



## Six-year report on the marine plan process for Northern Ireland's inshore and offshore regions

For the period 2015 to 2021

Laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly pursuant to Section 61 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and Section 9 of the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013

5<sup>th</sup> November 2021



***Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.***

**OGL**

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## Introduction

1. The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 require the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, as the Northern Ireland Marine Plan Authority, to prepare and adopt marine plans that would manage the Northern Ireland marine area and contribute to its sustainable development.
2. The composition of the Northern Ireland marine area, as defined by section 2 of the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 and section 322 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, means that legislatively there will be two marine plans in Northern Ireland - that is, one for its inshore region (out to 12 nautical miles) and another for its offshore region (an area beyond 12 nautical miles).
3. However, for administrative and practical purposes, these two marine plans have been combined into a single draft document which, when given final approval, will establish a "single" marine plan for Northern Ireland.

## Reporting Requirement

4. It is a legislative requirement of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (Section 61) that insofar as Northern Ireland's offshore region is concerned:
  - (10) Each marine plan authority must from time to time prepare and lay before the appropriate legislature a report which –
    - (a) identifies any marine plans which the authority has prepared and adopted;



(b) describes any intentions the authority may have for the amendment of any marine plans which it has prepared and adopted;

(c) describes any intentions the authority may have for the preparation and adoption of any further marine plans.

(11) The first report prepared under subsection (10) by each marine plan authority must be laid before the appropriate legislature before the expiration of the period of 6 years beginning with the date of the passing of this Act.

5. The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 came into operation on 12 November 2009. The first statutory six-year report, covering the period 2009 to 2015, was laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly on 21 October 2015 as a single report for the Northern Ireland inshore and offshore regions, fulfilling statutory reporting requirements under the Section 61 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, for Northern Ireland's offshore region, and Section 9 of the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013, for Northern Ireland's inshore region. The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs is required to lay a second report in the Northern Ireland Assembly not later than 12 November 2021 for the period 2015 to 2021.

### **Progress report for 2015 to 2021**

6. In the six year period covered by this second report (2015 to 2021), the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, as the Marine Plan Authority for Northern Ireland's inshore and offshore regions has consulted on a draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland (April 2018) and has published a report summarising and analysing the responses to the consultation (April 2021).



## **Key Milestones 2015 to 2021**

- Reports associated with the draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland, that had been received from the appointed contractors AECOM and APBmer, were published by The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, including:
  - i. Marine Plan Sustainability Appraisal – Scoping Report
  - ii. Marine Plan Sustainability Appraisal – Scoping Report – Summary of Responses
  - iii. Sustainability Appraisal Volume 1: Non-technical Summary of Sustainability Appraisal
  - iv. Sustainability Appraisal Volume 2: Sustainability Appraisal Report
  - v. Sustainability Appraisal Volume 3: Appendices
  - vi. Habitats Regulation Assessment Pre-screening
  - vii. Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening Report
  
- The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs also carried out and published:
  - i. Rural Needs Impact Assessment
  - ii. Partial Regulatory Impact Assessment
  - iii. Equality Impact and Human Rights Screening
  - iv. Revised Statement of Public Participation
  
- The draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland and the associated assessments received approval to be issued for public consultation, from the Northern Ireland Executive and from the Secretary of State for Environment (in relation to retained functions).
  
- Public consultation on the Draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland and the associated assessments commenced on 18 April 2018 and ended on 15 June 2018, an eight week period.



- Over 70 comments were received from a broad range of stakeholders including members of the public, coastal community groups, environmental NGOs, sports bodies, stakeholder representative bodies, fisheries organisations, energy providers, Local Authorities and public sector bodies.
- The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs published the follow up Marine Plan for Northern Ireland: Public Consultation Report – Summary of Responses (April 2021) including analysis of the responses. Modifications to the draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland are in progress taking into account the responses to the consultation and considerations for developing policy areas. An Independent Investigation may be carried out if there are any remaining unresolved matters.
- The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs launched the Northern Ireland Marine Map Viewer, an on-line free to use digital resource bringing together previously disparate marine related spatial datasets (such as marine use, marine environment and maritime heritage) for interested members of the public, marine users, stakeholders and decision makers. It supports the marine planning process and is intended to be used alongside the marine plan.
- The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs has continued its ongoing engagement with other Northern Ireland and UK departments that have responsibilities in the Northern Ireland marine area, to ensure their respective responsibilities are accurately reflected in the draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland. Ongoing engagement has also continued with other stakeholders and fora such as the Irish Sea Maritime Forum, the Inter-departmental Marine Co-ordination Group and the Coastal Forum.
- The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs has been a project partner in the SIM Atlantic project (Supporting Implementation of Maritime Spatial Planning in the Atlantic) to produce methodologies, practical guidance and communication tools for five European Atlantic countries: France,



Ireland, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom; helping ensure that Northern Ireland's marine spatial planning reflects current research and best practice.

7. The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs intends to publish a second iteration of the draft marine plan for Northern Ireland in 2022, subject to Northern Ireland Executive and Secretary of State for the Environment approvals.
8. Following the formal approval process, the marine plan for Northern Ireland will be adopted once it is published by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.
9. As the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs has not yet adopted a marine plan for Northern Ireland, the statutory requirement to describe any intentions to amend any prepared and adopted marine plan is not relevant at the time of this second report.
10. The draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland (which continues to progress towards finalisation and adoption) covers the whole of Northern Ireland's inshore and offshore regions, therefore the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs does not intend to prepare and adopt any further marine plans for Northern Ireland. Following finalisation and adoption of the marine plan, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs will consider amendments or replacement after each subsequent three-year report.
11. The next six-year report will be laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly not later than 12 November 2027.