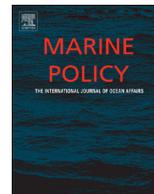




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## Marine Policy

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## Public perceptions of management priorities for the English Channel region

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## ARTICLE INFO

## Keywords:

English Channel  
Le Manche  
Public Perception Research  
Marine governance  
Marine environment  
Public engagement

## ABSTRACT

The English Channel region is an area of high conservational importance, as well being a contributor to economic prosperity, social well-being and quality of life of the people living around it. There is a need to incorporate societal elements into marine and coastal governance, to improve management of the Channel ecosystem. Public Perception Research (PPR) is a relatively unexplored dimension of marine science, with limited research at the scale of the Channel region. Using an online survey, this study examined the public's use of, and funding priorities for, the Channel's marine and coastal environment. It revealed that there are variations in how the English and French coastlines are used. Environmental issues were generally viewed as being more important than economic ones. Country-level differences were observed for public uses of, and priorities for the Channel region. Cleaner water and beaches, and improved coastal flood defences, were more highly prioritised by English respondents, while offshore renewable energy and sustainability of businesses were more highly prioritised by French respondents. The paper contributes to the debate on the value of PPR by addressing evidence gaps in the English Channel region, and to PPR literature more broadly. It provides baseline data to inform future engagement strategies for the marine and coastal governance of the Channel region specifically. It also identifies how this type of research has implications for the wider marine and coastal environment, including contributing to Sustainable Development Goal 14 on conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas, and marine resources.

## 1. Introduction

Marine and coastal environments are some of the most productive and valued ecosystems in the world [1,2]. However, they are also some of the most heavily degraded environments as a result of substantial and increasing human pressures, threats and challenges [3–5]. This is reflected in the English Channel (known as La Manche in France; hereafter the Channel), an area of high conservation importance and one which contributes to economic prosperity, social well-being and quality of the life [6]. The geographical area of the Channel is defined as having, as its western limit a line from 48°38'23"N 4°34'13"W to 50°04'N 5°43'W (i.e. Ushant to the Scilly Isles) and as its eastern limit (across the Dover Strait) a line joining the Walde lighthouse in France, at 51°00'N 1°55'E, and Leathercoat Point in England, at 51°10'N 1°55'E

[7]. However, the boundaries of the region and its terrestrial extent can vary depending on the issues being considered, with different boundaries applied by OSPAR, the EU, and other bodies [6].

This paper is based on the results of an online survey conducted under the aegis of the Promoting Effective Governance of the Channel Ecosystem (PEGASEAS) Project and was intended to provide recommendations and identify future challenges for the Interreg V Programme for 2014–2020 (successor to Interreg IV).<sup>1</sup> All areas included within the Interreg V programme area for the Channel were included in the survey. This includes all the South Coast of England, from Kent to Cornwall, all of the North Coast of France, from Calais to Brest, and incorporates the marine, coastal and terrestrial space within the region (see Fig. 1). Responses to the survey came from all of the Interreg V eligible areas, and a breakdown of the residence of those

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<sup>1</sup> The Interreg Europe programme helps regional and local governments across Europe to develop and deliver policy measures that have an integrated and sustainable impact on both people and places. For further information in the Interreg Programme see <https://www.interreg-europe.eu/about-us/what-is-interreg-europe/>.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2018.07.001>

Received 29 June 2018; Accepted 1 July 2018

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Fig. 1. Map of the Channel, including Interreg V eligible areas.

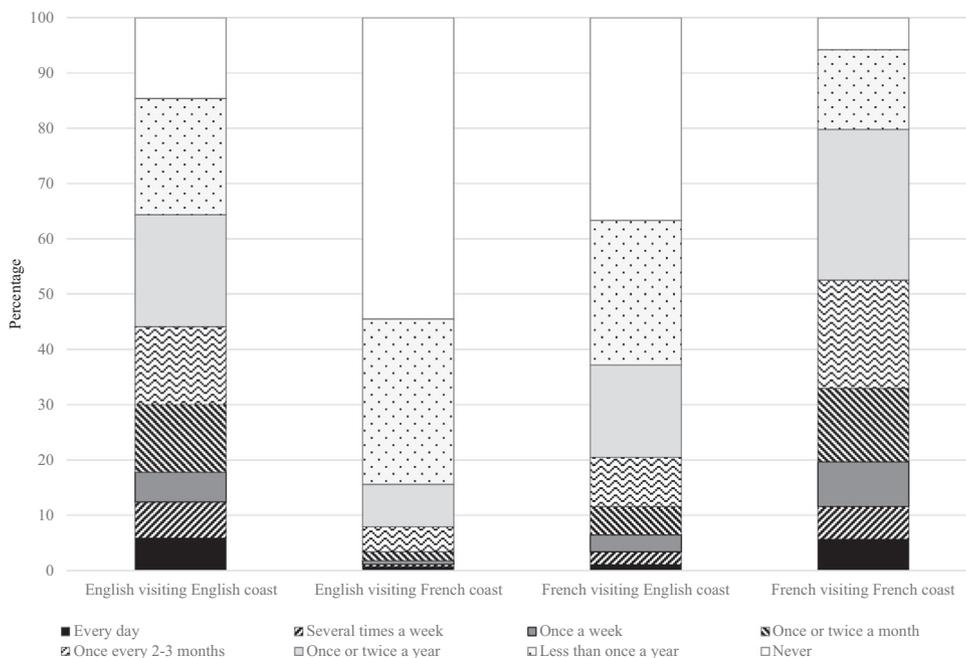


Fig. 2. Frequency of visits to the (English and French) Channel Coast (n = 2000).

respondents (English by County, French by Département is provided in the Supplementary Material to this paper (Supp.Mat. Figs. 1 and 2).

Map courtesy of the Challenger Society, UK, [www.challenger-society.org.uk](http://www.challenger-society.org.uk) [8]

The Channel is a vibrant area, with a growing population living along the coasts of what is one of the busiest maritime regions in the

world [6]. It faces a range of economic, social and environmental challenges, including unemployment, social deprivation, vulnerability to the impacts of climate change (e.g. marine-source flooding events and coastal erosion), and ecological deterioration relating to multiple human pressures [9]. Managing both natural environmental risks and the impacts of human activities requires implementation of cross-

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