

Wildlife and Countryside Link Briefing

Marine Protected Areas and species protection under the OSPAR Convention

September 2010

The next OSPAR Ministerial Meeting will take place in Bergen, Norway (23-24 September 2010).

Wildlife and Countryside Link urges the Minister to attend the Ministerial Meeting and agree strong, aspirational targets for the establishment of MPAs and the implementation of measures to protect marine species and habitats, which will support the UK's national objectives for the better protection and management of the marine environment and its wildlife.

Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link) brings together the UK's leading voluntary organisations united by their common interest in the conservation and enjoyment of wildlife, the countryside and the marine environment. Taken together our members have the support of over 8 million people in the UK.

Link supports OSPAR's continued general obligation to take all possible steps to prevent and eliminate pollution and take the necessary measures to protect the maritime area against the adverse effects of human activities so as to safeguard human health and to conserve marine ecosystems and, when practicable, restore marine areas which have been adversely affected¹. However, we are genuinely disappointed by the lack of progress so far, and the prospect of missed targets in some of OSPAR's work areas, especially in achieving an ecologically coherent and well-managed network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) by 2010, and in action to protect threatened and/or declining marine species and habitats listed by OSPAR. The OSPAR Ministerial Meeting provides an excellent opportunity for OSPAR Contracting Parties to rectify the situation, by committing to strong, aspirational targets.

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

The UK Government has several international commitments to protect the marine environment, alongside the current OSPAR Recommendation to establish an ecologically coherent network of well-managed MPAs by 2010. For example, the global target under the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) to establish a coherent network of representative protected areas in the marine environment by 2012; and the commitment under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) to achieve 'Good Environmental Status' (GES) in the marine environment by 2020. Although most Contracting Parties (including the UK) have submitted some MPAs to the OSPAR network, progress has been slow and the 2010 deadline for the completion of the network will be missed. The OSPAR network is currently far from comprehensive, ecologically coherent or well-managed, and as it stands there are very few sites established further offshore or in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction.

¹ OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic, Annex 5, Article 2:
http://www.ospar.org/html_documents/ospar/html/OSPAR_Convention_e_updated_text_2007.pdf#na_meddest=annex5

We believe that Contracting Parties must take the opportunity at the OSPAR Ministerial Meeting to adopt an aspirational new target for delivering an ecologically coherent and well-managed network of MPAs, including in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, as they will miss the 2010 target. **Link would support a new target for the OSPAR Contracting Parties of 2012 for the designation of an ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas, in line with the existing commitment under the WSSD, as well as matching the UK's own national targets for establishing a network of MPAs by 2012; and a supplementary target for achieving a well-managed network by 2016 at the latest.** In supporting this new target for the OSPAR maritime area, we maintain that the UK should lead the way by establishing an ecologically coherent network of well-managed MPAs by 2012. The Marine & Coastal Access Act and Marine (Scotland) Act provide the tools required for the designation and effective management of sites, and we would not support the 2012 target for sites in UK waters being pushed back.

We therefore welcome the Minister's written answer (21 July 2010) to a Parliamentary question regarding the OSPAR MPAs target, in which he stated that *"In determining any new target, we will look to reflect our national commitment to a substantially established ecologically coherent network of MPAs by 2012, and work with Contracting Parties to agree a revised target that is both ambitious and achievable."* **Link therefore urges the UK to support the Link proposal, above, for a new OSPAR MPA target.**

We also support continuation of the work under OSPAR to designate OSPAR MPAs in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, including High Seas MPAs in the waters superjacent to protected areas on the extended continental shelves of coastal states.

Species & Habitats

Alongside work to designate OSPAR MPAs, we would also like to see Contracting Parties, including the UK, adopt a proactive timetable for implementing the agreed actions and measures to protect threatened and/or declining species and habitats on the OSPAR list. **In Link's opinion, those actions and measures should be in place at the latest by 2013.**

This briefing is supported by the following Link members:

- Buglife – The Invertebrate Conservation Trust
- Greenpeace
- Marine Conservation Society
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- The Wildlife Trusts
- Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society
- WWF – UK

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