

# **The Irish Sea Pilot: Report on the communications strategy.**

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# 1. DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGY

1. Strategic communication with stakeholders was a priority for the Pilot from the outset. In addition to stakeholders of the Irish Sea itself, a wider community having an interest in the Pilot was identified, including government administrations, policy makers and national bodies which had to be informed and consulted about the Pilot's progress. Consideration of the purposes of communication and audiences enabled a defined set of objectives to be set. The Pilot had to:
  - i. inform all those interested in the Pilot of its purpose, timescale, progress and conclusions;
  - ii. identify sources of information essential to the successful operation and delivery of the Pilot;
  - iii. consult stakeholders at key milestones on progress, draft reports, objectives and conclusions to ensure that as far as possible, the Pilot was meeting the requirements of marine nature conservation and the wider social and economic needs of Irish Sea communities;
  - iv. consult stakeholders in relation to current and proposed legislation, regulation and enforcement measures and responsibilities;
  - v. promote the Pilot's outcomes around the Irish Sea, within and outside the UK, with the European Commission (EC), with other countries bordering on the north-east Atlantic and with OSPAR.
2. The staff time and other resources available to the Pilot for implementing the communications strategy were limited, and the most cost-effective means practicable were needed. Email and internet communication would be used as much as was acceptable to the intended audiences. Following a preliminary investigation with a cross-section of stakeholders, a communications strategy (in full at annex 1) was adopted. containing the following elements:
  - i. a stakeholder database would hold contact details including email addresses as far as possible;
  - ii. a website would hold background information, consultation documents progress and task reports, and would be used to publicise and promote the Pilot;
  - iii. a regular bulletin or Irish Sea Pilot Newsletter, would be produced periodically, and widely disseminated, and articles would be submitted for inclusion in the newsletters of other organisations;
  - iv. presentations would be given to selected workshops, seminars and conferences, where a large number of stakeholders could be reached at one time or where a workshop was organised so as to engage a small number of key stakeholders actively;
  - v. bilateral meetings would be held with stakeholders whose contribution to the Pilot or its outcomes was deemed to be critical;
  - vi. links would be maintained with other Government initiatives arising from the publication of *Safeguarding our Seas* (Defra 2002).

## 2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

### 2.1 Stakeholder database

3. From the start, communication was focussed on stakeholder bodies at the international, national, regional and 'county' levels. Individual and local stakeholders were accorded a lower priority in recognition of the Pilot's purposes, and the level of resources available. The stakeholder database initially contained approximately 200 contacts compiled from existing lists supplied by organisations represented on the Steering group. Stakeholders from Ireland and the Isle of Man were included and the database refined and extended with time. By the end of the project, the list had risen to above 700.
4. Most stakeholders and a wider community of interest in the Pilot were identified under the following headings:
  - a. UK Government departments, Devolved Administrations, the Government of Ireland and the Isle of Man Government. Each administration selected and supplied contacts from within its area of jurisdiction.
  - b. All 56 Irish Sea local authorities.
  - c. The main economic sectors with Irish Sea interests.
  - d. Relevant non-governmental organisations.
5. The database includes the contacts already involved in the UK Government's Review of Marine Nature Conservation (RMNC) as provided by DEFRA European Wildlife Division. Irish Sea representatives of sectoral networks such as fisheries organisations were added, also contacts likely to be sources of scientific advice and information such as universities, marine institutes, laboratories, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and Country Agencies. National Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) networks such as the English, Welsh and Scottish coastal fora, and CoastNET were included with regional fora such as the Irish Sea Forum and the North West Coastal Forum and local estuary & coastal partnerships such as the Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum.
6. Virtually all communication with stakeholders took place via email. However, stakeholders who wished to receive postal communications were accommodated.

### 2.2 Website

7. A component of the JNCC website was developed for use by the Pilot at [www.jncc.gov.uk/irishseapilot](http://www.jncc.gov.uk/irishseapilot) where all the main reports and papers were posted. This website, with email notification to contacts when documents were posted, proved to be the best means of making information available to stakeholders, especially for some very large documents which included colour maps. These reports often exceeded the capacity of email systems and mailing

paper copies was too expensive and time consuming. The website was restructured in March 2004 to hold the final report and all the other outputs from the Pilot.

### *2.3 Consultations*

8. The first email consultation with stakeholders in summer 2002 provided briefing on the launch of the Pilot and sought comments on proposed Irish Sea boundaries that the Pilot would use. This consultation resulted in modifications to the area to include economic and environmental interests around the Pembrokeshire coast and nature conservation interests in the Clyde. Subsequently the Government of Ireland proposed that, on ecological criteria, the southern boundary of the area could be re-drawn to Carnsore Point, in Ireland. However, data collation and mapping work had progressed by the time this became clear and the change was not made. We suggest that future work on nature conservation in the Irish Sea should reconsider this boundary.
9. Later consultations on various interim progress reports of progress with technical aspects of the Pilot's work, followed in summer 2003. Consultations and organisations who responded are listed in table 1. Numbers of responses were as follows:
  - Data collation and mapping 13
  - The marine landscapes classification 8
  - Identification of nationally-important features 6
  - Identification of nationally-important areas 6
  - Setting conservation objectives 15
  - Legislation, governance and enforcement. 24

### *2.4 Newsletters, articles and presentations*

10. Two Irish Sea Pilot Newsletters were produced in the early stages of the Pilot. The first announced that work on the Pilot was underway; the second was a progress report in March 2003. A third newsletter in May 2004 announced completion of the Pilot, summarised its results and promoted access to the various outputs. The Newsletters are disseminated to all the contacts on the Pilot's database, also through the *Coastal Management for Sustainability* (CMS) email notification service (some 2,000 contacts), and thirdly through the Pilot's website.
11. Articles on the Pilot were published in *Wavelength* (2), *Biodiversity News*, *Coastline Scotland*, *Coast Map News*, JNCC's *Nature News* (2) and a number of other specialist publications.
12. During the course of the Pilot, some 40 presentations were given to a range of international, national and regional audiences, totalling some 2,700 people (table 2). The largest events were Coastal Futures 2003 and 2004 and the Defra conference to promote the Marine Stewardship process and launch the ICZM Stock-take project. Two Irish Sea Forum meetings, an Irish Sea

fisheries workshop in Dublin, presentations to the Governments of Ireland and the Isle of Man, the Welsh coastal and maritime partnership and the Scottish sustainable marine environment project ensured that all administrations round the Irish Sea were directly informed.

## *2.5 Stakeholder workshops*

13. Stakeholder workshops were organised at 3-4 month intervals (table 2). They were held within the jurisdiction of each Irish Sea administration in sequence as follows: Isle of Man, Edinburgh, Cardiff, Liverpool and an all-Ireland workshop in Dublin. These were organised jointly by Defra and the Pilot team with lists of invitees supplied by each relevant administration. The half day workshops were structured with a detailed presentation of the Pilot's aims and progress followed by discussion, questions and ideas from local interests.

## *2.6 Other liaison*

14. A range of bilateral and multilateral meetings with key stakeholders were held where the Pilot's purpose was presented and the implications for the plans and policies of other sectors was explored and discussed.
15. Liaison was maintained with a range of concurrent Governmental initiatives, including:
  - the Defra UK ICZM Stock-take project,
  - the Review of Byelaw Powers for the Coast,
  - the Review of Development in Coastal and Marine Waters,
  - the work on Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) for renewable energy development,
  - the Sustainable Scottish Marine Environment Initiative.
  - the RMNC and its subgroups on Legislation and Information.
  - The Environment Food and Rural affairs Committee inquiry into the marine environment, and Government policy in relation to it.
  - The Defra review of marine fisheries and environmental enforcement arrangements in England and Wales.
  - The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution study of the environmental effects of marine fisheries
  - The Cabinet Office Strategy Unit study of marine fisheries

## *2.7 International involvement*

16. The Governments of Ireland and the Isle of Man nominated representatives to sit on the steering group for the Pilot in April 2002 in response to invitations from Defra. Formal inter-governmental links were established by Defra in summer 2002, through the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office for the

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Government of Ireland, and through the Home office for the Isle of Man. Discussions regarding the purpose and objectives of the Pilot in relation to those Administrations' respective policy objectives for marine nature conservation commenced with visits by Defra and the Pilot Project team to the Isle of Man and Ireland respectively in September 2003.

17. The Governments of Ireland and the Isle of Man supplied lists of contacts that were included in the Pilot's stakeholder database. Contact with stakeholders in these countries was mostly to do with the supply of data and information for the data collation task. The consultation documents were drafted principally for UK policy development purposes and while some may have been relevant and of interest to other countries, consultation responses were not requested or received.
18. The European Commission received communications such as newsletters and notification of consultations, International presentations were made to the OSPAR Biodiversity Committee, to an OSPAR workshop on marine spatial planning, to the marine committee of the European Environmental Advisory Councils and presentations on the marine landscapes work were given to a small number of other European meetings.

### *2.8 Survey and evaluation*

19. The specification for the Irish Sea Pilot included an evaluation of how people's perceptions had been changed during the course of the work. This evaluation was undertaken over the period 20-23 January 2004, i.e. after the research work of the Pilot was completed, and during the report preparation phase. The Project Team carried out telephone interviews with ten stakeholders (nine Steering Group members and one RMNC Working Group member). Interviewees were selected as available, to give a mix of industry, regulators, and conservationists and to gain a wide range of informed perspectives from those involved in management of the Pilot.
20. A set of six questions was asked of each of the interviewees designed to obtain informed feedback on various aspects of the Pilot's work programme. It aimed to explore views on good practice for regional sea management and focussed on two areas, namely, stakeholder expectations and the processes of communications and partner engagement, both important areas of the Pilot's work. Comments received were on a non-attributable basis. A summary of responses relevant to this report with some comments and actions taken by the Pilot are shown in table 3.

### 3. DISCUSSION OF COMMUNICATION ISSUES

21. The Communications Strategy proved cost-effective and the general approach adopted was considered to have been appropriate for the needs and purposes of the Pilot. Evaluation comments indicated that the Pilot's structure consisting of a project team with steering group and stakeholder workshops worked well for the policy development purposes of the project. However, the complexity of the project, the pace of change, the number and scale of outputs at certain stages created a level of work such that members of the steering group could not fully engage with all the components of the Pilot all the time.

#### *3.1 Stakeholder database*

22. Limited resources and the largely theoretical and policy development purposes of the Pilot dictated that local stakeholders and individuals around the Irish Sea were accorded a lower priority for direct communication and involvement than organisations and networks at the national level. Implementation of the framework in a real situation in the Irish Sea or in other Regional Seas would require full and careful consideration to the need to involve all stakeholders including local communities and individuals and also the best method of engaging all the stakeholders in the work. It is essential to have a comprehensive overview of all the stakeholders for the project concerned and how they will be engaged with the work. The compilation of a more extensive, comprehensive and targeted database than the Pilot used would be required in order to communicate with certain groups for defined purposes. Sufficient preparatory time should be allowed in project planning for the development of an up-to-date and comprehensive stakeholder database although this could be undertaken in parallel with other preparatory work.

#### *3.2 Website and email*

23. Communication by email with large documents posted on the web site was found to be acceptable method of communication by all but a very few contacts. This method received support from all of the respondents to the consultation on the draft communications strategy and did not appear to limit responses to later consultations. Most contacts found email to be the preferred means of communication and is strongly recommended for projects of this nature. The advantages for sender and recipient are high speed, high efficiency and low cost. Feedback can be generated very quickly, with much less work and cost compared with paper communications. The relative informality of email means that presentation is less critical and small effective communications can be generated frequently, thus increasing the sense of involvement and ownership of the project by stakeholders.
24. However, we should note that while email and web based communication proved satisfactory for the Pilot, this might not be the case when implementing

the framework with other Regional Seas, and a preliminary consultation with stakeholders on the best means of communication should always be undertaken.

### *3.3 Consultations*

25. Consultation responses were relatively few in number and this probably reflects both the rather specialist nature of the consultation reports and the limited time available. However, comments were received mostly from Government Departments, Agencies, Research Institutes and Non-government bodies as listed in table 1 and these were all most helpful. For future projects we would recommend greater engagement with stakeholders over technical aspects of the project including consultations taking an approach more based on seminars and workshops.

### *3.4 Newsletters articles and communications*

26. The evaluation responses indicated that the Pilot was well publicised through the programme of workshops, presentations, published articles and newsletters. This was a relatively complex project and many of those with a peripheral interest had difficulty in keeping and maintaining a comprehensive understanding of how the Pilot was progressing.

### *3.5 Stakeholder workshops*

27. The technique of holding stakeholder workshops to engage a high level of interested expertise was generally successful but limited to some extent by low numbers of the delegates we most wanted to reach. Attendance of 30-50 stakeholders was obtained in each case, time constraints having limited preparation of lists of invitees. Also a lack of ownership of the Pilot by other governments and devolved administrations (discussed below) probably contributed to reduced engagement. Greater preparation of the delegate list and more local involvement and publicity could have increased the size of the workshops and their value. The workshops performed a valuable function in providing an indication of the concerns and priorities of stakeholders in each area. In an implementation phase of regional sea management, workshops could also be used for development and decision making purposes such as the formulation of agreed conservation objectives, the selection of nationally-important areas (in the circumstances where there were a range of alternative areas), and in consensus building where compromise decisions were required. The value of the workshops was seen both as helping to reach the best possible decisions, and also as generating a high level of ownership of decisions taken.

### *3.6 Other issues*

28. Evaluation comments and discussions in the Pilot steering group indicated that there were some misconceptions in the early stages among stakeholders about the fundamental purpose of the Pilot and its communications work. The

expectation that the Pilot would work towards the development and testing of an integrated management plan for the Irish Sea meant that stakeholders assumed there would be much greater engagement with sectoral interests over (for example) conservation objectives and management approaches than took place. An integrated management approach developed by a cross sectoral forum using an ICZM model is likely to be a sensible way of progressing management for the Irish Sea and other regional seas, indeed the Pilot report makes a recommendation to this effect, however, ICZM is a longer term strategy requiring 5-10 years to develop effectively. The Irish Sea Pilot was limited to developing the nature conservation component of an ICZM approach and has demonstrated that a framework for regional sea nature conservation can be constructed and applied.

29. The data collation exercise to a large extent can be considered to have been an exercise in communications. Contact with data holders was essential to identify the presence, format and availability of data and then to encourage the release and supply of data. Generally this aspect of the Pilot worked well, although a lot of potentially useful data was not in the end supplied for various reasons linked to the limitations of resources in either the Pilot or the data holder body. Ongoing cross sectoral and cross agency communication over data issues is essential to build up a common understanding of the benefits to everyone of managing data to common standards and exchanging data freely and openly. The risk to the holder that value will be lost if data is openly released are small, indeed unused data that is not kept up to date quickly becomes valueless in any case. The benefits of common access to data so that a better knowledge base for decision making is created, outweigh the risk.
30. The value of seeking the advice of those having expert, local knowledge of important information about a Regional Sea should not be underestimated. Relying on a rather mechanistic data collation exercise mostly among public sector agencies might well lead to an inefficient use of resources, and in the acquisition of data that was not used subsequently. The Pilot did not have resources (time in particular) to test this approach more fully but we are aware that considerable Irish Sea expertise remains untapped. An exploration of the potential for making greater use of such experts is recommended for future projects.

### *3.7 International engagement*

31. International engagement with work at the regional sea scale is essential and requires careful preparation. Countries bordering the regional sea must be in a position to agree on policy priorities and management objectives from the earliest inception of a project, so that a scheme such as the proposed nature conservation framework can be developed and implemented jointly and effectively at the Regional Sea scale. In the case of the Pilot it was necessary, albeit at a rather late stage, to establish a formal inter-governmental link through the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office. All National Governments in a regional sea project must see themselves as equal partners in a regional sea management scheme with equal influence over discussions and equal responsibility for implementation.

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32. The time required for preparatory discussions to take place between Governments having jurisdiction within that sea area, prior to the commencement of the work, is likely to be 6-12 months. An adequate period should be allowed in project planning for agreement at Government level on the need for work at the regional sea scale and the scope or terms of reference of the project. For example the scope might include the policy framework, issues to be covered, techniques and approaches and geographical area. Governments should also agree processes and structures for engagement, funding arrangements, data and information exchange and sectoral consultation arrangements.
33. The urgency of completing the Irish Sea Pilot for the policy development purposes of the RMNC and Defra did not allow for the level of advance preparation with other Governments that would normally be required. The outcome was that the Governments of Ireland and the Isle of Man did not consider themselves to be equal partners in a project that was essentially initiated and led by the UK. Therefore the international partnership aspects of a regional sea management initiative should not be considered to have been adequately explored and tested by the Irish Sea Pilot.
34. Engagement of stakeholders and consultation on outputs may be best carried out by the Government of the country concerned, both to avoid the impression that the initiative is being imposed from outside, and also because communication with such stakeholders is most effectively undertaken in their own language and with an awareness of the policy environment in which stakeholders will respond. This issue requires close co-operation between the countries involved since a regional sea project team cannot engage stakeholders of another country without the clearance and endorsement of that country's government. An agreement on procedures for stakeholder consultation in each country should be part of the inter-governmental discussions setting up a regional sea management initiative.
35. Despite the limited preparation, the Pilot was received by Irish Sea Governments with considerable interest and enthusiasm. Both the Isle of Man Government and the Government of Ireland gave policy support to the Pilot at an early date and a great deal of assistance with data and information. Practical collaboration with Ireland would undoubtedly have been enhanced if discussions had been initiated prior to the commencement of the Pilot. In retrospect, the origin of the Pilot as a UK initiative, without the equal engagement of the Governments of the Isle of Man and Ireland at the outset, constrained the Pilot's ability to take a full Regional Sea perspective. Greater attention in the early planning stages will be required to ensure that a future Regional Sea scale project meets the marine policy and management objectives of stakeholders from all the countries involved.
36. The level of engagement by the European Commission in the Pilot was less than had been hoped despite a number of approaches by Defra and the project team and communication of information such as newsletters and progress reports. Regional sea management programmes within European waters are likely to be most effectively established under an overarching policy framework at the European level. Such a policy framework would provide a formal structure within which member states could set up partnership and

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liaison arrangements for marine planning. In the case of the Pilot, EC involvement could have been a conduit for liaison with other Member States having an interest in the Irish Sea such as the exploitation of fish stocks by France, Belgium and Holland.

37. The Pilot's main report and linked reports (such as this one) are drafted largely for Defra policy development purposes. As such they are not targeted at other UK administrations, EU member states or other countries. To generate the maximum advantage from the work undertaken and resources committed, the Pilot Team recommends that the Government should promote the 'Regional Seas' approach and the framework for marine nature conservation with the European Commission, OSPAR and countries bordering on the north-east Atlantic. In order to do this, it may be necessary to prepare the outputs and findings of the Pilot in other report(s) better targeted at the policy development initiatives currently underway at the EU level such as the EU marine strategy and the work of OSPAR.

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<b>Table 1 Organisation who responded to Pilot consultations on Interim reports in 2003</b>	<b>Data and mapping</b>	<b>Conservation objectives</b>	<b>Legislation, governance and enforcement</b>	<b>Marine landscape classification</b>	<b>Selection of nationally important features</b>	<b>Selection of nationally important areas</b>
British Geological Survey	X			X		
Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture Science	X	X	X			
Clyde Fishermen's Association		X				
Countryside Council for Wales	X	X	X	X	X	X
Department for Transport			X			
Defra European Wildlife Division	X	X	X	X		X
Defra Marine and Waterways Division			X			
Defra GW			X			
Department for Trade and Industry			X			
Environment Agency	X	X	X	X	X	X
English Nature	X	X	X	X	X	X
European Cetacean By-catch campaign			X			
Fisheries Research Services			X	X	X	
Foreign and Commonwealth Office			X			
Government Office North West		X				
Joint Nature Conservation Committee	X	X	X			
Marine Biological Association	X	X				
Maritime Coastguard Agency			X			
Marine Consents and Environment Unit			X			
Mersey Local Planning Authority		X				
Northern Ireland Regional Planning and Transport			X			
North West Coastal Forum	X					
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister			X			
Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum	X	X	X	X	X	X
Royal Society for Protection of Birds	X	X		X	X	X
Royal Yachting Association	X	X	X			
Scottish Executive			X			
Scottish Natural Heritage	X		X			
Sea Fisheries Committee		X				
Trinity House			X			
UK Hydrographic Office	X					
Wildlife & Countryside Link		X				
Whale & Dolphin Conservation Society			X			
<b>Totals</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>

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<b>Table 2. Presentations by the Irish Sea Pilot team</b>	Date	Presenter	Audience
Pan-European Biological & Landscape Diversity Strategy. Corridors workshop	21-6-02	SA	40
Irish Sea Forum	10-8-02	SA	50
Isle of Man Government officials	3-9-02	MV	10
Isle of Man stakeholders	4-9-02	Joint	30
Government of Ireland officials	12-9-02	SA	15
Ireland fisheries workshop	18-9-02	SA	40
Scottish Marine Group	31-10-02	SA	150
Defra ICZM workshop	14-11-02	SA	500
BGS	3-12-02	SA/MW	10
CEFAS	4-12-02	CL/SA	2
Scottish stakeholders	12-12-02	Joint	40
Coastal Futures	23-1-03	SA	300
OSPAR Biodiversity Committee	22-1-03	SA	50
Scottish Sustainable Marine Environment	14-2-03	SA/CL	1
PISCES	7-3-03	CL	10
Wales Coastal & Maritime partnership	5-3-03	SA	30
Wales stakeholders	5-3-03	SA/CL	30
Scottish Sustainable Marine Environment	19-3-03	SA	50
POL Ecosystem approach workshop	27-3-03	CL	30
WWF	2-4-03	SA/CL	2
PML Research group	31-3-03	SA/CL	2
ICZM stock-take project team	11-4-03	SA/CL	2
International maritime policy conference	15-5-03	SA	30
JNCC Chairman & Managing Director	20-5-03	SA/CL	2
UK biodiversity partnership	22-5-03	CL	250
EN MPA workshop	19-6-03	CL	60
England stakeholders	25-6-03	Joint	50
Irish Sea Forum	3-7-03	SA	50
North West Coastal Forum	8-7-03	CL	20
JNCC	17-9-03	MV/SA	20
Coastnet spatial planning workshop	1-9-03	CL	200
Ireland stakeholders	3-9-03	SA/CL	40
JNCC marine staff	7-10-03	Joint	20
DTI Oil & Gas consents unit	8-10-03	SA	5
Defra fisheries inquiry	28-10-03	SA	2
CCW staff	21-11-03	SA/CL	40
SNH West Areas Board	2-12-03	SA	20
Forth Estuary Forum	4-12-03	SA	100
European Environment Advisory Councils	5-12-03	SA	10
Inter Agency Committee on marine Science and technology- Marine Environment Data advisory group.	11-12-03	CL	20
OSPAR workshop Spatial planning	9-1-04	SA	20
Coastal Futures 2004	22-1-04	SA	300
EN Directors & Maritime staff	5-2-04	Joint	30
UK Biodiversity standing committee	17-3-04	SA	15
Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution	1-4-04	SA	20
Eurocean Irish EU Presidency Conference Galway	10-5-04	SA	40
CCW Council	17-5-04	MV/SA	15
<b>Total audience(approximately)</b>			<b>2700</b>

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<b>Table 3: Evaluation of expectations, process of work and partner engagement</b>	
<b>Questions (grey) and comments from consultees</b>	<b>Project team comments and actions</b>
<b>1. How do the outcomes of the Pilot differ from what your expectations had been at the start of the Pilot?</b>	
Ireland and IOM governments were not involved in the planning of the project. Earlier engagement could have improved value and better trialled international engagement.	Reports emphasise the necessity for early engagement of relevant governments.
Pilot hasn't got to the stage of attaching conservation objectives to areas of the Irish Sea and mapping them. This was fundamental for engaging stakeholders and identifying their objectives and issues; recognise that issues of scale and timescale made this difficult. This should be the next stage of development.	Further work is required. Important areas such as possible MPA must be identified before consideration is given to a framework of objectives for those areas.
Expected to have more stakeholder involvement with conservation objectives. Has developed into more strategic view of regional sea and clearer framework than envisaged.	Greater stakeholder involvement was not possible within the Pilot's resources. An area for ongoing work.
Emphasis is now needed on implementation. More cross-sectoral work is needed on the application of the ecosystem approach, bringing in the socio-economic dimension.	An area where further work is required.
Marine spatial planning provides a way forward. Thinking is currently biased towards nature conservation. River Basin Management Plans and stakeholder engagement under the WFD may provide a model.	An area where further work is required.
<b>2 Where have you felt that the Pilot hasn't lived up to your expectations?</b>	
The Pilot was not properly constituted as a regional sea management project e.g. since it was set up before Ireland invited on board and Ireland was not asked to jointly fund. This must be recognised and future work properly constituted at the Irish Sea level.	Reports emphasise the necessity for early engagement of relevant governments. Also make recommendations re stakeholder engagement.
The Pilot did not adequately address the fundamental relationships needed for working at the regional sea level; e.g. who needs to be involved, what is the process for international engagement, participation and decision-making.	
Project risks being less influential internationally because it is UK focussed and the report is a report to Defra. Report is not in a form conducive to being considered by Ireland or the EU Marine Strategy working party. Outputs must be communicated to wider EU	The production of a separate report for the EC and member states is recommended
Pilot could do more to develop links with OSPAR, to feed into discussions on threatened and declining species and MPA networks. Explore role of nationally important features and EU and OSPAR international lists.	An area where further work is required.
Pilot could do more to illustrate how to apply the ecosystem approach. In particular how to manage a whole area like the Irish Sea, setting the contribution of nationally important features and site protection in clearer context. Very important to feedback on ecosystem approach lessons.	Principles of an ecosystem approach underpin the Pilot's work. This aspect is expended in the RMNC report.
The framework need must identify the required level of stakeholder engagement and an engagement process. The Pilot was too constrained by resources to do this properly and consequently the framework is top-down and academic rather than implementation-validated.	Reports emphasise the necessity for early engagement of relevant governments. Also make recommendations re stakeholder engagement
Anticipation that the Pilot would develop and test a management strategy or plan; in practice has tested some elements but not a	This misconception was fairly widespread among stakeholders and

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whole plan. We recognise now that this was not practical within time and resources, and without putting further planning elements in place first.	is discussed in this report
<b>3. Are there any areas where the Pilot has exceeded your expectations or about which you were particularly pleased?</b>	There were no comments on communication in response to this question.
<b>4. In terms of the processes of work or partner engagement used by the Pilot, were there any areas that you thought worked well?</b>	
Dedicated Project Team is crucial and Pilot has been relatively well resourced. Project Team has helped make the project work as well as it has. Good working relationships established with Steering Group members and other stakeholders involved. Full PT involvement in SG really helped.	
Steering Group had a good representation of interests, worked well and was very fair; opportunity to contribute and everyone's views valued. Defra to be congratulated for involving industry. Rotating meetings around the Irish Sea helped increase stakeholder engagement.	
Broadly, the processes worked well for the project at the level at which it was undertaken	
The Pilot has been well publicised; however it is such a complex project that generally it is only poorly understood	Discussed above
Good liaison between the Pilot and other initiatives, good understanding and avoided duplication of effort	
Formal and informal bilateral work with representatives of other governments and devolved administrations worked well	
<b>5. Were there areas that you thought didn't work well</b>	
Project carried out on too short a timescale	The lessons relevant to future work.
Steering group given too much to do. Long meetings and a lot of material to get through in and outside of meetings. Too much to pick off in one-day meetings. Document distribution complicated and time consuming.	The compressed timescale of the Pilot is recognised and the assistance of the Steering group was invaluable.
Timescale for commenting on papers and reports was too short. Consultation workload has hindered opportunities to develop the bigger picture.	The compressed timescale is recognised but was part of the contractual structure of the Pilot.
Stakeholder involvement good at the national level although inevitably fairly restricted; no different from experiences with other initiatives. Stakeholder meetings were a good idea and some were well attended, but generally not very effective at engaging people. Not for want of effort.	
Pilot doesn't do much for pulling 'both sides' together in a common apolitical way.	Greater sectoral engagement would be essential in a 'real' project..
Poor engagement of fisheries sector as a whole; recognise difficulty of involving working fishermen. Need to recognise that fishermen are part of the solution as well as part of the problem. Need to explore the nature of fisheries activities and their environmental implications more in identifying ways forward and recommendations.	
Communication not on same wavelength as many stakeholders; more policy level than practitioner. Language at too high a level to engage and lost some stakeholders. Language needs to be plainer and clearer. Too arrogant with knowledge.	
<b>6. As regards the latter, do you have suggestions to make as to how the process could have been better</b>	
Need to increase buy-in from stakeholders. Communications strategy needs to accommodate both government and non-government stakeholders; different stakes in the process and different approaches needed.	We recognise that greater sectoral and stakeholder engagement would be essential in a 'real' project..
Regional sea governments and other prospective stakeholders need to establish a firm partnership at the outset. Partners need to be able to able to identify resource requirements 12 months in advance of commencement.	This is identified in conclusions and recommendations for future work.
Need to engage industry in discussion. Spatial planning and sustainable development may provide the best opportunity; ICZM considered in respect of local authorities and planning primarily?	Greater sectoral and stakeholder engagement would be essential in a 'real' project..
Pilot and other initiatives are forcing the fishing industry to face and think about the issues and justify their	

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actions, beyond politics. This decade is critical; have to make things work better.	
Need to meet with and ask the fishing industry what it wants and what it can contribute; be clear what is being sought of it. Recognise that the industry may need to be encouraged and supported to direct more resources to this. Need face to face meetings and explore how to engage. Draw plans and find out who is going to be affected. Recognise also that majority of fishermen are totally opposed to any restrictions, not just nature conservation.	Greater sectoral and stakeholder engagement would be essential in a 'real' project.
Establishing and sustaining dialogue and partnership working is most important. Need to ensure continuation of interested parties on marine nature conservation and sustainable development in future. Seek industry involvement at the outset.	
Programme in consultations at the planning stage and ensure that the timing, duration, form and volume of consultations will facilitate organisations and individuals providing full responses	This is identified in conclusions and recommendations for future work.
Place more effort on engaging experts and gauging their advice, and then seek relevant information to substantiate or illustrate. This increases the support and ownership and assists with prioritising data collation. Establish expert groups – to feed into projects and report back to.	
Important for people to be aware of what the Project Team and contractors have been asked to do; increases partnership and integration across jurisdiction of work.	
Don't need to replicate Pilot in other areas. Need to take forward and pilot the implementation phase; start to move to hard action on the ground	
Next step needs to identify conservation targets for the whole sea and parts of it and the management and other actions needed. This should aim to stimulate discussion, engagement and response at a local level.	
UK government should make stronger links between its initiatives and international initiatives and integrate them through the Marine Stewardship process	An RMNC issue
Marine spatial planning may encourage governmental commitment to work together at the regional sea scale.	This is identified in conclusions and recommendations for future work.
Joined up Government should be encouraged to strengthen environmental protection, recovery and management, to underpin sustainable social and economic development.	

## Annex 1

### A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY FOR THE REGIONAL SEAS PILOT SCHEME

#### 1. Overall Purpose of the Communications Strategy

1.1 The Review of Marine Nature Conservation Working Group identified the development of an effective Communications Strategy as a crucial initial task for the Regional Seas Pilot Scheme. There are a number of purposes for effective communications within the pilot scheme. In summary these are:

- to raise awareness, within the European Union and within the UK nationally, regionally and locally of the purpose and timescale of the pilot scheme;
- to facilitate the provision of information on which the pilot scheme depends;
- to ensure that the views of stakeholders are fully taken into account and their experience effectively utilised;
- to enable conclusions and recommendations developed through the pilot scheme to be effectively disseminated and promoted.

1.2 It is recognised that the potential number of stakeholders with an interest in the pilot scheme is likely to be large, and that the nature of the ‘required’ involvement is likely to vary between stakeholders; also, for a given stakeholder, the nature of the involvement may change over time.

#### 2. Range of Stakeholders

2.1 At the outset of the project, the constituency of stakeholders is imperfectly known, and this will become much better defined over the first 3 to 6 months of the project. In general terms, however, the stakeholders all likely to be drawn from the following main groups:

- i. stakeholders having a direct interest in the outcomes of the trial for the purposes of policy formulation in the UK (primarily governmental departments with environmental responsibilities, statutory conservation agencies, conservation non-governmental organisations);
- ii. stakeholders having a potential direct interest in the outcomes of the trial for the purposes of policy formulation outside the UK (primarily the European Commission, and governmental departments with environmental responsibilities, and conservation non-governmental organisations, of the Isle of Man,

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Ireland, other countries of the NE Atlantic seaboard, and, potentially, more widely);

- iii. stakeholders responsible for regulating human activity in the maritime zone or who have a responsibility for formulating sustainable development policy in relation to the marine environment (primarily governmental departments, statutory environmental agencies, regional and sub-regional governmental bodies, and ports authorities, with responsibilities for areas related to the Irish Sea, and coastal networks);
- iv. stakeholders representing those whose income or quality of life have the potential to be impacted by the outcomes of the study (ports associations, fisheries associations, industry associations, tourism authorities and recreational associations);
- v. stakeholders who hold information or data essential to the effective undertaking of the project (these will include a number of the stakeholders listed in the other categories, and also relevant universities and scientific institutions).

2.2 It will be apparent from the foregoing, that, at least initially, the stakeholder constituency is concentrated on relevant organisations having responsibilities or interests at the European Union, national (including foreign national), regional and sub-regional levels, rather than with local communities or individuals. This is a recognition both of the level of the intended outputs from the project, and also of the resource limitations of the project.

2.3 Notwithstanding the above, the project is being undertaken on behalf of, and has the potential to affect, the public interest, so the need to undertake a wider, publicly-accessible, dissemination of information about the project needs to be taken sufficiently into account.

### **3. Relating the Stakeholder base to the purpose of the Communications Strategy**

3.1 Bringing the conclusions of sections 1 and 2 together, it is possible to identify a more defined set of objectives for the Communications Strategy. These are to:

- i. inform people who are likely to have an interest in the pilot scheme about its purpose, timescale, progress and conclusions (all stakeholders, and the general public);
- ii. identify sources of information essential to the successful operation of the trial in relation to:

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- physical and biological resources (e.g. within statutory conservation agencies, scientific institutes, universities, conservation NGOs);
  - conservation and other relevant protected areas (statutory conservation agencies and governmental departments);
  - the occurrence of natural marine resources and their utilisation (e.g. within governmental departments and agencies, regulatory and development bodies, industry associations);
  - the nature and extent of the dependency of local communities on the Irish Sea for their income or quality of life (e.g. local authorities, tourism authorities associations representing particular interest groups or communities);
  - current regulation, regulatory responsibility, and enforcement (e.g. regulatory bodies, particular interest groups).
- iii. ascertain the views of stakeholders in order to help refine objectives formulated as part of the proposed marine nature conservation framework, both to ensure that they are the most appropriate objectives for nature conservation, and also to help ensure they are compatible with meeting the wider needs of people for the Irish Sea (e.g. governmental departments, regulatory and development bodies, conservation agencies and NGOs, particular interest groups);
- iv. help to refine conclusions as to the measures necessary to enable the objectives to be met, including in relation to effective regulation, regulatory responsibility and enforcement (e.g. governmental departments, regulatory and enforcement bodies and agencies, conservation agencies and NGOS, particular interest groups);
- v. promote the outcomes of the pilot scheme outside the UK (e.g. with the European Commission, and other countries, primarily those bordering on the NE Atlantic).

## **4. Outcomes of the consultation on developing a Communications Strategy and other relevant issues**

- 4.1 To inform the development of the Communications Strategy, 80 stakeholders were consulted by email, and their views on the most efficient ways of communicating with them, and with the people they represent if they were the contact point for an association or interest group were sought. Of these, 20 people responded, and their views can be summarised as follows:

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- the most efficient method of consulting the stakeholder group was considered to be by email, but some stakeholders did not have immediate access to email, and postal communication should be considered for these;
- many groups and associations produced a newsletter or bulletin (characteristically quarterly) and this was a key means they used to communicate with their membership;
- many groups and associations also maintained a website, and material for that website, or links to a dedicated project website, was considered a potentially efficient means of communication;
- about 30% of respondents considered there was a need for a project website;
- about 30% of respondents considered there would be a need to give presentations to meetings or to arrange workshops;
- a small number of respondents suggested a pilot scheme newsletter, but the view was also expressed that there were already too many newsletters in circulation. There was rather more enthusiasm for regular short updates to be provided.

4.2 Account needs to be taken, in relation to the points made in 4.2 above, of the potential for an 'internet bias' as a consequence of the consultation being undertaken through email.

4.3 In addition, account needs to be taken of the fact that the staff time and other resources available to the pilot scheme for implementation of the communications strategy is limited, and the most cost-effective means practicable need to be used when communicating with the stakeholders and the general public. It is almost inevitable, and indeed desirable, that most time will be spent on communication which will assist in the formulation of outputs required under the pilot scheme. The implication of this, is that communication whose purpose is to raise awareness or provide information on progress needs to be undertaken by means which are highly efficient.

4.4 A number of observations can be made in relation to the foregoing:

- i. while attendance at meetings and the giving of presentations is an effective means of communicating, it is also time-intensive, both for the project team and for the stakeholders. It is a mechanism best used a) for delivery of information about the project where there is a substantial and relevant audience, and b) where face-to-face communication is likely to be key to the achievement of key aspect of the project;

- ii. communicating via the newsletters, bulletins etc of other organisations (or indeed through newspapers or radio and TV) is highly dependent on whether those other organisations use the material, and it is likely that there will be gaps in the material is communicated through this route. Also because of the lead times in the preparation and issue of newsletters, this route may be better suited to information provision than for active stakeholder engagement, given the tight project timetable;
- iii. there is, nonetheless, considerable benefit in preparing information about the pilot scheme once, and making it available for dissemination by others in a variety of forms, while maintaining it in complete form in a manner that can be accessed readily.

## **5. Interim Communications Strategy**

- 5.1 It is unlikely that a Communications Strategy developed at the commencement of the Pilot Scheme will be found to be completely satisfactory. It is likely that some modification, based on experience, and on additional input, will be necessary. The Strategy needs to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate such change.
- 5.2 Nonetheless it is possible to identify, from the foregoing analysis, the main elements of an Interim Communications Strategy and these are summarised below.

### *Awareness Raising*

- 5.3 At key dates during the pilot scheme, **Press Releases** should be issued which set out, in concise, plain, language, information appropriate to the relevant state of the project. A Press Release should be issued within 3 months of the commencement of the pilot scheme, and also at the end, with probably two further Releases at intervening stages of the pilot scheme.
- 5.4 The Project Team will seek to limit interviews to the media (Press, Radio, TV) following these Releases, to national or regional media, since coverage by local media is likely to result in very patchy communication, and the audiences reached too small, to justify them.
- 5.5 A dedicated **website** (or section of an existing website depending on speed and practicality) will be established and maintained which will carry an explanation of the purpose of the pilot scheme and all consultation documents and products arising out of it. The Press Releases referred to in 5.3 above will contain the website address as a point of referral for further information.

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- 5.6 The Project Team will, initially, prepare a precise **summary** of the purpose and timetable of the pilot scheme, and short **bulletins** of progress at approximately quarterly intervals and provide these to stakeholders (see below) and for inclusion on the website.
- 5.7 The Project Team will **contribute** to conferences and seminars organised by others where this would a) be timely in relation to the stage of the project, and b) reach a substantial and relevant audience, or c) support the project through promoting the outcomes with key stakeholders.

*Stakeholder database*

- 5.8 It will be necessary to establish and maintain a **database** of the stakeholder summarised in section 2.1 above. This database should contain email and, where appropriate, the postal addresses of the main contact points for the European Commission, national (including foreign national), regional and sub-regional bodies, interest associations and organisations relevant to the pilot scheme.

*Communications schedule*

- 5.9 A **communications schedule** will be established, refined as necessary in the light of any changes of timetable determined by the Steering Group, which will indicate the approximate dates of inter alia Press Releases, consultation with stakeholders and product availability. The purpose of the communications schedule is both to assist the Project Team implement the communications strategy, and also to forewarn stakeholders of the likely dates when their views will be sought, and on what topic.

*Communication with stakeholders*

- 5.10 Communication with stakeholders, insofar as this relates to the matters included on the communications schedule, will be by **email** or, where more appropriate (e.g. because of lack of internet access), by **post**.
- 5.11 Communication with stakeholders for the purpose of negotiating access to information sources is likely to be through **bilateral contacts** between the Project Team and individual information holders or organisation contact points. This is likely to be through a mix of email, telephone, post and face-to-face meetings.
- 5.12 Communication for the purpose of promoting the pilot scheme and its conclusions, with stakeholders who are at 'arm's length' from the scheme, e.g. the European Commission, foreign national level stakeholders etc, is likely to be best accomplished by **bilateral meetings** and/or **seminars** convened for the purpose. It is likely that there will need to be at least one such **promotional seminar** for non-

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UK stakeholders at the end of the project, and possibly also one undertaken at an intermediate stage (e.g. spring/summer 2003).

**6. Amending the Communications Strategy**

- 6.1 It is suggested that the Communications Strategy should be a regular item on the agenda of Steering Group meetings, and amended, as appropriate, as required by the Steering Group following discussion at those meetings. The Project Team will provide feedback on their evaluation of the strategy as it progresses to inform this discussion.