

Information Note: ISCZ stakeholder process and Stakeholder Group

A new kind of consultation process.

The process for stakeholders to influence the location, size and conservation features of Marine Conservation Zones in the Irish Sea is different to most consultation exercises.

Instead of just a single formal consultation towards the end of the process, people will have the opportunity to be involved from an early stage. Introductory workshops have already been held and Liaison Officers are meeting with sea users up and down the coast to collect information and to hear what people have to say. Soon there will be ways of contributing ideas and comment online and there may also be county forum for people to receive updates and make comments. Importantly, there will be opportunities for people to comment on draft consultation versions of the MCZ proposals as they are developed. One way or another, there will be plenty of opportunities for people to have their say.

This level of involvement will result in a wealth of data, local knowledge and information, but instead of this being passed to a small group of conservationists to make decisions behind closed doors, it will be passed to a larger 'Stakeholder Group'. This Stakeholder Group will be made up of people from a wide range of sea users and interest groups. Working within guidelines, the Stakeholder Group's key task is to identify MCZs that protect important marine life and natural features whilst avoiding unnecessary negative effects on other interests where possible. The Group will then make recommendations to Government on the location, size and conservation features of the MCZs by June 2011.

Forming the Stakeholder Group

Given the Stakeholder Group has such important responsibilities, forming an inclusive, balanced yet manageable sized Group is vital - but also a significant challenge. The process for doing this is:

Regional Stakeholders

Over six hundred people were invited to one of four County Workshops held in the NW in Oct 09

At the workshops, people were asked, via a questionnaire, to suggest potential local/regional stakeholders and to comment on the structure and balance of a draft list of interests (see annex).

International Stakeholders

In October 2009, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) let a contract to identify National stakeholders. In November 2009, the JNCC sent out a letter asking people how they want to be involved and whether they would like to be considered for a place on the Stakeholder Group. The results are due in early January 2010

In mid Jan 2010, we will use the two lists to first create the shortlist of interests/sectors who will have a place on the Group. To ensure we do this with good information about the region, we are meeting with ISCZ and three advisers who between them have a good overview of the different sectors.

Having identified the optimum balance of interests, we will look at the regional and national lists for people who can represent each interest and take a regional view.

When several similar people or organisations have been suggested, we will contact each person and ask:

- If they are able to take up the role if selected
- To short-list who else from the list they would accept as the representative for their interest.

In Feb 2010, the person who receives the most support from the short list will be invited to take a place on the Stakeholder Group. The first workshop of the Stakeholder Group is currently planned for March 2010.

This process for shortlisting individuals to represent each interest was considered at the four workshops in the NW region and received strong support.

The role and responsibilities of representatives on the Stakeholder Group

The following description of the type of person and their responsibilities was also consulted on at the four NW workshops. The description received strong support. Comments were also made and these are being reviewed to see if and how this list could be improved.

Regional representatives need to be people who:

- Are trusted and respected within their sector or activity
- Have a good network of contacts within their sector, activity or interest
- Can explain the needs and interests of those they represent
- Can take a regional view
- Have the time and interest to participate in a lot of workshops and comment on draft documents or maps.

Representatives on the Stakeholder Group will be committing to a process with about 6 - 8 workshops spread over 18 months. Each of the workshops will build on the work of the previous stage so the representative will need to commit to doing their best to attend the full set. At times, there may be a workshop every other month and later workshops may need to run over two days.

The role of a regional representative on the Stakeholder Group is to:

- Have or develop a regional view of their sector or activity
- Represent the views of their activity or interest across the region
- Provide information and insight into the activity or interest
- Provide two-way communication between those they represent and the Stakeholder Group
- Negotiate over the optimum locations for the Marine Conservation Zones
- Comment on draft text, maps or other documents as they develop
- Do their best to attend all the workshops in the process

Stakeholder Group Structure

The initial ideas on a draft structure for the Stakeholder Group are over the page. This was also presented to stakeholders at the four workshops held across the NW region in October 2009. It received good support for its breadth and balance. People were also asked for suggestions and improvements to this initial draft and we are looking at these in detail.

We are also waiting for the list from the JNCC of national and international stakeholders who would like to be considered for a place.

When we can combine both the regional list and the national/international list, we will make additions and amendments to the structure whilst aiming to retain the overall balance. Clearly our decision needs to be well informed and so we are meeting with staff from the ISCZ and three other people who between them have an overview of the region and main sectors in the region.

Regrettably, because we need to keep to a manageable number, it is unlikely that we will be able to provide a place for everyone who wants to be on the Stakeholder Group. However, as outlined above, there will be plenty of opportunities for people to make comment in other ways as the MCZ network evolves.

Annex 1 Initial Draft List

Please note well: This list is very much a draft temporary list. It is the list that people considered at the workshop with two additions and one correction arising from strong suggestions made at the workshop. Other suggestions are also still being looked at and changes will also be made when we have the list of national and international stakeholders.

Industries (8)**Commercial Fishing (8)****Natural Environment (8)****Leisure and tourism (6)****Heritage (3)****Navigation and Safety (1)****Owners (2)****Science, research & education (2)****Regional coastal counties/authorities (6)**