



Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link) is a coalition of the UK's major NGOs working together for the conservation and protection of wildlife, the countryside and the marine environment. For 10 years, we have been working together to bring about the introduction of comprehensive legislation to protect our seas.

Wildlife and Countryside Link's Marine Vision

"Healthy, well-managed seas, where wildlife is flourishing and ecosystems are protected, connected and thriving"

The UK Marine & Coastal Access Act 2009 and the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 finally provide the legislative tools that the UK Government, Welsh Assembly Government and Scottish Government need to take real action towards our vision. We are still campaigning for a Northern Ireland Marine Act to complete the legislative jigsaw.

Now is the time for action

Marine planning



Marine planning is fundamental to deliver both Link's vision and the joint Government vision for the marine area.

At a time of ever increasing pressures on the marine environment, the UK urgently needs a strategic, robust marine planning system. A plan-led approach to managing the marine environment will help to avoid or reduce conflict, to identify and permit appropriate and compatible developments, to manage marine resources sustainably and to protect and enhance important environmental and social assets. Marine planning should bring benefits to all - improved certainty for industry, decision-makers and all sea users - as well as protecting space for marine biodiversity and ecosystems.

For the first time in the UK, legislation allows marine activities to be planned in a strategic way.

The new system of marine planning must ensure:

- An ecosystem-based approach to marine planning that protects space for wildlife;
- A forward looking, comprehensive UK-wide Marine Policy Statement (MPS) jointly agreed by the UK Government and Devolved Administrations, to guide decisions in the marine environment;
- Thorough appraisal which incorporates Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), of the MPS and marine plans to ensure that developments do not push the natural environment to or beyond its capacity or limits;
- Plans throughout UK waters not just selected areas, particularly once parallel legislation is in place for the inshore waters of Northern Ireland;
- A system that works well across the marine and coastal boundaries between England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and that integrates land-use plans with marine plans

Marine Planning principles

Link supports the principles for marine planning set out in the UNESCO Marine Spatial Planning Guide¹, which are:

- Ecosystem-based, balancing² ecological, economic, and social goals and objectives toward sustainable development;
- Integrated, across sectors and agencies, and among levels of government;
- Place-based or area-based;
- Adaptive, capable of learning from experience;
- Strategic and anticipatory, focused on the long-term;
- Participatory, stakeholders actively involved in the process.

Therefore, while marine planning must be based on best available data, it is more than just mapping everything that happens in the marine area. Marine planning is a process, a tool for improved decision making. It must be strategic, proactive, forward-looking, iterative and integrate all the policies that effect the management of the marine area to develop a coherent and sustainable approach to the use of marine resources and space, while protecting valuable marine assets. This process should also highlight and hence help to prioritise survey or research work to fill data gaps.

¹ Ehler C & Douvère F (2009) Marine Spatial Planning: a step-by-step approach toward ecosystem-based management. Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and Man and the Biosphere Programme. IOC Manual and Guides No. 53, ICAM Dossier No. 6. Paris: UNESCO. <http://www.unesco-ioc-marinesp.be/uploads/documentenbank/3368f50cc7792e8da75ed70c9d8d63.pdf>

² Link believes that the terminology of 'integrating' is more appropriate than that of 'balancing' in this context (see the subsequent bullet point) as set out in the joint UK Sustainable Development Strategy (2005), where the intention to achieve sustainable development is delivered by integrating environmental, social and economic goals and objectives, rather than balancing or trading one off against each other.



Marine planning's role in delivering the UK's marine commitments



The joint UK marine vision is commonly stated as "clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas". However, there is more to the vision than this. The vision puts "an ecosystem approach at the heart of our strategy, to reconcile conservation objectives and individual needs". It states that Governments will "deliver our objective by pursuing policies that promote sustainable development, integrated management, stakeholder involvement, robust science and the precautionary principle". The joint UK marine vision also states that "within one generation, we want to have made a real difference by building on the progress already made". It also recognises that although we "depend on the oceans and seas to help meet our economic and social needs", "at the same time, they contain unique habitats and diverse forms of life".³

Marine planning is a tool to help deliver this vision. Industry, society and the environment will be integrated in a way never before achieved in UK waters – involving stakeholders in making strategic decisions. Taking an ecosystem-based approach to planning and management of marine activities will support the achievement of the five principles of sustainable development at sea.

³ Safeguarding Our Seas - A Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Development of our Marine Environment (2002)

UK Marine Vision



Marine planning based on an Ecosystem-based approach

An ecosystem-based approach is an integrated approach to management that considers the entire ecosystem, including humans. The goal of ecosystem-based management is to maintain an ecosystem in a healthy, productive and resilient condition so that it can provide the goods and services people want and need. Ecosystem-based management differs from current approaches that usually focus on a single species, sector, activity or concern; it considers the cumulative impacts of different sectors.

Specifically, ecosystem-based management:⁴

- Emphasises the protection of ecosystem structure, functioning, and key processes;
- Explicitly accounts for the interconnectedness within systems, recognising the importance of interactions between many target species or key services and other non-target species;
- Acknowledges interconnectedness among systems, such as among air, land and sea;
- Integrates ecological, social, economic, and institutional perspectives, recognising their strong interdependences;
- Is place-based in focusing on a specific ecosystem and the range of human activities affecting it.

Marine planning must utilise an ecosystem-based approach to the management of human activities and the sustainable use of resources at sea. It is also worth reiterating that the MSFD places a legal obligation on all Member States to "apply an ecosystem-based approach to the management of human activities".⁵

⁴ UNESCO Marine Spatial Planning Guide (2009). ⁵ Article 1(3) of the EU MSFD.

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) requires us to achieve good environmental status (GES) throughout EU waters by 2020. The UK has to prepare marine strategies and programmes of measures that will:

- protect, preserve and where practicable, restore marine ecosystems;
- prevent deterioration; and
- phase out pollution.

The aim is to ensure that there are no significant impacts on or risks to marine biodiversity, marine ecosystems, human health or legitimate uses of the sea. The marine strategies must apply an ecosystem-based approach to the management of human activities and ensure that cumulative impacts do not compromise marine ecosystem resilience and their capacity to respond to human-induced changes, while enabling the sustainable use of marine goods and services now and in the future. The MSFD requires environmental considerations to be integrated into policies that have an impact on the marine environment.

Marine plans will play a significant part in developing the UK's marine strategies. The marine planning system offers an opportunity to assist in delivery and implementation of the marine strategy objectives and Governments will need to ensure that marine planning supports the achievement of GES. Furthermore, marine planning will need to be based on an ecosystem-based approach, support marine conservation and ensure that the cumulative impacts of human activities do not affect the capacity of marine ecosystems to continue to function and to deliver goods and services.

EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive

Sustainable Development principles

The overarching 'goal' of the joint UK Sustainable Development Strategy⁶ is: "to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life, without compromising the quality of life of future generations". To achieve sustainable development within the UK, five guiding principles were adopted as follows:

"We want to achieve our goals of living within environmental limits and a just society, and we will do it by means of a sustainable economy, good governance, and sound science".

These principles are to form the basis for any UK or Devolved Administration policy and for a policy to be sustainable it must respect all five principles. However, it is clear that there is an explicit focus on living within environmental limits and achieving a just society.

Marine planning will support the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with these five principles by arbitrating between competing uses of the sea and managing their impact on the marine environment. This will help to ensure sustainable use of marine resources and that the individual and cumulative impacts of human activities do not exceed the capacity of marine ecosystems to function in a healthy manner.

⁶ Securing the Future - Delivering UK Sustainable Development Strategy (2005)



Relationship with other marine policies

Marine Protected Areas

Marine planning will need to accommodate and integrate an ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) into the planning process. Whilst MPAs should protect the 'jewels in the crown' of the UK's marine biodiversity, they must not be used simply to provide islands of biodiversity in otherwise developed or degraded seas⁷. As a consequence, marine planning must ensure that the wider seas and marine ecosystems are also protected and that appropriate management and protection measures are put in place to achieve that. This is particularly important for mobile species as their protection will require the full suite of management tools, MPAs as well as wider measures, to be used. MPAs are designated using ecological criteria to ensure the protection

of specific species and habitats. A sufficient number of sites of adequate size and distribution must be designated to deliver an ecologically coherent network of MPAs which gives effective protection to the full range of biodiversity found in UK waters. Whilst the location and boundaries of MPAs will be determined through separate processes, marine planning should provide a strategic overview of the success of the MPA network. When combined with other management tools, both MPA designations and marine planning will help to achieve the UK's environmental objectives, such as living within environmental limits, and GES under the MSFD.

⁷ IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (IUCN-WCPA) (2008). Establishing Marine Protected Area Networks - Making It Happen. IUCN-WCPA, National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration and The Nature Conservancy, Washington, DC, pp:118.

EU Common Fisheries Policy

Growing developments offshore have the potential to displace fishing activity into areas which have until now been less impacted by fishing, to the potential detriment of the wider marine ecosystems. Marine planning will, therefore, be vital to achieve conflict resolution between the deployment of fishing activities not only with MPAs but also with other offshore developments, notably marine renewables. This is relevant to the (2012) reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) in two main respects. Firstly, the new CFP should make explicit the need for compliance with the MSFD and the achievement of GES, and the performance of fisheries will increasingly be measured against this by, for example, the extent to which a robust ecosystem-based approach is factored into Long Term

Management Plans (LTMPs). As a cornerstone of reform, we are seeking the development of mandatory LTMPs according to centrally agreed standards for all fisheries as a means to address the sustainability of marine ecosystems. Secondly, CFP reform must deliver effective regionalised management with stakeholders at the heart of the decision-making process. While the spatial scale for regional fisheries management has yet to be agreed, for example, it could be based on the MSFD Marine Regions or the boundaries of the fisheries Regional Advisory Councils (RACs), either way, this will strongly link CFP and marine planning at the scale envisaged by the MSFD, as well as changing the governance frameworks for influencing planning and licensing decisions.

Cumulative impacts

As a strategic and cross-sectoral approach, marine planning should help identify cumulative and in-combination effects on the marine environment and other users. Part of the process for identifying the cumulative effects and developing scenarios that avoid or mitigate them will be through the process of the Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental

Assessment (SEA). If Government is really to meet its various commitments, from halting biodiversity loss and living within environmental limits to achieving GES, it must take cumulative and in-combination effects very seriously and both marine planning and the SEA will be key tools to achieve this.

Our Marine Planning Vision: 2010 to 2020

Marine plans will be prepared by the Marine Management Organisation and equivalent bodies in the Devolved Administrations. Link is actively involved in supporting the preparation of guidance to inform the planning process.

Our key priorities are to see:

- a strong and focussed UK-wide Marine Policy Statement, including specific spatial planning objectives and establishing policy direction to ensure that marine plans are effective and consistent with national policy;
- plans covering all UK waters;
- planning based on regional sea areas, including detailed planning in areas of most potential conflict such as coastal areas and offshore hot-spots;
- thorough appraisal of sustainability, including Strategic Environmental Assessment of the MPS and marine plans;
- baseline mapping for all UK waters by the end of 2011, to support implementation of the Marine Policy Statement and the preparation of marine plans, with the data and maps made publically available;
- an ecologically coherent network of MPAs including Marine Conservation Zones designated by 2012;
- wide, early and effective local, regional and national stakeholder engagement in all marine plans;
- clear and agreed mechanisms (e.g. MoU) for working together in cross-border areas.
- well understood integration between land use plans and marine plans;
- a clear steer on the carrying capacity of UK seas for emerging uses such as renewables deployment, alongside the regeneration of marine ecosystems;
- a robust monitoring and review programme to ensure the achievement of sustainable development and an ecosystem-based approach.

Link members are working with government, industry and other stakeholders across the UK and Europe to help ensure that these marine planning principles are put into practice now, so that we gain a fully operational and effective marine planning system for all UK waters by 2020.



This leaflet is supported by the following Link members



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Marine Planning Principles

