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

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

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| **Strengths** |
| * A lot of public support for idea * Extent of coverage is impressive |
| * Designation process brought stakeholders together * Astonishing growth of … like in some established MPAs * Increasing public awareness of their value and function * We have a large number designated now * Good contribution to network in whole OSPAR region * Establishing of network has gone a long way in extending the ecological knowledge of the area * Long lasting form of protection * Not just about protection but also restoring and enhancement * Some connection being made with other processes eg: in relation to MSFD and WFD |
| **Weaknesses** |
| * Not so sure about support for action associated * People are not clear on what an MPA is * Variation in definition are confusing * Area of coverage a challenge for MP in relation to other uses eg: in relation to offshore energy * Potential for variation in interpretation of implications for development * Evidence base not strong to support MPAs and control of development eg: carrying capacity lack of wider Irish Sea evidence base as well. |
| * Complexity of designating underdeveloped * Designation doesn’t secure their good ecological status – vulnerable to change * Designation doesn’t necessarily secure good management * Designation process lengthy and difficult, doesn’t respond quickly to new knowledge and data * Length and complexity of process not consistent with dynamics of marine – knowledge of natural processes * Lack of consistency in process across countries makes it difficult to assess wider picture |
| **Opportunities** |
| * Opportunity to build the evidence base not just ecological but socio-economic as well * Links for wellbeing act potential to develop a rounder perspective on MPAs eg: fisheries and community |
| * Highly protected MPAs an opportunity for upgrading levels of protection * Combining protected area on land and sea and thinking more holistically about wider ecological network * Coherence with marine planning * Cross border collaboration in designation and management * Co-location of MPAs with development. Improve and enhance * Public/private partnership in management of MPAs * Maybe an opportunity to get funding |
| **Threats** |
| * Lack of integrated perspective can compromise sustainable development and role of MPAs * Loss of faith in what MPAs are about due to lack of evidence / bias of evidence towards ecological * Lack of monitoring to capture changes/ dynamic environment and credibility of designation |
| * Ongoing funding for management and enhancement * Brexit * Climate change * Alien and invasive species |

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| **Top 3 Issues** |
| 1. Lack of social evidence around impacts on MPAs 2. No monitoring process to assess socio-economic impacts of MPAs 3. Designation does not equal protection – we need a process for assessing and reporting effectiveness |
| 1. Evidence base – take an ecosystem based approach is impossible if we don’t have a robust evidence base around the Irish Sea 2. Lack of societal indicators in MPA designation and management risks stakeholders disengaging in process 3. Monitoring – lack of long term commitment to resourcing and funding monitoring across Irish Sea |
| 1. Lack of evidence – especially socio-economic 2. Challenge of proportionate risk base approach 3. Barrier to sustainable development |
| 1. Exceedingly difficult to monitor/ measure if MPA is working 2. Lack of general ocean literacy on protected areas/ purpose 3. Dynamic ocean environment difficult to assess |
| 1. People don’t know enough about them |
| 1. Brexit- any change in environmental legislation (European Sites) 2. Continued funding for monitoring and enforcement 3. Ensuring effective management measures |
| 1. Slow response time to new evidence collected by offshore wind developers 2. Designation based on patchy data not representative of whole region |
| 1. Invasive species via climate change |
| 1. Resource limitations (staff/ funding) |
| 1. Divergence and variation in what is an MPA across region 2. Slow response and insulated response to increased data/info on MPA – need to improve to enable responsive policy 3. Enforcement and resourcing of designation |
| 1. Vulnerability of MPAs to change and damage by human interventions and climate change 2. Conflicts with development that would cause loss of habitats and biodiversity 3. Lack of sufficient funding |

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| **Top 3 Opportunities** |
| 1. Opportunity to develop a series of indicators to reflect socio-economic aspects and impacts of MPAs 2. Development of an Irish Sea MPA evidence base 3. Improve links to wellbeing (eg: bluespace) |
| 1. Marine tourism 2. Payment for ecosystem services 3. Opportunity for B +D + demonstration MPAs |
| 1. Could allow for community level management, particularly if more “marine parks” 2. Options for different types of protected areas 3. Option to focus more on MPA evidence gathering and monitoring |
| 1. Building societal indicators into MPAs could help to ensure a well respected management scheme/ actions foster environmental stewardship 2. In the face of climate change increased monitoring (and investment) will help to make system more resilient 3. Use Wales and WBFGA as an example of embedding sustainable development for coastal communities in marine management |
| 1. Cross-border collaboration |
| 1. Significant growth for species that is recognised by the public |
| 1. Harmonisation of MPAs across regions 2. Common unifier which could yield resources and focus effort 3. Network for learning and sharing approaches which already exist and should be built on |
| 1. ICT/Science developments for data gathering and sharing |
| 1. Cross-border join up and collaboration 2. Land-sea join up with sites covering marine and terrestrial areas 3. Highly Protected Marine Areas |
| 1. Coexistence with offshore wind to enhance objectives of MPAs ie excluding trawling/fishing from offshore wind |
| 1. Public-private partnerships to establish and manage MPAs 2. Combining MPA establishment and management on land and sea throughout coastal zones 3. Encouraging sustainable use and conservation in MPAs |