10)	○	○	○

Biodiversity conservation non-governmental organisation (11)	○	○	○
Heritage and local history (12)	○	○	○
Recreation/tourism/beach management (13)	○	○	○
Regeneration and economic development (14)	○	○	○
Industry/local business (15)	○	○	○
Community organisation (16)	○	○	○
Consultancy (17)	○	○	○
National grant giving bodies/Charitable trusts (18)	○	○	○
Local or regional grant giving bodies/Charitable trusts (19)	○	○	○
Management fees / full cost recovery from project income (20)	○	○	○
Gifts from individuals (21)	○	○	○
Business donations (22)	○	○	○
Developer contributions (23)	○	○	○
Other (please specify): (24)	○	○	○
Other (please specify): (25)	○	○	○
Other (please specify): (26)	○	○	○

Q8b_FUNDING_project

Q8 b) Who are the main funding partners for project/short-term activity?
Please base your answer on last financial year (2022-2023). We are looking for income rather then in-kind support.
Tick all that apply. For any unanswered questions please click on 'Continue without answering' to proceed to the next question.

	Minor funder (1)	Moderate funder (2)	Major funder (3)
County Council / Unitary Authority (1)	○	○	○
District Council (2)	○	○	○
Parish/Town Council (3)	○	○	○
Natural England (4)	○	○	○
Environment Agency (5)	○	○	○
Marine Management Organisation (6)	○	○	○
Water Company/water quality/catchment management (7)	○	○	○
Port/harbour authority/shipping (8)	○	○	○
Marine industry (e.g. renewable energy, cabling) (9)	○	○	○
Commercial/recreational fisheries (10)	○	○	○
Biodiversity conservation non-governmental organisation (11)	○	○	○
Heritage and local history (12)	○	○	○
Recreation/tourism/beach management (13)	○	○	○
Regeneration and economic development (14)	○	○	○

Industry/local business (15)	○	○	○
Community organisation (16)	○	○	○
Consultancy (17)	○	○	○
National grant giving bodies/Charitable trusts (18)	○	○	○
Local or regional grant giving bodies/Charitable trusts (19)	○	○	○
Management fees / full cost recovery from project income (20)	○	○	○
Gifts from individuals (21)	○	○	○
Business donations (22)	○	○	○
Developer contributions (23)	○	○	○
National Lottery (24)	○	○	○
Other (please specify): (25)	○	○	○
Other (please specify): (26)	○	○	○

Q8c_overall Q8 c) Please could you indicate the approximate balance of your overall funding (core & project) between public/private/charity/other sectors?
Please base your answer on last financial year (2022-2023).

Public : _____ (1)

Private : _____ (2)

Charity : _____ (3)

Other sectors : _____ (4)

Total : _____

Q8d_comment Q8 d) Would you like to provide any comments on the balance of funding?

_____

Q9 STAFFING Staffing and Volunteers

Q9a_STAFF FTE employ

Q9 a) In total, how many FTE* people are <u>employed (paid)</u> by your partnership?
*FTE = Full Time Equivalent and can be made up by full time, part time and seasonal staff. Tick one box.

- None (1)
- <1 FTE (2)
- 1-3 FTE (3)
- 3-5 FTE (4)
- >5 FTE (5)

Q9b_STAFF FTE volunt Q9 b) In total, how many FTE people are <u>volunteering (unpaid</u>) by your partnership to support core servcies and/or to manage the projects your partnership manages?
Tick one box. We are looking for the amount of in-kind support.

- None (1)
- (2)
- 1-3 FTE (3)
- 3-5 FTE (4)
- >5 FTE (5)

Q9c_comment Q9 c) Would you like to provide any comments on the number of people employed or volunteering in-kind support?

_____

Q10 AIMS

Aims

Q10a_aim Q10 a) In one sentence, could you please describe what your coastal/estuary/marine partnership was set up to achieve?

_____

_____

_____

Q10b_age Q10 b) For how many years has the partnership been active?

_____

_____

_____

Q10c_achieved Q10 c) Overall, to what extent do you feel the partnership has achieved its ambitions?

- Achieved to a high degree (1)
- Mostly achieved (2)
- Somewhat achieved (3)
- Not very much achieved (4)
- Not achieved at all (5)

Q10d_explain score Q10 d) Please state why you have allocated this score?

_____

Q11a_EFFECT_Gov Effectiveness

Q11 a) In your opinion, to what extent do the following factors determine the effectiveness of your partnership?
Please note we are asking here about the effectiveness of the partnership in delivering what it was set up to achieve.
The factors listed have been the subject of previous questions. Other factors can be added in Q11 b).
For any unanswered questions please click on 'Continue without answering' to proceed to the next question.

	Not important (1)	A little important (2)	Somewhat important (3)	Quite important (4)	Highly important (5)
Hosting arrangements (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Status - formal/informal (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Governance structure (4)	○	○	○	○	○

Number/balance of funding partners (5)	○	○	○	○	○
Balance between core service budget and project funding (6)	○	○	○	○	○
Interests/stakeholder representation in governance structure (7)	○	○	○	○	○
Staffing and volunteers (8)	○	○	○	○	○
Aims (9)	○	○	○	○	○

Q11b_EFFECT_soft **Q11 b) What other 'softer factors' appear to determine the effectiveness of your partnership?**
Tick all that apply. For any unanswered questions please click on 'Continue without answering' to proceed to the next question.

	Not important (1)	A little important (2)	Somewhat important (3)	Quite important (4)	Highly important (5)
Skills (e.g. of officers/staff/volunteers) (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Independence (e.g. of chair/staff) (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Trust (e.g. among partners) (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Leadership (e.g. chair/manager) (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Collaboration (e.g. between partners and stakeholders) (5)	○	○	○	○	○
Understanding (e.g. of issues amongst	○	○	○	○	○

partners and stakeholders) (6)					
Funding (e.g. availability) (7)	○	○	○	○	○
Capacity (e.g. time) (10)	○	○	○	○	○
Track record (e.g. delivery success) (8)	○	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify) (9)	○	○	○	○	○

Q11c_EFFECT other Q11 c) Would you like to make any other comments about the ability of your partnership to meet its aims?

_____

PART 3 - MARINE NATURE RECOVERY

P3_INTRO The final part of the survey explores links between Coastal/Estuary/Marine Partnerships and Marine Nature Recovery (MNR) projects/initiatives.

DEFINITION **Marine Nature Recovery definition**
Marine nature recovery is needed to reverse past declines in wildlife and habitats and bring our seas back to life, so that they are healthy and thriving now and into the future for people, climate and nature. To rebuild the marine life-support systems that deliver the many benefits that society receives from a healthy ocean we need urgent action. This includes: A growing and resilient MPA network designated and managed for nature conservation, including Highly Protected Marine Areas Habitat restoration and creation within and outside the MPA network to help restore ecological processes and connect marine wildlife populations Building resilience to climate change, including acting to protect, restore and expand vital ‘blue carbon’ assets and the ecosystem services that they provide Enabling people to enjoy, understand and connect with nature at sea, benefitting health and wellbeing. Source: Marine Nature Recovery in Cornwall (June 2021).

Q12 Marine Nature Recovery (MNR) Engagement

Q12 a) Please indicate your partnerships' level of engagement in coastal or marine nature recovery (MNR) projects/initiatives:
For each named MNR project/initiative the table requests information about the habitat location, your partnerships involvement and whether it is past/present/planned.

For any unanswered questions please click on 'Continue without answering' to proceed to the next question.

	MNR project name	Habitat focus				Level of involvement	Status			Additional information
	(1)	Intertidal (1)	Subtidal (2)	Offshore (>12nm) (3)	Other (4)		Past/complete (1)	Present/ongoing (2)	Future/planned (3)	(1)
1. (1)		•	•	•	•	▼ Significantly (e.g. leading) (1 ... Not at all (5)	○	○	○	
2. (2)		•	•	•	•	▼ Significantly (e.g. leading) (1 ... Not at all (5)	○	○	○	
3. (3)		•	•	•	•	▼ Significantly (e.g. leading) (1 ... Not at all (5)	○	○	○	
4. (4)		•	•	•	•	▼ Significantly (e.g. leading) (1 ... Not at all (5)	○	○	○	
5. (5)		•	•	•	•	▼ Significantly (e.g. leading)	○	○	○	

						(1 ... Not at all (5)				

Q12b_MNR location Q12 b) Please could you indicate the extent of the MNR project/initiative(s) you have named above on the map below.
Use the drop-pin or drawing tool to map a polygon. If the map above does not load, please click here to open a separate tab, or continue to the next question please.

- Click to write Choice 1 (1)
- Click to write Choice 2 (2)
- Click to write Choice 3 (3)

Q13_MNR engagement preference

Q13 To what extent would you like to be more engaged in marine nature recovery projects/initiatives? *Tick one box*

- Significantly (e.g. leading) (1)
- Involved (e.g. a partner) (2)
- Some (e.g. participating) (3)
- Little (e.g. aware) (4)
- Not at all (e.g. not engaged) (5)

Q14_MNR barriers

Q14 To what extent do the following factors present barriers to your engagement in MNR projects/initiatives? *Tick all that apply. For any unanswered questions please click on 'Continue without answering' to proceed to the next question.*

	Strongly (1)	Somewhat (2)	A little (3)	Not at all (4)	Prefer not to say (5)
Skills (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Funding/finance (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Partner buy-in (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Permissions/licences (4)	○	○	○	○	○

Limited opportunities identified (5)	○	○	○	○	○
Access to shared knowledge and expertise (7)	○	○	○	○	○
Other (6)	○	○	○	○	○

Q15_OTHER open

Q15 Please provide any other comments relating to the questions in this survey.

_____

What Happens Next

Please continue to the bottom of this page to submit your response.

Based on the results of this survey, CPN will be inviting a selection of partnerships for interview. We will explore four qualities of existing partnerships in more depth: effectiveness, efficiency, equity and legitimacy.

Further_engagement

Please indicate whether you would be interested in further engagement in this research:

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)
- ○ Don't Know (3)

CONTACT **Further Contact**
Please provide an email address for further contact about this survey and to be entered into the draw for a free Coastal Futures 2024 conference ticket:

_____

Opt Out
We would like to retain your email contact for future contact from the Coastal Partnerships Network. If you would rather opt-out of future updates, please tick this box.

- ○ Opt-out (1)

Please submit your response by clicking on the next arrow (bottom right) below.

The results of this research will be published by Natural England and the Coastal Partnerships Network in 2024. We would welcome any other comments to inform the direction of this research. Please contact Dr Natasha Bradshaw (Principal Researcher): njb.bradshaw@gmail.com

For further information about the Coastal Partnerships Network please visit https://www.coastalpartnershipsnetwork.org.uk/

Appendix 5: Participants brief and consent form

PARTICIPANTS BRIEF AND CONSENT FORM

Partnership: [name]

ABOUT THE PROJECT 'Partnerships4MNR'

Natural England are searching for evidence about the capacity and capability of partnerships to support marine nature recovery. You are invited to interview because of your role with a local coastal, estuary or marine partnership and your response to the project survey at the end of last year. I am one of the regional researchers commissioned by The Coastal Collaborative on behalf of Natural England.

The aim of the project is to explore the effectiveness of Coastal/Estuary/Marine Partnerships (CEMPs) and similar initiatives, in particular their ability to support Marine Nature Recovery (MNR). The results may offer a key opportunity for NE to influence future investment.

Please refer to the Project Summary for further information about this research.

THE INTERVIEW

The interview will explore responses to the survey in more depth. It will focus on your existing governance arrangements, balance of funding (core/project) and how these influence the effectiveness of your partnership's activities. We will also explore your perspective on the partnerships past, present and future role in marine nature recovery (MNR). The aim is to understand possible connections between the partnerships governance arrangements and other factors which affect your ability to engage in and support MNR.

Your interview will take approximately **60 minutes**. The questions are aimed at partnership managers/officers/co-ordinators and their leaders/hosts or supporting partners. The interview will be followed by an invitation to participate in a workshop in March and we aim to share the research reports widely later this year.

CONSENT

By continuing you are agreeing that your data will be used by Natural England and the Coastal Partnerships Network project team. The preservation of confidentiality is paramount and all measures will be taken to ensure the information you provide is not identifiable to yourself. The project team will work with data associated with your partnership initiative but protect your individual anonymity in any published reports. For further information please see Natural England's social research privacy notice. Participation in this survey is entirely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time before, during or after the interview.

Your consent

Please tick all the boxes that apply to you:

☐ I agree to voluntarily participate in an interview. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time without giving a reason.

☐ I agree to the interview being recorded as data for the evaluation.

☐ I agree that the information I provide as part of this interview may be used in reports, publications and other outputs for this project. The information will be presented anonymously so that I will not be personally identified.

☐ I understand that any personal data I provide for this project will be destroyed at the end of the project.

☐ I agree that my organisation's name can be identified in the final report and any final outputs.

Signed ……

Full name (please print) ……

Date ……

Thank you for taking the time to read this information and for your valuable contribution to this project.

Please return the signed form to Niall Benson - E: ***dniallbenson@gmail.com***

Appendix 6: Interview questions and guidance for regional researchers

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWEES

Interviewer:

Partnership Name:

Interviewees name & role within/in relation to the Partnership:

PART A Introduction [10 mins]

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an interview for Natural England's project, which asks us to explore what makes effective partnerships for marine nature recovery.

Q1: Is everyone happy about the meeting being recorded?

Q2: Firstly, let's start with some introductions

Q3: Do you have any initial questions about the purpose of this project?

The interview is designed to be semi-structured to allow us to have a free- flowing conversation. However, I will be guiding us through five topics over the next 50 minutes.

The interview should cover five topics, ideally in this order:

PART B

1. governance strengths and weaknesses such as the partnerships scale, type, status, function and host;

1. balance of funding sources such as core vs. project income and future intentions/aspirations;

1. perspective on the 'quality criteria' which NE have asked us to assess, which are effectiveness, efficiency, equity and legitimacy;

PART C

iv. the extent of MNR engagement (past, present and future) - reflections and aspirations;

iv. finance for MNR.

Suggested Questions

PART B Governance and funding [30 mins]

Q4: I understand that your partnership's governance is… [RR to check survey response]. Please could you elaborate on the strengths and weaknesses of this arrangement?

[RR to prepare specific questions about existing governance that may be unique (e.g. charity or company status evolution)].

Q5: What other factors (apart from governance) influence the effectiveness of the partnership. Can you give examples of 'softer factors' such as….[check Q11b of survey response]?

We are looking for further insights from your survey response on: …

[RR to prepare specific suggestions based on survey response (e.g. any references to trust, neutrality, legitimacy, equity, changes in governance or individuals/skills that may have influenced the 'softer' factors determining effectiveness.)

Q6: Could you comment on the balance of partners supporting the partnership financially or in-kind? We are looking at what makes partnerships equitable.

Q7: To what extent does the balance of core vs. project funding influence delivery?

We are looking for further insights from your survey response on: …

[RR to prepare specific questions based on survey response about their funding e.g. enabling private sector engagement, future possible pathways for investment etc.]

Q8: Do you think that a change in governance status (e.g. to a more formal body) would influence the effectiveness of the partnership's work? If so, in what way(s)?

PART C MNR [20 minutes].

Q9: You have indicated that the partnership has [led/participated] **in** [n= /several] **MNR projects. Please could you indicate how this came about?** What role did your partnership play in the project and did you receive funding to take part? If so, what was the funding source?

Q10: What were the challenges/barriers to delivery?

Q11: To what extent do you see future opportunities for the partnership to lead/participate in future MNR initiatives?

We are looking for further insights from your survey response on: …

[RR to prepare specific questions based on survey response about knowledge of MNR funding mechanisms and possible future pathways for MNR investment such as NEIRF, natural capital (and if they fit with existing aims/objectives).

Q12: If the availability of finance for MNR increases in and around your partnership's location, would you seek to lead/participate in future restoration projects? If so/not, why?

Closing Question

Q13: Do you have any other observations to offer about the aims of this research?

Thank you very much for your time to participate in this research.

Key triggers for discussion

Please identify these yourself from reviewing the survey response and the reasons the CEMP/similar initiative was selected for interview (see TCC google drive*: Shortlisting table* and *Interview Log*).

Appendix 7: Workshop agenda and report

EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS FOR MARINE NATURE RECOVERY

ONLINE WORKSHOP

Monday 11th March 09:30 – 13:00

Chair Helen Kendall, Natural England

Participants Coastal Estuary Marine Partnership officers, managers, hosts, chairs and partners
Project participants: Expert Advisory Group & Regional Researchers.

Objectives

1 Share findings from survey and interviews: characterisation, governance and involvement in marine nature recovery.

2 Explore the challenges, opportunities and a 'recipe for success' for CEMPs role to support marine nature recovery.

AGENDA

09:30 Welcome and Introductions Helen Kendall, Natural England (NE)

09:40 Project Findings to date Dr Natasha Bradshaw, The Coastal Collaborative Ltd (TCC)

- Characterisation of CEMPs Landscape
- Governance and Finance
- Marine Nature Recovery

10:00 Discussion

10:20 Financial Mechanisms

- Initial project insights — Amy Pryor, TCC
- International insights — Martin LeTissier, Coastal Matters
- UK green/blue finance — Yarema Ronish, Biodiversity Capital
- UK social impact investment — Heather Hilburn, Thames Estuary Partnership

10:40 Discussion

11:00 Break

11:20 Workshop activity

12:20 Plenary feedback and discussion

- Polling

13:00 Close

The Coastal Collaborative Ltd

Workshop Report

The findings of the research and advice provided by independent advisors, informed discussion through a workshop attended by 69 participants including survey/interviewees, EAG, NE, project team and independent researchers. It revealed deeper insights into how to unlock finance for MNR and the potential role of existing CEMPs as part of an investible MNR project partnership. The finance research presented above and at the workshop was very new to all participants, with no briefing sent out before the workshop. Therefore, the results of the workshop are considered to be preliminary, a first snapshot to highlight any in house skills and knowledge within CEMPs and any challenges, opportunities and considerations they cited that would support their undertaking future role(s) in MNR investment beyond their current experience (as detailed in RS2, Section 1)

The following scenario options were posed as potential roles that a CEMP could undertake as part of a funded MNR project partnership. They are based on the researched green finance mechanisms, nature based solutions (NbS) was the umbrella term used for MNR in this instance due to green finance mechanisms referring to NbS as nature recovery and MNR is an example of NbS. Social Impact Investment was presented and discussed after the breakout groups as it was thought to be too much new information in a short space of time.

Scenarios for MNR investment using green finance mechanisms and the potential CEMP role

1) Setting up and managing nature credits schemes for return on investment

In this scenario the CEMP would take a business focussed pioneering approach to setting up a business venture involving nature credits.

a) CEMP is helping the local authority set up a local nature credits scheme, bringing buyers and sellers of nature credits together to create a workable ‘system’. There is an urgent need for such schemes in areas affected by Nutrient Neutrality rules. The CEMP would be a convenor and a co-creator OR
b) CEMP is part of a business venture which is going to create and sell nature credits, in partnership with a landowner (which could be the local authority). There would need to be a partner who understands business planning, including financial modelling. The CEMP would be the data and partnerships specialist within the business venture.

2) Supporting & maintaining partnerships for NbS delivery

In this scenario, the CEMP has an enabling role, taking a lead role in convening partnerships.

a) A separate business venture takes the lead role as the provider of nature credits, creating a business plan, seeking private sector investment and registering and selling the nature credits to buyers. But it needs reliable partners to deliver the NbS. The CEMP convenes and coordinates a delivery partnership OR

b) As above, a separate business venture takes the lead role as the provider of nature credits. The CEMP acts as an expert scientific advisor, carries out stakeholder engagement, and measures social impacts.

3) Long-term system validation and monitoring of NbS to ensure legitimacy of nature credits

In this scenario, the CEMP either:

a) Leads in setting up a system for validation of nature credits, or
b) Carries out long-term monitoring of the NbS, to ensure the ongoing validity of the nature credits.

Each of the scenarios above would require hard governance attributes (as described in Section 3.2 RS1) to be in place for elements of the project. If the CEMP doesn't have the requisite hard governance attributes, then they can partner with an organisation capable of establishing and managing them.

All of the proposed roles above are valid for a CEMP to undertake and would utilise the knowledge and social capital inherent in a CEMP or similar initiative i.e. strong links across sectors, stakeholders and communities as well as knowledge of their local coastal and marine environment.

Workshop Breakout Session

Participants of the workshop were asked to self-select into these three scenario groups to undergo a breakout session with each supported by a Regional Researcher, an independent finance researcher and a member of the Project Team. The breakout activity was designed to interrogate each of these example roles that a CEMP could play within an MNR partnership and assess whether they had the requisite skills in house or would need capacity building. Most participants felt they naturally sat within Group 2 *Supporting and Maintaining Partnerships for NbS delivery* and therefore this breakout group was the largest. However, this may have been due to the title of this group resonating with their core CEMP role of supporting and maintaining partnerships rather than due to a strong understanding of what each role entailed and therefore no significance could be attributed to this self-selection. Each group had a set of questions to answer for the two roles described within each scenario. However, each group ran out of time and were only able to answer the first category a) role with no time to discuss or answer the b) role in each scenario. Discussions were supported with organograms (see below) where the columns represent different functional roles that are involved in delivering NbS with the CEMP role highlighted in yellow and a box detailing the skills that a CEMP will need to have in order to fulfil that role. The breakout materials, infographics used and questions asked of each group along with their verbatim responses can be seen in Annex D4 Workshop Output Breakout Groups.

Breakout Group 1 - Setting up and managing nature credits schemes for return on investment

In this group, the CEMP was taking a business focussed pioneering approach to setting up a business venture involving nature credits.

In the organograms, the columns represent different functional roles that are involved in delivering NbS with private sector investment from nature credits.

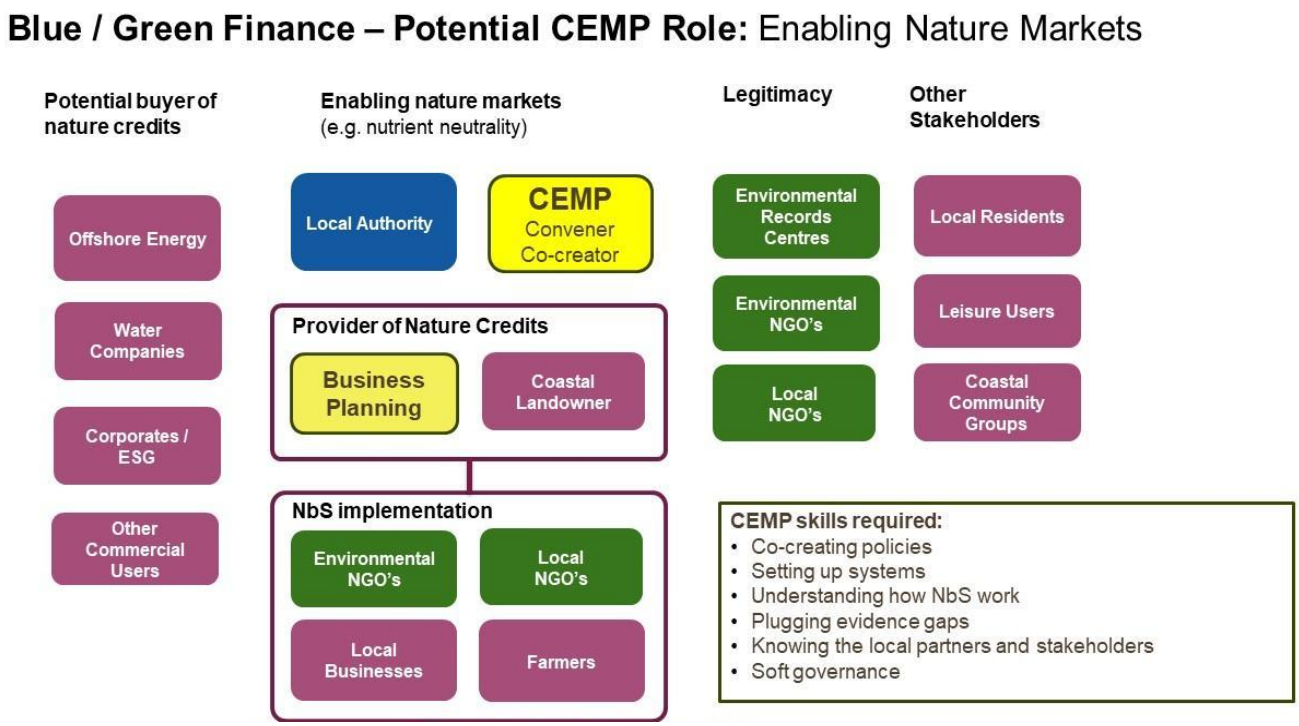

Figure 10. Miro Board 1a

Board 1(a) (above) CEMP is helping the local authority set up a local nature credits scheme, bringing buyers and sellers of nature credits together to create a workable 'system'. There is an urgent need for such schemes in areas affected by Nutrient Neutrality rules.

The CEMP would be a convenor and a co-creator.

The CEMP's role requires:

- Identifying the relevant departments and individuals within the local authority, including decision makers and stakeholders.
- Proactively seeking out land developers (potential purchasers of credits) and farmers and landowners (potential sellers of credits) to bring their viewpoints together.

- Understanding the science behind the relevant nature credits, being able to identify and action evidence gaps.
- Co-creating a workable ‘system’ to encourage a timely supply of nature credits, and pricing which works for buyers and sellers.

This role involves convening and can be done with soft governance, but the systems are likely to require formal hard governance.

Group 1 responses summary

This group identified the biggest threats to habitats in their local areas as coastal squeeze, lack of habitat connectivity, loss of coastal and marine habitats, water quality impacting habitat recovery and lack of information and understanding and overall apathy.

They agreed that the CEMPs could have a strong and clear role in stakeholder engagement, supporting adaptive management and monitoring over the longer term for maintenance and evidencing return on investment. They could play a broker role and ensure accountability of partners. However, they recognised that a legal entity would need to lead whether it be an existing organisation or a special purpose vehicle created and if a CEMP with legal status was to lead, they would need significant capacity building in nature finance.

All agreed that currently CEMPs are not in a position to offer this service either due to their current (non-) legal status, lack of nature finance skills and understanding of the nature credit market or connections in the financial sector. They all agreed that they have abundant skills for partnership coordination, stakeholder engagement and local knowledge.

When asked if there were any skills or stakeholders missing from the breakdown, the group identified Higher Education, IFCAs, commercial stakeholders and real communities. A missing skill identified as important was experience in social engagement and being able to recognise a breadth of groups of people who might be relevant to the project outside of the usual suspects which could present a risk of only identifying decision-makers, those already with power and environmental stakeholders. The CEMPs ability to convene across mixed sector needs would gain better agreement across a way forward.

When asked whether they would be prepared to change their governance to offer this role, the response was negative but a special purpose vehicle or CIC could be established that they could be a part of.

Breakout Group 2 - Supporting & maintaining partnerships for NbS delivery

In this group, the CEMP has an enabling role, taking a lead role in convening partnerships.

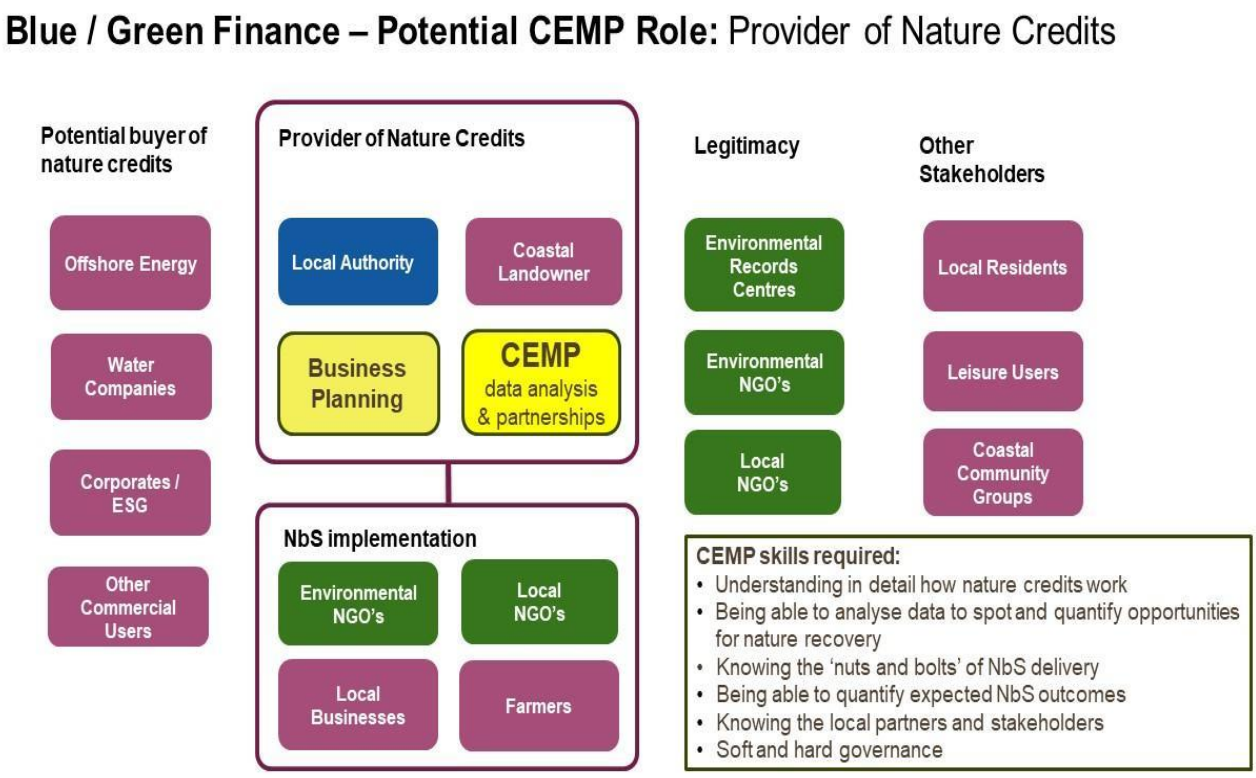

Figure 11. Miro Board 2a

Board 2(a) (above) A separate business venture takes the lead role as the provider of nature credits, creating a business plan, seeking private sector investment and registering and selling the nature credits to buyers. But it needs reliable partners to deliver the NbS.

The CEMP convenes and coordinates a delivery partnership which includes:

- environmental NGOs working in the local area
- other local NGOs
- local businesses
- farmers

The delivery partnership's role is to implement the nature recovery plan, followed by a long-term conservation plan.

The CEMP's role requires:

- Knowledge of local habitats & species
- Understanding the 'nuts and bolts' of NbS
- Knowing the local partners and stakeholders
- Track record in delivering outcomes for funders

The CEMP would probably need to be a legal entity, because private sector funders would want it to enter into a long-term legal agreement with the business venture.

Group 2 responses summary

Broadly, this group identified the biggest threats to habitats in their local areas a being coastal squeeze, lack of habitat connectivity, loss of coastal and marine habitats, water quality impacting habitat recovery, lack of information and understanding, developments (offshore and onshore), recreational disturbance, climate change induced storminess and flooding, coastal erosion, the sheer complexity of the coastal environment, lack of capacity for habitat restoration and multiple sources of impact.

They agreed that the CEMPs could play a big role in MNR implementation through partnership coordination with adequate resourcing. They identified various CEMP strengths in support of this - well connected, trusted often with a neutral standpoint and thus objective and felt that CEMPs were very important for successful delivery. Some suggested best practice guidance could be produced for CEMPs on key representatives needed and structure of an MNR partnership and that working with universities would be beneficial. CEMP hosting arrangements would need to be considered and core financing would need to be available.

Overall, the group felt that CEMPs could offer this service but at present most were under resourced and struggling with capacity. If they were to offer this service, they would need adequate resourcing and support. Other issues raised were the lack of financial understanding on nature credits. Questions were raised over the maturity of blue nature credits within the market, and concerns over local appetite for them to offer this service, with the need for it to be part of a broader portfolio of work to continue to offer their core CEMP role.

When asked if their CEMP had the requisite skills, the group was very mixed, with some participants confident they had all the skills, and others recognising they would need capacity building or buy in skills to understand nature credits and support for holding funds. Capacity was raised as an issue again and one person raised the question of whether CEMPs have the skills to become more inclusive of a broader section of society.

The group were asked if there were any skills or stakeholders they felt were missing; the lack of robust scientific monitoring and research required to manage and monitor success; and the health of the nature restored. In response some felt that blue finance posed an opportunity for long term monitoring to be financially supported as part of an MNR project. Water companies were cited as those missing from the stakeholder group.

When asked whether they would be prepared to change their governance to offer this role, the response was mixed with some saying yes, other unsure and some definitively no. But all stated that either as a caveat to changing governance or a reason for not changing

governance was because the CEMP's role was broader than just MNR delivery. All agreed that the broader remit and work of the CEMP must be able to continue to meet local needs and objectives.

Breakout Group 3 - Long-term system validation and monitoring of NbS to ensure legitimacy of nature credits

In this group, the CEMP either:

- Leads in setting up a system for validation of nature credits, or
- Carries out long-term monitoring of the NbS, to ensure the ongoing validity of the nature credits.

These require different skills, but both contribute to ensuring the legitimacy of the nature credits.

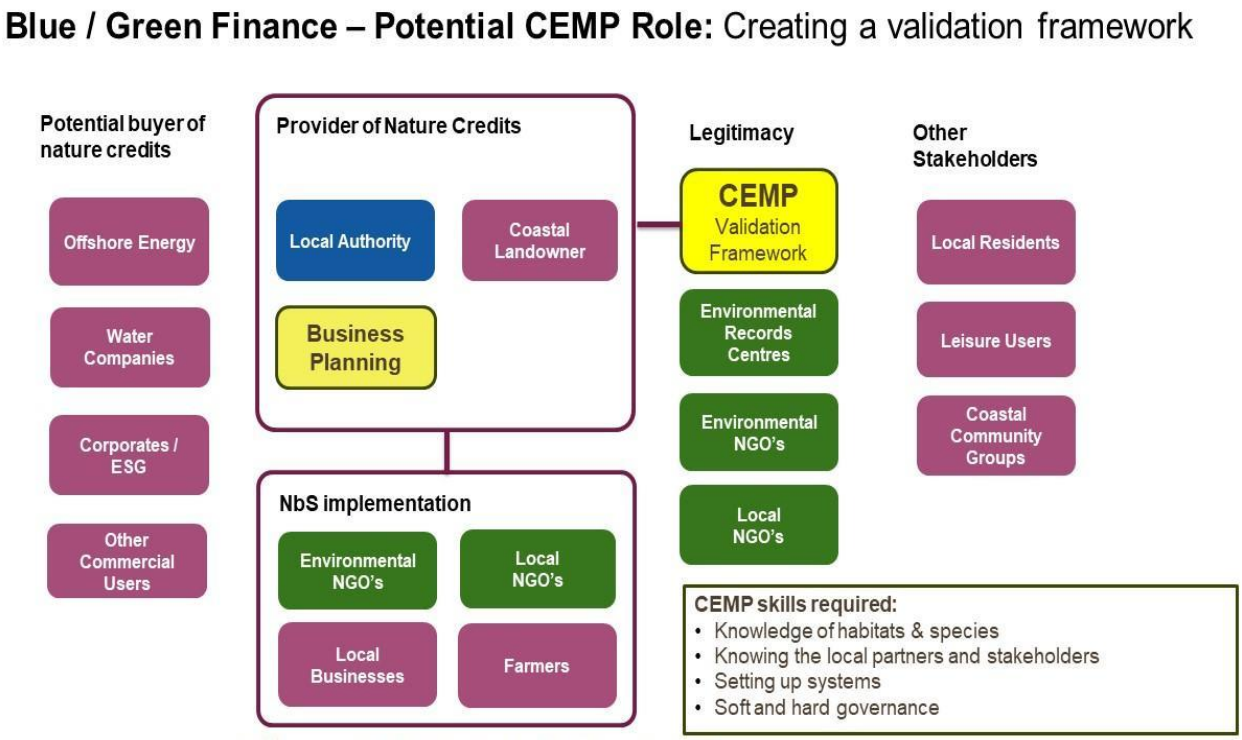

Figure 12. Miro Board 3a

Board 3(a) (above) CEMP sets up a framework 'system' for verifying and validating nature credits, convening input from:

- Environmental records centres
- Environmental NGOs
- Other NGOs
- The wider community – to identify any unintended consequences of the NbS

The CEMP's role requires:

- Knowledge of habitats & species
- Knowing the local partners and stakeholders
- Setting up systems

The CEMP could initially operate with soft governance, but the framework system would somehow need to be put on a long-term footing.

Group 3 responses summary

This group identified the biggest threats to habitats in their local areas being coastal squeeze, lack of habitat connectivity, lack of understanding of importance of marine environments, pollution impacting water quality, invasive non-native species, recreational disturbance and climate change and consequently increased storminess.

They agreed that the CEMPs could play this role if capacity could be supported and financed. In particular the coordination of a monitoring partnership and framework appealed but some highlighted that if implementing the monitoring this would require capacity and long-term funding.

Overall, the group felt that CEMPs could offer this service but only if funding and resources could be secured. Some also highlighted that it would depend on their governance and stakeholders' appetite for the CEMP to take on this role. They again highlighted that it would have to be a partnership approach with all partners pulling together.

When asked if their CEMP had the requisite skills, the group thought that the coordination skills, local knowledge and relationships were there but depending on the habitats it may require expertise to be recruited in or resourced externally. Cross partnership working would potentially be required and co-designed standardised approaches developed.

When asked if there were any skills or stakeholders they felt were missing, most listed local communities, businesses and those that are not represented by umbrella groups needed to be brought into the partnership. Expert skills on monitoring the environment and measuring ecosystem service delivery and how this may be impacted by climate change was raised by one as a skill missing.

When asked whether they would be prepared to change their governance to offer this role, the response was positive from all with the caveat that the Partnership would need to be consulted and the benefit to the CEMP, its members and objectives would need to be evidenced with one posing the question of how radical the change would be.

Social Impact Investment potential for financing MNR

The question and answer session after the presentation revealed that participants were extremely interested in this new area and could envisage bringing social enterprises and investors into their partnerships. There was interest in engaging with organisations active in the social impact sector to provide the upskilling that would be required to attract outward investment from this space. This was caveated with the need for building capacity, introductions to those within the space and creating a social and environmental investment ‘Roadmap’ to guide creation of MNR partnerships and projects with a blended finance model replicating the Scottish Social Impact Ecosystem Map (Figure 9 Section 2.3 above).

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