

## Report summary

# Valued Seas

## What is Valued Seas?

This project was designed to gather evidence that could be used by Natural England to contribute to the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) Marine Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment (mNCEA) programme.

Valued Seas explored how data on socio-cultural value could be captured and integrated into a Natural Capital Assessment for the Falmouth to St Austell Bay Special Protection Area (SPA), one of the case study sites for the mNCEA.

Using socio-cultural values provides a more holistic understanding of the total value of the marine space to people, supporting future management to safeguard these added benefits into the future.

## What did we find?

- Participants in this project shared the **many ways they derive socio-cultural value from the coast**; such as creating a sense of identity, socialising, and building relationships, recreation, and particularly, the value of the coast and sea to people's mental and physical wellbeing.
- **Socio-cultural values are interconnected**, and **people can hold multiple values** at once – for example, experiencing wellbeing benefits while using the sea for recreation, or using the sea to earn a living while also valuing it as an important place for community relationships.
- **There are limitations of monetising some kinds of value**, and values which can be monetised do not necessarily have a higher value to society. For example, this project suggests most of the community are more likely to prize wellbeing value they gain from the sea over its provision of natural resources, which is easier to assign a monetary value. Some participants also felt that nature is valuable in and of itself and should not be given a financial value.
- Qualitative research and **community deliberation can be an effective way to elicit data on some socio-cultural values**.

## Key terms:

**Socio-cultural values** are values that are shared by groups of people and/or inform the shared identity of a group (\*). It's important to consider and capture the everyday value of the marine environment to those who live, work, and enjoy time there, because it ensures decision-makers can consider the full range of impacts that management decisions might have for people and nature.

**Natural Capital Assessment** Marine natural capital is the natural resources in the ocean that deliver economic and social value to society through the services nature provides; such as providing food, regulating our climate, supporting leisure opportunities, culture, and wellbeing. Natural Capital Assessments help represent the importance of ecosystems by accounting for this value in decisions affecting the marine environment.





## How did we do this?

Valued Seas used Community Voice Method, which engages stakeholders in a way that seeks their views and encourages discussion on marine issues to stimulate more meaningful and equitable community engagement in natural resource policy development, decision-making and management. This mixed methods approach included semi-structured interviews, which were recorded to produce a 30-minute film. This film was then shown at interactive community workshops, during which further information was shared, and data was collected. After the workshops, participants completed feedback surveys, which we used to improve later sessions.



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### Project design

The Marine Conservation Society worked alongside Natural England and local stakeholders to create an interview guide.



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### Research

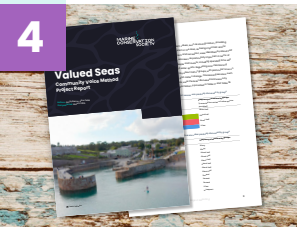
A diverse sample of 28 people took part in filmed semi-structured interviews. These interviews were transcribed, analysed, and used to produce a film narrative for the development of a 30-minute documentary.



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### Deliberation

Five workshops were held: three community workshops, one workshop for Cornwall County Councillors, and one workshop for the Mevagissey fishing community. Participants watched the project film and provided feedback on it. They also learned about and discussed several topics, such as the socio-cultural values they held, Natural Capital Assessments, and management of the St Austell Bay area.



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### Reporting

We have published a detailed report on the project and its findings. The film is also available, as is an interactive map showing how participants use the coast and sea around St Austell Bay.

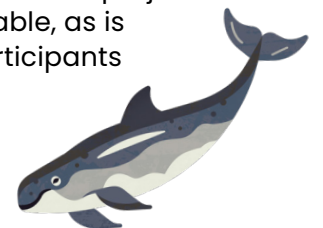


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### Action

This data is being used to support the inclusion of socio-cultural data in the mNCEA program. It is also being used by the MMO to support their Celtic Seas and Western Pelagic Channel Fisheries Management Plan.

## The Community Voice Method process



## What did people say?



“When you look out there, and you see how beautiful it is, it’s hard not to just want to be here, and [spend] all of your time here, really. And sharing that with other people... and showing them, is a real honour, to be honest with you.”



“...it’s in my heart, soul, body, blood, breath, everything. I mean, I am so lucky because I breathe the sea air in, I see the sea. And I’m near it as much as I can, so it’s an absolutely essential part of my being... I wake up every morning feeling blessed and give thanks for me being able to enjoy it as I do.”

“My relationship with this place? Well, as a Cornishman, it’s just in me, really. I feel... very proud to be here. My family’s been here for generations... I feel intrinsically linked to the place and landscape, as do many people in the community.”



“...the coast and sea pretty much is the local economy here... I think that the economy is really driven by beautiful natural spaces, and that’s really our huge selling point and our huge asset in the area.”

[View the full report at mcsuk.org](https://mcsuk.org)

\* Reference: IPBES (n.d.) *Glossary: Socio-cultural Value*. Available at: <https://www.ipbes.net/glossary-tag/socio-cultural-value>

📷 Header, Action – Lewis Jefferies; How did we do this? – Dr Peter Richardson; Research – Tom Crawford; Deliberation – Emily Bunce.



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