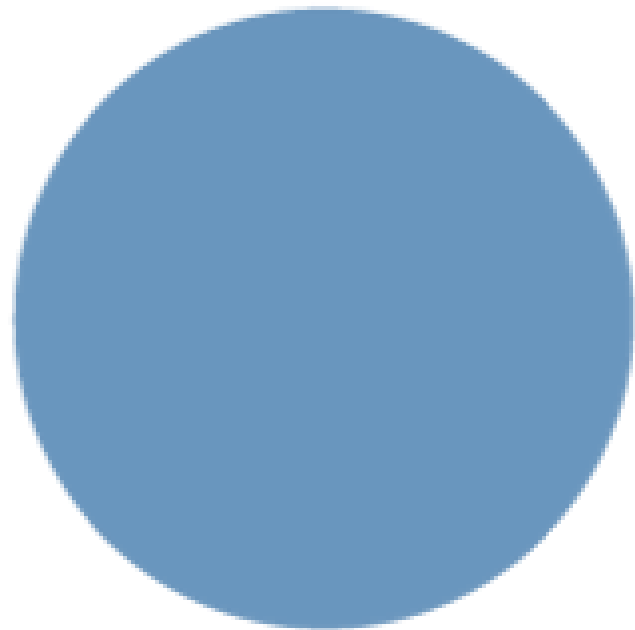




PARTNERSHIP FIRST



Partnership First

CASE STUDY
Yorkshire Marine
Nature Partnership

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CASE STUDY: STRENGTHENING STRATEGIC CAPACITY, CLARITY AND IMPACT FOR A REGIONAL MARINE NATURE PARTNERSHIP

CLIENT

Yorkshire Marine Nature Partnership (YMNP)

Commission: Skills & Knowledge Audit, Strategic Partnership Review, Action Planning

Role: Independent evaluation, partnership development and strategic support

OVERVIEW

Yorkshire Marine Nature Partnership (YMNP) is the only region-wide partnership focused on the stewardship and recovery of Yorkshire's marine and coastal environment. It brings together local authorities, statutory agencies, NGOs, academic institutions, delivery organisations and partnerships to address complex environmental challenges at the land–sea interface.

Building on earlier development work, YMNP was entering a new phase of ambition: shaping a long-term marine nature recovery strategy, strengthening its regional influence, and moving toward more coordinated delivery. To support this transition, **Partnership First** was commissioned to provide independent analysis and practical guidance to strengthen partnership capacity, governance, and approaches to impact and learning.

OUR APPROACH: INDEPENDENT REVIEW & DEVELOPMENTAL SUPPORT

Partnership First acted as an **independent critical friend**, combining evidence-gathering with facilitation, interpretation and strategic translation.

PHASE ONE – SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE AUDIT AND PARTNERSHIP REVIEW

Designed and delivered a mixed-method assessment to build a clear, evidence-based picture of:

- Skills, knowledge and expertise across marine, coastal, environmental, policy and organisational domains
- Capacity constraints affecting engagement and participation
- How effectively YMNP was functioning as a partnership
- Partner perspectives on governance, communication, influence and impact

The methodology combined:

- Online audits and surveys
- Interviews and qualitative insight
- Review of previous audits, evaluations and partnership documentation

Findings were interpreted carefully, focusing on **patterns and consistency** across multiple evidence sources rather than treating individual responses in isolation.

PHASE TWO: STRATEGIC INSIGHT AND SENSE-MAKING

Rather than presenting the findings as a static report, Partnership First focused on **sense-making and application**, helping YMNP to:

- Clarify core strengths to build on, including trust, convening power and existing expertise
- Identify areas where longer-term, structured development would be beneficial
- Understand the implications for governance, commissioning and leadership as the partnership matured
- Explore how impact and learning could be made more visible and useful to partners

This phase supported shared understanding and constructive dialogue, ensuring the evidence could inform decision-making and next steps.

PHASE THREE – ACTION PLAN AND ROADMAP FOR GROWTH

Translated the findings into a **three-phase Action Plan**, providing YMNP with a practical, sequenced roadmap for its next stage of development.

The Action Plan focused on:

Phase 1 – Consolidating foundations

Phase 2 – Strengthening systems and collaboration

Phase 3 – Embedding and scaling impact

Each phase included clear success indicators to support reflection, learning and adaptation over time.

OUTCOMES

Outcomes were:

- A credible, shared evidence base to support strategic decision-making
- Greater clarity about partnership strengths, constraints and development needs
- A structured pathway toward a more Board-led, strategic commissioning model
- Foundations for a clear and visible Impact & Learning Framework
- Clearer expectations and engagement pathways for partners
- Increased confidence in YMNP's ability to demonstrate value, influence policy and attract future investment

Crucially, the approach was grounded in the **lived reality of partner capacity**, ensuring recommendations were realistic, proportionate and achievable.

LEGACY

STRATEGIC CLARITY: A clearer articulation of purpose, priorities and long-term ambition, supported by a phased development roadmap.

EVIDENCE-LED PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: Impact and learning positioned as enablers of leadership, accountability and influence rather than compliance.

CAPACITY-AWARE DESIGN: Governance, engagement and delivery structures designed around partner realities and available resource.

FOUNDATIONS FOR MARINE RECOVERY LEADERSHIP: Systems, structures and shared understanding in place to support YMNP's transition into a mature, strategically aligned regional partnership.

WHY THIS WORK MATTERS

This case study demonstrates **Partnership First's** ability to:

- Work effectively with complex, multi-partner systems
- Balance honest evidence-based review with constructive development
- Translate insight into practical, usable strategy
- Support partnerships to evolve without undermining trust, goodwill or collaborative ethos

"Many thanks for sharing the final documents and for all of your hard work throughout this project. It has been a pleasure working with you, and we've greatly appreciated the expertise, insight and honesty you've brought to the audit. Your objective perspectives, coupled with your clear and well reasoned recommendations, have been especially helpful. We're confident that the final report and action plan will serve as a strong foundation for the partnership as we move into the next phase. It's been really great to get a new perspective and your report will really help guide us and improve our ways of working and drive our ambitions forward. Thank you."

Executive Board Chair and Development Officer - Yorkshire Marine Nature Partnership