

Scottish Highly Protected Marine Areas

Stakeholder Engagement Plan

December 2022

Introduction

This Stakeholder Engagement Plan explains how and when the Scottish Government, NatureScot and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee will engage with stakeholders on the identification and designation of Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs) in Scotland's seas. It sets out opportunities such as on-line sessions, cross-sectoral workshops and statutory public consultations in which stakeholders can participate and make a meaningful difference.

The introduction of the commitment to designate at least 10% of our seas as HPMAs by 2026 will impact a number of human activities and raise issues for a range of different stakeholders and stakeholder groups. Accordingly, our aim throughout is to be fair, transparent and inclusive and to strengthen the process by engaging with stakeholders at all key stages of policy development, site selection, assessment, and designation.

As we progress, this plan may be revised and updated with further information on engagement opportunities. We will communicate specific event details such as dates, locations, timings and signing-up instructions, via the 'Get involved and keep updated' section of the [HPMA website](#). We will also highlight upcoming stakeholder events in our bulletin: if you would like to receive this, please email HPMA@gov.scot and request to be added to our HPMA mailing list.

How we will engage

Between now and 2026 there are 3 main phases during which we are engaging with stakeholders (as set out below and as illustrated in figure 1):

1. A public consultation on the draft [Policy Framework](#), [Site Selection Guidelines](#) and supporting documents will run from December 2022 until March 2023. To complement this consultation we will be holding a series of online sessions during early 2023. Numbers will be limited: you will be required to sign-up via the 'Get involved and keep updated' section of the [HPMA website](#) to attend.
2. A series of workshops to inform the development of proposed HPMAs running from Spring 2023 until late 2024. Numbers will be limited: you will be required to sign-up via the 'Get involved and keep updated' section of the [HPMA website](#) to attend.

3. A public consultation on the proposed locations for HPMA in 2025, before final designation of sites in 2026.

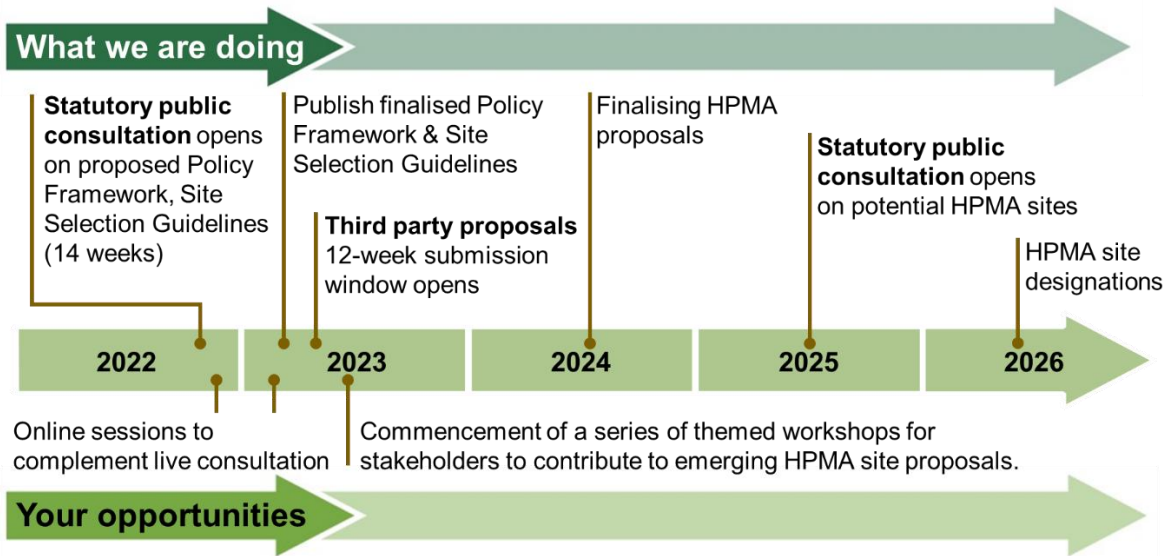


Figure 1: Indicative timeline showing HPMA project milestones and engagement opportunities

The initial phase of the HPMA process is focused on producing the Policy Framework and Site Selection Guidelines. Following the end of public consultation these documents will be finalised and published. Their publication will mark the beginning of the next phase of site selection and assessment for HPMA.

During the phase of site selection, a series of cross-sectoral themed workshops (Figure 2) will allow stakeholders to contribute to and comment on proposals as they emerge. The themes these workshops will focus on will include process, scientific evidence, emerging socio-economic impacts and potential impacts to island communities.

The workshop series below is indicative and subject to change. It is intended to support the development of HPMA proposals and is themed to that effect:

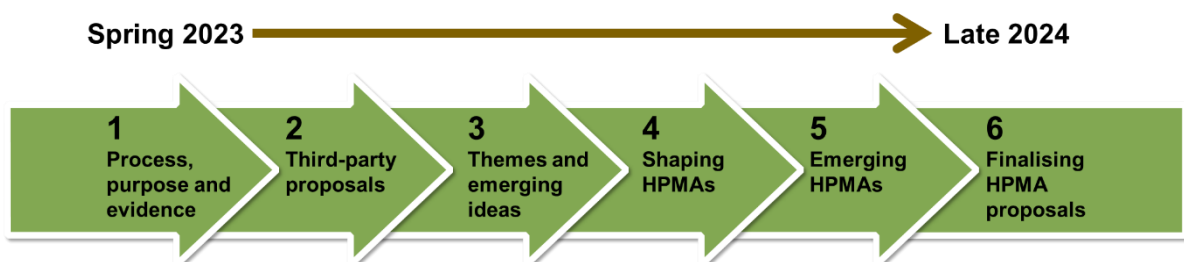


Figure 2: Indicative stakeholder workshop series

- 1. Process, purpose and evidence** - Introduce the published Policy Framework & Site Selection Guidelines. Discuss use of evidence, impacts & timelines
- 2. Third-party proposals** - To assist with the opening of the third-party proposals process, templates and support
- 3. Themes and emerging ideas** – Mapping of interests including a review of third-party proposals and visualising delivery of multiple benefits
- 4. Shaping HPMA**s – Initial long list of broad proposals including ‘options’: balancing ecological benefits & socio-economic impacts
- 5. Emerging HPMA**s – A review of shorter list of refined HPMA proposals – a reduced set of options still on the table – site specifics to be explored
- 6. Finalising HPMA proposals** - Bilateral meetings and set-piece event to present further refined site proposals to be taken to formal consultation

Third-party proposals

A twelve week submission window will allow for third-party proposals to be submitted. The process is outlined in the Site Selection Guidelines. Third-party proposals will be assessed against both the Site Selection Guidelines and the overall Policy Framework for HPMA. Consideration of favourable proposals will form a key element of the workshop series. We recommend you contact the HPMA Policy Team by emailing HPMA@gov.scot at an early stage if you are considering submitting a third-party proposal.

Stakeholders can begin to gather supporting evidence for third-party proposals before publication of the Policy Framework and Site Selection Guidelines, in Spring 2023. We will introduce a deadline for submitting third party proposals to allow applications to be reviewed as part of our proposed Workshop 3 on “Themes and Emerging Ideas”.

Beyond this initial submission period, the process will remain flexible and responsive to the provision of further supporting evidence but inevitably, a final deadline for evidence will also need to be identified. Third party proposals that are carried through to the finalised site proposals will be subject to a further formal public consultation period alongside all the other proposed sites.

What you need to do to engage

If you are interested in taking part in any of the events set out in this plan then please visit the 'Get involved and keep updated' section of the [HPMA website](#) for specific event(s) information, including signing up instructions. If you would like to receive our bulletin, please email HPMA@gov.scot and request to be added to our mailing list.



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