



Rural Needs Impact Assessment

Marine Plan for Northern Ireland

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Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

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Rural Needs Impact Assessment

What is this Rural Needs Impact Assessment?

1. The Rural Needs Impact Assessment is a process by which policies, strategies, plans and the delivery of services are considered, to ensure that public authorities appropriately take account of the needs of the rural community (social and economic needs). Under the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, public authorities are responsible for monitoring and reporting on how they have complied with the consideration of rural needs and on the co-operation and sharing of information with other public authorities.

Defining the Issues

2. In defining the issues the Marine Plan Team considered the following questions:
 - i. *What are the objectives of the plan?*
 - ii. *What impact do you intend it to have in rural areas?*
 - iii. *How is 'rural' defined for the purposes of this plan?*
 - iv. *What would constitute a fair rural outcome in this case?*
3. Marine Plan Team consideration:
 - 3.1. The Marine Plan for Northern Ireland (the Marine Plan) incorporates policy contained within the UK Marine Policy Statement (MPS) and existing sectoral policy. The Marine Plan contains high level, strategic policy for the marine area.
 - 3.2. The Marine Plan is made up of two plans, one for the Northern Ireland inshore region under the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 and one for the Northern Ireland offshore region under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. The Department, as the Marine Plan Authority, is required to prepare marine plans for the better management of the Northern Ireland marine area, which will facilitate its sustainable development. The plans for both the inshore and offshore regions have been combined into one document, which will be collectively known as the Marine Plan for Northern Ireland.
 - 3.3. The Marine Plan Vision is: "A healthy marine area which is managed sustainably for the economic, environmental and social prosperity of present and future generations." It is in conformity with the UK MPS, which provides the overarching framework for marine policy and decision making in the UK marine area.
 - 3.4. Sustainable development is at the core of the Marine Plan, which along with the Marine Mapviewer, will inform and guide the regulation, management, use and protection of the Northern Ireland marine area.

3.5. There are 8 objectives:

Objective 1. To promote the sustainable development of productive activities, which support employment at all skill levels, while fully considering the requirements of other marine interests.

Objective 2. To help realise the potential of energy resources and energy storage within the marine area, while fully considering the requirements of other marine interests.

Objective 3. To promote the development of vibrant, accessible and sustainable coastal communities.

Objective 4. To promote the marine resource, its recreational value and the wider economic, environmental and social benefits to all.

Objective 5. To promote the preservation and enjoyment of marine related heritage assets.

Objective 6. To promote a healthy, resilient and adaptable marine ecosystem and an ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas.

Objective 7. To contribute towards climate change mitigation and adaptation measures.

Objective 8. To continue to develop a sound marine evidence base in a co-ordinated manner, to increase understanding and to support the development, monitoring and review of marine plans.

3.6. The Marine Plan will impact on all those who interact with the marine area and will contribute to providing vibrant coastal communities, particularly those in remote rural areas and the island community of Rathlin. This is reflected in Objective 3 above and the policies contained within the Marine Plan that promote sustainable development.

Understanding the situation

4. To understand the situation, the Marine Plan Team considered the following questions:

- i. What is the current situation in rural areas?*
- ii. What evidence (statistics, data, research, stakeholder advice) do you have about the position in rural areas?*
- iii. If the relevant evidence is not available, can this be sourced?*

- iv. *Do you have access to the views of rural stakeholders about the likely impact of the policy?*
- v. *Are there existing design features or mitigations already in place, to take account of rural needs?*

5. Marine Plan Team consideration:

- 5.1. Engagement with stakeholders, including the general public, and the evidence gathered in preparation of the Marine Plan, have given no indication of any likely adverse rural impacts.
- 5.2. Information has been gathered on economic, environmental and social factors. This includes:
 - Economic Study: Contribution of Northern Ireland's Key Marine Activities to the Economy and Society;
 - Sustainability Appraisal Report for the Marine Plan - which includes Appendices on Baseline Information covering economic, environmental and social conditions; and
 - Various economic, environmental and social datasets presented through Geographical Information Systems, for marine uses and activities.
- 5.3. This information was not gathered to specifically identify rural impacts.
- 5.4. In addition, the Department conducted stakeholder engagement from an early stage in the development of the Marine Plan. The Department will continue to consult with stakeholders and welcomes comments on rural issues.
- 5.5. Further evidence would be useful, specifically in terms of marine activity and its significance for people on land, however this is not available.
- 5.6. Regular review and monitoring of the Marine Plan will allow emerging or new evidence to be given consideration.

Developing and Appraising Options

6. In developing and appraising options, the Marine Plan Team considered the following questions:
 - i. *Are there barriers to delivery in rural areas?*
 - ii. *If so, how can these be overcome or mitigated?*
 - iii. *Will it cost more to deliver in rural areas?*
 - iv. *What steps can be taken to achieve fair rural outcomes?*

7. Marine Plan Team consideration:

7.1. The Marine Plan is made up of a number of high level policies aimed at facilitating the sustainable development of the marine area. It consolidates existing legislation, policy measures and practices in the Northern Ireland marine area. The Marine Plan emphasises the contributory role it has with other programmes and measures in marine management. The Marine Plan makes clear that the policy and legislative responsibility of marine activities and uses remains with the relevant public authorities. The Marine Plan policies will be applied by public authorities making decisions that affect or might affect the marine area, through decision making processes. As the Marine Plan does not zone areas for specific activities or uses, local impacts cannot be identified at this stage.

7.2. The Department does not consider it necessary to mitigate against impacts in the rural area, as no adverse impact is anticipated at this stage. This will be reviewed after the public consultation on the Marine Plan and we welcome comments from all stakeholders.

Preparing for Delivery

8. In preparing for the delivery of the Marine Plan, the following questions were considered:

- i. Do the necessary delivery mechanisms exist in rural areas?*
- ii. Have you considered alternative delivery mechanisms?*
- iii. What action has been taken to ensure fair rural outcomes?*
- iv. Is there flexibility for local delivery bodies to find local solutions?*
- v. Are different solutions required in different areas?*

9. Marine Plan Team consideration:

9.1. The Marine Plan contains high level, strategic policy for the marine area. It consolidates existing legislation, policy measures and practices in the Northern Ireland marine area. The Marine Plan emphasises the contributory role it has with other programmes and measures in marine management. The Marine Plan makes clear that the policy and legislative responsibility of marine activities and uses remains with the relevant public authorities. Ongoing engagement with stakeholders and the evidence gathered in preparation of the Marine Plan, have given no indication of any likely adverse rural impacts. This position will be reviewed after the public consultation

on the Marine Plan and we welcome comments from all stakeholders. We would particularly welcome views from rural coastal communities and the community on Rathlin Island.

Implementation and Monitoring

10. For the implementation and monitoring of the Marine Plan the following questions were considered:
 - i. Have you set any rural specific indicators or targets to monitor?*
 - ii. How will the outcomes be measured in rural areas?*
 - iii. Are there any statistics or data that you will collect to monitor rural needs and impacts?*
11. Marine Plan Team consideration:
 - 11.1. Public authorities, whose decisions affect or might affect the marine area, are responsible for implementing the policies of the Marine Plan. They will achieve this by applying the policies to a range of decision making processes.
 - 11.2. Legislation requires that the Marine Plan is reviewed regularly. This review will be twofold: to monitor how well the content of the Marine Plan has been taken forward through decision-making processes; and to monitor the effects and effectiveness of the policies within the Marine Plan in securing objectives.
 - 11.3. No specific indicators or targets have been identified at this stage. In developing indicators or targets in relation to Objective 3 of the Marine Plan, we would welcome views and advice from rural coastal communities and the Rathlin Island community, during the period of public consultation to ensure that the Marine Plan supports these types of communities.

Evaluation and Review

12. For the Evaluation and Review of the Marine Plan the following questions were considered:
 - i. What processes are in place to evaluate and review the implementation of the plan?*
 - ii. Have rural needs been factored into the evaluation process?*
 - iii. How will lessons learned in relation to rural outcomes be used to inform future policy making and delivery?*

13. Marine Plan Team consideration:

13.1. The legislation that directed the Department to prepare Marine Plans also requires that they are regularly reviewed and reported on. This process will allow emerging or new evidence to be given consideration.

13.2. Public participation has been central to the development of the Marine Plan. To date, no issues have been raised regarding potential impacts on rural needs. The policies of the Marine Plan will continue to be monitored and reviewed and we would welcome any comments from all stakeholders during the public consultation period.

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Date completed:	September 2017
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Date	December 2017



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