**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. |
| * 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. |
| **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. |
| * 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. |
| **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)* |
| * Flood and Coastal Erosion Management using natural processes. * Climate change impacts on species and habitats – economic benefits e.g. from new species. |
| **Threats** |
| * BREXIT * Austerity / reduced funding |
| * 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. |
| **Top 3 Issues** |
| 1. Climate Change. 2. Lack of awareness of entire Irish Sea as network of MPAs. |
| 1. Monitoring. 2. Funding. 3. Co-ordination/collaboration. |
| 1. Reduced funding. 2. Lack of management. 3. Lack of public awareness/engagement. |
| 1. Limited clarity on MPA in development decision-making. 2. Climate change might shift MPAs spatially. |
| 1. Lack of coherence terrestrial and marine. 2. Lack of management following designation. |
| 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. |
| 1. Polarised views of various interest groups, unwilling to see others’ points of view. 2. Inconsistency across regions. |
| 1. Uncertainty/’slow down’ due to BREXIT. 2. Need to focus on improved management. 3. Reduced funding; austerity. |
| 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). |
| 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. |
| 1. Possible impact on commercial interests within the MPAs. |
| **Top 3 Opportunities** |
| 1. Hydrodynamic modelling and population genetic approaches allow effects of MPAs on other areas to be predicted – connectivity – network approach. |
| 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. |
| 1. WFD to highlight importance of good land management on marine environments. 2. Opportunities marine brings to communicate to public. |
| 1. Private sector funding for MPAs. 2. Whole Site Approach in 25 Year Plan. 3. Engaging other partners. |
| 1. Research funds. 2. Better management. 3. Education. |
| 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. |
| 1. Education of public on what is allowed in MPAs. |
| 1. MPAs that span terrestrial and marine. 2. Harness existing plans e.g. England & Defra 25 Year Plan. |
| 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. |
| 1. Continuously expanding. 2. Could there be a hierarchy? |
| 1. FCERM (flood and coastal erosion risk management) using natural approaches e.g. sandscaping, managed realignment. 2. SuDS – urban flooding creates marine pollution. |