

### 3. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

#### Development of the Strategy

28. One of the first tasks to be undertaken by the Pilot was the development of a communications strategy. Consideration of the purposes of communications for the Pilot enabled the production of a defined set of objectives. These were to:
- i. inform those people who were likely to have an interest in the Pilot about its purpose, timescale, progress and conclusions;
  - ii. help in the identification of sources of information essential to the successful operation of the Pilot;
  - iii. ascertain the views of stakeholders in order to help refine objectives formulated as part of the proposed framework for marine nature conservation, both to ensure that they were the most appropriate objectives for nature conservation, and also to help ensure they were compatible with meeting the wider needs of people for the Irish Sea;
  - 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;
  - v. promote the outcomes of the Pilot, outside the UK, with the European Commission, other countries bordering on the North-east Atlantic and with OSPAR.
29. The staff time and other resources available to the Pilot for implementing the communications strategy were limited, and the most cost-effective means practicable needed to be used when communicating with the intended audiences. Following a preliminary investigation with a cross-section of stakeholders, the following communications strategy was adopted:
- i. a stakeholder database was to be established and maintained, containing the email and, where appropriate, postal addresses of stakeholder contacts;
  - ii. a website was to be established and maintained. All the main consultation documents and task reports produced by the Pilot were to be posted on this website;
  - iii. bulletins, in the form of an Irish Sea Pilot Newsletter, were to be produced periodically, and widely disseminated, and articles would be submitted for inclusion in the newsletters of other organisations;
  - iv. presentations were to be given to selected workshops, seminars and conferences. These presentations were to be given in the circumstances where, either a large number of stakeholders could be reached at one time (often where the conference had been organised for purposes other than the Pilot), or where a workshop had been specifically organised so as to engage a small number of key stakeholders actively;
  - v. bilateral meetings were to be held with stakeholders whose contribution to the Pilot or its outcomes was deemed to be critical;
  - vi. links were to be maintained with the range of other Government initiatives arising from the publication of *Safeguarding our Seas* (Defra, 2002a).
30. The primary means of active communication with stakeholders was to be by email, using the contact list held on the stakeholder database.

## Implementation of the Communications Strategy

31. At the commencement of the Pilot, the decision was taken to focus communication with stakeholders at the international, national, regional and 'county' levels, with local stakeholders being accorded a lower priority. This was in recognition of the purposes of the Pilot, and the level of resources available. The stakeholder database was developed from existing contact lists, but these were refined and added to during the life of the Pilot. Initially, the database contained information on 200 contacts; by the end of the Pilot, with stakeholders from Ireland and the Isle of Man included, this had risen to 700.
32. A component of the JNCC website was developed for use by the Irish Sea Pilot, namely **[www.jncc.gov.uk/irishseapilot](http://www.jncc.gov.uk/irishseapilot)**. All the main documents produced by the Pilot were posted on the website. Because some of these documents were large, and many included maps, this proved a better means of making such information available to stakeholders than emailing it, which could quickly have resulted in the capacity of their email systems being exceeded. Notification of the placement of documents on the website was circulated by email.
33. Three Irish Sea Pilot Newsletters were produced. The first announced that work was underway on the Pilot, the second was a progress report, and the third announced completion of the Pilot and summarised its results. These Newsletters were disseminated firstly to the stakeholder contacts, secondly through the mail service offered by *Coastal Management for Sustainability* (some 2,000 contacts), and thirdly through the website.
34. Articles on the Pilot were published in *Wavelength*, *Biodiversity News*, *Coastline Scotland* and in *Coast Map News*.
35. 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. Stakeholder workshops were organised in the Isle of Man, Edinburgh, Cardiff, Liverpool and an all-Ireland workshop in Dublin.
36. A draft boundary for the Irish Sea for the purposes of the Pilot was developed on the basis of biogeographical factors. An initial email consultation exercise was carried out with stakeholders which provided briefing on the Pilot and sought comments on the proposed boundary. As a result of stakeholder comments, the southern boundary was amended. The revised boundary is shown on the maps accompanying this Report. This initial consultation was followed by specific consultations over the availability of data, and on the interim reports on data collation, marine landscapes, nationally-important features, nationally-important areas, conservation objectives, legislation, governance and enforcement.
37. A range of bilateral and multilateral meetings with key stakeholders were held. The level of engagement of non-UK bodies was, however, somewhat variable. A close working relationship was quickly established with the Isle of Man Government, and the Government of Ireland also gave policy support to the Pilot at an early date, but practical collaboration with Ireland would undoubtedly have been enhanced if discussions had been initiated prior to the commencement of the Pilot. The European Commission received communications about the Pilot, but during the conduct of the Pilot, the level of Commission engagement was less than had been hoped, as this could have been a conduit for liaison with other Member States. A presentation was given at a meeting of the OSPAR Biodiversity Committee and presentations on the marine landscapes work were given to a small number of other European meetings.
38. Liaison was maintained with a range of concurrent Governmental initiatives, including the Defra UK Integrated Coastal Zone Management Stocktake, the Review of Byelaw Powers for the Coast, the Review of Development in Coastal and Marine Waters, the work on Strategic Environment Assessment for renewable energy development, and the Sustainable Scottish Marine

Environment Initiative. Close liaison was also maintained with the Review of Marine Nature Conservation's subgroups on Legislation and Information.

39. 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.

### Recommendations

40. The Communications Strategy proved cost-effective for the purposes of the Pilot, and the general approach adopted is considered to have been appropriate. The principal recommendation arising for the work was:

**R1 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.**

41. Further, a number of good practice measures would need to be put in place if the framework for marine nature conservation were to be applied to other Regional Seas. These are:
- i. when implementing the framework at the Regional Sea scale, sufficient preparatory time (at least 6 months and preferably a year) should be allowed for discussions to take place with other Governments having jurisdiction within that sea area, prior to the commencement of the work, to enable the necessary level of engagement and support to be developed;
  - ii. sufficient preparatory time should also be allowed for the development of an up-to-date and comprehensive stakeholder database. This work could be undertaken in parallel to discussions with other Governments;
  - iii. engagement of stakeholders is 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. This would require close co-operation between the UK and the other country(ies) involved;
  - iv. 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;
  - v. while local stakeholders were accorded a lower priority in the Pilot, work to implement the framework with other Regional Seas will need to give full and careful consideration to the need to involve local stakeholders and also the best method of engaging all the stakeholders in the work.
42. A full report on the Irish Sea Pilot Communications Strategy is available (Vincent *et al.*, 2004 and online at [www.jncc.gov.uk/irishseapilot](http://www.jncc.gov.uk/irishseapilot)).