



**National
Oceanography Centre**
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH COUNCIL

Consultation on a Marine Planning System for England
Response from National Oceanography Centre
7th October 2010

Introduction

The National Oceanography Centre in conjunction with members of the UK Marine scientific research community welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation. Views were obtained by circulating the links to the Defra consultation across all staff and postgraduate students at our laboratories in Southampton and Liverpool, and discussion with colleagues at other locations.

Consultation Questions

1. Do you agree that we have identified and captured within Chapter 1 all of the benefits of marine planning?

Broadly, yes – One caveat is that the EU fishing vessels operating under the Common Fisheries Policy - which is hardly mentioned in the document – could ignore many aspects of the English marine planning system, perhaps fatally undermining attempts to achieve Good Environmental Status or operate marine conservation zones/marine protected areas

The importance of a successful reform of the CFP so that it operates within the scope of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive cannot be overstated.

2. Have we set out and appropriately considered in Chapter 2 and elsewhere the elements required before marine planning can begin?

Chapter 2 provides a good level of detail about the elements required before planning can begin. However the existing evidence base is not sufficiently comprehensive for the MMO to be able to source sound underpinning scientific evidence for all decisions. We understand that the applicant should be responsible for providing additional evidence where it is needed for a planning decision to be made, however this may raise questions about the impartiality of the evidence that is presented.

3. Does the proposed structure and content for Marine plans provide appropriate clarity to enable the MMO to create effective Marine Plans in England? (Chapter 3)?

Given that the proposed system is intended to be flexible and able to adapt as new knowledge becomes available, yes.

In particular, is the overall approach to planning recommended and outlined in paragraphs 3.7 to 3.9 appropriate?

Yes

4. In Chapter 4 have we covered all steps required to draft Marine Plans?

Chapter 4 contains a detailed and comprehensive summary of the steps that will be required.

5. Are the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders clear in Chapter 5?

Define the 'third sector' referred to in 5.3. References to the Infrastructure Planning Commission now obsolete as IPC due to be abolished, presumably large offshore developments excluding oil and gas will now remain with the MMO? Other Quangos mentioned in Chapter 5 may also be subject to review or closure following the comprehensive spending review.

6. In Chapter 6, is it clear how the marine planning system interacts with plans and processes on land?

The overlap in planning boundaries will probably assist liaison between the marine and terrestrial planning communities.

The new systems look like they are going to be terribly bureaucratic with many different organisations attempting to work together. The scope for 'spanners in the works' such as local terrestrial political/activist opposition to a given offshore scheme has a very high potential to severely slow down the planning process. Abolishing the Infrastructure Planning Commission removes a system that was intended to bypass this sort of blockage.

7. In Chapter 7, is the approach to decision making both during and after the adoption of marine plans clear?

Yes.

This response prepared by
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