

30/03/16 - Recommendations for the Preparation of Maritime Spatial Plans in Ireland



By Conor Norton and Jerry Barnes

The project has reached its final stage and culminated with *Recommendations for the Preparation of Maritime Spatial Plans in Ireland*, which are currently being reviewed before publication.

The Recommendations outline a staged integrated approach for the preparation of MSPs. This approach is recommended to ensure that a rational and consistent process is applied to the spatial plan-making processes. It also allows for a full understanding of the maritime environment and issues and for determining appropriate objectives and strategy development. The Recommendations provide a framework for drafting plans, including adoption and monitoring, and resolving conflicts. As spatial planning is an on-going process within plan-making cycles, there is a review process which allows for revision and updating. Integration of plan-making, environmental assessment and consultation promotes broader acceptance by stakeholders, ensures a legally robust plan and effectively integrates environmental considerations and the ecosystem-based approach into plan preparation.

The recommendations are designed to fit in with the Irish plan-making tradition and are informed by existing guidance. A series of case studies provided examples of best practice in relation to the various stages of the process. The approach follows from the establishment of the governance, reporting relationships, steering committee, project team, relevant advisory panel, stakeholder panel and all statutory requirements identified during the initial project management set up phase. The stages are structured as follows:

- Stage 1 - Understanding the marine environment
- Stage 2 - Vision, objectives and preferred strategy
- Stage 3 - Drafting the plan
- Stage 4 - Adopting, implementing and monitoring

Conor Norton will be discussing the approach and recommendations at the National Planning Conference in Athlone on the 14th April 2016 in Athlone. The Recommendations will be published by the Environmental Protection Agency in the next few months. In the meantime, we take the opportunity to thank Dorothy Stewart (Sustainability and Innovative Water Research Projects Management Research Unit - EPA), Alaine Clarke (WFD Integration and Coordination Unit - EPA), Shane O'Boyle (Aquatic Environment Unit - EPA), Eugene Nixon (Marine Institute), Lorraine

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