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.

The new system of marine planning must ensure:
- An ecosystem-based approach to marine planning, that protects space for wildlife;
- A science-based, comprehensive UK Marine Policy Statement (MPS) jointly agreed by the UK Government and Devolved Administrations, to guide decisions in the marine environment;
- Through adequate, which incorporates Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), of the MPS and marine plans to ensure that developments do not push the natural environment beyond its capacity or limits;
- Plans throughout UK waters not just selected areas, particularly in Northern Ireland, industry, decision-makers and all 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. For the first time, the use of marine resources and space, while protecting valuable marine species. This process will be ‘place-based’ and driven by the need for practical surveys or research work to fill data gaps.

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, Marine 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.

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

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 our ecosystems healthy, productive and complete so that it can sustain the range of goods and services and benefits that we all require.

Specifically, ecosystem-based management:
- Emphasizes the protection of ecosystem structure, functioning and process;
- Explicitly accounts for the interconnectedness within systems, recognizing the importance of interactions between many target species or key services and other non-target species;
- Acknowledges interconnections among systems, such as among air, land and sea;
- Integrates ecological, social, economic, and institutional perspectives, recognizing their strong interdependences;
- Adapts, capable of learning from experience;
- Adaptive, capable of learning from experience;
- Integrated, across sectors and agencies, and among levels of government;
- Adaptive, capable of learning from experience;
- Place-based, adapted to the community;
- Strategic and anticipatory, focusing on the long-term;
- Participating, stakeholders actively involved in the process;
- Integrates ecological, social, economic, and institutional perspectives, recognizing their strong interdependences;
- Integrates, across sectors and agencies, and among levels of government.

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

- Prevent deterioration; and
- Enable the sustainable use of marine goods and services
- Prevent, preserve and where practicable, restore marine ecosystems;
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- Recognize their strong interdependences;
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- Address the cumulative impacts of human activities and ensure that cumulative impacts do not affect the capacity or limits of the marine environment;
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Relationship with other marine policies

Marine planning will need to accommodate and integrate an ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) into the planning process. MPAs should protect the ‘jewels in the crown’ of the UK’s marine biodiversity, they must not be used simply to provide islands of blacklisting in otherwise degraded or damaged zones. A robust ecosystem-based approach is factored into Long Term Management Plans (LTMPs). As a consequence of reform, we are seeking the development of mandatory LTMPs according to carefully agreed standards for all fisheries as a means to address the sustainability of marine ecosystems. Secure, Green, CFP reform must define effective regulatory management with stakeholders at the heart of the decision making process. MPAs will not come into being, 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 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 co-occurring effects on the marine environment and offer measures. Part of the process for identifying the cumulative effects and developing scenarios that could result from them will be through the process of Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) 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 form 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 seas, including detailed planning in areas of most potential conflict such as coastal areas and offshore hotspots.
- thorough assessment of sustainability, including Strategic Environmental Assessment of the MPA 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 publicly 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 methodologies (e.g. MIDs) for working together in cross-border areas.
- well-understood integration between land-use plans and marine plans.
- a clear view on the carrying capacity of UK seas for emerging uses such as renewable 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.

For more information please contact: Joanna Fisher at Link, joanna@wcl.org.uk or 020 7820 8600 Wildlife and Countrywide Link, www.wcl.org.uk

This leaflet is supported by the following Link members

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 ecosystem. Marine planning will, therefore, be vital to achieve conflict resolution between the deployment of fishing activities not affected with MPAs. Offshore developments must therefore comply with the (2012) reforms of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) in two respects. Firstly, the CFP should make explicit the need for compliance with the MSFD and the achievement of MSFD, and the performance of fisheries will increasingly be measured against this. Secondly, the extent to which a robust ecosystem-based approach is factored into Long Term Management Plans (LTMPs). As a consequence of reform, we are seeking the development of mandatory LTMPs according to carefully agreed standards for all fisheries as a means to address the sustainability of marine ecosystems. Secure, Green, CFP reform must define effective regulatory management with stakeholders at the heart of the decision making process. MPAs will not come into being, 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 changing the governance frameworks for influencing planning and licensing decisions.

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