

Marine Spatial Planning Project Management Group Meeting

Note of meeting held at 11:00 am on 24th August
Defra Offices, Whitehall Place West, London

Those present:

Robert Canning	Defra (chair)
Karen Morgan	Defra
Robert Baldi	Defra
Steve Hull	ABPmer
Jim Claydon	TOR

Welcome and introduction

1. Robert Canning welcomed colleagues to the meeting. Its principal purpose was to prepare for the stakeholder workshop arranged for 29 September. Other Government departments represented on the management group had been invited to attend although it had been emphasised that their attendance was not essential on this occasion.

Exchange of views on Irish Sea Draft Regional Plan

2. The draft plan had been circulated to the management group for comments although none had been received other than from Defra. It was agreed that this was an important step in providing some high level objectives for the marine environment and in bringing together the full range of sectoral needs and priorities for the pilot area. In discussion it was agreed that:

- the contractors would change the order of a small number of the sections of the plan so that the generic issues and objectives (eg on climate change) would precede the specific sectoral components of the plan;
- a specific reference to devolution would be included in the introduction to the draft plan to recognise that some activities covered in the plan are devolved;
- members of the management group would be given until Friday 2 September to provide any final comments to the contractor on their interests in the draft plan;
- the contractor would then circulate the draft plan to the stakeholder advisory group and invite views or comments by 23 September. These would form the basis for discussion when the plan was presented at the September stakeholder workshop.

Action: The contractor will make these minor revisions to the plan. The management group will provide any comments to the contractor on the draft plan by 2 September. The contractor will circulate the draft plan the following week and invite views from stakeholders by 23 September for discussion at the 29 September workshop.

3. Three scenarios had also been prepared to show how marine spatial planning could be used to forward-plan in three areas. These covered (i) tidal stream energy, (ii) marine aggregate extraction and (iii) marine protected areas. The meeting agreed that the scenarios would need to be presented together rather than considered in isolation. They would be circulated to stakeholders alongside the draft plan. The contractor would consider how this forward-planning might be used to simplify or quicken the consenting process or otherwise be used to demonstrate the benefits of marine spatial planning.

Preparation of the sub-regional plan

4. Jim Claydon reported on a meeting that the contactors had held with a range of land and coastal stakeholders in the Mersey Estuary area on 19 August to discuss the preparation and usefulness of a sub-regional marine spatial plan. Key points made at that meeting were:

- there was support in principle for the concept of sub-regional plans but there was concern about synergies with current local plans such as shoreline management plans, ICZM, river basin management plans etc;
- it was questioned what value a sub-regional plan in the Liverpool Bay area (as originally envisaged in the pilot project) would add. In particular, it was noted that the “regional” pilot area did not cover the entire Irish Sea and could potentially be described as a sub-regional plan. It was felt that a sub-regional plan should not simply duplicate what would be in the regional plan;
- the meeting had raised a range of policy issues previously raised by stakeholders such as which body would be responsible for preparing a plan or sub-regional plan and the need for data to be made freely available;

5. Following the views of the Estuary Partnership meeting, the management group agreed that a specific sub-regional plan was unlikely to add value in the pilot and risked duplicating the wider pilot. Rather, it was agreed that the focus of the sub-regional work should be specifically on how the land-sea interface would be best addressed in a marine spatial plan and how existing plans and partnerships could best sit alongside a marine spatial plan.

Action: the Contractor would post a minute of the Mersey Estuary meeting on the project web site for the benefit of stakeholders. The Contractor will develop proposals on sub-regional planning as agreed for the 29 September workshop.

Preparations for the 29 September stakeholder workshop

6. It was noted that this will take place in London over one day. Invitations had already been sent to stakeholders. The meeting agreed that the outline would cover (i) the draft regional plan and scenarios, (ii) the sub-regional plan, (iii) an update on Regulatory Impact Assessment and (iv) a discussion on the options and benefits of marine spatial planning. **Action:** The contractor will work up the detailed itinerary for the workshop over the next couple of weeks.

7. Robert Canning would speak to Marine Legislation Division to explore whether the workshop should include a presentation or update on the political aspects of marine spatial planning and the Marine Bill more generally¹.

Regulatory Impact Assessment

8. The Contractor reported that they had already started to assess the regulatory impact of marine spatial planning, along with the options and benefits identified therein. This would cover the pilot area and be extrapolated to all UK waters. The contractor anticipated that the RIA would be completed – and hence the whole project would be completed - by the end of October.

Next management group meeting

9. The next, and probably final, management group meeting would be held in mid October (either the 13, 14 or 17 October). The Contractor would prepare and circulate the project's draft final report one week before this meeting.²

Any other business

10. It was noted that Robert Canning and Steve Hull had attended the North Sea Regional Advisory Council Spatial Planning Working Group on Marine Spatial Planning on 18 August where a presentation had been given on the Irish Sea pilot, focusing on fisheries-related data and issues. This had been well received.

11. It was noted that Robert Canning and Steve Hull are due to speak on marine spatial planning at the Coastal Futures conference "Towards a Marine Bill – Realising the Opportunity" on 25 October. The detail would be agreed at the October management group meeting.

**Marine and Waterways Division, Defra
25 August 2005**

¹ It has been agreed that there should be a 10-15 minute presentation at the start of the September 29 workshop by Marine Legislation division to update stakeholders on progress and thinking on Marine Bill issues more generally.

² This has now been arranged for 17 October (11:00 am, Defra Offices, Room G2, Whitehall Place).