

Progress of marine planning – a summary report

The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 introduces an integrated approach to management of the UK's marine environment, known as marine planning.

Marine planning can be described as:

“An integrated, policy-based approach to the regulation, management and protection of the marine environment including the allocation of space, that addresses the multiple, cumulative and potentially conflicting uses of the sea and thereby facilitates sustainable development.”¹

Marine plan system in England

The marine plan system will progress the development of marine plans in a two stage approach, consisting of:

- A UK-wide Marine Policy Statement (MPS)
- A series of marine plans (following adoption of the MPS)

UK Marine Policy Statement²

The draft MPS, currently available for public comment, is the framework for preparing marine plans and taking decisions affecting the marine area. It sets out the sectoral/activity specific policy objectives the UK Government, Scottish Government, Welsh Assembly Government and Northern Ireland Executive are seeking to achieve in the UK marine area in securing the UK vision of clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas. The process of marine planning will integrate delivery of these objectives, and contribute to the sustainable development of the UK marine area.

Marine Plans

Marine Plan Authority

The Marine Management Organisation, vested on 1st April 2010, is the marine plan authority for English inshore and offshore areas.

Marine Plan Areas

The final marine plan areas have been identified following a period of public consultation earlier this year. A total of eleven areas are outlined (illustrated in Figure 1); five marine plan areas in the English inshore, four in the English offshore and one marine plan area in the Northwest combining the inshore and offshore areas.

The MMO will be able to plan from the area covered by mean high water spring tide out to the furthest limits of either the continental shelf or the Renewable Economic Zone which will overlap Local Authority jurisdiction for terrestrial planning. It is intended that the MMO will develop the plans incrementally with preparation of the first plans in the areas where it is determined, through a set of priority criteria, that early planning will be most beneficial. It is anticipated that two marine plans will be started consecutively every two years, with each plan taking approximately 24 to 30 months to develop; however it may be possible to accelerate this over time.

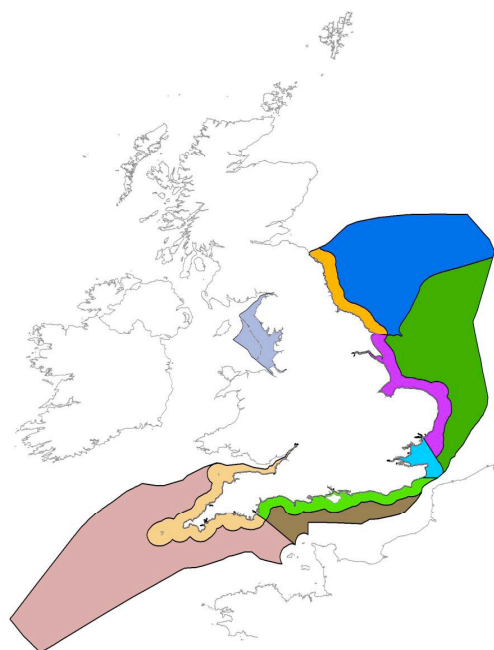


Figure 1: Marine Plan Areas*³

* Marine Plan areas illustrated are named as follows: North East Offshore; East Offshore; South Offshore; South West Offshore; North West; North East Inshore; East Inshore; South East; South Inshore; South West Inshore.

1. MSPP Consortium (2006). *Marine Spatial Planning Pilot: Final Report*. <http://www.abpmer.net/mspp/>.

Marine Plan Structure

It is proposed that the marine plans will consist of a number of linked documents (Figure 2). They will address the three spatial elements of the marine plan area: surface of the water, the entire water column and the seabed (including any activity beneath the seabed). They will also provide a temporal element to reflect any human activities and natural processes which occur on a seasonal cycle, but these will be clearly outlined within the plan. Marine plans will cover a minimum twenty-year period from when they are formally adopted, but will also look beyond this timeframe where appropriate. Each plan will be subject to review on a three-year cycle during that period, when revision or replacement will be considered.

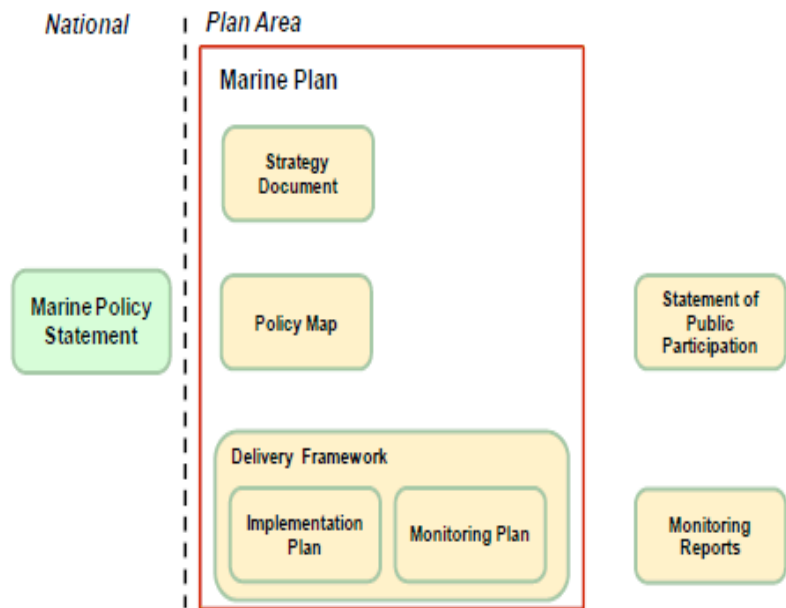


Figure 2: Proposed marine plan structure³

Marine Planning Process

Following development of the MPS, the MMO will develop the marine plans as outlined in Figure 3.

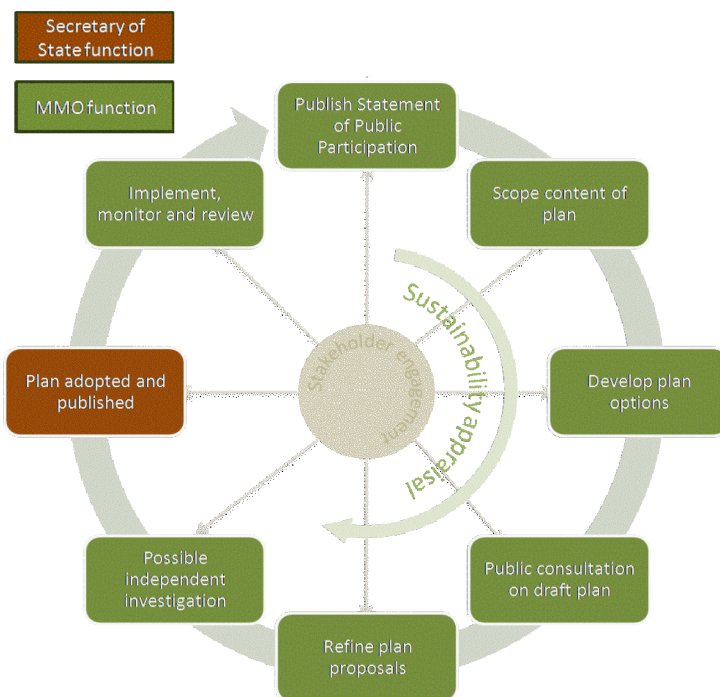


Figure 3: Marine Planning Process³

How marine planning will affect you or your organisation will depend on your role, responsibility and interaction with the marine environment. Involvement with the marine planning process will enable you and your organisation to voice your views on the management of the marine environment and have the potential to influence the outcomes of the options within the marine plan.

The Marine and Coastal Access Act places an obligation on all public authorities to have regard to the MPS and marine plans (once adopted), and more strongly, to act in accordance with them when making licensing and related decisions. Hence, the repercussions of marine plans will not only sit with public authorities but all those who have a use or interest in the marine environment.

Further information

For further information on marine planning, please visit the following websites:

- MMO: <http://www.marinemangement.org.uk/marineplanning/index.htm>
- Defra: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/marine/index.htm>

2. Defra (2010). *UK Marine Policy Statement: A draft for public consultation*. <http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/marine-policy/index.htm>

3. Defra (2010). *Consultation on a marine planning system for England*. <http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/marine-planning/index.htm>