



Kent Wildlife Trust
Guardians of the Deep
Gap Analysis
Summary Report



23 March 2016

Natural Values in partnership with Bright Angel Coastal Consultants and Collingwood Environmental Planning



Report to Kent Wildlife Trust

Guardians of the Deep Gap Analysis: Summary Report

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1. Introduction

The *Guardians of the Deep* Gap Analysis project forms part of the development work towards a Stage 2 Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid to be submitted by Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT).

The purpose of the *Guardians of the Deep* Gap Analysis project is:

To carry out a gap analysis of existing public engagement in the marine environment, in order to identify target audiences, and also to undertake consultation based on the findings from the gap analysis.

The Gap Analysis project was divided into three parts:

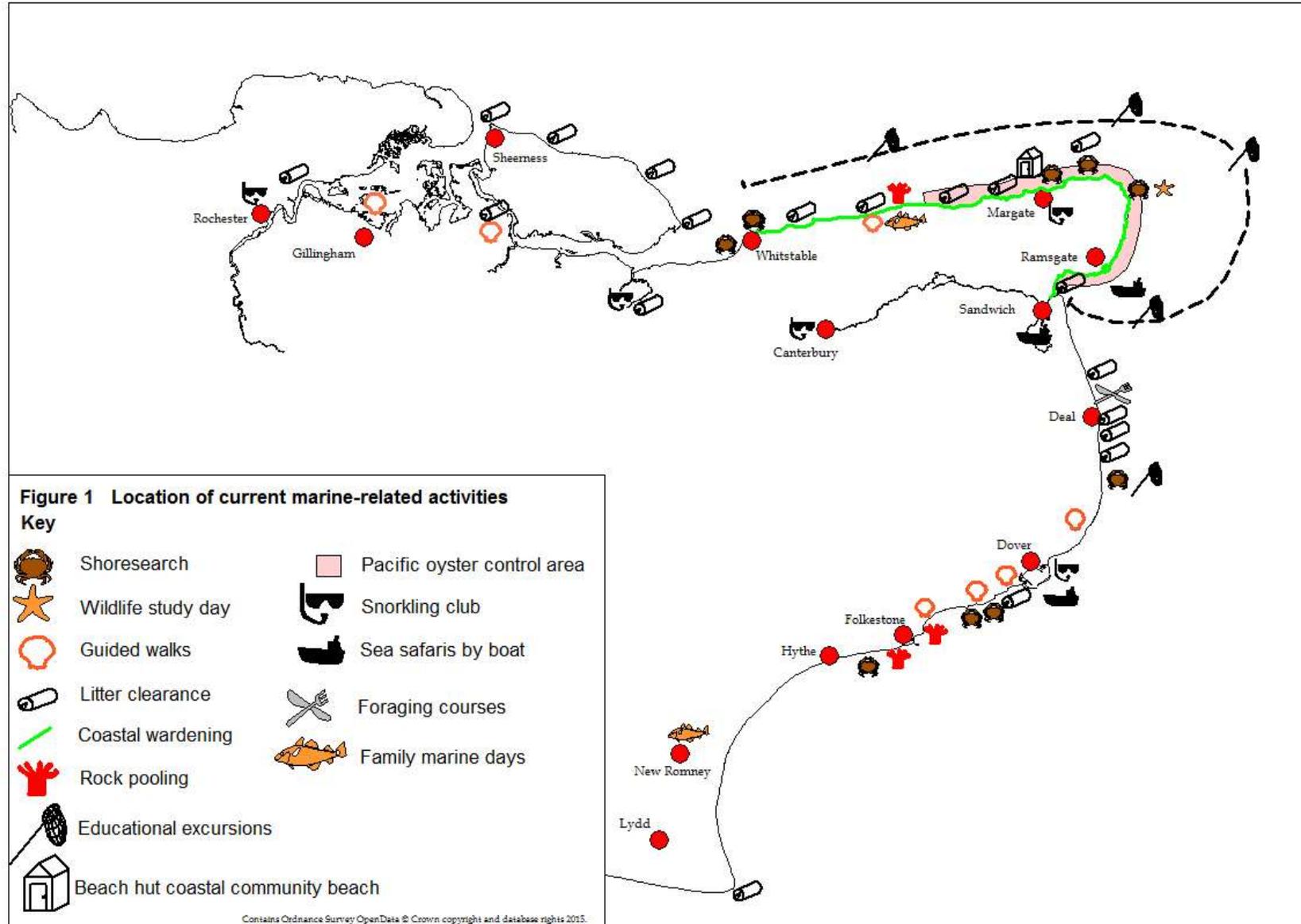
- Stage 1: Gap Analysis – desk research on the gaps in and opportunities for marine engagement activities
- Stage 2: Resource Assessment – planning and resources required for consultation
- Stage 3: Consultation – to explore people’s perceptions and opinions on the marine environment and activities

2. Gap analysis of activities

The geographic location of the project is planned to extend along the coast from Medway to Dymchurch and will also include activities inland, throughout Kent. The project is about giving opportunities to anyone who is interested to engage under the five specific areas of activity:

1. Coastal Guardians
2. Undersea Explorers
3. Wildbeach
4. Coastal Connections
5. Coastal Citizen Science to include:
 - CoastBusters
 - Monthly Survey Events

Gaps were explored by comparing future planned and existing provision. Information on existing marine activities (Figure 1) represented those that had occurred during the past year (2015). Locations where an activity was not found to occur were regarded as gaps.



At present there is less variety and number of marine engagement activities offered compared to the past. The main reason for this is the lack of funding to sustain activities.

Many of the current range of marine activities offered target adults who already have an interest in the marine environment and its care (e.g. Shoresearch, Thanet Coast Wardens and Beach Clean events). Beach cleans are popular along most of the Kent coast, many of which are organised as part of the MCS Beachwatch.

Education activities for children are provided by Canterbury City Council, the P1 Marine Foundation and Rippledawn. Thanet Coast Project also runs education activities on demand. Seashore activities (such as rock pooling) are offered during holiday periods by KWT and White Cliffs Countryside Partnership and Rippledawn.

Gaps in provision have been identified in the distribution of activities along the coast, for example, there is a high focus of activities along the Canterbury Coastline, through the work of the Foreshore Services, and also along the Thanet coast, with the Coastal Wardens scheme and the Pacific oyster control programme.

Approaches to bridging the gaps have been proposed following desk research into: past provision, to identify activities that are of interest to people; local community groups, projects and partnerships (complementary initiatives) with which the project could work to engage people on marine issues; and experience from elsewhere in the UK which demonstrates good practice with respect to sustainability of marine engagement.

Popular events from past programmes have highlighted the importance of interactive and creative activities that capture the imagination, such sea shore explorer sessions, rockpooling, arts and crafts workshops and photography. Various complementary initiatives have been identified with members who may provide a source of volunteers as Coastal Guardians or Citizen Scientists (e.g. ramblers/walking groups and photographic societies). Organisations for young people, such as Scouts and Guides, may be interested in Undersea Explorers and Wildbeach. Other organisations may be keen to work in partnership and provide venues for the project, such as leisure centres offering Undersea Explorers for their younger members.

Experience from elsewhere in the UK has highlighted the benefits of having a building to act as a base and focus for activities (e.g. marine wildlife centres). In addition, already established organisations, such as 'Friends of' groups may form a stepping point for establishing Coastal Guardian networks.

3. Consultation programme

The consultation consisted of:

8 facilitated focus groups (plus one meeting) with different groups of people within the project area. A 60 minute programme was designed which could be extended (by increasing the length of discussion on each topic) as necessary. Focus groups were attended by 80 participants consisting of an even split of males and females; just over a quarter (27.5%) of participants were young people (aged 14-18).

A paper questionnaire of 17 questions aimed at seeking people's opinions on matters relating to the marine environment and five socio-demographic questions to determine the profile of respondents. The paper questionnaire was distributed by KWT and partners to over 554 contacts and 68 were returned. Respondents comprised a fairly even split between males (53%) and females (47%).

A short, online questionnaire with access via the KWT E-newsletter and Twitter account. The questionnaire included eight questions: six covering opinions relating to the marine environment; one to determine whether the respondent lives in Kent or further afield; and the other for contact details for those interested in getting involved in caring for the coast.

4. Consultation results

The three forms of consultation (focus groups, paper questionnaire and online survey) demonstrated a strong support for the marine environment around Kent and its protection.

Participants at all focus groups were interested in becoming involved with *Guardians of the Deep*. Establishing the project with existing groups is intended to aid sustainability of the project once any funding from HLF has ended.

The paper and online questionnaires were distributed to contacts of project partners. Respondents to both were predominantly (92%) from Kent and 65% expressed an interest in becoming involved in caring for the marine environment. These contacts form a target audience for the sustainability of the project.

Overall the marine environment was considered to be 'very important' to people (83% of respondents to both questionnaires). Furthermore, most people (as demonstrated by results of the paper questionnaire) also regarded protection of the marine environment around the Kent coast to be 'very important: a top priority'. These results indicate commitment and support for Kent's marine environment.

From a list of statements, people showed support for those that reflected the value of the marine environment. The most supported statement (by 84% of respondents to the paper questionnaire) was: 'all marine life has worth: we are dependent on healthy seas as a component of global oceanic and climatic systems and for food'. This statement was also ranked highest and supported by 71% of participants at focus groups.

Concern about damage to the marine environment resulting from a range of activities was demonstrated in the paper questionnaire. Marine litter was of particular concern to 86% of respondents. Participants at focus group sessions also raised marine litter as an issue along with concerns over water quality. The wide concern with marine litter and the popularity of beach cleans provides a stepping stone for raising awareness of wider marine issues and marine nature conservation.

From the paper and online questionnaires there was good awareness (or expectation) that the seabed contains a variety of marine life. However, there was little awareness of what the seabed actually 'looked like' as expressed by people at focus group sessions who were pleasantly surprised at the diversity of marine life shown in the video clips.

In general, people regard themselves to have 'little or some knowledge' of the marine environment (as reported by 52% of paper questionnaire respondents). There is therefore the opportunity to enhance people's knowledge through learning opportunities

and marine engagement activities. The vast majority of people (153 out of a total of 158 = 97%) responding to the paper and online questionnaires were interested in finding out more about the marine environment. Respondents also recorded a range of other topics that they were interested in knowing more about, in addition to those listed in the questionnaires. Similarly, participants at focus groups expressed interest in a range of marine related topics and other activities. These areas of interest provide a means to link key messages about MCZs and marine protection issues to the particular interests of individuals.

Young people especially, communicate via social media and, expressed an interest in using technology to engage in the marine environment (e.g. through iSpot¹). Focussing engagement in ways that interest them will be a key aspect to their participation.

The main features that would attract people to a marine stand at a show were underwater video footage and seeing live marine creatures (e.g. in a tank) as illustrated by focus group sessions and respondents to the paper questionnaire. Such features form an immediate way of engaging people and raising awareness in marine matters.

A range of additional ways of engaging the public in the marine environment were also suggested, such as:

- Underwater video links (with a permanently/temporarily sited underwater video camera that might 'tell a story' of a local micro-habitat or species), thus making the underwater environment visible to people.
- Use of QR codes around the coast to draw people's attention towards the sea and interpret what is there as well as human impacts and issues and the need for marine protection.
- Providing factual information on MCZs, including potentially damaging activities and any restrictions applying to users of the marine environment.

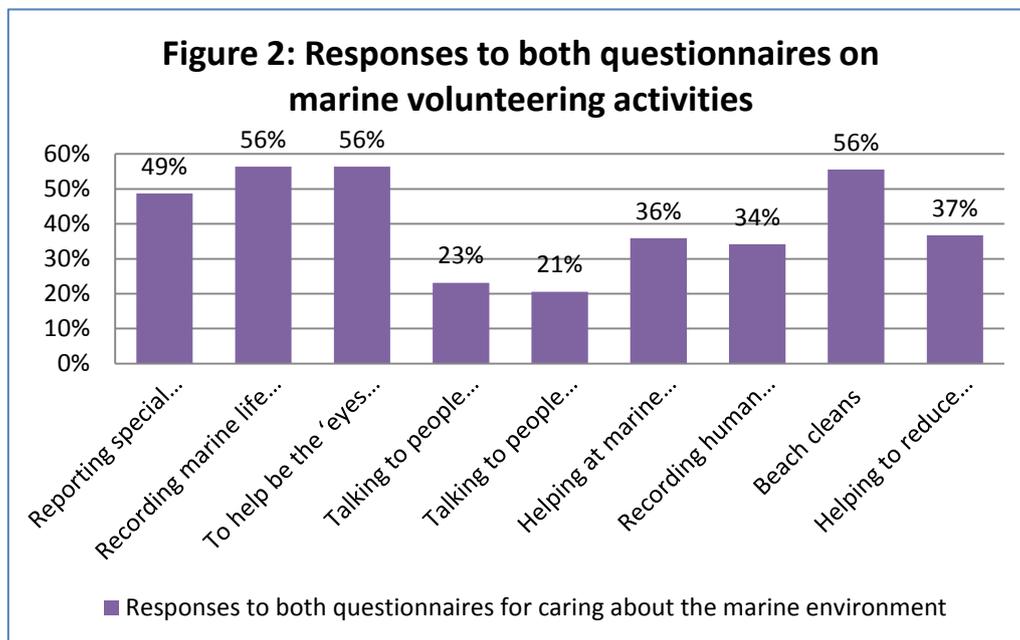
Availability of easy-to-understand information on MCZs (where they are, why they are important, what can't be done in those areas) was found to be a current gap. Provision of such information through the project would constitute an initiative that is not being covered by other organisations.

¹ <http://www.ispotnature.org/communities/uk-and-ireland>

When people visit the coast they mostly go with family (54%), as demonstrated through responses to the paper questionnaire. Family activities, therefore, may be of interest to this group. Only 27% reported that they go to join an organised activity. (Commenting on this, some individuals were not aware when or where activities may be taking place.) However, 70% of respondents said that they were either 'very likely' or 'likely' to join in an organised group activity. This shows that there is appetite for engagement in the marine environment.

The main barrier to engagement in marine activities is lack of time (as expressed by 60% of respondents to the paper questionnaire). This applies to people whether or not they currently engage in marine activities. Exploring ways of engaging people in the marine environment through, for example, social media or online volunteer tasks could enable people to get engaged during spare moments while at home.

Participants at focus groups and two-thirds (65%) of respondents to the paper and online questionnaires expressed an interest in becoming involved in caring for the marine environment (Figure 2).



Three-quarters (76%) of respondents already participate in volunteering, 46% of these in the natural environment. The main motivating factor is interest and enjoyment. Participants at focus groups identified the social aspects to be important in volunteering.

