



2006 A Marine Bill: DEFRA CONSULTATION

Solent Forum Steering Group Response

This response was prepared by the Solent Forum Officer on behalf of the Solent Forum Steering Group and is specifically related to the role of coastal partnerships and fora. It represents a collective view of the individuals of the group and not that of the constituent authorities or other organisations that are members of the Solent Forum. It also does not prejudice the right of individuals from making individual comments.

The Solent Forum Steering Group welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Marine Bill Consultation document and congratulates Defra on providing a well presented document in plain English. However, we feel that the process of crafting the Marine Bill has not been made transparent and are sure that many respondents are unclear on how and when the draft Bill will be presented in light of the many and likely conflicting responses Defra will receive.

We are in agreement with Defra that the current regime for allocating and managing development and resource use in the marine environment is not as practical as it could be. We hope that the Marine Bill will provide a framework to guide marine and coastal activities. However, we believe that the Marine Bill should not stand alone but be an integral part in the mechanisms employed by government to bring about modern and rational delivery of sustainable development in the coastal and marine environment to include: sectoral policy development; collection and management of data; indicator development and formal recognition of the value of integrated management and the role of coastal partnerships/fora.

We are dismayed to see that integrated coastal zone management is not given a dedicated section in the marine bill consultation document. We understand that this is because Defra are currently preparing the English ICZM Strategy and believe that the principles of ICZM should be embedded throughout the Bill. However, for meaningful debate and discussion on ICZM and the future of the marine environment it would have been prudent to have read the two documents in tandem.

The role of coastal partnerships in delivering ICZM and particular aspects considered in the Marine Bill consultation document need to be fully considered by government. Coastal Partnerships are at the forefront of delivering Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) in the UK. They have evolved over the past 10-15 years at approximately 50 locations around the English, Welsh and Scottish coastline. The partnership techniques being used to facilitate ICZM delivery are pioneering approaches to deliver sustainable resource management in the coastal zone.



Coastal Partnerships have a number of **unique selling points** which make them well placed to aid the delivery of ICZM:

- Impartiality and a proven role in conflict resolution and consensus building;
- The ability to work across sectors and between all levels of decision making;
- Horizon scanning to inform organisations of coastal issues;
- Raising awareness of issues and a mechanism for community engagement;
- Attracting project funding and initiating collaborative ventures;
- Providing a gateway service and 'one-stop-shop' for information and contacts;
- Filling gaps where there are no sectoral responsibilities and mobilising voluntary support and involvement;
- Providing a (bottom-up) conduit to regional and national government;
- Offer a quality label for ICZM.

The opportunity presented by the Marine Bill must be utilised to ensure statutory underpinning for ICZM, especially with the introduction of marine spatial planning (MSP) which will operate in the coastal zone.

A statutory duty should be placed on all competent authorities to prepare and act in accordance with the subsequent plan's policies and allocation of space unless it is demonstrated otherwise [Q5]. In particular, there should be a duty on all competent authorities to work collectively in preparing policies within the coastal zone. Where appropriate, coastal partnerships should be employed to facilitate this.

Strategic policies for each sector operating in the marine environment need to be developed, this may include regionally specific policies. Policies for the coastal zone need to be scrutinized through an ICZM process at the local level so assuring nested policy arrangements. Coastal partnerships, such as the Solent Forum, are well placed to achieve this. The two spatial planning systems would need to be integrated through communication, cooperation and collaboration and through information exchange, coastal partnerships have long provided such services.

Some areas, we agree, will require sub-regional MSPs or strategies just as the terrestrial system. However, these should be where the coast is intensively used by a variety of sectors or where a sector will grow significantly due to national policy. At a sub-regional level, a coastal partnership if operating at the correct scale would be well placed to assist with the planning process, the monitoring of policies and relevant indicators and with undertaking the necessary review in partnership with the MMO as it provides a recognised ICZM platform for engaging with relevant stakeholders [Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17].

Whoever takes the lead on plan production should be responsible for monitoring and review, although all parties should contribute information on an annual basis



relevant to development, changes in activities etc. Monitoring and review will be dependent upon nested targets, indicators and objectives being developed at the national, regional and local scale [Q29]. The Solent Forum has established a set of indicators to help managers monitor change in the coastal zone.

Stakeholder engagement is now a given in all aspects of decisions that affect others, however guidance needs to be produced that states what is and isn't available for discussion. In order to actively participate in the process awareness raising exercises will need to take place so that all stakeholders are adequately provisioned with information. For efficiency at the local level, coastal partnerships, if operating at the right scale, could oversee the delivery of such information, with competent authorities contributing to its development and production.

A single organisation should be responsible for the marine environment to ensure an integrated approach is undertaken. It should be seen as a neutral delivery vehicle with a sole remit to manage the marine area. Its core functions should be marine spatial planning and the delivery of a fully integrated licensing regime to include Petroleum Act, offshore renewables, maritime and coastguard activities and fisheries. Although, specific licensing of a particular sector may be undertaken by discharging the MMO function to another competent authority, to be viable the MMO must hold the strategic position of responsibility for the marine environment [Q77-Q89].

If the MMO is to be responsible for delivering MSP then it needs to operate at the regional (seas) level as well as the national level. In some circumstances a local or sub-regional presence may also be appropriate in some form. Coastal partnerships should be considered crucial partners in assisting with the delivering MMO functions at this level, where they operate at the correct scale.

The general principles of this response are as follows:

- Marine Spatial Planning is an appropriate tool for managing anthropogenic activity in the marine environment;
- Sub-regional marine spatial strategies will be applicable in some areas;
- Integrated coastal zone management should be the process employed in coastal zones to ensure integrated policy making;
- The Marine Bill must provide statutory underpinning of ICZM;
- Streamlined consenting procedures are to be encouraged;
- A Marine Management Organisation should be explicitly responsible for the management of all activities in and protection of the marine environment and should function at the national and regional level, at least;
- Its core functions should be marine spatial planning and the delivery of a fully integrated licensing regime (to include Petroleum Act and offshore renewables), fisheries and maritime and coastguard functions;



- Coastal partnerships provide recognised and competent platforms for engaging with stakeholders and will be a crucial partner in delivering local MMO functions.

**Prepared by Tracey Hewett
For and on behalf of the Solent Forum Steering Group**

**Solent Forum
c/o Environment Department
Hampshire County Council
The Castle
Winchester
Hampshire SO23 8UE**

**Telephone: 01962 846027
Email: solentforum@hants.gov.uk**