**Irish Sea Maritime Forum Biennial Conference 15th January 2019, Cardiff**

**Workshop: Marine Protected Areas in the Irish Sea**

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| **Strengths** |
| * Number of MPAs is going up.
* Quite a lot of MPAs now.
* Legislation is all in place.
* Good inter-governmental co-ordination (within UK).
* Consistency in legislative basis, e.g. EU, helps co-ordination and reasons to talk.
* Underpinned by other international e.g. OSPAR, Convention on Biological Diversity.
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| * Lots of MPAs in the Irish Sea.
* Area Statements re Wales National Marine Plan.
* Collectively we have a sense of social responsibility for the natural environment.
* The fact that an MPA is in place makes it more likely good things will happen.
* Management measures can help restore vulnerable habitats/species e.g. Loch Carron and its management measures in Scotland – urgent designation to stop any more trawling damage and enable the ecosystem to recover.
* Good hydrodynamic models of Irish Sea so can model effects of designation on non-designated areas and vice versa.
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| **Weaknesses** |
| * Effective management.
* Monitoring, evidence.
* Enforcement.
* A lot of unknowns, particularly in offshore.
* Public awareness / ocean literacy (lack of).
* Austerity / diminishing resources.
* Levels of protection - multi-use e.g. Highly Protected Marine Areas v. MCZs with socio-economic factors.
* Restricted to conservation of nature not historic environment, etc., except in Scotland.
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| * Not managed very effectively (money & political will).
* Lack of communication on what can and cannot do in MPAs.
* Area Statements in the Wales National Marine Plan are also a weakness as may give rise to conflict between the MPA and potential developments as laid out in the Area Statements in the Marine Plan.
* Can/could cause a disproportionate focus of activities in non-protected areas e.g. oil exploration activity.
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| **Opportunities** |
| * Private sector funding – sustainable finances for MPAs. e.g. cash from developers whose activities may impact on MPAs in a pot for MPAs (like s. 106 in terrestrial planning)
* Future funding to mitigate Brexit funds loss e.g. Scotland has established a fund for this – tailored more to our priorities not what the EU perceives as priorities for Europe
* Case studies or what ‘good’ looks like – more sharing of them. This is an opportunity to engage with other partners or to communicate better about what is meant re favourable condition.
* ‘Whole Site Approach’ – Defra (UK) 25 Year Environment Plan – can we help to shape what the ‘whole site approach’ means?
* Sustainable Drainage Systems – in Wales local authorities are **Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) Approving Bodies (SABs) -** SuDS can reduce pollution from flood events in coastal areas. *(facilitator’s note – new legislation in Wales from Jan 2019 see https://www.wlga.wales/sustainable-drainage-regulations)*
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| * Flood and Coastal Erosion Management using natural processes.
* Climate change impacts on species and habitats – economic benefits e.g. from new species.
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| **Threats** |
| * BREXIT
* Austerity / reduced funding
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| * No-one is considering the whole Irish Sea:
	+ OSPAR = Celtic Seas
	+ UK = UK waters of the Irish Sea
	+ Ireland = Irish waters of the Irish Sea

(It is not obvious if anyone has that overview from internet information!)* Climate change impacts on species and habitats – changes to site boundaries, species and habitats degrade or need to move.
* Tidal lagoons and other National Significant Infrastructure Projects – economic and socially-based decisions not so much environmental.
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| **Top 3 Issues** |
| 1. Climate Change.
2. Lack of awareness of entire Irish Sea as network of MPAs.
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| 1. Monitoring.
2. Funding.
3. Co-ordination/collaboration.
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| 1. Reduced funding.
2. Lack of management.
3. Lack of public awareness/engagement.
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| 1. Limited clarity on MPA in development decision-making.
2. Climate change might shift MPAs spatially.
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| 1. Lack of coherence terrestrial and marine.
2. Lack of management following designation.
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| 1. Clarification of what MSP can do to deliver MPAs along with realistic acknowledgement of socio-economic issues associated with use of MPA sites, resources and features.
2. Unintended consequences of well-intentioned policies: e.g. improvements to water quality (pre & post WFD) lead to a reduction of nutrient load and results in more fish (cleaner waters) but decline in molluscs (less to eat) and decline/change in bird numbers and species.
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| 1. Polarised views of various interest groups, unwilling to see others’ points of view.
2. Inconsistency across regions.
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| 1. Uncertainty/’slow down’ due to BREXIT.
2. Need to focus on improved management.
3. Reduced funding; austerity.
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| 1. Lack of co-ordinated approaches across British Isles.
2. Lack of resources for management.
3. Lack of historic environment input into MPAs (in Wales).
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| 1. Conflict between spatial plans appropriate activities and MPAs.
2. Lack of co-ordinated approach.
3. No apparent link between land based designations and marine.
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| 1. Possible impact on commercial interests within the MPAs.
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| **Top 3 Opportunities** |
| 1. Hydrodynamic modelling and population genetic approaches allow effects of MPAs on other areas to be predicted – connectivity – network approach.
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| 1. Bring together funding to address common issues.
2. Bringing in private sector funding to support MPA work.
3. Raising awareness of value of MPA network across the Irish Sea.
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| 1. WFD to highlight importance of good land management on marine environments.
2. Opportunities marine brings to communicate to public.
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| 1. Private sector funding for MPAs.
2. Whole Site Approach in 25 Year Plan.
3. Engaging other partners.
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| 1. Research funds.
2. Better management.
3. Education.
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| 1. Pan-Irish Sea assessment of processes and how they affect everyone’s MPAs.
2. Post-BREXIT reboot of cross-border working to address new circumstances.
3. Exchange of knowledge/experience on non-nature conservation MPAs.
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| 1. Education of public on what is allowed in MPAs.
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| 1. MPAs that span terrestrial and marine.
2. Harness existing plans e.g. England & Defra 25 Year Plan.
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| 1. Enhanced monitoring of species across MPAs.
2. Better communication to the public and stakeholders about MPAs.
3. Enhanced protection of historic wrecks within MPAs.
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| 1. Continuously expanding.
2. Could there be a hierarchy?
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| 1. FCERM (flood and coastal erosion risk management) using natural approaches e.g. sandscaping, managed realignment.
2. SuDS – urban flooding creates marine pollution.
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