



MARINE STRATEGY FRAMEWORK



Introduction to Marine Strategy Framework Directive

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) is a pivotal piece of legislation to ensure more effective protection of the marine environment across Europe. It came into force on 15 July 2008 and must be transposed into national law by 15 July 2010, with implementation by 2016. Each member state is responsible for transposing it into national law; in the UK it is the responsibility of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural affairs (Defra). It is the vital environmental component of the Union's future maritime policy and aims to preserve, protect and restore marine waters.

Its objectives are to:

- Achieve good environmental status of the EU's marine waters by 2021.
- Protect the resource base upon which marine-related economic and social activities depend.
- Achieve the full economic potential of the seas and oceans whilst acknowledging and working with the encompassing marine environment.

Many of the threats facing Europe's seas require cooperation between member states to tackle them effectively. The Directive gives responsibility to Member States to cooperate with each other and non-EU countries to develop strategies that meet the objectives for their marine waters. The UK is planning to use the Oslo and Paris Convention (OSPAR) as the forum to deliver all the key regional elements of the Directive.

Directive Requirements

The key requirements of the Directive are as follows:

- An assessment of the current state of UK seas by July 2012.
- A detailed description of what Good Environmental Status means for UK waters, and associated targets and indicators by July 2012.
- Establishment of a monitoring programme to measure progress toward Good Environmental Status by July 2014.
- Establishment of a programme of measures for achieving Good Environmental Status by 2016.

The UK Marine Monitoring Assessment Strategy (UKMMAS) coordinates marine monitoring across the UK and will play a key role in delivering the monitoring required to measure progress towards Good Environmental Status. Stakeholders within UKMMAS are producing 'Charting Progress 2'. This report will provide the backbone of the UK's initial assessment of the state of the sea for this Directive. It will also include information about the economic and social use of the UK's marine waters.



*Photo courtesy of Matt Simmons photography/
Chichester Harbour Conservancy*

Marine Planning will be an important tool in implementing any programme of measures.

Good Environmental Status

The Directive sets out eleven high level descriptors of Good Environmental Status (GES) for which the EC will set parameters. It leaves it down to individual Member States to determine what GES means in more detail for their waters, and to set specific targets and indicators by 2012. It applies an ecosystem based approach to the management of human activities, ensuring that the collective pressure of such activities is kept within levels compatible with the GES. A summary of the indicators are as follows:

1. Maintain biological diversity.
2. Ensure human introduced alien species do not adversely alter ecosystems.
3. Commercially exploited fish and shellfish are maintained within safe biological limits.
4. Ensure long term abundance of marine food-webs.
5. Minimise eutrophication.
6. Ensure the structure and function of the sea-floor is safeguarded.
7. The alteration of hydrographical conditions does not adversely affect marine ecosystems.
8. Concentrations of contaminants are at levels not giving rise to pollution effects.
9. Fish and shellfish for human consumption do not exceed levels established by Community legislation.
10. Properties and quantities of marine litter do not cause harm to the coastal and marine environment.
11. Introduction of energy, including underwater noise, is at levels that do not adversely affect the marine environment.

Impacts within the Solent

The implications of the MSFD on activities within the Solent are still uncertain. Investigations supporting the Directive are still underway and there is significant uncertainty on how the terminology of the Directive could be interpreted. In particular, the more detailed GES descriptors are yet to be agreed as is the geographical scale at which the Directive would be assessed. GES Descriptors most relevant to Solent are:

- GES 5: Human-induced eutrophication is minimised, especially adverse effects thereof, such as losses in biodiversity, ecosystem degradation, harmful algae blooms and oxygen deficiency in bottom waters.
- GES 8: Concentrations of contaminants are at levels not giving rise to pollution effects.
- GES 9: Contaminants in fish and other seafood for human consumption do not exceed levels established by Community legislation or other relevant standards.



Photo courtesy of Chichester Harbour Conservancy

Whilst there may be significant implications for coastal and inshore management in the implementation of the GES from a biodiversity and ecosystem perspective, there is a low risk that the Directive will result in significant additional water quality legislation. This is because there is already robust, well established legislation which is fully embedded into the consents and management procedures in the UK (source: ABP Marine Environmental Research).