Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

Marine Inquiry

Written submission from Shetland Islands Marine Planning Partnership

Are the objectives for the establishment of the Scottish Marine Regions still appropriate?

Yes. They have defined boundaries and enhanced localism for our approach to Regional Marine Planning.

In Shetland’s case, this consolidated the previous regime and powers that were granted by the ZCC Act 1974, such as licences of works out to 12 nautical miles.

How effective has the approach to establishing Marine Planning Partnerships been in practice? Are they working as anticipated? What are the opportunities/constraints/barriers to success?

We feel that our Marine Planning Partnership (Shetland Islands Council and the NAFC Marine Centre) has worked effectively together. However, there have been some issues that we did not foresee at the outset, such as the requirement for data sharing agreements. The preparation of which has impacted the progress of our consultation for the Shetland Islands Regional Marine Plan.

Our Partnership established an advisory group to oversee and advise on the production of the Marine Plan. This has worked well to date, but we feel that the Marine Act’s requirement for the group to include representatives of recreation interests, but not community interests, has been a missed opportunity. We feel this is not fully representative of all users of our marine environment.

Notable achievements have been that our Regional Marine Plan establishes a context for future development, master planning approaches and more effective locational based policy. An additional example is that we have used our advisory group to build better working relationships and improve approaches to inshore fisheries management.

We feel that any future amendments to the Marine Scotland Act should take the opportunity to further approaches to the effective implementation of Regional Marine Plans. Approaches to the Town and Country Planning system for Local Development Plans (such as the requirement to produce Action Programmes/Delivery Programmes and Monitoring Statements) should be looked at as a possible good practice approach.

What progress has been made in the development and implementation of Regional Marine Plans and what are the objectives and priorities for the next 5-10 years?

Our draft Regional Marine Plan is prepared and ready for consultation subject to the completion of data sharing agreements. We anticipate adoption of the plan later in 2020. Following this, implementation and monitoring of the Plan will be our priority to maximise the benefits of Marine Planning for our region.
We are currently in the process of preparing our next terrestrial Local Development Plan for Shetland. As part of this we shall be reviewing supplementary guidance prepared for aquaculture and works licensing. We consider that the adopted Regional Marine Plan for Shetland will have a greater consolidated role in the future in guiding development, future decision making and guidance.

**Is the system of marine planning sufficiently integrated with the terrestrial planning system?**

In general we have felt that this has worked sufficiently. However, we feel that placing too much emphasis on integrating marine and terrestrial planning has been done at the expense of integrating marine planning with other regulatory functions, such as agriculture, environmental protection, and community interaction. Landscape and visual impact provide one positive example of where this has been well integrated.

**What is required to deliver an effective Marine Planning system under Part 3 of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010? Is the National Marine Plan capable of delivering sustainable development within Scottish Marine Regions in advance of those areas having an RMP in place?**

The National Marine Plan is a high-level national document. Whilst it includes relevant policies and information it does not lend itself particularly well to guiding decision making on localised developments. This is why our Marine Planning Partnership and Advisory Group have done an effective role in translating the National Policy into specific policy and guidance at the regional level as part of our Regional Marine Plan.

**What funding and support is available for the development of RMPs?**

Central funding support is welcome, although we feel there is an opportunity for the Scottish Government to provide more specific advice and guidance to support the process. Examples of where this would be productive include, BRIA, producing guidance on adopting the ecosystem approach, model policies and ensuring more coordinated action and guidance from key agencies (such as SNH and SEPA).

It would also be helpful and more productive if funding was provided on a longer term basis to enable the recruitment of staff on longer term contracts with competitive salaries, to help attract the required personnel.

**What duties/requirements are there on local authorities to develop and implement RMPs?**

In our case this has been easier to achieve as we a single marine region. Our Marine Planning Partnership works closely to develop and implement our Regional Marine Plan.

**Is there sufficient marine planning expertise in all Local Authorities for development of RMPs?**

Our Marine Planning Partnership includes expertise from both the NAFC Marine Centre who lead production of the Regional Marine Plan alongside Shetland Islands Council.
In our local authority we feel we have sufficient expertise as we have a Marine Planning Team. This reflects the importance of the marine industry to the Shetland economy. Recruitment can be difficult though, due to our location and area of expertise being considered to be a niche.

All local authorities have expertise in plan production and community engagement, the issue may well be with resourcing and prioritisation for Regional Marine Planning.

There may be opportunities for local authorities to work in partnership and use secondments to provide expertise and assist with the production of their plans.