



SUMMARY REPORT

**BEACHY HEAD EAST
Community
Consultation
Workshops**

February 2023



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Supporting the Sussex IFCA Informal Fisheries
Management Consultation at Beachy Head East
Marine Conservation Zone



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BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Beachy Head East (BHE) Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) is the largest inshore Marine Protected Area in Sussex. It runs from Beachy Head lighthouse, along the mean high-water line to Hastings Pier and out to the Royal Sovereign lighthouse, via the Bulverhythe buoy. The site covers 197km² and is adjacent to Eastbourne, Pevensey Bay, Bexhill, Hastings and St Leonards, with a combined population of around 256,477 people (2020 estimate, www.citypopulation.de 20/6/22).

BHE MCZ was one of the first MCZs to be proposed through Balanced Seas, the regional process to identify potential MCZ locations in the Southeast, by their Regional Stakeholder Group in 2010. It was supported by fishing industry and environmental NGOs and was eventually put forward for consultation in 2018 and designated in 2019.

In accordance with Marine & Coastal Access Act 2009 duties, Sussex IFCA (SxIFCA) is responsible for the introduction of appropriate protective fisheries management measures within Beachy Head East MCZ. The Sussex IFCA has successfully introduced management measures in the other five MCZ inshore sites within its district. BHE MCZ; the last to be designated, is the only remaining inshore Sussex MCZ in which management is required.

The polarisation of marine and coastal stakeholders is an established feature of the marine resource management narrative in the UK. In many communities, disagreements about the management of natural resources remain unresolved and certain stakeholders miss out on the opportunity to have their voice heard. Traditional methods of public participation, such as community meetings and online consultations routinely fail to engage communities. On the contrary, they may exacerbate conflicts among stakeholders and erode public confidence in policy making processes even as valued community assets like rocky reefs and associated sea life are degraded.

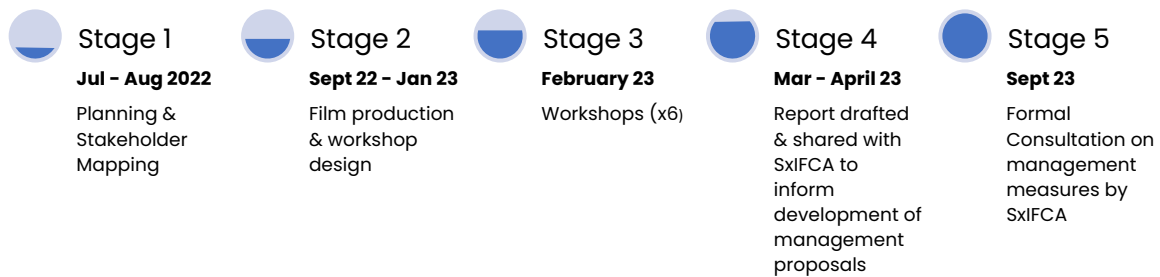
The application of an open listening approach, developed through experience of the Community Voice Method (CVM), a film based community engagement that is proven to create the conditions for more meaningful public participation processes (Cumming et al. 2022)

. Grounding in local values helps people take a step back from narrow, polarised policy debates and fosters conversation around the connections between people and place. The Marine Conservation Society (MCS) has a history of working closely with the SxIFCA and holds a rich and unique dataset of community views about the coast and sea in Sussex that stretches back over the last decade.

In 2013/14, the Marine Conservation Society and Sussex IFCA collaborated on the delivery the first Community Voice Method in the UK to support consultation on the first MCZ's designated in the area (Ranger et al. 2016). At the time BHE MCZ was being considered for designation, so this project took the opportunity to include questions about BHE and included interviews with stakeholders in Hastings, Bexhill and Eastbourne. Since 2017, the Marine Conservation Society's 'Agents of Change' community mobilisation project has been engaged around the BHE MCZ to amplify community support for a well-managed site. This included a localised and community led campaign in 2018/19 - #BackingBeachyHeadEast - calling designation of the site. This campaign gained support from over 1000 local people and was hosted on a bespoke website www.beachyheadeast.org.

At around the same time, MCS was delivering the first ever national CVM project - 'Our Blue Heart' - which was showcased in a documentary film focussing on social values associated with the ocean. Once again, the project included voices from Hastings and Bexhill. Finally, between 2020 - 2023, MCS has led on the youth engagement component of the Sussex Wildlife Trust led 'Wild Coast Sussex' project. Our contribution was to engage 16-25-year-olds with their local coast and marine environment. As part of the initial scoping phase for this research, young adults from Eastbourne, Bexhill and Hastings were film interviewed and asked their values associated with the local sea.

With this rich dataset in hand, MCS approached the Sussex IFCA to suggest that these accumulated community perspectives could be a valuable perspective to add to their up-coming informal consultation on management measures for the BHE MCZ. By drawing on this dataset and adopting the ethos of CVM, MCS offered to help broaden and deepen local engagement in the consultation. The aim was to develop local, shared understanding of community values and aspirations for people and their local sea and support active and positive engagement to inform IFCA management discussions.



Stage 1: Planning and Stakeholder Mapping

Workshop planning

The first stage allowed us to reflect on experience and learning and consider how both community and SxIFCA needs from the process could be best met.

Acknowledging that more than a decade has passed since the initial consultation at Balanced Seas in 2010 we anticipated that a degree of disconnect between policy makers and community about the site was likely and would need to be somehow efficiently bridged to lay the foundation for productive discussions. Where a process requires stakeholders to understand, process and respond to a lot of information, our experiences of community engagement as part of the Agents of Change project in Norfolk, had made it clear that a two-stage approach to consultation is beneficial. Having the same people attend two sessions gives people the time and space to digest and reflect adopt a considered approach in workshop deliberations. So, we decided to adopt this model for our work with SxIFCA on the BHE MCZ Management consultation.

MCS is committed to taking a holistic approach in order to reduce silos and allow people, who might have previously considered they were in opposition, hear and consider the views of others. This approach successfully allows stakeholders who may have previously felt frustrated by narrow and less inclusive engagement in conversations about marine to feel included and heard. The diversity of views that this welcomes creates the conditions for more informed consideration of deeply complex and multi-faceted issues.

Whereas a CVM project would usually include collecting new qualitative data from community members, we were able to draw on views and values shared over the preceding decade. This approach contributed to bridging the long period of time that had already elapsed since the initial proposal and effectively acted as a prompt to consider what had remained the same and what may have shifted and changed over the intervening years. We used the resulting film to reconnect people with shared, deeply held values and encouraged open consideration of any and all contemporary local issues at the outset. This holistic and open listening approach would need to be reflected in the workshop design

and activities undertaken by participants, ahead of focusing in on fisheries management deliberations.

Stakeholder mapping

A detailed stakeholder mapping exercise was conducted with SxIFCA to ensure that as diverse a cross section of the interested local community were aware of the consultation and felt welcome and motivated to attend. The span of stakeholders identified included:

- **Marine-related businesses**, including angling and dive clubs, commercial fishing organisations, charter boat operators, tackle shops, fish processing and sale premises, water sports organisations, water companies and more.
- **Other businesses**, including Chambers of Commerce, galleries and more.
- **Existing site users**, including fishermen, anglers, hand gatherers, divers, walkers and more.
- **Potential site users** through local media and wider community, including universities, colleges, and schools.
- **Neighbours** to Beachy Head East MCZ, including landowners (e.g., South Downs National Park Authority) and sea users based at neighbouring ports.
- **Public agencies**, including local Councils.
- **Government bodies**, including statutory bodies (e.g., Environment Agency and Crown Estate) and local Members of Parliament
- **Civil society organisations**, including environmental NGOs and other charitable organisations (e.g., RNLI).
- **Catchment groups** (e.g., Sussex Heritage Coast).

A total of 272 individuals, organisations, businesses and groups across Newhaven, Eastbourne, Pevensey Bay, Bexhill, Hastings, and Rye were identified through this process.

Stage 2: Film production & Workshop Design

Film Production

The existing CVM data from Sussex was reviewed and a subset of interviewees who were either from East Sussex or had either an interest or professional responsibility in the area was selected. This reassessment resulted in a pool of 28 interviewees, including commercial fishermen, recreational fishermen, divers, academics, statutory bodies, County Council, fish merchants, environmental NGOs, young adults, and an artist, marine archaeologist, and pub landlord. A broad film narrative was agreed (see image below) which included an introduction to Sussex, making visible connections to sea and coast, connection to fishing, changes in marine environment, views on management and hopes for the future.

Full transcripts were reanalysed for this project to reflect the current focus on BHE and potential management measures. Where the film narrative drew out themes which had not previously been explored, new codes were added. The film narrative started broad and then focused on fisheries management and hopes for the future. To convey as many views and values as possible, film clips which were most clearly, concisely, and engagingly expressed were used. The final film developed was 28 minutes long. The film can be viewed on YouTube [here](https://youtu.be/K4bt8zAgnsY?si=zOlwIFgSrDw-wFYG).

<https://youtu.be/K4bt8zAgnsY?si=zOlwIFgSrDw-wFYG>



Beachy Head East MCZ film narrative

Workshop structure

The workshops were designed by MCS in consultation with SxIFCA. As planned, we developed a paired approach, designing two complementary workshop sessions. To make workshops accessible, workshop spaces were booked in locations around the MCZ at Eastbourne, Bexhill, and Hastings. To reduce the pressure of addressing a whole room, stakeholders worked in smaller groups. To reduce silos and encourage constructive conversation across stakeholder groups, groupings were intentionally mixed according to people's connection to the MCZ. Each group was facilitated by a member of SxIFCA or MCS staff and, where capacity allowed, each group also had a recorder or scribe. Participants were strongly encouraged

to attend both workshops if possible. Invitations were sent out by SxIFCA and MCS to contacts identified through the stakeholder mapping exercise by email, text, phone and / or face-to-face communication.

To allow for diverse stakeholders to share their views in an open forum and thereby develop a shared understanding of both common ground and areas of difference, the following three phased approach was agreed:

WORKSHOP 1

- **Phase 1:** Information sharing
- **Phase 2:** Community views, values, and hopes for the future.

WORKSHOP 2

- **Phase 3:** IFCA management proposals and community reflections

WORKSHOP 1

Phase 1: Information sharing

The first workshops opened with a welcome and orientation from SxIFCA's Chief Officer and the Lead Facilitator from MCS. To ensure that everyone felt informed enough to engage fully in the conversations with other stakeholders, the SxIFCA provided some baseline information about the BHE MCZ.



Participants in their smaller groups were then asked to introduce themselves to one another before taking part in the first exercise, called **'Information Stations'**.

Workshop participants moved between information stations in their small mixed groups. Wherever possible, staff from the different organisations were there to discuss their work to community members directly. The stations included SxIFCA management, SxIFCA research, the work of Natural England, the Environment Agency, and the Local Authority. This activity was designed to quickly bring workshop participants up to date with current work and priorities in the district and ask any burning questions they might have.



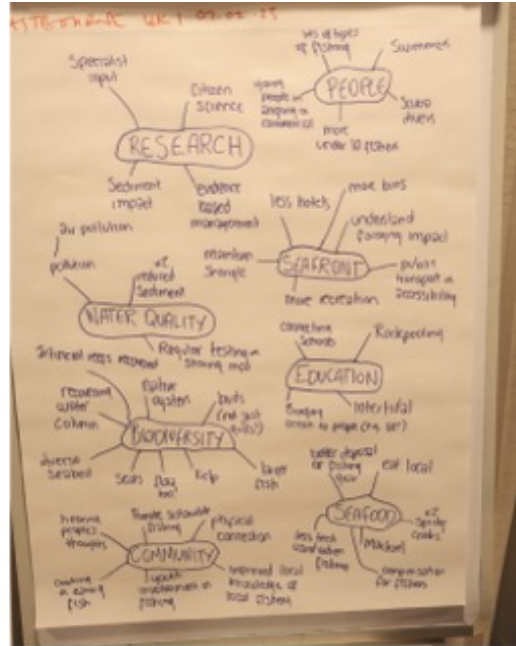
Phase 2: Community views, values, and hopes for the future.

Having just heard about the work of the organisations charged with managing the local sea and coast, this phase gave the community opportunity to respond with their hopes for the local area. To demonstrate listening and provide a prompt for conversation, this phase began with a **screening of the film** reflecting the views and values of community members over the years.



Immediately after the film, participants were given the opportunity to share any general reflections on what they had seen with the whole group. Then there was a break to allow time for reflection and conversation between participants.

This shared reflection then led into the **visioning exercise**. Participants were asked to imagine that they left the local area and returned 20 years into the future to find that everything was exactly as they hoped. In their groups, they used text and illustrations to create an image of what that would look like. If there were areas of disagreement, both scenarios were recorded. A member of each group then shared their collective vision with the participants in the room and the statutory bodies present. After this, a reminder of the next workshop a week or so later was shared and feedback form circulated.



WORKSHOP 2

PHASE 3: IFCA management proposals and community reflections

Shared vision: The second round of workshops were run at the same venues with, as far as possible, the same participants. Once again, the workshops opened with a welcome from the SxIFCA's Chief Officer and the MCS Lead Facilitator who also provided a recap of Workshop 1. This included presentation of a collated 'vision'

drawn from community aspirations for the future that had been shared across all three workshops. The themes relating to fishing and environment were explored in a bit more depth while all themes raised were reflected. The intention of this exercise was to situate the upcoming deliberation on fisheries management measures for Beachy Head East in the social and environmental context of the area. At the same time reminding participants of the common ground expressed in the visioning exercises.

Key information & Management Options: The SxIFCA Chief Officer then provided clear and detailed information related to the MCZ its social and ecological value. He described local fishing activity, the protected features of the site, Natural England advice on management and details of the byelaw creation process. Within this framework, he then explained that there were several options for management. These were presented to workshop participants and their differences described. Printed maps describing the four different management proposals were provided to each participant to support small group conversations. Sussex IFCA staff joined each table to answer questions and ensure participants were able to quickly familiarise themselves with the options. Each participant was asked to make an individual assessment of the options and rank them in order of preference on a paper form. They were able to abstain if they chose to. These forms were collected, and the data inputted during the second exercise of Phase 3, to provide immediate feedback and a quick gauge on feeling in the room.

Management Options Carousel: Having recorded their individual views on the management options, participants were then asked to consider the management options at hand more holistically and from different perspectives. They moved between five stations in their small groups. At each station they were presented with a different question and asked to respond and provide some insight to their reasoning. Deliberations and rankings were recorded by a facilitator. Participants could also abstain if they wished.

The questions:

- Which management option will be easiest to enforce and have good compliance?
- Which management option best meets the Conservation Objectives of the MCZ?
- Which management option will most limit the displacement of fishing boats on to other habitats and fishing grounds?
- Which management option will increase the long-term sustainability of fishing in the area?

- Which management option will have the least negative impact on mobile gear fishing income in the MCZ in the short-term?

Participants then returned to their tables and the results of the individual ranking and the management options carousel were shared. These results provided an overview of people's initial responses, their deliberated responses and some of the thinking behind their views. It was noted by facilitators that some attendees may have been 'norming' or voting based on where most votes had been cast by previous groups. It would potentially be advisable to hide responses from previous groups to avoid this in future.

Final ranking: Participants were asked to give a final ranking of their preference for management options. They were asked to consider whether the wider questions presented as part of the carousel had changed how they felt about the management options presented by Sussex IFCA. The results of this final ranking were not presented back to the room.

Close: The SxIFCA Chief Officer provided a closing statement and described the expected timeline of events for fisheries management at the Beachy Head East MCZ. After this, the room was asked to separate into two groups, those that fish (either commercially or recreationally) and those that do not fish. All those that fish were invited to spend some additional time sharing specific, relevant information with the Sussex IFCA, for example, about key fishing locations. All those that do not fish were asked to complete a feedback questionnaire, which welcomed their thoughts on other/ additional management suggestions.



Top left: Quick familiarisation with the management options presented by Sussex IFCA

Top right: Initial ranking of management options in order of preference

Bottom left: Wider perspective questions during management options carousel exercise

Bottom right: Feedback to the room on ranking and carousel outcomes

RESULTS

Workshop participation

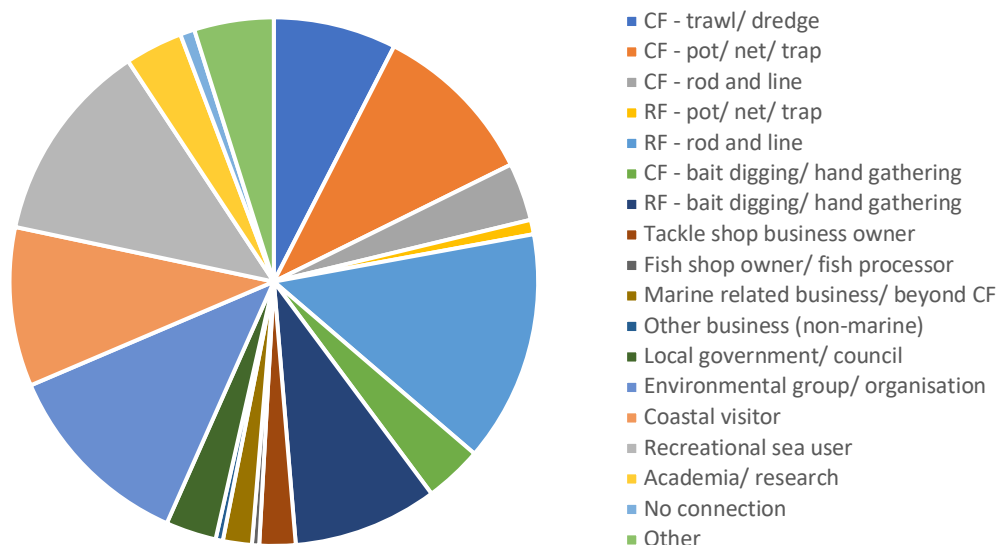
In total, six workshops were held. Two each at Eastbourne, Bexhill and Hastings. The workshops were attended by 125 individuals, 42 of whom (67%) attended both the first and second workshop at one of the locations.

At check in, each attendee was asked to introduce themselves and their primary interest in the process. For the purposes of this report, the first stakeholder grouping described by the individual is shared here.

Stakeholder Group, as stated during workshop check-ins	Total overall attendance (n)	Proportion overall attendance (%)
Environment group/organisation/ interest	21	16.8
Commercial fisher (any fishing type)	39	31.2
Recreational fisher (any fishing type)	24	19.2
IFCA committee member	4	3.2
Councillor / Government	13	10.4
Marine business - charter boat	4	3.2
Business – fish shop	1	0.8
Business – tackle shop	4	3.2
Business - other	1	0.8
Academia / research	4	3.2
Local resident	3	1.6
Natural England	4	2.4
Environment Agency	2	1.6
Marine Management Organisation	1	0.8

This data gives an impression of the range of all attendees but is limited by recording only one grouping per individual when some people may belong to multiple groups. A more nuanced account can be derived from the feedback forms that participants were asked to complete. They were able to self-describe their connection to or interest in the site and choose as many groups as they felt appropriate. Across all Workshop 1 events, 48 attendees completed survey forms (76% attendees) and across all Workshop 2 events, 50 attendees completed survey forms (81% attendees), totalling 98 feedback forms (78% total workshops attendees).

Group CF = commercial fisher RF = recreational fisher	Eastbourne	Bexhill	Hastings	Eastbourne	Bexhill	Hastings	Overall no. attendees	% of surveyed respondents (n=98)
CF trawl / dredge	1	1	5	1	0	9	17	17.3
CF pot / net / trap	4	2	5	4	0	8	23	23.5
CF rod and line	1	1	1	1	0	4	8	8.2
RF pot / net / trap	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	2.0
RF rod and line	3	13	1	4	9	2	32	32.7
CF bait digging / gathering	0	5	0	0	3	0	8	8.2
RF bait digging / gathering	1	7	0	3	9	0	20	20.4
Tackle shop business owner	0	3	0	0	2	0	5	5.1
Fish shop owner / processor	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1.0
Other marine-related business	3	0	0	1	0	0	4	4.1
Other business (non-marine)	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1.0
Local Government / Council	2	1	1	0	1	2	7	7.1
Environmental group /org.	5	4	2	8	4	4	27	27.6
Coastal visitor	3	6	3	2	6	2	22	22.4
Recreational sea user	7	6	2	6	3	4	28	28.6
Academia / research	1	1	1	2	1	2	8	8.2
No connection	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	2.0
Other: Local resident	2	1	0	1	0	0	4	4.1
Other: Teacher	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1.0
Other: MMO appointee to Sx IFCA	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	2.0
Other: retired / shore angler	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1.0
Other: ex-tackle shop owner	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1.0
Other: retired fisherman / educator	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1.0
Other: Fishing Society	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1.0



Community Vision for Local Society and Sea

Collating data from the visioning exercises revealed common and distinct aspirations for Eastbourne, Bexhill, and Hastings communities. for the Beachy Head East MCZ, local society, and sea. In total, there were 11 vision diagrams produced (Eastbourne = 5, Bexhill=4, Hastings=2) which were synthesised into a shared, collective vision.

	No. of groups	No. of locations
Good & clean water quality	10	3
More/ better recreation at the coast	7	3
Towed gear management & or zonation	7	3
Improved Community Space	6	3
Less pollution, excluding water quality	6	3
Monitoring & understanding marine environmental change	6	3
Abundant wildlife & diversity	6	2
Environmental Education	5	3
Fishing Education	5	3
Improved accessibility & public transport	5	3
More lobsters & edible crabs	5	3
Increasing fish retail opportunities	5	3
Increased/ better management offshore	5	3
More & bigger fish	4	3
Static gear supported a& well-managed	4	3
Maintained & restored seabed, including kelp	4	2
Good & / or better inshore fisheries management	4	2
More under 10 fishing boats	3	3
Seal management, mixed responses	3	3
Inshore fisheries management to apply out to 12nm	3	2
Maintained commercial fishing community	3	2
Reduced sedimentation	3	1
Diverse seabed	2	2
Maintain beach/ sea defence	2	2
Limiting hand gathering	2	2
Fisheries management enforcement	2	1
Financial support for fishers to diversify to low impact gears	1	1
Consider management in wider societal & environmental context	1	1
Stakeholder agreement to support MCZ environment	1	1
More MPAs outside 6nm	1	1

Community Feedback on Management Proposals

All workshop 2 participants were given the opportunity to provide feedback on their thoughts on the IFCA's management proposals and then, later, were given opportunity to offer further management options if they wished.

Response to IFCA Management Proposals: Four management options were proposed, with an additional option to include or reject the inclusion of outlying point data. All respondents could opt to abstain from the exercises if they wished.

The exercises were:

1. First individual ranking
2. Management options discussion carousel and discussion
3. Final individual ranking

The summary results for these activities from all three locations are shown below. The results of the ranking exercises show that, while Option 4 had more support than the other options after the first ranking exercise, there was slightly more support for it after the carousel activity which encouraged participants to think more holistically about the options.

Ranking Exercises

	First Individual Ranking	Final Individual Ranking
Option 1	51	49
Option 2	48	48
Option 3	47	48
Option 4	55	56

Management options discussion carousel

Responses to the carousel activity reveal some of the thinking behind preferences. Participants felt that Option 1 would be easiest to enforce and achieve good compliance, that it best met the Conservation Objectives of the MCZ and would increase the long-term sustainability of the site.

Option 4 was felt to be the best option for limiting displacement of fishing boats and having the least negative impact on mobile gear fishing income in the MCZ in the short-term.

	Conservation	Management enforcement	Management displacement	Mobile fishing gear	Sustainability of fishing
Option 1	37	34	13	1	27
Option 2	0	1	0	1	6
Option 3	2	11	2	1	5
Option 4	15	8	30	48	11
Abstain	2	1	11	5	8

Summary of Participant Feedback

Feedback forms were fully or partially completed by 98 participants. The percentages below show the proportion of net agreement among people who responded to that particular question

- 85% survey respondents found the **workshop process** to be good or very good (n=81).
- 86% respondents found the **pre-workshop communications** to be good or very good (n=81).
- 96% found the venues and **facilities** to be good or very good (n=91).
- 96% survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that **the workshops were enjoyable** (n=92).
- 98% survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that **the workshops were informative** (n=96).
- 88% survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that **the workshops had met their expectations** (n=84).
- 85% survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that **the workshops were relevant to the issues facing the region** (n=81)
- 91% survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that **their opinions had been valued in the workshops** (n=84).

- 99% survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that **everyone had a chance to participate during the workshops** (n=98)
- 92% survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the workshops were **an effective way of helping people to talk about marine resource management** (n=92).
- 97% survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the workshops gave them a chance to **talk to people they don't usually talk to** (n=95).
- 95% survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the workshops gave them **a greater appreciation of other people's views** (n=94)
- 73% survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they had discovered they had something in common with someone they didn't expect to share common ground with (n=70).

Some questions invited qualitative responses.

The **two-part workshop format** was broadly well received. Examples of positive feedback shared on the two-part workshop structure:

- *'Good - too much discussion for a single event'*
- *'I liked the 2-part approach, saved me from system overload!!'*
- *'Useful to have two parts to let ideas develop'*
- *'Big investment of time but worth it'*
- *'I really felt it was beneficial as it gave me time to absorb, consider, and discuss points made in the first workshop, prior to sharing and discussing in the second'*
- *'Very beneficial to have week in between to consider issues & comments & to return to more discussions'*

Though not all participants agreed.

- *'Not sure 2 workshops was necessary don't think first added much to the consultation in workshop 2'*

When asked **which parts of the workshops they enjoyed most**, many people said they enjoyed all or nearly all of it. But the most pronounced theme was around discussions with others, hearing views of others and mix of tables, opinions, and expertise. A number of people particularly enjoyed the Workshop 1 visioning exercise, including the discussion that followed the sense of working together and hearing views of others. People also mentioned the Workshop 2 management discussions at carousel stations and the Workshop 1 information stations and opportunity to meet different organisations. People also appreciated being part of the byelaw process and being able to have their say, watching the film, the respectful environment, close facilitation and opportunity to record ideas visually.

When asked **how the workshops could be improved** most people who responded said they had nothing to suggest. A few participants felt the workshops were not publicised as well as they could have been and were disappointed that some of the organisations did not send representative to every workshop. Other useful suggestions were made about timings, room layout, areas where more information/explanation would have been welcome and potential additional presenters (specifically a fisher).

When asked **how this workshop compared to past public workshops** participants had attended on marine resource management, more than half of the respondents (53%) said they had never participated in a workshop like this before. Of those that had, 89% said that it was better than their previous experiences.

Some examples of the responses to this question include:

- *Well organised, less conflicts*
- *Easy atmosphere*
- *More interactive, liked mixing tables in workshop 2*
- *Certainly longer! But more informative and well managed*
- *Not boring! Usually are tedious but this kept my attention.*
- *This was highly detail oriented - provided opportunity to drive down*
- *More interactive*
- *Less aggressive / emotionally charged*
- *Very good, though long a lot of information to process*

The detailed results of the Beachy Head East Workshops were collated and shared with the SxIFCA as part of the informal consultation on management measures for the MCZ in Spring 2023. The formal consultation was launched in the late

summer of 2023 and details of the workshop outcomes are included in the Impact Assessment and Informal Consultation Report on the SxIFCA website [here](#)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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