Marine Protected Area Network Management Action Plan for Wales

2019–2020

Introduction

This is the second Marine Protected Area (MPA) Network Management Action Plan for Wales (2019-2020), produced by the Wales MPA Management Steering Group (Steering Group). It sets out the priority network-level actions to improve MPA management and, therefore, improve or maintain condition of the network of MPAs in Wales. The 2019-2020 Action Plan includes ongoing management actions identified within the 2018-19 Action Plan plus new actions identified and prioritised for 2019-20. It complements management activity delivered at a local level and identified within individual site action plans where they exist[1].

The 2019-2020 Action Plan sits alongside the MPA Network Management Framework for Wales 2018-2023[2] (Framework) and collectively they provide a steer for Management Authorities to guide delivery of the long-term vision for the management of the network:

> The Welsh MPA network is under effective and consistent management which safeguards the marine wildlife and habitats of sites, and leads to site features achieving or maintaining favourable condition. Network management supports resilient marine ecosystems which in turn help to achieve clean, safe, healthy, sustainable, productive and biologically diverse Welsh seas. MPAs are valued for the long-term benefits they provide to the people of Wales through the protection of their rich natural and cultural heritage.

Publication of this 2019-2020 Action Plan is accompanied by the publication of the Wales MPA Network Management Annual Report 2018-2019[3] which provides an update on delivery progress of actions prioritised in last year's Action Plan (2018-2019). In preparing both documents, the Steering Group considered how it can better assess and critique the contribution the actions make to improvement in management and overall condition of the MPA network in Wales in support of this vision. The Steering Group will reflect this learning to inform future iterations of both the Annual Report and Action Plan.

The Actions

Each action within the 2019-2020 Action Plan contributes to at least one of the Framework's five MPA management principles, to guide delivery of the vision and objectives for the management of the network:

1. **Strategic Planning:** Management should be guided by strategic planning processes at both a sectoral and all-Wales level. It supports sustainable use of the MPA network in ways which conserve and enhance condition, support resilience of marine ecosystems, support wellbeing and deliver sustainable management of natural resources.

2. **Regulation, development consenting and assessment processes:** Regulatory processes, consenting decisions and assessment processes should be delivered consistently and proportionately across the network, and proactively consider and support the maintenance or enhancement (where possible/appropriate) of the condition of relevant sites and features across the network.

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[1] please see Annex 2 of MPA Network Management Framework for Wales 2018-2023 for details of these: gov.wales/marine-protected-area-network-management-framework-wales

[2] gov.wales/marine-protected-area-network-management-framework-wales

[3] gov.wales/marine-protected-area-network-management-annual-report

3. **Management advice and guidance:** Decision-making and management operations should be supported by clear and consistent advice and guidance on MPAs including their conservation objectives.

4. **Understanding the condition of, and pressures and threats on, sites and their features to inform management:** Management should be informed by, and consistently refer to, formal assessment and reporting on the health and condition of features, sites and the network as a whole. Assessment and reporting is informed by a prioritised monitoring programme that improves understanding of condition, change and impacts across aspects of the network where key pressures are identified.

5. **Wider management:** Management operations on individual and multiple sites should be prioritised to ensure delivery of activity that has the potential for greatest improvement in the management of key pressures, and on condition across the network. Management activities may maintain or enhance feature condition, identify and address particular local issues and pressures, and raise awareness of MPAs through targeted interventions and engagement with members of the public.

Actions were proposed to the MPA Management Steering Group for assessment against a set of agreed prioritisation criteria, which are set out in the Annex. The Steering Group has agreed a list of 25 priority actions, 19 have been carried over from the 2018-2019 Action Plan due to their delivery timescales or their ongoing nature and there are 6 new actions. The actions reflect the breadth of MPA management activity which takes place day in day out, as well as specific interventions and projects. As with the 2018-2019 Action Plan, many are investigatory in nature and it is anticipated that they will result in the development of active interventions suitable to be put forward for screening and prioritisation for future iterations of the Action Plan.

	Action	Description	MPA Network Management Outcome(s)	Timescale for delivery	Key Management Authorities	Resource secured: Y/N?
Actions carried over from the 2018-2019 Action Plan						
1	Develop an approach to undertaking improved and periodic MPA condition assessments. *Previously listed as Action 1 in 2018-2019 Action Plan.*	This project will develop indicators and a process for improving reporting on condition of features protected within the network of MPAs in Wales. The main activities of the project are: • development of a series of reporting indicators, to allow the more efficient assessment and reporting of the condition of MPA features; • development of agreed guidance describing how site condition assessments will be carried out on all MPAs; and • trial of the new methodology on MPA site(s)/feature(s) in Wales.	The main outcome of the project will be the ability to carry out timely site level condition assessments leading to a better understanding of the condition of MPAs in Wales which will better inform management and focus priorities.	Oct 2018 – March 2022	NRW	Y

	Action	Description	MPA Network Management Outcome(s)	Timescale for delivery	Key Management Authorities	Resource secured: Y/N?
2	Deliver MPA management through regulatory consenting and assessment processes. Previously listed as Action 2 in 2018-2019 Action Plan.	The aim of this work is to make sure that regulatory consenting, assessment processes and activity enabling decision-making processes take account of the potential impacts to the MPA network and include appropriate mitigation where necessary.	Decision-making that reduces impact on the features of the MPA network.	Ongoing	All Management Authorities	Y
3	Further develop a risk-based marine monitoring programme across the MPA network. Previously listed as Action 4 in 2018-2019 Action Plan.	This work is developing a prioritised, risk-based marine biodiversity monitoring programme which will be delivered using the most efficient and effective techniques available. Results and analyses will be published and used to inform management. Whilst the new programme is being developed, the current monitoring programme will continue to be delivered.	Improved evidence base to inform future assessments of MPA condition and appropriate management measures. In the long term this work will enable a greater understanding of the effectiveness of management measures.	Monitoring programme review nearing completion. Implementation of new integrated marine biodiversity monitoring programme.	NRW JNCC WG	Y

	Action	Description	MPA Network Management Outcome(s)	Timescale for delivery	Key Management Authorities	Resource secured: Y/N?
4	Develop an approach for refining conservation objectives for all MPAs in Wales while continuing to publish guidance for new sites as necessary. Previously listed as Action 5 in 2018-2019 Action Plan.	The overarching aim of this project is to develop an approach for improving conservation objectives for all MPAs in Wales. This year the project will review outputs of the scenario testing of conservation objectives carried out in 2018-19 and agree a way forward. Continue to publish conservation advice for sites as needed.	Decision-making and management will be supported by clear and consistent advice and guidance on MPAs including their conservation objectives.	Next phase: March 2020. Publication of conservation advice ongoing.	NRW JNCC	Y
5	Develop a UK Dolphin and Harbour Porpoise Conservation Strategy. Previously listed as Action 6 in 2018-2019 Action Plan.	This work aims to develop a consistent, UK-wide approach to managing pressures and threats on nine of the most commonly found dolphin, porpoise and small whale species in UK waters within and outside MPAs.	The strategy, in addition to existing legal obligations, will inform targeted management to improve understanding and conservation status of these species in UK waters.	Consultation in 2019. Publication and implementation from 2020.	WG JNCC NRW	Y

	Action	Description	MPA Network Management Outcome(s)	Timescale for delivery	Key Management Authorities	Resource secured: Y/N?
6	Assess and where necessary manage the impact of commercial fishing activities on MPAs. Previously listed as Action 8 in 2018-2019 Action Plan.	The aim of the project is to ensure that commercial fisheries management within European Marine Sites affords adequate protection to designated features, in line with the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. The project is assessing interactions between species and habitats and different types of fisheries gear. These assessments are being used to inform whether future fisheries management measures are necessary. This year, project activities will include: • marine mammal assessments (NRW); • potting interaction assessments (NRW); and • final draft of management proposal exploring options for additional management measures for the purple assessed activities to inform Ministerial Advice.	Improved evidence base on the pressures/ threats from all relevant commercial fishing activities to inform whether management may be needed. Exploration and implementation of management interventions, where required, to improve or maintain the condition of features across the network.	Assessments completed 2020; management measures ongoing as necessary.	WG NRW	Y

	Action	Description	MPA Network Management Outcome(s)	Timescale for delivery	Key Management Authorities	Resource secured: Y/N?
7	Operate a risk-based approach to fisheries enforcement. Previously listed as Action 9 in 2018-2019 Action Plan.	This work, which includes enforcement and prosecution, within the Welsh zone and its MPAs, operates a risk-based and intelligence-led approach to marine enforcement, using technological improvements to maintain a focus on high-risk fisheries activities. In serves to act as a strong deterrent to help prevent unlawful fishing activities and contribute towards the continued protection of MPA features and the overall condition of the network.	Approach will improve evidence base and support site management to protect designated features in MPAs.	Ongoing	WG	Y

	Action	Description	MPA Network Management Outcome(s)	Timescale for delivery	Key Management Authorities	Resource secured: Y/N?
8	MPA Network Condition Improvement Programme (previously the MPA Condition Improvement Project). Previously listed as Action 10 in 2018-2019 Action Plan.	This programme of work explores potential management actions, where required, to address identified pressures and threats for the MPA network. This year the programme will consider the pressure and threats identified for recently designated sites (e.g. harbour porpoise Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)) and develop projects where necessary. The programme will develop and support work across the 6 priority work areas (Agriculture and Land Management, identified as a priority for Sites of Special Scientific Interest in 2018-19) and will seek to: • improve communication and ways of working across relevant policy areas • develop actions and secure funding where required enable delivery. Priority actions developed through the MPA Network Condition Improvement Programme have been and will continue to be put forward as discrete actions for screening and prioritisation in future iterations of the Action Plan. In this year's Action Plan these are actions 13, 15, 21 & 24.	Focus of effort on priority management challenges, will continue to help develop and deliver those actions (1) with the greatest potential to improve (or maintain) the condition of features across the network, or (2) will improve understanding of links between activities and feature condition.	Ongoing	NRW	Y

	Action	Description	MPA Network Management Outcome(s)	Timescale for delivery	Key Management Authorities	Resource secured: Y/N?
9	Improve maps of the extent and distribution of Annex I marine habitats. Previously listed as Action 11 in 2018-2019 Action Plan.	This work provides key evidence to support management of SACs (e.g. casework advice) and Article 17 reporting. This mainly involves collation of third party data (e.g. UK Hydographic Office multibeam data) to update maps.	Improved maps will support management, as well as assessment and reporting.	Ongoing (as new data becomes available).	NRW	Y
10	Deliver the priority actions within the Marine Litter Action Plan where they provide benefit to the network of MPAs in Wales. Previously listed as Action 13 in 2018-2019 Action Plan.	The Clean Seas Partnership Marine Litter Action Plan will help tackle marine litter and seeks an overall reduction in marine litter. To support delivery of a number of plan's evidence-related actions, an EMFF grant funded project is underway involving Keep Wales Tidy, Marine Conservation Society, local authorities and others, to gather research into marine litter. A review of the plan's priority actions is underway to inform the next stage of plan delivery. NRW has created a new marine litter role to strengthen their internal work on marine litter and support their membership of the Clean Seas Partnership and delivery of the Marine Litter Action Plan.	Improve understanding of and, where appropriate, reduce impacts of litter on the marine environment and MPA's if such measures are taken.	March 2021	The Clean Seas Partnership: WG NRW DCWW MHPA LAs Relevant Authority Group officers	Y

	Action	Description	MPA Network Management Outcome(s)	Timescale for delivery	Key Management Authorities	Resource secured: Y/N?
11	Explore how the outcomes from pilot projects on diffuse water and atmospheric air pollution at Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau, Pembrokeshire Marine and Severn Estuary SACs can be applied across the network. Previously listed as Action 15 in 2018-2019 Action Plan.	A number of sites are piloting projects to better understand impacts of diffuse water pollution and atmospheric pollution on MPA features. This year the MPA Management Steering Group will review interim results and use learning from the projects carried out in 2018/19 to explore the need to develop a network scale project/action addressing pollution effects on the features of the MPA network.	The eventual outcome of this work will be a better understanding of the impacts of water and air pollution on the features of the MPA network and the support of projects, where necessary, to improve condition.	January 2020	MPA Management Steering Group	Y

	Action	Description	MPA Network Management Outcome(s)	Timescale for delivery	Key Management Authorities	Resource secured: Y/N?
12	Sustainable Management of Marine Natural Resources project. Previously listed as Action 16 in 2018-2019 Action Plan.	This project is developing, and improving access to, the environmental evidence base to help identify opportunities and constraints in relation to potential future development of wave and tidal stream energy and aquaculture sectors in Welsh waters. It will create locational guidance and other tools to allow the consideration of environmental sensitivities and help to ensure compliance with the environmental policies in the Welsh National Marine Plan (once adopted). The second project phase currently underway includes collection of new data and interpretation of existing evidence to deliver environmental constraints and opportunities mapping within resource areas. The final project outputs will be evidence packages to inform the planning, assessment and consenting of developments. In 2019/2020: This work will be augmented by an additional project (funded by WG), which will develop and improve access to the environmental evidence base in relation to the aggregates sector.	Improved access to relevant data and information, locational guidance and decision making tools will help to achieve better outcomes for the marine environment, including MPAs, and contribute towards the sustainable development of these sectors.	December 2020	NRW WG	Y

	Action	Description	MPA Network Management Outcome(s)	Timescale for delivery	Key Management Authorities	Resource secured: Y/N?
13	Develop a bio-security plan for marine Invasive Non-Natives Species (INNS). Previously listed as Action 17 in 2018-2019 Action Plan.	This pilot project will deliver a biosecurity plan for Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau (PLAS) SAC. It will also inform development and implementation of biosecurity planning across the MPA network. This will be achieved by: • working with stakeholders to address the main pathways of introduction and spread of marine INNS; • developing techniques to assess and predict the effects of INNS on habitats and species; • building capacity to protect marine biodiversity and minimise risks to protected features; and • learning from The Rapid LIFE project particularly the pilot work done on the Severn.	Protection of features of the site by managing the key pathways by which marine INNS are introduced and spread at the site level through the use of good biosecurity. Lessons learned will inform biosecurity planning across the MPA network.	April 2019 – March 2022	NRW Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau SAC Relevant Authority Group	Y

	Action	Description	MPA Network Management Outcome(s)	Timescale for delivery	Key Management Authorities	Resource secured: Y/N?
14	Develop consistent and proportionate guidance to improve casework advice, and to support implementation of the Welsh National Marine Plan. Previously listed as Action 18 in 2018-2019 Action Plan.	The purpose of this work is to develop guidance to support consistent and proportionate assessment of the impacts of regulated activities on the protected features of MPAs in Wales. Guidance is also being developed to support implementation of Welsh National Marine Plan policies in decision-making e.g. marine licencing and policy specific guidance.	Consistent and proportionate guidance will support improved decision-making which will help to improve the security of management and help to maintain the condition, and where appropriate, improve the features of MPAs.	Ongoing programme of relevant guidance production.	NRW JNCC	Y

	Action	Description	MPA Network Management Outcome(s)	Timescale for delivery	Key Management Authorities	Resource secured: Y/N?
15	Address coastal squeeze impacts on MPAs. Previously listed as Action 19 in 2018-2019 Action Plan.	Work this year will include a review of the evidence collected in 2018/19 of the nature and scale of coastal squeeze[4] on MPA coastal habitat features in Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau SAC (outside of anticipated compensatory requirements from work associated with flood and coastal erosion risk management schemes). Potential solutions to offset habitat loss will be considered. Work will continue to progress habitat creation projects to provide compensatory coastal habitat for anticipated habitat loss arising from work associated with flood and coastal erosion risk management schemes.	Use new knowledge of coastal squeeze impacts to help maintain the integrity of the network. Compensation for loss of some coastal habitats due to climate change.	Ongoing	NRW WG	Y

[4] Coastal squeeze is the loss of natural habitats arising from man-made structures, or actions, preventing the landward movement of those habitats that would otherwise naturally occur in response to sea level rise (SLR), potentially in conjunction with other coastal processes. Coastal squeeze reduces habitat area on the seaward side of existing structures.

	Action	Description	MPA Network Management Outcome(s)	Timescale for delivery	Key Management Authorities	Resource secured: Y/N?
16	Maintain links between the MPA Network Management Action Plan and locally agreed actions, where they exist, and support exploration of funding opportunities. Previously listed as Action 20 in 2018-2019 Action Plan.	This action will highlight and link to local actions of relevance, including specific local actions in the annual Action Plan as appropriate.	Allows for the sharing of best practice from different sites to the MPA network, encourage cross-site working, as well as promoting the work done at the site level.	Report(s) produced by European Marine Site Officers (EMSOs) and collated by Steering Group EMSO advisor by May 2020.	Relevant Authority Groups	Y

	Action	Description	MPA Network Management Outcome(s)	Timescale for delivery	Key Management Authorities	Resource secured: Y/N?
17	Integrate sustainable management of the MPA network with the Area Statement Process. Previously listed as Action 21 in 2018-2019 Action Plan.	This work will ensure that the MPA Framework's five management principles are embedded in and integrated with the Marine Area Statement process and products, recognising that securing a well-managed network of MPAs is a key tool in delivering SMNR and a resilient marine ecosystem. The focus over the coming year will be on engagement with a wide range of stakeholders around the identified themes: • nature based solutions and adaptation in the coastal zone; • supporting implementation of marine planning; and • building the resilience of the marine environment. Engagement will help identify priorities, risks and opportunities and agree collaborative action to address them.	Integration of marine planning and management processes to improve the resilience of marine ecosystems, including the MPA network.	Development of first Marine Area Statement (March 2020) and ongoing delivery.	NRW Management Authorities and all other relevant stakeholders	Y

	Action	Description	MPA Network Management Outcome(s)	Timescale for delivery	Key Management Authorities	Resource secured: Y/N?
18	Improve accessibility of marine monitoring data. Previously listed as Action 3 in 2018-2019 Action Plan.	This project will continue to collate, quality assure and enter marine monitoring data into the most suitable database (e.g. Marine Recorder) to increase accessibility of marine monitoring data. The project this year will focus on all Water Framework Directive sediment data since 2007 and all reef data since 2010.	Improved data availability will inform assessments of MPAs and allows the information to be used by others in projects/research, improving the overall marine evidence base.	Data entry complete by March 2020.	NRW JNCC	Y
19	Undertake analysis of outstanding monitoring data samples to inform site condition assessment. Previously listed as Action 7 in 2018-2019 Action Plan.	This project will complete analysis of outstanding data samples to improve accuracy and confidence in condition assessments. This year further contracts will be let to prepare, analyse and report on monitoring data for outstanding Annex I Marine habitats.	Good, timely knowledge of the condition of features will help prioritise management action.	Publish reports by end March 2020.	NRW	Y

	Action	Description	MPA Network Management Outcome(s)	Timescale for delivery	Key Management Authorities	Resource secured: Y/N?
New Actions						
20	A Plan of Action to reduce the incidental bycatch of seabirds in UK waters.	This UK-wide three-year project seeks to deliver a coherent approach to understand and where necessary reduce seabird bycatch in UK fisheries. The objectives of the project in 2019/2020 are: • develop a programme of work to assist in decision-making for possible deployment of mitigation measures; and • identify enhancements to existing monitoring and assessment.	Improving the evidence base and management tools to address bycatch in the marine environment will contribute to MPA management, including those sites for seabirds.	March 2022	JNCC NRW WG	Y
21	Wales Non-licensable Activities Project (previously the Unregulated Activities Project). Phase 2 listed as Action 12 in 2018-2019 Action Plan.	Following valuable engagement with stakeholders in the management of sites in April 2019, work is underway to develop Phase 3 of this project building upon work completed as part of the 2018-2019 Action Plan. Key elements being considered include: • bait digging: - field based investigations on distribution and intensity of activity and impacts at sites identified as potentially sensitive during Phase 2;	Improved evidence base for high priority activities. Prioritisation and implementation of management, where required, to improve (or maintain) condition of MPA features.	March 2021	NRW	Y

	Action	Description	MPA Network Management Outcome(s)	Timescale for delivery	Key Management Authorities	Resource secured: Y/N?
21		- scoping study on the feasibility of management options to address impacts on protected features (using The Gann as a pilot) • anchoring, mooring and launching: identify potentially vulnerable areas of seabed/ intertidal to: using activity data from Phase 2; • geophysical survey: evidence based to inform discussion on whether this activity should be recommended for requiring marine licence; and • recreation boating/leisure craft: evidence of impacts of leisure craft on feature condition of marine mobile species. Bait digging has the greatest evidence at this stage of the need to take management action.				

	Action	Description	MPA Network Management Outcome(s)	Timescale for delivery	Key Management Authorities	Resource secured: Y/N?
22	Community Litter Project.	This project consists of four strands: • a review of the outcomes and lessons learnt from previous and ongoing litter projects; • development of ideas for added-value litter projects or projects that tackle issues not currently covered by community or national projects; • work with local authorities to prevent unintentional littering by refuse collection vehicles; and • a trial project within Gwynedd County Council to reduce single use plastics within local authorities. This action complements Action 10.	Awareness raising of marine litter and support for projects to reduce plastic use. Reduction in the amount of plastic and other litter entering the marine environment locally.	March 2020	Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau SAC Relevant Authority Group	Y

	Action	Description	MPA Network Management Outcome(s)	Timescale for delivery	Key Management Authorities	Resource secured: Y/N?
23	Reduce disturbance to marine mammals and birds.	This project consists of three strands: • a review of the effectiveness of marine codes in place at Pembrokeshire Marine, Cardigan Bay and Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau SACs; • production of seal disturbance panels for key pupping sites across Wales; and • building on work undertaken in Pembrokeshire, explore the feasibility costs for developing a Wales-wide app to provide information on potential disturbance of vulnerable species.	Marine codes at key sites for highly mobile species are fit for purpose. Contribution to maintaining Grey Seal *Halichoerus grypus* in favourable condition. Marine users are aware of potential disturbance issues across Wales, and how this can affect vulnerable species.	March 2020	Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau SAC Relevant Authority Group	Y

	Action	Description	MPA Network Management Outcome(s)	Timescale for delivery	Key Management Authorities	Resource secured: Y/N?
24	A pilot project on saltmarsh grazing and water quality at Carmarthen Bay and Estuaries SAC.	Poor water quality was highlighted in NRW's indicative site condition reports (2018) as a major issue affecting feature condition across the network of MPAs in Wales. The objectives of this project are: • to improve the evidence base for the impact pathway of sheep grazing on saltmarsh; and • to investigate management measures to improve the habitat feature condition of the Carmarthen Bay and Estuaries SAC. Evidence generated by this project could be important for other sites where there is a combination of saltmarsh and mudflats and sandflats or estuary. These sites include: • Dee Estuary SAC • Anglesey Coast: Saltmarsh SAC • Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau SAC • Pembrokeshire Marine SAC • Severn Estuary SAC	Improved evidence base: • for feature condition assessments and knowledge of management measures to help reach favourable condition; • on the contribution of sheep faeces to marine water quality issues; and • to inform saltmarsh grazing limits. Information on potential management measures to improve water quality issues affecting the cockle fishery.	September 2020	NRW	Y

	Action	Description	MPA Network Management Outcome(s)	Timescale for delivery	Key Management Authorities	Resource secured: Y/N?
25	The impacts of marine litter on MPA features.	This action addresses a knowledge gap identified during the Article 17 reporting process on the impacts of plastic litter (macro and micro) on the features of the MPA network. The project objectives are to carry out: • a literature review of the evidence of the impact of litter (macro and micro) on network features; and • a prioritisation exercise of habitats and features to highlight those most at risk, linked to the literature review and evidence base. This action complements Action 11.	Prioritised list of site features most at risk of impacts of plastic litter. Improved evidence base for site condition assessments. Improved evidence base for determining future actions and management measures.	March 2020	NRW Natural England	Y

Criteria for screening and scoring actions to include in the MPA Network Management Action Plan

Introduction

The MPA Management Steering Group (the Steering Group) has developed an MPA Network Management Framework to aid Welsh Management Authorities to better manage the MPA network in Wales. Alongside this Framework is the MPA Network Management Action Plan (NMAP) which will be updated and reported on an annual basis.

At its meeting in March 2018, the Steering Group agreed to the development of transparent criteria that can be consistently applied to prioritise actions put forward for consideration for the NMAP.

This paper sets out the criteria developed and agreed by the Steering Group. These criteria have been developed from two processes NRW has used for prioritisation of marine work planning.

Screening and prioritisation of actions for inclusion in the NMAP

Table 1 summarises the proposed criteria, further detail to apply them is provided in the subsequent sections.

Table 1: Threshold scores and maximum scores for each criterion

#	Criteria	Threshold score	Maximum possible score
1	Is the action consistent with the MPA management principles?	2*	15
2	What is the spatial extent of the action?	2	3
3	What is the ability of the action to deliver improvements, or to improve our understanding of pressure/threats or their management?	2	3

#	Criteria	Threshold score	Maximum possible score
4	What is the feasibility of the action?	2	3
5	Does implementing the action represent value for money? Yes/No	N/A	N/A
	Total	**8**	**24**

* Against at least one of the management principles

We are proposing two screening measures:

1. If an action scores negatively against any of the MPA management principles in criterion 1 it should not be taken any further through the prioritisation process until these issues are addressed.

2. Only actions that reach the threshold score (as laid out in Table 1) for all criteria should be included in the NMAP[5].

Further consideration could be given on how the total score for an action could be used to differentiate between and therefore prioritise actions included in the NMAP, for example to determine the allocation of resources.

1. Is the action consistent with the MPA Management Principles?

This first criterion is focussed on the consistency of an action with the five MPA network management principles. Actions will be scored against each of the MPA management principles (Box 1); the maximum score achievable is therefore fifteen. An action may not be relevant for all management principles. If an action scores negatively against any management principle it will not be taken any further through the prioritisation process until these issues are addressed.

[5] Sponsors of actions that fail to reach the threshold should consider how it could be improved to reach that score before it is suitable to be included in the NMAP.

Box 1: MPA Management Principles

MP1 Strategic Planning: Management should be guided by strategic planning processes at both a sectoral and all-Wales level. It supports sustainable use of the MPA network in ways which conserve and enhance, and contributes towards resilient marine ecosystems, wellbeing and delivery of sustainable management of natural resources.

MP2 Regulation, development consenting and assessment processes: Regulatory processes and consenting decisions are delivered consistently and proportionately across the network, and proactively consider and support the maintenance or enhancement (where possible/appropriate) of the condition of relevant sites and features across the network.

MP3 Management advice and guidance: Decision-making and management operations is supported by clear and consistent advice and guidance on MPAs including their conservation objectives.

MP4 Understanding the condition of, and pressures and threats on, sites and their features to inform management: Management is informed by formal assessment and reporting on the condition of features, sites and the network and the associated pressures. Assessment and reporting is informed by a prioritised evidence programme (including monitoring) which improves our understanding of the relationship between pressures and threats and condition.

MP5 Wider management: Management activities across the network are prioritised towards those that have the potential for greatest improvement on condition and security of management. Common management challenges are address collectively across the network.

Use the following as a guide:

	Explanation	Score
N/A	The action has inconsistencies with the management principle.	-3
None	The action is not relevant to the management principle.	0
Low	The action is partially consistent with the management principle.	1
Medium	The action is consistent with the management principle.	2
High	The action is consistent with the management principle and will also bring about a positive change in ways of working.	3

2. What is the spatial extent of the action?

Scores should be allocated based on the scale of the impact of the action on the MPA network. Use the following as a guide:

	Explanation	Score
None	The action is for on a single site only and has no wider application across the network*.	0
Low	The action is for a small number of sites or a small proportion of the network.	1
Medium	The action is for: • multiple sites or • a large proportion of the MPA network or • a large proportion of a feature across the network. A medium score can also be awarded if the action is a demonstration project# with strong potential to be delivered across the network after a local pilot stage.	2
High	The action is for the network (e.g. whole feature and/or pressure wide).	3

* These actions should be prioritised though local action plans where they exist or the Actions Database.
\# A demonstration project would need to address an issue that is of concern across the network but suitable to be carried out at a single site level to prove the approach.

3. What is the ability of the action to deliver improvements in condition, or to improve our understanding of pressure/threats or their management?

The following criterion has been divided into two parts. An action should be taken through **only one**:

• Criterion 3a is linked to the ability of the action to address a known pressure on or threat[6] to features of the network.

• Criterion 3b addresses actions where there is a need to investigate a pressure or threat, or to investigate the appropriate management measure to address the pressure or threat.

[6] **Pressure:** A factor that is considered to be currently having an adverse impact on one or more features.
  Threat: A factor that is not currently an issue but is considered likely to become an issue in the near future (defined as up to 2020) unless action is taken.

3a. What is the ability of the action to deliver improvements to, or maintenance of, feature condition?

This criterion is related to actions that will result in improvements to, or maintenance of, the condition of features of the MPA network by managing pressures/threats. Use the following as a guide:

	Explanation	Score
None	The action is not targeted at a pressure or threat with a link to feature condition.	0
Low*	**Threat:** The action will manage one or more of the suspected threats that could affect the condition of the MPA network features.	1
Medium	**Pressure:** The action will manage one or more of the known pressures affecting the condition of the features of the MPA network. **Threat:** The action will manage one or more of the threats that could affect the condition of the features of the MPA network.	2
High	**Pressure:** The action will manage one or more of the known pressures significantly affecting the condition of the features of the MPA network, using a proven approach. **Threat:** The action will manage one or more of the threats that could significantly affect the condition of the features of the MPA network using a proven approach.	3

* There is no low score for pressures as to be prioritised for the NMAP the pressure should be known.

3b. What is the ability of the action to improve our understanding of pressure/threats or their management?

This criterion is related to actions that will result in improving our understanding of the pressures or threats to the MPA network, or improving our understanding of the different management measures that could be used to address these pressures or threats. Use the following as a guide:

	Explanation	Score
None	The action will not improve our understanding of: a. pressures or threats; or b. the management measures needed to address them.	0
Low*	**Threat:** The action will partially improve our understanding of: a. one of the threats which could affect the condition of the MPA network features; or b. the management measures needed to address this threat.	1
Medium	**Pressure:** The action will increase our understanding of: a. one or more of the pressures and how they are affecting the condition of the features of the MPA network; or b. the management measures needed to manage those pressures. **Threat:** The action will improve our understanding of: a. one or more of the threats that could affect the condition of the features of the MPA network; or b. the management measures needed to manage those threats.	2
High	**Pressure:** The action will significantly increase our understanding of: a. one or more of the pressures and how they are affecting the condition of the features of the MPA network; or b. the management measures needed to manage those pressures. **Threat:** The action will significantly improve our understanding of: a. one or more of the threats that could significantly affect the condition of the features of the MPA network; or b. the management measures needed to manage those threats.	3

* There is no low score for pressures as to be prioritised for the NMAP the pressure should be known.

4. What is the feasibility of the action?

This criterion relates to the technical feasibility of carrying out an action.

Technical feasibility: includes practical, logistical and technical ability (including skills and expertise) to undertake an action.

Use the following as a guide:

	Explanation	Score
None	The action is not technically feasible, even if resources were available.	0
Low	The technical feasibility of the action is currently unproven.	1
Medium	There are no significant issues with technical feasibility.	2
High	Technical feasibility is proven.	3

5. Does implementing the action represent value for money?

This criterion relates to the value for money of the action, this is a simple yes or no answer, but the yes answer will need to be justified, there is no scoring associated with this criterion.

Does implementing the action represent value for money? Yes/No
If yes, please justify your answer considering how proportionate the cost is to the size of the project and the benefits it will deliver (*please include the direct costs as well as other resources necessary to achieve the action and the expected outcomes of the project linked to improvements in condition or understanding*).