

***The Northern Ireland Marine Task Force (NIMTF) is a coalition of non-government environmental organisations – it includes RSPB, Ulster Wildlife, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, WWF Northern Ireland, National Trust, Friends of the Earth, Irish Whale and Dolphin Group and Northern Ireland Environment Link. The NIMTF has the support of approximately 100,000 local people. We are working towards healthy, productive and resilient seas for Northern Ireland.***

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Northern Ireland Marine Task Force (NIMTF) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the UK government's consultation on the *Marine Strategy Part One: UK Updated Assessment and Good Environmental Status*. NIMTF have contributed to and support the Environment Links UK response to the consultation. The purpose of this response is not to raise points covered in the UK Links response, but to highlight a specific point on the importance of the integration between the UK Marine Strategy and Northern Ireland Marine Plan.

The European Marine Spatial Planning Directive (2014/89/EU) states that the plans must adhere to the ecosystem based approach. The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC) (MSFD) is the strongest legal instrument for implementing Ecosystem Based Management in the UK and as such it has been integrated into all current UK marine plans for England, Scotland and Wales and other EU plans (e.g. Belgium, Netherlands, Latvia and Sweden).

It is imperative that the final marine plan for Northern Ireland recognises and supports full integration of the MSFD and UK Marine Strategy objectives and targets. Within the current draft plan, we believe that the ecosystem based approach and integration of the MSFD can be strengthened.

NIMTF believes that spatial planning can greatly assist with the achievement of Good Environmental Status (GES) for UK seas. *The UK Marine Strategy Part 3* also makes specific reference to this point: *'Marine plans will contribute to meeting the objectives of the MSFD, particularly in relation to any measures which have a spatial dimension'*. The lack of a spatial plan for Northern Ireland is of concern and we would welcome the use of a hybrid marine planning system (policy guidance and regional spatial plans) for NI in the future.

If you have any queries on the comments made on behalf of the NIMTF, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours faithfully,  
Ellen MacMahon

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