

Forum Discussion – part one

Councillor Margaret Rogers chaired a discussion as participants responded to ideas that had come up during the day about a Devon Maritime Forum (DMF). This is a summary of their points:

- I like the idea of the DMF being a process, not a structure i.e. an opportunity to talk to people I don't usually meet, hearing new voices. Several people agreed with this.
- Suggest 'Chatham House' rules – to facilitate information exchange.
- Avoid duplication with Sea Vision and other fora.
- DMF might encumber existing processes.
- DMF would be a benefit – but go for cheaper option £1,500.
- Need to encourage diversity and be inclusive so we can learn about other perspectives.
- DMF needs to include **users** of coast and not just managers.
- The AONB partnership attend approximately 40 fora or other partnerships. Therefore what can DMF do that is **special and needed?** We need to sift and filter this morning's issues for the key **Devon** (at this county scale) issues and make them our core business.
- A National Trust participant agreed with this proposal. DMF must do what others cannot. It need to address cross-cutting issues that are not being addressed elsewhere.
- Could DMF facilitate integrated coastal zone management?
- A Devon Wildlife Trust participant supported the cross sector value/capacity of such a Forum and said 'lets make this a basis for a new way of doing things'.
- Finding common interests to create ways of achievement and hear other points of view and ideas thus avoiding conflict.
- TECF offers a 2-tier model for forum working.
- Malcolm Turnbull of Dorset County Council talked about the Dorset Coast Forum, which now costs £100k, funded by 10 partners, supporting coordinator posts. For more detail see Appendix G.
- Beware of becoming a quango – or looking like a quango.
- Some participants could not see how we can all have shared vision because there are conflicts of interest.
- Is there need for a single voice?
- But it is good to share views.
- All of today's information would be available from existing organisations and their hierarchies – so why do we need a DMF?

- DMF can act as a bridge between politicians, businesses and people etc.
- DMF will need a few years to evolve.
- An English Nature participant agreed that the DMF should evolve organically – get to know each other. Somebody needs to facilitate this, who?
- Participants then heard Richard Younger-Ross MP for Teignbridge saying that government recognises a need to find ways of coherence / cross sector working (beyond existing channels and influences) which brings together wider interests, often without the usual restrictions, approaches, agendas. Being a bridge between experts, end users, the policy framework etc. This will create a more powerful voice when people come together from different sectors.
- How can we influence the Marine Bill? And other legislation? Should this be a prime focus?
- It saves time and duplication if we come together.
- Smaller industries would not otherwise get access.

By being unaffiliated, a DMF will be better heard and gain more influence than big organisations with big budgets.