



**Net Gain** is one of four regional projects set up to make recommendations on Marine Conservation Zones to Government by 2011

# Final Recommendations Summary Report

September 2011







## Working Together

Through the period March 2010 to June 2011 a total of six full rounds of Regional Hub meetings were held (24 meetings in all) each round being tied in with meetings of the Stakeholder Advisory Panel.

The first, second and fifth Regional Hub rounds consisted of one-day meetings, whilst the third, fourth and sixth rounds consisted of either one-and-a-half or two-day meetings. In total, it is estimated that Net Gain has drawn upon 5,500 hours of stakeholder effort through its Regional Hub meetings alone.

StAP meetings were held after each round of Regional Hubs, to review the outputs and provide guidance and oversight. Through the course of the Project, StAP meetings provided an additional 500 hours of stakeholder effort to the Project.

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However, please note that following the closing of the Regional MCZ Projects after the submission of final reports to the Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies, Natural England and JNCC assume responsibility for the remainder of the wider project.

For further information, please visit the following:

[www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)  
[jncc.defra.gov.uk](http://jncc.defra.gov.uk)  
[www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)  
or email: [mczproject@jncc.gov.uk](mailto:mczproject@jncc.gov.uk)



## A note from Net Gain

**Dear Stakeholder,** Welcome to the summary report of the final recommendations by the Net Gain Project. Since the launch of the project in 2009, stakeholders from a wide range of sectors throughout our project area have spent several thousand hours working together to produce the plans for a network of Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) that are well understood and supported.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of our Regional Hubs and Stakeholder Advisory Panel whole-heartedly and on behalf of the whole team for their hard work, dedication and commitment to the process. This project was no easy undertaking, the first of its kind, with the largest project area and challenging timescales under which to deliver a complex task.

It is also important to thank the thousands of stakeholders who engaged with the project, submitting their information, thoughts, concerns and opinions throughout the process. Our liaison team in particular wish to thank sea users along the east coast for their help during the data collection process. This information played a vital role in the decision-making process throughout our stakeholder meetings.

The conclusion of the Net Gain project is by no means 'the end' for the MCZ project as a whole. The recommendations of our stakeholders have been submitted to Natural England and the Joint Nature Conservation Council (JNCC), ready to be considered by Government Ministers. There is still a chance to have your say, as MCZs will be subject to public consultation.

Thank you for playing your part in this historic process.  
On behalf of the Net Gain team,  
Best wishes

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Joanna Redhead".

**Joanna Redhead**  
Project Manager - Net Gain



## The Net Gain Project area: an overview

The Net Gain MCZ Project area spans two regional seas; the southern portion of the Northern North Sea (Scottish border to Flamborough Head) and the northern portion of the Southern North Sea (Flamborough Head to Bawdse). Water depths across this area range from less than 50m in the south to 200m in the north. Most of the region is well mixed by tides and wind throughout the year, and sea surface temperatures vary seasonally.

The area covered by the Net Gain Project includes all 23 broad-scale habitats listed within the Ecological Network Guidance (ENG), along with 14 habitat features of conservation importance (FOCI) and records for 12 low or limited mobility species FOCI. Of the three highly mobile species FOCI listed in the ENG, smelt and European eel are known to utilise estuaries or inshore coastal waters within Net Gain for key life stages. Protection is afforded to some ENG features by existing designations, including Special Areas for Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Ramsar sites.

The coastline in the north is predominantly rocky, interspersed with intertidal sediments in bays and inlets. In the south, the coastline is varied with large expanses of intertidal sands, muds and soft cliffs. Offshore, the seabed comprises large expanses of sands, muds and coarser sediments. Both the Northern and Southern North Sea areas support a diversity of marine species, including marine mammals, birds and commercially important species including some of the most valuable fisheries in the UK. Herring, mackerel and other shellfish fisheries are also commercially important.

The Net Gain region is also extremely important to the oil and gas sectors, the aggregate extraction sector, the renewable energy sector and to shipping. The marine environment in the Net Gain area is also important for recreation, supporting local communities and tourism.



## The Process

The national Project Delivery Guidance provided by the SNCBs to the Regional MCZ Projects called for MCZ recommendations to be made by a representative Regional Stakeholder Group (RSG). In the initial stages of the project it was determined that a single RSG would not be logistically feasible due to the size of the Net Gain project area and length of coast covered. For this reason, the Regional Stakeholder Group (RSG) was established in such a way so as to allow for greater representation from each sector, and taking account of regional variations within sectors along the coast.

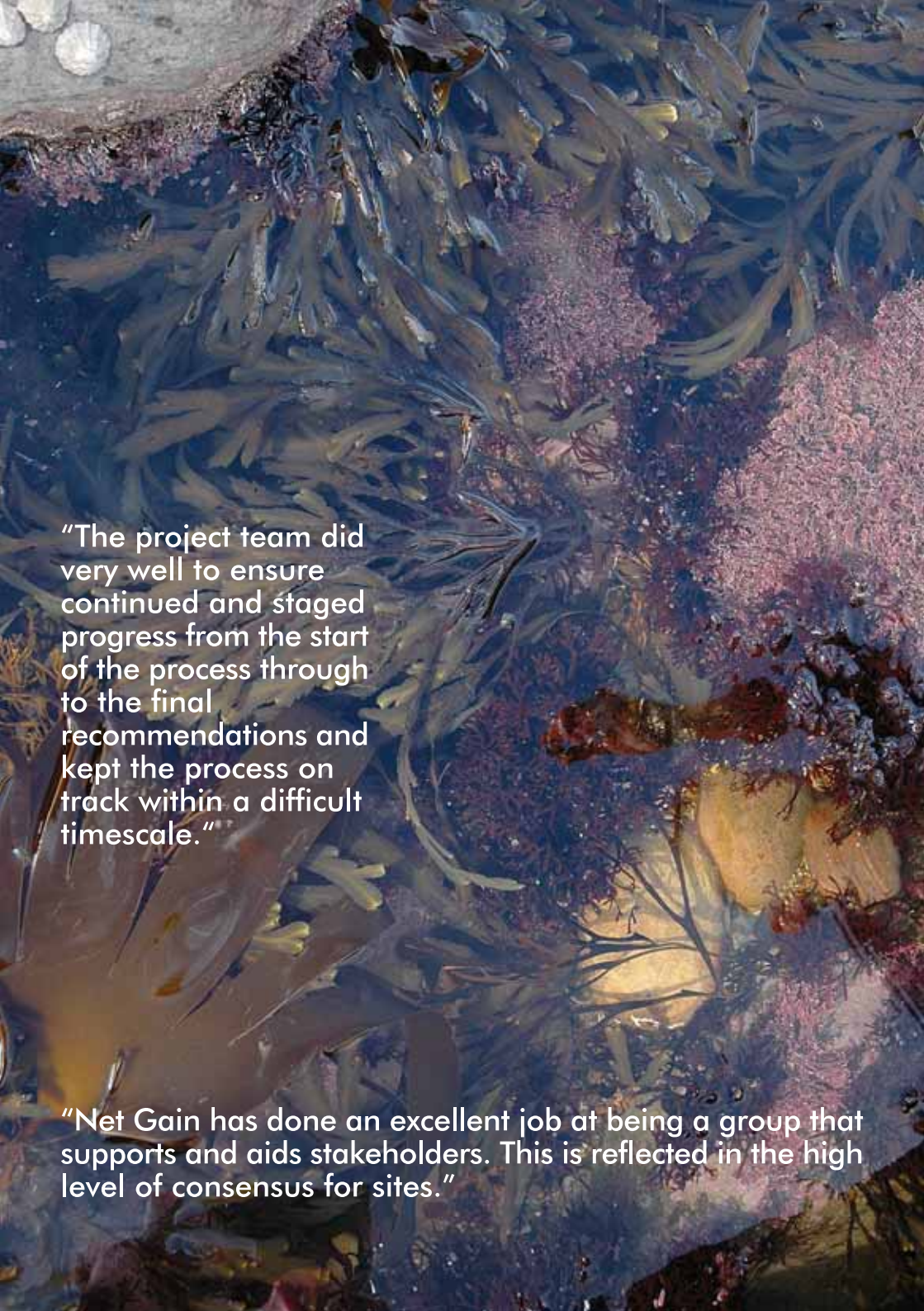
The Net Gain Regional Stakeholder Group was comprised of a Stakeholder Advisory Panel (StAP) and four Regional Hubs. While it was the collective responsibility of the Regional Stakeholder Group to make MCZ recommendations to Government, the StAP and Regional Hubs had different roles in the recommendation process.

The four Regional Hubs were where the main focus of the planning work and deliberation over sites took place, representing the real 'hands on' part of the work. Members worked together in facilitated sessions to develop recommendations on MCZs. Regional Hub members made recommendations on the size, location, boundaries and, ultimately, conservation objectives for proposed sites.

The Regional Hubs were complemented by the Stakeholder Advisory Panel (StAP) whose function was to maintain an overview of the work being undertaken in the Regional Hubs, to check for consistency and balance and to bring all the recommendations from the Regional Hubs together before passing them to Defra's independent Science Advisory Panel (SAP) for review and feedback.

The work that was completed in the regional stakeholder meetings resulted in recommendations for 18 recommended marine conservation zones (rMCZs) and 13 recommended reference areas (rRAs). These final recommendations were signed off by Trevor Jameson, chair of the Stakeholder Advisory Panel.





"The project team did very well to ensure continued and staged progress from the start of the process through to the final recommendations and kept the process on track within a difficult timescale."

"Net Gain has done an excellent job at being a group that supports and aids stakeholders. This is reflected in the high level of consensus for sites."



## Regional Hubs: The North East

**Local Liaison Officer:**  
Gary Tinsley

### Previous meetings

16/03/10: South Shields  
10/06/10 & 11/06/10: South Shields  
21/10/10 & 22/10/10: Blyth  
20/01/11 & 21/01/11: South Shields  
21/03/11: South Shields  
04/05/11 & 05/05/11: South Shields

### Membership

- Commercial fishing
- Renewables
- National Federation of Fishermen's Organisation
- Newcastle University
- Recreational Sea Anglers
- The Crown Estate
- Northumberland Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
- Marine Management Organisation
- Offshore renewables
- RSPB
- North East Wildlife Tours
- Natural England
- Durham Heritage Coast
- Recreational diving
- Wildlife Trust
- Environment Agency
- Yachting
- Tees INCA
- Angling Charter boats
- National Trust
- Marinet
- Marine Conservation Society

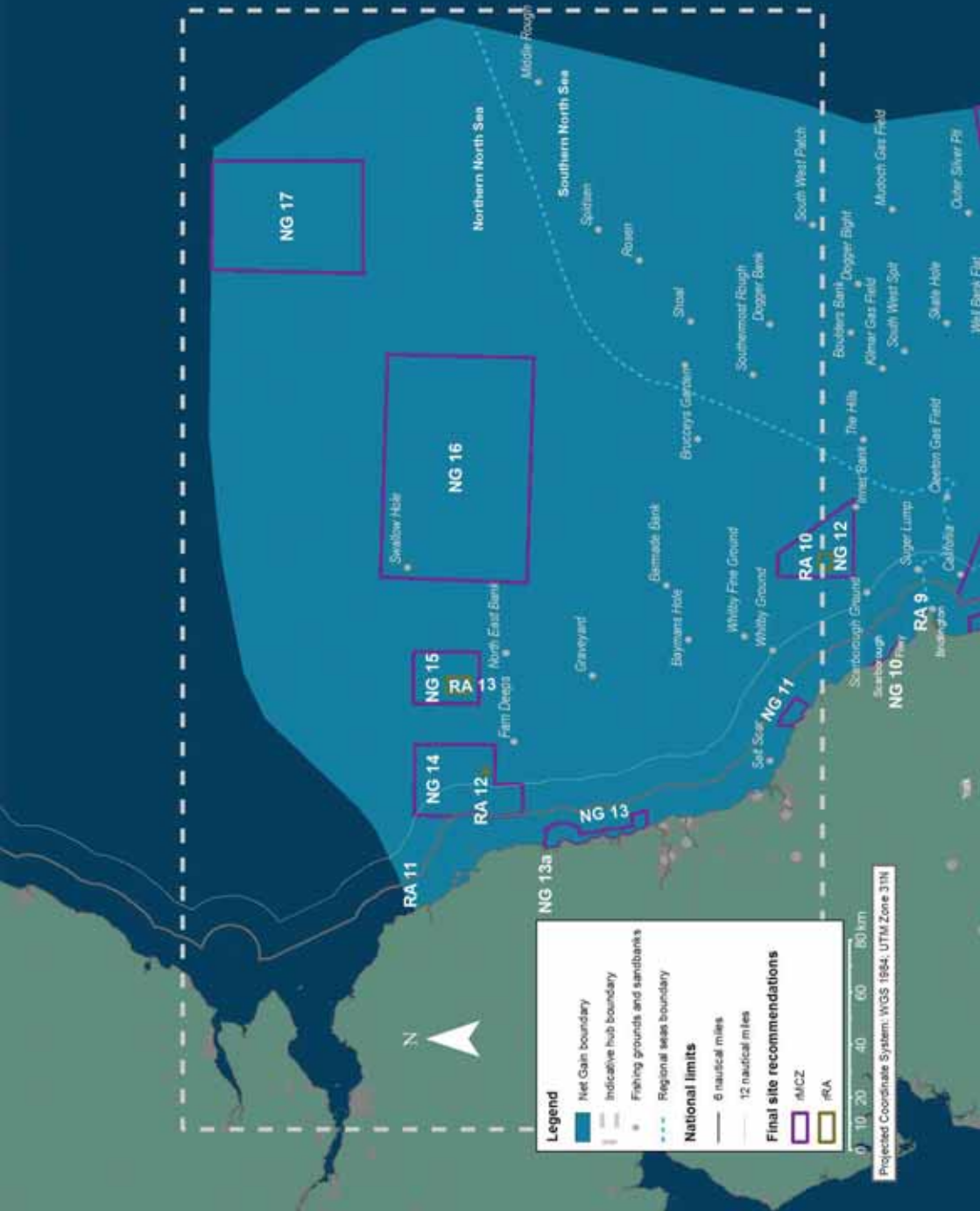
In total, there are six rMCZs and three rRAs in the North East hub area. Of the three rRAs, one is intertidal and two are sited offshore. All three of the reference areas have been recommended for broad-scale habitat features.

Site NG16, Swallow Sands, is the largest site in the Net Gain project area and has been recommended to protect subtidal sand and coarse sediment habitats. This site also contains the geological glacial tunnel valley feature, Swallow Hole.

NG 13a, Aln Estuary is one of only two estuarine sites in the network. This is an important example of estuarine rocky habitats and coastal saltmarshes. This site is also an important nursery and breeding area for several marine species.

Site NG13, Coquet to St Marys Island, includes Coquet Island, which is a haul out area for seals. The first pup was raised on the island in 2010-2011. Both islands are popular eco-tourism destinations, attracting visitors from around the country and beyond.





**Legend**

- Net Gam boundary
- Indicative hub boundary
- Fishing grounds and sandbanks
- Regional sea boundary

**National limits**

- 6 nautical miles
- 12 nautical miles

**Final site recommendations**

- M/CZ
- RA

Projected Coordinate System: WGS 1984, UTM Zone 31N

NG 17

NG 16

NG 15  
RA 13

NG 14  
RA 12

NG 13

NG 13a

NG 11  
RA 11

RA 10

NG 12

RA 9

NG 10

Northern North Sea

Southern North Sea

Middle Rough

Soldan

Rosyth

Shoal

Southern Rough

Dogger Bank

Greycoys Capstair

Beaume Bank

Gravoyant

Baymanns Hole

Whitty Fine Ground

Whitty Ground

Immet Bank

The Hills

Bookers Bank

Dogger Blight

Komar Gas Field

South West Spit

South West Patch

Mudoch Gas Field

Outer Silver Pit

Swallow Hole

North East Bank

Film Deep

Super Lump

Caithness

Orkney Gas Field

Wolf Bank Flat

Jardangan

N

0 10 20 40 60 80 km



## Regional Hubs: Yorkshire and Humber

**Local Liaison Officer:**  
Pete Hansell

**Previous Meetings:**

18/03/10: Scarborough  
08/06/10 & 09/06/10: Scarborough  
21/07/2010: Scarborough  
19/10/10 & 20/10/10: Scarborough  
18/01/11 & 19/01/11: Scarborough  
23/03/11: Scarborough  
12/04/11 & 13/04/11: Scarborough

**Membership:**

- Commercial fishing
- Kayak Anglers
- North Yorkshire Moors National Park
- Newcastle University
- Whitby Trawlers
- Filey Against Dredging
- Natural England
- The University of Hull
- Commercial Fishing
- Humber INCA
- British Sub Aqua Club
- Charter Boats
- The Crown Estate
- Marine Management Organisation
- Royal Yachting Association
- Associated British Ports
- North Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
- RSPB
- Environment Agency
- Fish processing
- Recreational Sea Anglers
- East Riding of Yorkshire County Council
- Marine Conservation Society
- Bridlington and Flamborough Fishermans Society
- East Yorkshire Subsea Heritage and Exploration Society
- Scarborough Boat Angling Club
- Cleveland Potash Ltd

The Yorkshire and Humber hub have put forward five rMCZs and two rRAs. This area of the coastline is home to areas of interest such as Flamborough Head, Bempton Cliffs and Filey Brigg, as well as the Humber Estuary.

The Inner Silver Pit geological feature is covered by NG6 and NG9. The Inner Silver Pit is a fantastic example of ecological biodiversity – particularly in the canyon walls.

The geological features of Spurn Head and The Binks are covered by NG8. Spurn Head is a popular eco-tourism area all year round. Visitors are attracted to the area by several key features, including the seabirds that are prevalent in the area due to the lagoons, estuarine and coastal features.





## Regional Hubs: Lincolnshire and the Wash

**Local Liaison Officer:**  
Dan Davis

**Previous Meetings:**

30/03/10: Boston  
14/06/10 & 15/06/10: Kings Lynn  
14/10/10 & 15/10/10 Boston  
27/01/11 & 28/01/11 Kings Lynn  
25/03/11: Boston  
12/05/11 & 13/05/11: Kings Lynn

**Membership:**

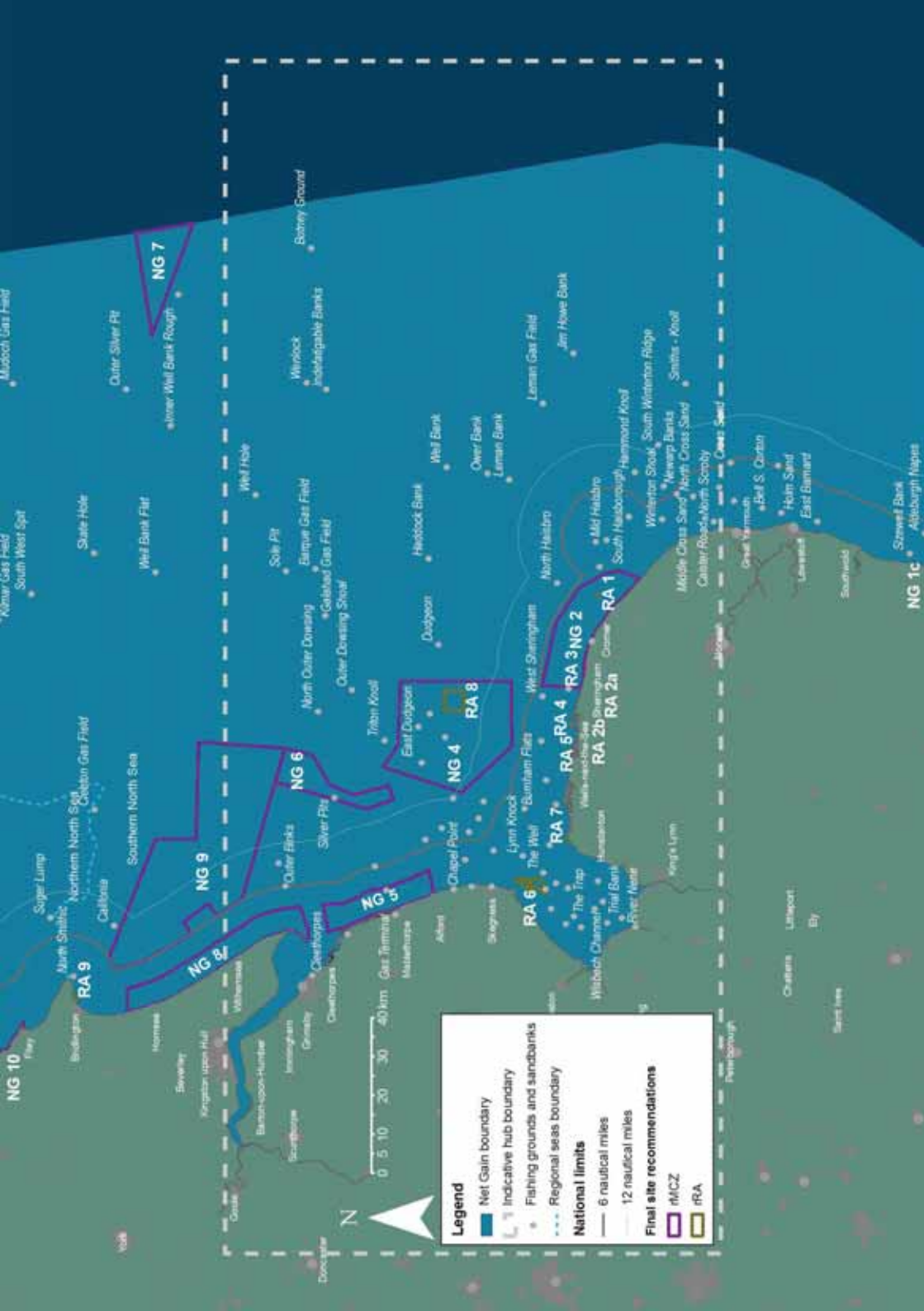
- Commercial Fishing
- NPower: renewable
- Ministry of Defence
- Private landowner
- Shellfish processors
- Environment Agency
- Recreational Sea Anglers
- RSPB
- The Crown Estate
- Wildlife Trust
- Natural England
- English Heritage
- Coastal Forums
- Royal Haskoning
- Aggregates
- Marine Management Organisation
- Marine Conservation Society
- Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Society
- Shellfishing

The Lincolnshire and The Wash hub put forward four rMCZs and 7 rRAs in the final recommendations report. This hub area has the most reference areas, with a series of small reference areas protecting such features as the starlet sea anemone, coastal saltmarshes, saline reed beds and seagrass.

The Wash and North Norfolk coast has several layers of existing protection through national and European legislation. The recommendations developed by our Regional Stakeholder Group for MCZs in this area will compliment these designations.

The site NG5 covers Donna Nook, a nationally important seal colony on the Lincolnshire coastline, with up to approximately 4000 seals making the area their home. In the autumn up to 60,000 wildlife visitors are attracted to Donna Nook, 120,000 annually.









## Regional Hubs: East of England

**Local Liaison Officer:**  
Tammy Stamford

**Previous Meetings:**

25/03/10: Lowestoft  
16/06/10 & 17/06/10: Lowestoft  
12/10/10 & 13/10/10: Lowestoft  
25/01/11 & 26/01/11: Lowestoft  
30/03/11: Lowestoft  
10/05/11 & 11/05/11: Lowestoft

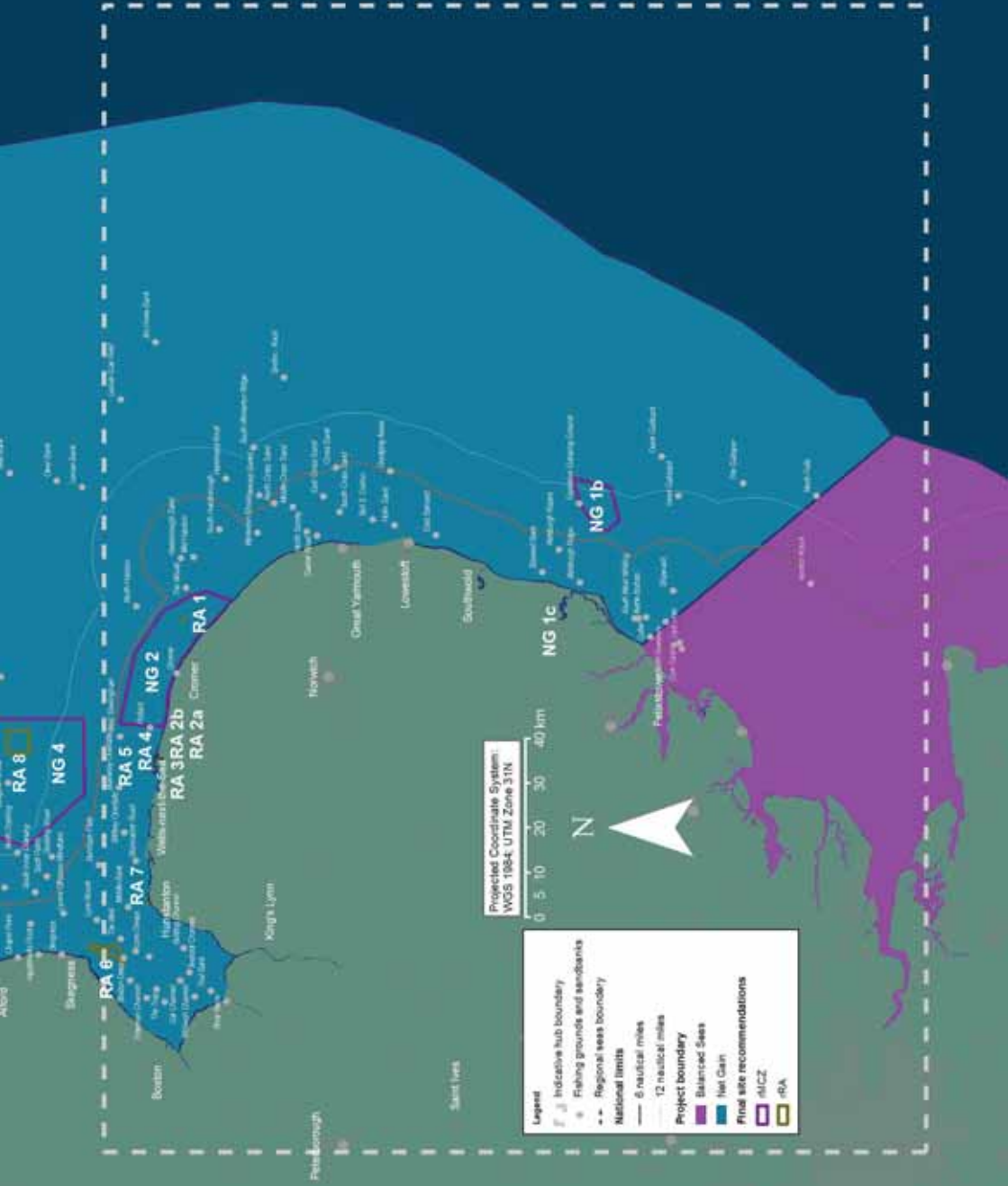
**Membership:**

- Local Government
- Commercial fishing
- English Heritage
- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- Offshore renewables
- RSPB
- The Crown Estate
- Marine Management Organisation
- Wildlife Trust
- Ports and Harbours
- Yachting
- Marinet
- Aggregates
- Southwold Harbour
- Marine Conservation Society
- North Sea Marine Cluster
- Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
- Seafood Processing
- National Trust
- Recreational Sea Anglers

The East of England hub area has, in total, put forward three rMCZs and one rRA in our final recommendations.

Site NG2 covers a fantastic example of subtidal chalk, believed to be the largest reef of this sort in Europe. In addition, this is the only significant area of hard seabed in the Southern North Sea. In this area alone, there are 30 recorded species of nudibranchs as well as sightings of several unusual species such as sunfish and basking shark.

Site NG1c covers the Alde and Ore estuary, which has a geological feature at its mouth. This is a key breeding and nursery ground for smelt, which is one of our named highly mobile species in the Ecological Network Guidance.





## The Stakeholder Advisory Panel (StAP)

### Membership:

- Inshore commercial fishing
- Offshore commercial fishing
- International fisheries
- Shellfisheries
- Leisure boating
- Diving
- Recreational Sea Angling
- Aggregates
- Offshore renewables
- Shipping
- Ports and Harbours
- Submarine cables
- Oil and gas
- Charter boaters
- NGOs
- Natural England
- JNCC
- The Crown Estate
- Local Government
- Marine Management Organisation
- Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities

Throughout the process, the StAP, chaired by Trevor Jameson, has come together to review the outputs from each round of Regional Hub meetings. One of the central aims of the StAP was to keep a perspective of the whole Net Gain area, and to help ensure that the network of recommended MCZs was developing into one that was well understood and met the targets of the Ecological Network Guidance across the board.

A range of national organisations were represented on the StAP, and members from each Regional Hub attended each meeting. This allowed for effective two-way communication between the Regional Hubs and the StAP, ensuring transparency and efficiency in the work that was undertaken by both groups.

The ultimate responsibility for signing off the recommendations of the Net Gain project fell to Trevor Jameson at the end of August 2011.



## Looking Ahead

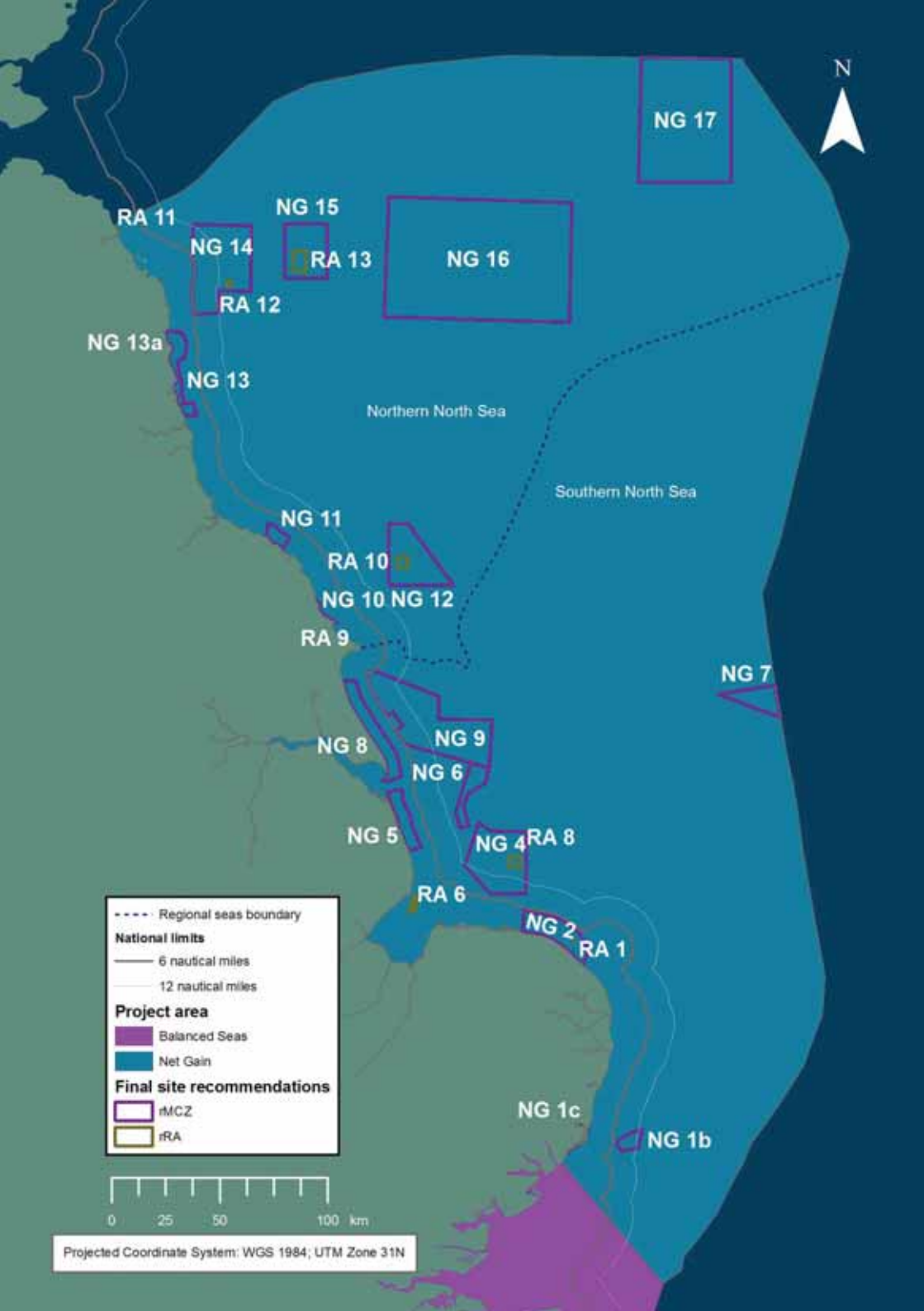
**Marine Conservation Zones are just one part of a much wider vision for a well supported, well understood and ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas in English waters. The government aims to designate Marine Conservation Zones in the near future, following a public consultation.**

Net Gain, along with the other Regional MCZ Projects, submitted their final recommendations in September 2011. It is important to note that this booklet is in no way intended to replace the complete final recommendations report, which can be found on our website , more to serve as a summary of the comprehensive final document.

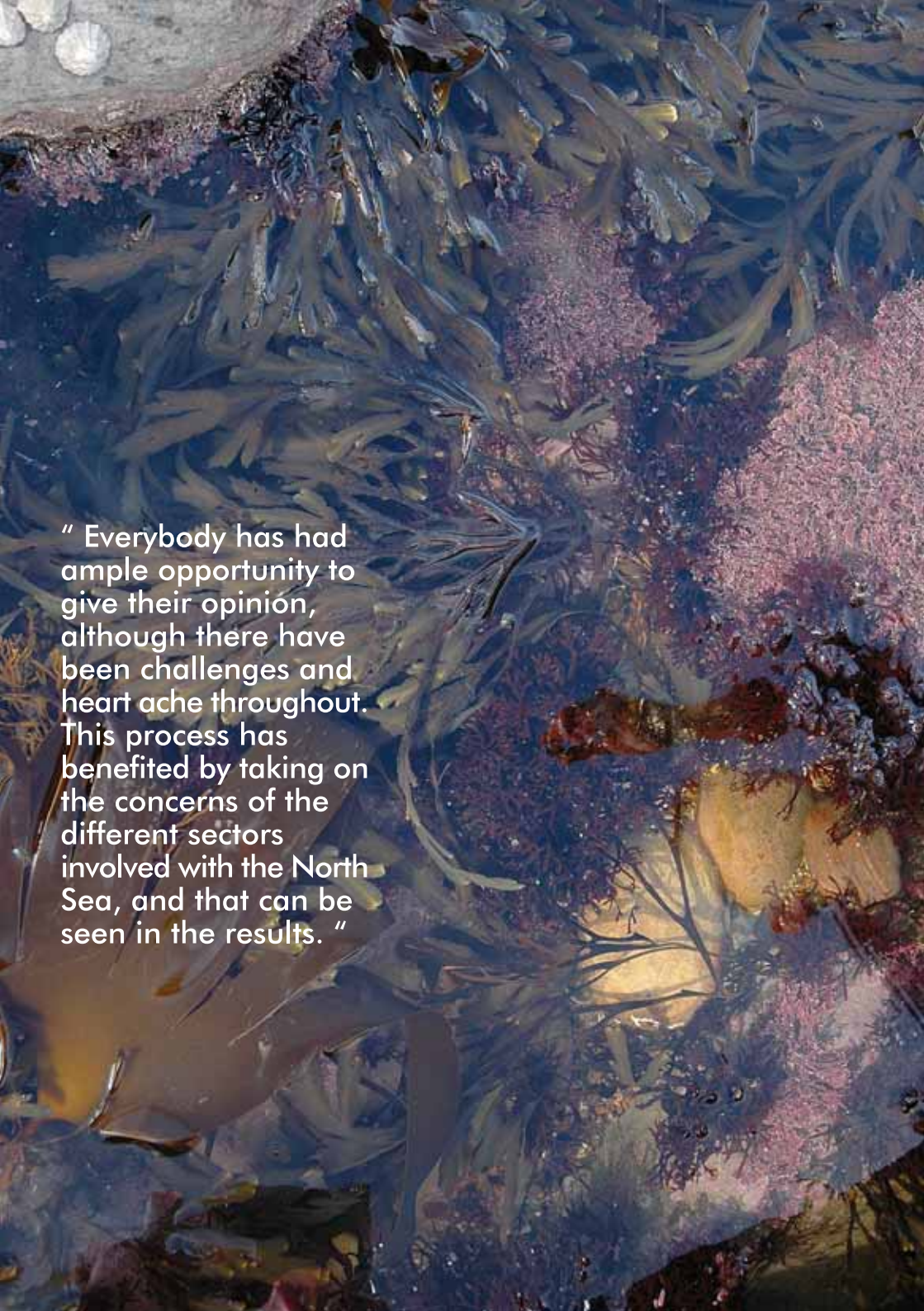
The Science Advisory Panel is now assessing the final recommendations, in terms of how well the report meets the Ecological Network Guidance, with a view to providing their feedback later in the year. Natural England and JNCC will also provide their assessment and advice to Government.

The remaining members of the Net Gain team will continue to work from offices in Hull, predominantly on the Impact Assessment that will be submitted early next year. The Impact Assessment will assess the economic, social and environmental impacts associated with the designation of MCZs.

Following the submission of the final recommendations, the Impact Assessment and the advice from the Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies, Ministers will consider which sites should be put forward for public consultation and potential designation. The public consultation will be a further opportunity for stakeholders that have been involved in the MCZ process to feedback on the proposals, as well as the wider public.







“ Everybody has had ample opportunity to give their opinion, although there have been challenges and heart ache throughout. This process has benefited by taking on the concerns of the different sectors involved with the North Sea, and that can be seen in the results. ”



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