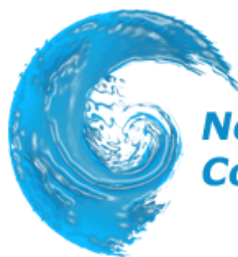


**Northern Ireland
Coastal and Marine Forum**



**Integrated Coastal Zone Management
Striking a Sustainable Balance**



**Northern Ireland
Coastal and Marine Forum**

The Coastal Zone



Coastal zones are the ever changing frontiers between land and sea - constantly being influenced by changing wind, weather and tide; they are among the most dynamic and sensitive of the earth's ocean habitats.

At 650 km in length, the coast of Northern Ireland is relatively short - yet it supports an exceptional diversity of wildlife and habitats. The coast includes biologically diverse ecosystems, and physical features that serve as critical natural defences against storms and floods. These dynamic coastal habitats also change as sea level rises. They have adapted in the past during major changes in sea level over the past 20,000 years. Coastal waters are extremely productive and they support a diverse marine ecosystem that is the life support system of our sea – many local communities make a living from the sea and maintaining it is important for the long-term economic and social sustainability of Northern Ireland's coast. Three quarters of the length of our beautiful coastline is protected for its special conservation value and several of its coastal habitats and species are of international importance.

There is no one accepted definition of the coastal zone, particularly in terms of how far inland coastal zones reach. However, in the UK, the devolved administrations have responsibility for many issues relating to the area up to 12 nautical miles offshore. For planning purposes in Northern Ireland the seaward limit is the mean low water mark.

The coastal zone, however, cannot be isolated as a defined 'coastal strip' and treated as entirely separate from the land or waters. For some issues, notably pollution, the whole of Northern Ireland could be treated as the coastal zone. The boundary of the coastal zone is thus in practice a moveable one. This fact underlies the need for a flexible and pragmatic approach to coastal zone management in Northern Ireland, which integrates land use planning, and management of coastal resources with management of the Province's resources as a whole.

Pressures on the Coast



The abundant natural wealth and spectacular scenery of the coast have provided livelihoods for generations of coastal communities in Northern Ireland.

Inshore fisheries, agriculture, ports and harbours, industry, housing development, tourism and power generation all compete for space and coastal resources.

With most of the population living within an hour's drive of the coast, a huge range of outdoor recreational activities also take place - surfing, sailing, diving, angling, hiking and playing golf are more popular than ever.

The coastline is under great pressure from competing human uses and global climate change will intensify that pressure. The coastline can adjust to changes if sufficient space is available but

often human interests are not compatible with such change and conflicts arise.

With rising sea levels, increased storminess and higher temperatures predicted, the challenge will be to manage coastal activities in a sustainable way whilst ensuring the health of coastal ecosystems.

Our coast and inshore waters provide a multitude of vital resources and significant economic benefits through fisheries, transport and tourism. However, as in many coastal regions, the planning and regulation of coastal activities provides challenges and is not fully integrated between land and sea or between different sectors of activity.

Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)

To date, coastal management policies and decisions in the UK have been made with reference to individual sectoral interests such as aquaculture, environment, waste management, economic development and tourism. The framework currently in place in NI also reflects the sectoral nature of coastal management and is dominated by central government Departments rather than local authorities as in the rest of the UK.

Integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) provides a new way of balancing social and economic demands on the coast with the protection of coastal ecosystems.

The objective of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) is to establish sustainable levels of economic and social activity in our coastal areas while protecting the coastal environment. ICZM seeks to “join up” the different policies that have an effect on the coast whilst bringing together stakeholders to inform, support and implement these policies. This means that actions will be considered from the perspective of all of their potential impacts.



Background to ICZM

During the 1990s, the European Commission funded a study on ICZM known as a 'Demonstration Programme'. This examined 35 coastal management projects around Europe (7 UK projects) to identify the main pressures and problems facing our coasts. The Demonstration Programme highlighted a wide range of environmental and social issues at the coast such as habitat destruction, loss of fish stocks and biodiversity, pollution, economic decline and social deprivation. Interrelated biological, physical and human issues facing European coastal zones were also investigated and the causes were traced to a number of underlying problems:

- **A lack of vision** related to management of the coast based on a very limited understanding of coastal processes and dynamics and with scientific research and data collection isolated from end-users
- **Inadequate stakeholder involvement** when formulating and implementing solutions to coastal problems
- **Inappropriate and uncoordinated sectoral legislation and policy**, often working against the long-term interests of sustainable management of the coast
- **Rigid bureaucratic systems** and the lack of coordination between relevant administrative bodies limiting local creativity and adaptability

- **Inadequate resources and political support** from higher administrative levels for local initiatives in sustainable coastal management.

The Principles of Integrated Coastal Zone Management

The Demonstration Programme also identified the following key principles for developing an ICZM policy.

For effective ICZM, management approaches should:

- **Think ahead** - take a long-term view beyond immediate short-term needs and address longer-term issues, including those associated with climate change and biodiversity loss
- **Try to see the bigger picture** – view inter-related coastal problems in the widest possible context, including consideration of all coastal activities and uses both on land and within coastal waters
- **Be flexible and adaptable** – try to anticipate problems and err on the side of caution where there is potential for unknown damaging effects to result from an action
- **Work with nature rather than against it** – recognise the limitations of the natural environment to assimilate pollution and the negative impacts of development
- **Use a combination of tools** – use legal, economic and educational approaches to tackle coastal problems rather than relying on one instrument in isolation
- **Get everyone involved** – include relevant administrative bodies and local communities. The involvement of local businesses and people can help identify the real issues and harness local solutions, rather than applying a 'one size fits all' management approach.



EU Recommendation on ICZM



The findings of the Demonstration Programme provided the basis for a European Parliament and Council Recommendation concerning ICZM. In May 2002, the European Union adopted this Recommendation, agreeing to implement the principles of integrated coastal zone management in Europe.

The Recommendation also asked Member States to undertake a national stocktake of the main legislation, institutions and stakeholders with an interest in using and managing the coast, and based on this, to develop national strategies to deliver ICZM by February 2006. The UK Government published the stocktake exercise in March 2004.

In simple terms, the EU Recommendation states that the process of developing an ICZM strategy will need to involve all interests and disciplines and promote the sustainable management of the coastal zone, by integrating social, economic and environmental interests.

The ICZM strategy for Northern Ireland should reflect the particular requirements of this region while at the same time feeding into the overall UK strategy.

The NI ICZM Strategy



In Northern Ireland the Department of Environment (DOE) is responsible for leading on integrated coastal zone management. It's integrated nature, however, means that it does impact on most government departments and requires their collaboration.

DOE launched 'An Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy for Northern Ireland 2006-2026' on 28th June 2006.

An ICZM strategy provides a management framework for a given coastal area. Whether an ICZM strategy is being developed at a national, regional or local level, it must provide a vision for the integrated management of the particular coastal zone it addresses.

Developed in partnership with all relevant government departments, the ICZM strategy for Northern Ireland is a living document, which reflects government's commitment to sustainable development through the key elements of society, environment, economics and integration. The strategy was informed by both direct consultation with coastal stakeholders and taking account of the wider policy context e.g. the Review of Marine Nature Conservation.

In line with the EU Recommendation on ICZM, the strategy's action plan:

- Identifies the roles of different organisations as well as identifying ways in which these roles can be co-ordinated
- Identifies a suitable mix of techniques for implementing ICZM with due regard for the EU's ICZM principles

- Develops national, regional or local programmes to address both the marine and landward areas of the coastal zones
- Identifies measures to promote public participation
- Identifies long-term and reliable sources of durable funding for ICZM initiatives
- Identifies mechanisms to ensure full and co-ordinated implementation and application of community legislation and policies that have an impact on coastal areas
- Includes adequate monitoring systems as well as information dissemination to the wider public
- Determines appropriate national training and education needs

The strategy is intended to form the basis for a new approach to the management of the coast and provides a useful reference for all users, planners, managers and developers in deciding how best to balance competing resource demands with environmental needs. It will also aid the development of an integrated programme of social, environmental and economic improvements for future generations.

All bodies with statutory authority for the diverse range of activities undertaken in the coastal zone are responsible for administering the appropriate laws or regulations relating to the control of these activities. Although the strategy itself is a non-statutory one, it aims to bring about a new approach to management of the coastal zone by applying all the regulating duties and powers available to the statutory bodies to achieve its goals; it does not introduce an additional level of governance.

The strategy **will** improve the way the coast is managed by:

Promoting integrated management by encouraging bodies to work together and to consider management of the coastal zone as a whole

Promoting a new approach to management that will bring users and regulators together to discuss and resolve issues at a local level

However, the strategy is **not**:

- A statutory document
- A nature conservation plan

- An economic development plan
- A social development plan
- Biased towards any particular interest group

The strategy does not impose any new duties on government Departments, public bodies, organisations or individuals. Instead it intends that all relevant bodies will use their existing powers better, in order to implement the actions listed in the strategy and to which the various government departments have agreed.



The Northern Ireland Coastal and Marine Forum



A key aspect of the implementation of the Strategy was the establishment of a Northern Ireland Coastal and Marine Forum [CMF]. The Coastal and Marine Forum is an independent, non-statutory body made up of a cross-section of interests ranging from local government, business, agriculture, community, fishing and environmental bodies. Prof. Andrew Cooper, Co-director of the Centre for Coastal and Marine Research and Centre for Maritime Archaeology at the University of Ulster in Coleraine is the first Chairman of CMF. The inaugural meeting of the CMF was held on Friday, 17th November 2006.

The Forum aims to provide meaningful stakeholder input into strategic policies affecting the coastal area, as well as raising awareness of Integrated Coastal Zone Management. In addition it will also provide expert advice, co-ordinate research, and provide support towards the achievement of the strategy objectives. It will be responsible for monitoring government's progress in implementing the Northern Ireland Strategy and reporting against the targets and objectives contained in it.

Its website at www.CoastalmarineNI.com provides further details and resources.

Getting involved and informed

To achieve effective integration of coastal plans and policies, all coastal stakeholders must be involved in and understand the importance of the ICZM process. In practice, this means not only government or those with regulatory powers but everyone who uses or has an influence upon the coast and its resources. The Coastal and Marine Forum will be launching several initiatives to improve appreciation and understanding of Northern Ireland's coastal resources among the population.

A great strength of the strategy is the wide range and number of people and organisations involved in its preparation.



Useful links

- EU Recommendation on ICZM (PDF)
http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/2002/l_148/l_14820020606en00240027.pdf
- UK Stocktake of current practice of ICZM in the UK
www.defra.gov.uk/environment/water/marine/uk/iczm/index.htm
- The Irish Sea Pilot Project
www.jncc.gov.uk/page-1541
- Review of Marine Nature Conservation
www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/ewd/rmnc/index.htm
- Charting Progress: An Integrated Assessment of the State of UK Seas
www.defra.gov.uk/environment/water/marine/uk/stateofsea/index.htm
- Safeguarding Sea Life – The UK response to the Review of Marine Nature Conservation'.
www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/ewd/rmnc/pdf/rmnc-review-1205.pdf
- 'An Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy for Northern Ireland 2006-2026'
www.doeni.gov.uk/iczm_document-2.pdf
- Environment and Heritage Service Coast Pages
www.ehsni.gov.uk/biodiversity/hap_uk/coast.htm
- A field Guide to the Coastal Environments of Northern Ireland
<http://www.science.ulster.ac.uk/ccmr/fieldguide.pdf>
- Rural Beach management: A good practice guide
<http://www.science.ulster.ac.uk/ccmr/atlanticbeaches2.pdf>
- The changing faces of Europe's coastal areas
http://reports.eea.europa.eu/eea_report_2006_6/en/

Contacts

If you require any further information please contact the Planning and Environmental Policy Group (DOE):

Northern Ireland Coastal and Marine Forum
Planning and Natural Resources Division
River House
48 High Street
Belfast
BT1 2AW
Tel: 028 90 257384
Fax: 028 90 257300
E-mail to: info.coastalmarineNI@doeni.gov.uk

Front cover photograph of Murlough Nature Reserve was provided by Robert Thompson, The National Trust

Port of Belfast, photograph provided by David Knott, Belfast Harbour Commissioners.

Ballintoy Harbour; Carrickfergus and Rathlin photographs provided by Mike Hartwell, Environment and Heritage Service

Giant's Causeway, Fishing Boat, Kite Festival and Coastal Development photographs provided by Gary Burrows, Environment and Heritage Service

Puffin photograph provided by Environment and Heritage Service

From Gortmore photograph provided by Paul Beattie, Limavady Borough Council.

Northern Ireland Coastal and Marine Forum Logo designed by Lee Goudie, Department for Regional Development, Information Systems Unit.