

18. COMPLETING THE MARINE NATURE CONSERVATION FRAMEWORK FOR THE IRISH SEA

469. As a result of the refinement of the marine nature conservation framework, and the specification for future regional sea projects, reported in previous chapters, it is possible to draw up and cost a suggested programme of work needed to complete the framework for the Irish Sea.

Draft Framework for Marine Nature Conservation

470. *Further engagement of Irish Sea stakeholders*

- i. discussions should be held with the Governments of Ireland and the Isle of Man on the work to be undertaken to complete the framework, the responsibilities for carrying out the various elements, and on how the work is to be financed;
- ii. an evaluation of the needs of stakeholders for participation in the further elements of work should be agreed and an appropriate communication strategy should be developed and implemented. Existing contact lists should be updated and enhanced as necessary.

Estimated cost: £45,000

471. *Data collation and mapping*

- i. identify key gaps in the data, and identify data sources to fill them, acquire the data, and enter it on the GIS.

Estimated cost: £30,000

472. *Assess socio-economic context of the Regional Sea*

- i. identify the high level objectives of the main marine sectors and regulatory infrastructure in terms of income generation, employment, protection of human health and safety, and protection of the environment;
- ii. identify the dependency of the various marine sectors on the maintenance of ecosystem services.

Estimated cost: £40,000

473. *Marine Landscapes*

- i. undertake any needed refinement to the existing work, including defining zones of high natural productivity.

Estimated cost: £15,000

474. *Nationally-important areas*

- i. complete the work to develop a draft ecologically-coherent network of nationally-important areas for the Irish Sea;
- ii. seek expert and sectoral stakeholder advice and involvement in developing the draft network, identifying the areas of flexibility in site selection, seeking views on where area selection would assist individual sectors, and on how the network would affect the sectors;

- iii. revise the network of nationally-important areas to provide the best fit between i. and ii. above.

Estimated cost: £35,000

475. *Nationally-important features*

- i. carry out any necessary refinement of the Provisional Irish Sea List to remove features unlikely to meet the agreed criteria, and re-map the known occurrence of these features;
- ii. consider whether any of the features would benefit from the development of individual or grouped Action Plans.

Estimated cost: £20,000

476. *Conservation objectives*

- i. identify and agree with stakeholders appropriate targets for the 'generic' conservation objectives already proposed (or more specific conservation objectives where necessary) to individual marine landscapes or to nationally-important areas;
- ii. in developing the objectives and targets, there should be close liaison with sectoral stakeholders to seek to ensure that the objectives and targets are consistent with achieving sustainable development, meeting international and national commitments and strategic goals, and implementing the ecosystem approach.

Estimated cost: £30,000

477. *Spatial planning*

- i. carry out the work specified for this element in the 'Specification for future Regional Sea Projects' set out in Chapter 17.

Estimated cost: £65,000

478. The total cost of completing the marine nature conservation framework for the Irish Sea is estimated at **£280,000 (€400,000)**. This assumes an overhead rate of 80% of staff costs; this is a higher overhead rate than was applied for the work undertaken under the Pilot reflecting in part the anticipated somewhat higher costs of work in Ireland.

Development of a Marine Spatial Planning System

479. Chapter 12 concluded that there was a need for a comprehensive system of marine spatial planning at the national, Regional Sea and local levels, suggested a set of guiding principles for this, and a hierarchy of planning guidance and plans. In their report, David Tyldesley and Associates recommended a programme of work to take these ideas forward which included:

- i. an investigation into how such a marine spatial planning framework would operate in practice and how it would relate to international regulatory mechanisms outside 12n miles; and,
- ii. a trial of the process recommended as a result of this investigation on the Irish Sea (building on the work of the Irish Sea Pilot), and, drawing on the experience of this trial, the development of detailed proposals for a statutory national framework and mechanisms for international collaboration.

The report indicated that this programme of work could be carried out over a period of 2-3 years, and might cost in the order of **£750,000 (€1,000,000)**.

480. This programme of work could be undertaken in conjunction with that described above for completing the marine nature conservation framework for the Irish Sea, which would inform its conclusions, at a total cost of ca **£1 million (€1.45 million)**.

Identification of external funding sources to assist completion of the framework for the Irish Sea and a Marine Spatial Planning System

European Union

481. There are 4 possible funding instruments that could be used to support marine projects in general and specifically the work on the Irish Sea. These are summarised briefly below with comments on their potential application. However, the current funding arrangements conclude in 2006 and the funding framework beyond 2006 is still to be determined.

Regional structural funds

482. These are under discussion at present and a new proposal is expected to emerge in February 2004. The current areas with Objective 1 and 2 status do not cover large areas of sea and these funding streams are not likely to be appropriate for further work in the Irish Sea or other Regional Seas.

Interreg III

483. Interreg III is a Community initiative which aims to stimulate inter-regional cooperation in the EU between 2000-06. It is financed under the European Regional Development Fund and is a financial instrument for spatial planning related initiatives. This phase of the Interreg initiative is designed to strengthen economic and social cohesion throughout the EU, by fostering the balanced development of the continent through cross-border, transnational and inter-regional cooperation. Special emphasis has been placed on integrating remote regions and those which share external borders with the candidate countries.

484. Interreg III is made up of 3 strands A, B and C and has a total budget of €4.875 billion (1999 prices):

- i. Strand A: aims to develop cross-border social and economic centres through common development strategies, and is focused on co-operation between adjacent regions;
- ii. Strand B: aims to promote better integration within the Union through the formation of large groups of European regions; it is focused on trans-national co-operation involving national, regional and local authorities;
- iii. Strand C: aims to improve the effectiveness of regional development policies and instruments through large-scale information exchange and sharing of experience (networks), it is focused on inter-regional co-operation.

485. Interreg programmes cover a number of sea areas separately including North West Europe, the North Sea and the Irish Sea. Interreg 111B is the most likely regional policy financial instrument to be applicable to marine or regional sea management.

The LIFE III programme

486. The European Commission has proposed the extension of the LIFE III programme beyond 2006. There are expected to be two more calls for projects in 2004 and 2005:

- i. LIFE Nature: supports actions aimed at conservation of natural habitats and the wild fauna and flora of European Union interest, in accordance with the Birds and Habitats Directives. It supports implementation of the nature conservation policy and the Natura 2000 Network of the European Union;
- ii. LIFE-Environment: supports actions which aim to implement the Community policy and legislation on the environment in the European Union and candidate countries. This approach enables demonstration and development of new methods for the protection and the enhancement of the environment.

487. UK agencies have used both Life Nature and Life Environment for marine projects; for example, Life Nature funded the European marine site programme, and BioMar, while Life Environment was used for some ICZM projects. Life Environment would appear to be the most suitable instrument for funding ecosystem-based initiatives at the Regional Sea scale.

Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance

488. There is expected to be pump priming funding for the establishment of Regional Advisory Councils (RAC) under the 2002 Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). Currently, a small number of large RACs are proposed to cover European seas and the remit is advisory only. Even at this scale, Member States have responded that the proposed budget is not adequate. European Parliament proposals now under discussion for stronger RACs with a wider management remit at a Regional Sea scale would require even greater funding. Therefore, it is rather too early to know if RAC could make any significant contribution to regional sea management in general.

Conclusion

489. Interreg 111B and Life Environment are the most likely European funding options for Regional Sea scale projects arising from the Irish Sea Pilot. The major break in EU funding streams at the end of 2006 suggests that action should be taken urgently to prepare projects in 2004 to take advantage of these options.

Recommendation

490. The following recommendation is made in relation to completing the marine nature conservation framework for the Irish Sea:

R64 Resources should be sought from the relevant national jurisdictions and statutory agencies, and from the European Union, to complete the work identified in this report in relation to the marine nature conservation framework for the Irish Sea, and to develop detailed proposals for a comprehensive marine spatial planning framework following a trial of initial proposals on the Irish Sea.