

## MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING PILOT PROJECT

### Irish Sea Regional Pilot Plan - Plan Preparation

#### 1. Purpose and Scope

This paper introduces for discussion, a **Concept Draft of The Irish Sea Pilot Marine Spatial Plan** (Appendix 1). It also outlines a suggested approach for preparing the regional pilot plan including allocation and management of space and drafting of policies.

It has been assumed for the purposes of plan preparation that marine spatial planning (MSP) will be implemented as a statutory system, with a Marine Agency responsible for co-ordinating production of the plan and managing its implementation. If a non-statutory system of MSP is introduced, it would still be possible to prepare a marine spatial plan but plan policies would not have the same weight and responsibilities for plan production and implementation would probably be more dispersed.

The paper is being circulated to all members of the MSPP Advisory Group for discussion at the workshop on 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> June. It will also be placed on the MSPP website. For those who wish to comment on the paper and appendix, but are unable to attend the workshop, initial comments would be appreciated by Friday 1<sup>st</sup> July.

The pilot plan will be developed through the remainder of June and July taking account of comments from stakeholders on the suggested process or alternatives. The draft plan will then be circulated to Advisory Group members for further comment at the end of July.

#### 2. Introduction

Towards Marine Spatial Planning and Management (MSPP Consortium, 2005) set out a possible process for marine spatial planning which could be piloted in the Irish Sea. The paper included an initial specification for the information considered necessary to underpin pilot plan preparation.

The approach was discussed at the Stakeholder Advisory Group workshop on 14<sup>th</sup> April and was generally supported. Following the workshop, the Project Consortium has collated the information to assist with plan development and circulated the material to relevant stakeholders and placed it on the MSPP website for comment by 10<sup>th</sup> June. The information is currently being revised in the light of comments received and revised material will be placed on the MSPP website at the end of June.

The main strands of information collected comprise:

- general and sectoral policies, objectives and targets at a national level and their spatial application;
- regional policies, objectives and targets and their spatial application;
- information on the spatial distribution of marine resources;
- spatial information on sectoral uses;
- constraints and issues facing individual sectors;

- future use requirements for individual sectors (5/20 years)

The information collected indicates that many areas of the Irish Sea are already subject to multiple use, in line with the findings of other recent research (IECS, 2005). It also identifies a very wide range of national policies that apply to individual use sectors, with many of these policies set at devolved administration level. While broad policy aims can be identified for all use sectors, information on sectoral objectives and targets at either national or regional level is generally fairly limited. Information on future requirements is also limited.

The overlapping nature of sectoral uses in the Irish Sea and the historical lack of integration of sectoral policies in the marine environment present significant challenges in the preparation of the regional pilot plan, compared to equivalent plans on land. This paper seeks to identify an approach to address these challenges to provide a basis for prioritising and managing the allocation of space and how this might be represented on a future zoning plan. **We would particularly welcome feedback at the workshop or subsequently on the suggested approach and/or stakeholders views on alternative approaches.**

We have then started to translate some of these concepts into an initial draft regional pilot plan (Appendix 1) to provide stakeholders with some greater clarity on what a regional plan might look like. **We would welcome stakeholder feedback on this or other options for plan structure.**

### 3. Definitions

The following new definitions are proposed, to support prioritisation of the allocation of space and to support reconciliation and integration of objectives:

- **Priority use:** a use which has policy and legal priority within a defined area of the plan. The priority use determines what other uses may occur within the area and/or under what conditions they may co-exist;
- **Conditional use:** a use which has policy and legal support within a defined area of the plan, but its acceptability is dependant on resolving conflicts with any higher priority uses where the use boundaries overlap;
- **Allowable use:** generally an activity which has policy and legal support but is not spatially constrained, except in areas where it is explicitly excluded or constrained by other uses. These activities will be subordinate to priority and conditional uses in areas where they overlap.

### 4. Possible prioritisation method

To enable preparation of a spatial plan, it is necessary to determine to some extent, priorities amongst different sectoral objectives. This is difficult to achieve at a regional plan level, because the relative priority afforded to particular objectives can depend on local factors. However, an initial attempt to define use priorities has been made (Table 1) which can be used to develop a hierarchy for sectoral objectives.

For example, within a European site such as a Special Protection Area or Special Area of Conservation, the conservation objectives have clear priority (termed '**the priority use**') and other uses within the area are subordinate (termed '**conditional uses**') in that the priority use can potentially impose limits or constraints on these conditional uses. Similarly, a licensed development activity (e.g. aggregate extraction, oil & gas exploration, renewable energy development etc.) might constitute the priority use (outside of a European site) with the conditions in its licence defining its relationship to other co-existing uses. A further type of use can also be identified (termed an '**allowable use**' ) which is defined by the areas from which it is explicitly excluded (rather than included), for example, the general rights of navigation and fishing.

An initial zoning plan has been prepared which seeks to apply this prioritisation process to spatially defined sectoral uses in the regional pilot area (see Figure 4 of Appendix 1). The limitations of paper maps means that the zoning plan only indicates the priority use for a given area – an interactive map will be demonstrated at the workshop that indicates how information on associated conditional uses and allowable uses might be retained within the zoning plan. The zoning plan is also limited in its ability to depict linear uses (shipping routes, cables etc). These have been shown as superimposed on the other priority use polygons, although it is recognised that they may not always have absolute priority in relation to other uses.

Where exclusion zones already exist around certain uses (e.g. protected wrecks, oil & gas installations) these have been incorporated within the initial zoning plan. It would be possible to further develop the zoning plan to incorporate buffer zones for other uses, where these were considered to be appropriate as a means of managing conflicts between adjacent activities.

## 5. Regional pilot plan structure and content

We propose a structure for the regional pilot plan which draws on the existing structure of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) to seek to reinforce the move away from the current sectoral approach to marine management (Appendix 1). We have sought to flesh out the contents of the plan in some areas to provide stakeholders with a broad feel for what a regional plan might look like. However, this is very much work in progress, and we would welcome constructive feedback from stakeholders at the workshop.

The overarching goals for the marine environment developed through the Seas of Change consultation (Defra, 2004) provide the highest level aims for the plan, akin to the core development principles contained in RSS. Beneath this, lower level national policies and objectives provide the context within which plan policies can be developed. These plan policies can then be related to the initial zoning plan and other accompanying maps which it is envisaged will form part of the plan.

## 6. References

Defra, 2004. The Government's response to its Seas of Change consultation to help deliver our vision for the marine environment. Defra, London.

Institute of Estuarine and Coastal Studies, 2005. Multiple Use Zoning in UK and Manx Waters of the Irish Sea: An Interpretation of Current Legislation and a Proposed GIS-based Zoning Scheme. Report to Scottish Natural Heritage, English Nature and Countryside Council for Wales.

MSPP Consortium, 2005. Towards Marine Spatial Planning and Management v1.0

Table 1: Initial Prioritisation of Sectoral Objectives

Sector	Priority
Geological and Nature Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National and international designated sites (SPA, SAC, Ramsar, NNR, MNR, SSSI, ASSI) – <b>priority use</b></li> <li>Statutorily protected species (WACA Schedule 5, Annex IV Habitats Directive, Bern &amp; Bonn Conventions) – <b>priority use</b></li> </ul>
Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>World Heritage Sites, protected wrecks, war graves, scheduled ancient monuments – <b>priority use</b></li> </ul>
Ports & Harbours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Port &amp; Harbour Authority Areas – generally maintenance of navigation would be <b>priority use</b>, but subject to requirements of national and international designated sites and priority cultural heritage sites where these overlap (<b>conditional use</b>)</li> <li>Dredge material disposal sites – <b>priority use or conditional use</b>, depending on location. Subject to requirements of national and international designated sites and priority cultural heritage sites where these overlap. May also be subject to constraints imposed by other uses.</li> </ul>
Shipping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Important navigation routes - <b>priority use</b>, but subject to requirements of national and international designated sites and priority cultural heritage sites where these overlap (<b>conditional use</b>)</li> <li>General right of navigation – <b>allowable use</b>, except where specifically excluded (e.g. Offshore Wind Farm), or subject to conditions where controlled (e.g. traffic separation scheme, port &amp; harbour authority area)</li> </ul>
Military Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exercise Areas, Firing Ranges – <b>priority use</b> but subject to requirements of national and international designated sites and priority cultural heritage sites where these overlap (<b>conditional use</b>).</li> </ul>
Cables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing operational cables – <b>priority use</b> but subject to requirements of national and international designated sites and priority cultural heritage sites where these overlap (<b>conditional use</b>)</li> </ul>
Oil & Gas Interconnectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing interconnectors – <b>priority use</b> but subject to requirements of national and international designated sites and priority cultural heritage sites where these overlap (<b>conditional use</b>)</li> </ul>
Oil & Gas Exploration & Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing installations – <b>priority use</b> but subject to requirements of national and international designated sites and priority cultural heritage sites where these overlap (<b>conditional use</b>) May also be subject to constraints imposed by other users (e.g. navigation)</li> </ul>
Mineral Extraction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing sites - <b>priority use</b> but subject to requirements of</li> </ul>

	national and international designated sites and priority cultural heritage sites where these overlap ( <b>conditional use</b> ). May also be subject to constraints imposed by other uses (e.g. navigation, flood defence)
Renewable Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing sites - <b>priority use</b> but subject to requirements of national and international designated sites and priority cultural heritage sites where these overlap (<b>conditional use</b>). May also be subject to constraints imposed by other uses (e.g. navigation, flood defence)</li> </ul>
Coastal Defence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing defences – <b>priority use</b> but subject to requirements of national and international designated sites and priority cultural heritage sites where these overlap (<b>conditional use</b>). May also be subject to constraints imposed by other uses (e.g. navigation)</li> </ul>
Fisheries and Shellfisheries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identified fishing and shellfishing grounds - <b>priority use</b> but subject to requirements of national and international designated sites and priority cultural heritage sites where these overlap (<b>conditional use</b>). May also be subject to constraints imposed by other uses (e.g. navigation in port &amp; harbour authority areas);</li> <li>General rights outwith identified fishing and shellfishing grounds - <b>allowable use</b>, except where specifically excluded (e.g. Offshore Wind Farm)</li> </ul>
Mariculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mariculture installations – <b>priority or conditional use</b> depending on location. Likely to be a conditional use where other priority uses are present</li> </ul>
Marine Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Installations (e.g. marinas) – <b>priority or conditional use</b> depending on location. Likely to be a conditional use where other priority uses are present.</li> <li>Recreational zoning areas – <b>priority use</b> but subject to requirements of national and international designated sites and priority cultural heritage sites where these overlap (<b>conditional use</b>). May also be subject to constraints imposed by other uses (e.g. navigation in port &amp; harbour authority areas);</li> <li>Sailing and racing areas, recreational sailing routes, sea angling, sea bathing etc. – <b>conditional use</b>, particularly where other uses are present</li> <li>Right of navigation – <b>allowable use</b> except where specifically excluded (e.g. Offshore Wind Farm)</li> </ul>

NB: New infrastructure developments might constitute a **priority use** or **conditional use**, depending on the proposed location and the nature of pre-existing activities.