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.

Northern Ireland Marine Task Force response to:
Expanding Ireland’s Marine Protected Area Network consultation
Submitted on 30/07/2021

General comments

The Northern Ireland Marine Task Force (NIMTF) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage consultation on the ‘Expanding Ireland’s Marine Protected Area Network’ report. We recognise the importance of this consultation in furthering the completion of an ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in Irish waters.

It is positive that the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) have been involved in the preparation of the report with the inclusion of their Principle Scientific Officer on the advisory group. NIMTF have been campaigning for and working towards achieving an ecologically coherent network of MPAs in Northern Irish waters for over a decade, and very much see the value and necessity of cross border, North-South cooperation when it comes to protecting habitats and species in this wider biogeographic region. Furthermore, when it comes to successfully protecting important natural ecosystem processes and services occurring at large scales, or tackling the negative impacts of anthropogenic climate change on the marine environment, adopting a common and strategic approach across neighbouring jurisdictions is essential.

Marine Protected Areas are an integral element of delivering marine recovery and an important management tool for conserving marine resources and protecting marine wildlife. A well-managed network of MPAs will help to restore and build resilience into the marine environment, playing an important role in the recovery and sustainable management of our seas. This will have cumulative, long-term benefits as the marine Natural Capital – the assets and services provided by our seas – grows in tandem with ecosystem and species recovery. Considering the ever-increasing pressures facing our sea including the twin climate and biodiversity emergencies, it is critical for Governments around the world to as soon as possible, implement robust, well-managed and ecologically coherent MPA networks to help marine habitats and species recover.

NIMTF agree and support many of the key principles laid out in the report, particularly those highlighted below stating; the possible objectives for MPAs, the need for cross border cooperation,
effective stakeholder engagement, and appropriate management and monitoring based on the precautionary principle. Specifically, in relation to the MPA objective ‘Areas contributing to maintenance of ecosystem functioning and ecosystem services including carbon sequestration’ NIMTF would stress the point that ‘climate adaptation’ should be attributed equal significance to the carbon sequestration role of MPAs. Coastal habitats can also play crucial roles in coastal resilience to storm events, erosion, and sea level change.

- Objectives for MPAs and the MPA network in Ireland may focus on the protection and recovery of: Threatened or declining species or habitats, Important or ecologically significant species or habitats, Features representative of the range of features present in Irish waters, Areas of high biodiversity, naturalness or sensitivity, Areas contributing to maintenance of ecosystem functioning and ecosystem services including carbon sequestration, Areas with significant biocultural diversity value.
- In designing the network, consideration should be given to interactions with networks designated by other States in the same marine regions.
- Early and sustained stakeholder engagement should be integral to the selection and management processes for MPAs. Engagement should be inclusive and equitable and the process should be designed to ensure that it is transparent, meaningful and facilitating.
- Management measures should be established as part of the designation process.
- Management of MPAs should be based on the best available evidence and on the precautionary principle.
- Accountability: management plans should have clearly demarcated lines of responsibility and ensure adequate reporting and answerability from all stakeholders about the fulfilment of their responsibilities.
- Carefully designed monitoring should be used to assess efficacy of the network and inform periodic reviews and adaptations of designations and management measures.
- Transparency: management measures, monitoring programme, and condition assessments should be readily accessible to all stakeholders.

Your opinions on marine protected areas (MPAs)

1. In your opinion, what would a good and effective MPA look like?

A good and effective MPA should:

- Comply with the ecologically coherent network design principles\(^1\):
  
  **Representativeness** – the MPA network should represent the range of marine habitats and species through protecting all major habitats types and associated biological communities present in our marine area.

  **Replication** – all major habitats should be replicated and distributed throughout the network. The amount of replication will depend on the extent and distribution of features within seas.

\(^1\) Marine Conservation Zone project: Ecological Network Guidance (2010) JNCC and Natural England
Viability – the MPA network should incorporate self-sustaining, geographically dispersed component sites of sufficient size to ensure species and habitats persistence through natural cycles of variation.

Adequacy – the MPA network should be of adequate size to deliver its ecological objectives and ensure the ecological viability and integrity of populations, species and communities (the proportion of each feature included within the MPA network should be sufficient to enable its long-term protection and/or recovery).

Connectivity – the MPA network should seek to maximise and enhance the linkages across individual MPAs using the best current science. For certain species this will mean that sites should be distributed in a manner to ensure protection at different stages in their life cycles.

Protection - the MPA network is likely to include a range of protection levels, ranging from highly protected sites or parts of sites where no extractive, depositional or other damaging activities are allowed, to areas with only minimal restrictions on activities that are needed to protect the features.

Best available evidence – network design should be based on the best information currently available. Lack of full scientific certainty should not be reason for postponing proportionate decisions on site selection.

- Be appropriately and effectively managed using a ‘whole site’ approach to management to deliver conservation objectives.
- Be effectively monitored so that management measures can be judged and used to inform further adaptive management decisions.
- Have adequate long-term funding to resource management, monitoring, compliance and enforcement and public engagement.
- Have an open and straightforward governance framework so that it’s clear to the public and stakeholders as to what activities are allowed and what activities are not allowed within the site.
- Be designated as the result of an effective, early and transparent stakeholder process through which local communities can continue to engage in the co-management and future planning of the site. This will simultaneously help communicate the wider benefits of designations, build support and buy-in from stakeholders, and create a sense of shared vision.
- Deliver firstly, the stated ecological and conservation objectives of the site, and secondly the socio-economic and cultural benefits from designation.
- Be integrated with and accounted for in other policy and legislation e.g., marine planning and Marine Strategy Framework Directive commitments.
- Be based in either strong primary national legislation or international legislation ratified at a national level.

2. Do you agree or disagree with the proposed operational definition for MPAs in Ireland?

Somewhat agree
3. If you don’t fully agree with this definition, what elements or features you would Change or Add or Delete in it?

NIMTF suggest that the words ‘over the long term’ should be removed from the stated definition of an MPA. It is important and quite right that the report acknowledges that the recovery of the marine environment and in some cases, achievement of stated conservation objectives for specific sites, may take many years to obtain. However, the introduction of a time frame within the definition gives the wrong impression as to the primary goal of any MPA - which is to protect stated features through site management measures, from which recovery of the features and wider ecosystem can begin. Protection for MPAs is afforded through effective management. Therefore, one primary and important aim of an MPA can be delivered immediately after designation through immediate implementation of effective management, which is an immediate and not a long-term ambition.

What should Ireland’s MPA network include?

4. The expert group’s report recommends the inclusion of existing legally-protected marine sites (for example, Reserves, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protected Areas for birds) as part of the future network of MPAs in Ireland. Do you agree or disagree with this recommendation?

Agree

Existing MPAs in Ireland represent Ireland’s current MPA network, and therefore should be included when it is expanded upon through the designation of new MPAs through national designations. In Northern Ireland for example, European marine sites are an integral part of Northern Ireland’s MPA network, despite also consisting of nationally designated Marine Conservation Zones. Furthermore, important areas already designated as an SAC or SPA through European legislation in Northern Ireland were subsequently further designated as MCZs (e.g., Strangford Lough) to protect nationally important species and features not afforded protection by pre-existing European designation. This layering approach, resulting in full MPAs or parts of MPAs having overlapping designations is beneficial as each designation type focuses on different aspects of biodiversity present in the site. Together, a single area with multiple designations increases the site’s protection, assuming associated and complementary management is put in place.

5. If you don’t fully agree with this recommendation, please tell us why?

NA

6. Based on the analysis and details presented in the report, are there any Animal species or Plant species or Habitat types that you think must be given greater or improved protection through the legal designation of new MPAs?
NIMTF agree that ‘Objectives for MPAs and the MPA network in Ireland may focus on the protection and recovery of:

- Threatened or declining species or habitats
- Important or ecologically significant species or habitats
- Features representative of the range of features present in Irish waters
- Areas of high biodiversity, naturalness or sensitivity

NIMTF also suggest that to achieve these objectives and to achieve a successful and ecological coherent network of MPAs in both Northern Irish and Irish waters, transboundary cooperation is key. Within the Irish biogeographic region, previous inaction in the transboundary loughs (Lough Foyle and Carlingford Lough) has led to environmental vulnerabilities (e.g., Tranche 1 of the Northern Ireland Marine Conservation Zone designation process). Vertical and horizontal cooperation mechanisms are crucial for successful MPA sitting and management. Optimal transboundary cooperation on designating and managing the North and South MPA networks, as well as other marine directives (such as the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and Marine Strategy UK (MSUK)) has the potential to improve ocean governance as a whole in the biogeographic region. The use of existing cooperation mechanisms (both legislation and institutional structures) is important and by doing so, duplication of effort is minimised and momentum built upon. NIMTF suggest the following mechanisms which could be utilised to support optimal transboundary cooperation on the designation and management of MPAs in the transboundary regions:

1. **Legal instruments such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):** Existing legal instruments are important mechanisms for facilitating transboundary cooperation, and although they are not specifically focused on MPAs, given their precedent for facilitating cross-border cooperation they should be explored as a useful existing mechanism. Following the UK’s exit from the EU, international transboundary cooperation mechanisms will be even more important.

2. **Regional Seas Conventions – OSPAR Commission (Forum for contracting parties to the Oslo and Paris Convention):** As an international forum, OSPAR should be utilised as an effective mechanism for supporting optimal transboundary cooperation on MPAs. OSPAR has been active in contributing to the MSFD, and so the use of the forum could be beneficial in supporting holistic, transboundary cooperation on both MPA designation and management, as well as facilitating cooperation on MPA contribution to MSFD and MSUK targets.

3. **Transboundary stakeholder working groups:** Transboundary stakeholder working groups have been proven to be fundamental for example, in the implementation of marine spatial plans in other European regions (e.g., HELCOM – VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group). The Irish Sea Network initiative is comprised of NGOs from England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland working together to improve understanding of marine conservation activities and pressures across the Irish Sea. It provides a forum for communication and co-operation by members to address marine issues that extend beyond single jurisdictional areas. Furthermore, the Irish Sea Maritime Forum is another example of
a non-statutory forum for Irish Sea users and stakeholders which was instrumental in facilitating transboundary cooperation on marine policy issues in the past. Specifically, for cooperation on the island of Ireland, existing mechanisms developed under the Good Friday Agreement should be utilised to ensure efficiency and avoid duplication where possible, including:

4. **The British – Irish Council, and the North – South Ministerial Council:** (North South Implementation Body: Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission (FCILC)). The Loughs Agency – A participant of the FCILC - is an important legislated body which NIMTF believes could be instrumental to transboundary regional marine management on the island of Ireland. Some of the issues relating to the governance of the transboundary loughs have been highlighted by the NI Select Affairs Committee Report2. The Loughs Agency stated in the inquiry that its unique management model should be considered a template for administrating natural resources which straddle the border (Paragraph 94, p. 43) – Given the considerable experience and knowledge the Agency has of implementing legislation on a cross jurisdictional basis, it could act as a facilitator for cross border co-operation, helping both jurisdictions to overcome wider potential jurisdictional issues in relation to environmental and fisheries management, in the cross-border region.

7. **Are there any Other ecosystem, oceanographic, cultural or other natural processes or features that you think should be afforded legal protection as part of the MPA network?**

NIMTF agree that ‘Objectives for MPAs and the MPA network in Ireland may focus on the protection and recovery of:

- **Features representative of the range of features present in Irish waters**
- **Areas contributing to maintenance of ecosystem functioning and ecosystem services including carbon sequestration**
- **Areas with significant biocultural diversity value’**

In relation to specific ecosystem functioning and services which should be afforded legal protection as part of the Irish MPA network, NIMTF are encouraged that carbon sequestration is already highlighted in the report. Inside and outside of MPAs, crucial blue carbon habitats and species will help mitigate against climate change by drawing down carbon, provide tangible benefits to biodiversity and will often also act as a natural defence against increased storminess, playing a crucial role in adaptation to climate change impacts. A recent report by Ulster Wildlife, National Oceanography Centre and University of Hull3, highlighted the importance of Northern Ireland’s coastal and marine habitats in helping to tackle the climate and nature crises. More specifically, the report

---

highlighted the current high levels, as well as the potential for even greater levels, of carbon sequestration within the NI MPA network if managed properly. The report found that:

- More than half of the estimated current extent of the coastal blue carbon habitats occur within Northern Ireland’s inshore MPA network. This means there is a significant opportunity to effectively protect these carbon sinks through implementation and enforcement of effective and enforced MPA management plans.
- There is the potential to triple the estimated blue carbon sequestration rate of the inshore MPA network through habitat restoration and creation.
- Partnership working and knowledge sharing is essential for habitat restoration programmes in order to access the expertise, funding and resources required for success.

Other important ecosystem, oceanographic, cultural or other natural processes or features which are worthy of consideration include (i) local, national or internationally important foraging grounds for seabirds, cetaceans, elasmobranchs or other marine species; (ii) spawning grounds and nursery areas; (iii) areas important for other critical life stages of marine species such as breeding or migration; (iv) coastal protection habitats and; (v) water filtration.

Again, NIMTF suggest that to achieve these objectives and to achieve a successful and ecological coherent network of MPAs in both Northern Irish and Irish waters, transboundary cooperation is key. (see our response to question 6). This is especially true when it comes to successfully protecting and conserving important natural ecosystem processes and services occurring at broader and larger scales, or tackling the negative impacts of anthropogenic climate change on the marine environment where adopting a common and strategic approach across neighbouring jurisdictions is essential.

8. Based on this information and further details presented in the report, do you agree or disagree with the inclusion of OECMs as a potential part of Ireland’s MPA network?

Somewhat disagree

9. If you don’t fully agree with the inclusion of OECMs in an expanded MPA network, please tell us why?

NIMTF believe that for a site to be eligible for inclusion in an MPA network, it must have a stated conservation objective. In some cases, OECMs may be a more suitable or pragmatic option over MPA designations which do have conservation as their primary aim. However, the potential difficulty when including OECMs in an MPA network arises when it includes areas which while potentially delivering some biodiversity benefits, also facilitate activities in the same area which have a significantly negative impact on marine habitats and species. Overall, there is a need for more research into the opportunities and limitations of OECMS in relation to the objectives of individual sites and MPA networks as a whole.

While ‘areas managed for renewable energy...can also deliver biodiversity protection’ the development and expansion of offshore wind farms for example, as with any activity or development at sea, will bring about a greater risk of having detrimental impact on the environment (e.g., marine
mammal disturbance, injury or death from underwater noise, benthic habitat loss and disturbance from monopiles structure development and cabling, seabird population declines due to disturbance, loss of foraging area and turbine blade collisions resulting in death\(^4\)). Therefore, including such areas in the MPA network, which are dedicated to the furthering of such potentially damaging activities may be problematic, whether other biodiversity benefits are realised or not.

A lesson to be learned from England’s expansion of offshore wind in the North Sea is that renewable energy development offshore must not adversely affect individual MPAs or the network as a whole. Unfortunately, a range of MPAs on the East coast of England are already in unfavourable condition due to offshore wind farm development or at risk from this activity. (e.g. (i) Haisborough, Hammond and Winterton SAC\(^5\) Condition assessment by Natural England states that the whole site is 100\% in unfavourable condition, with offshore wind farm cables contributing to a loss of habitat within the site. (ii) Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge SAC\(^6\) As above, condition assessment by Natural England states that that the areas which have been assessed are in unfavourable condition, with offshore wind farm located within the site contributing to a loss of habitat. (iii) The Wash and North Norfolk Coast SAC\(^7\) Condition assessment by Natural England states that the site is at risk from offshore wind farm cable installation).

Similarly, in the case of an OECM ‘managed to ensure the sustainability of a fishery’, it is clear that well-managed sustainable fisheries are less damaging to the environment, helping to halt the decline of biodiversity and in some cases actively help promote it by having positive effects on marine species and habitats \(^5\). However, NIMTF believe this constitutes fisheries management, and therefore is not appropriate for inclusion in an MPA network designed with conservation of the marine environment in mind.

According to the IUCN definition of a protected area, exploitation of resources can occur within an MPA provided that management strategies ‘have the sustainable use of natural resources as a means to achieve nature conservation’\(^6\). Scrutiny of the application of this definition used by the Government is required, and MPAs that allow fishing with no stated intended benefit to conservation should not be considered as such. Any ‘MPAs’ with bans on bottom trawling but with other fishing gears allowed which may also impact negatively on the conservation features of the site, may more appropriately be considered fisheries management zones.

Evidence of how fishing contributes as a means to achieve nature conservation in MPAs is scarce, whereas basic ecological principles and field studies indicate that removal of top predators will or has resulted in trophic and community size-structure changes that can adversely affect the whole

---


\(^5\) Lyme Bay - A case study: Response of the benthos to the zoned exclusion of towed demersal fishing gear in Lyme Bay; 6 years after the closure (NECR220)

\(^6\) Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories, IUCN

ecosystem. Fishing gear can also damage important carbon stores such as mud and seagrass\(^7\) and indiscriminate methods of fishing can damage or kill threatened species such as sharks\(^8\).

Lyme Bay Fisheries and Conservation Reserve is one of the few examples where fishing (potting) has successfully been managed within an MPA to achieve conservation goals\(^9\). ‘Collaboration between fishermen, conservationists, scientists and regulators in Lyme Bay has achieved a “win-win” model for fishing and conservation. The fishermen involved have experienced increased catches, improved landing infrastructure and a higher catch per unit of effort. They are now enjoying higher prices for their catch from a market that is prepared to pay more for traceable, sustainable and high-quality fish and shellfish. Research has shown that this has led to higher levels of job and income satisfaction and a desire by younger generations to enter the industry. These benefits for fishermen have gone hand in hand with a measurable revival of marine habitats, rare species and some commercially important stocks\(^9\).

10. Do you agree or disagree with the recommended principles for the process of MPA network expansion that are given in the green text above?

Agree

11. What would you Change or Add or Delete in these recommendations to help guide possible future steps in this process?

NIMTF agrees with and supports many of the key principles laid out in the report, particularly those highlighted below stating; the possible objectives for MPAs, the need for cross border cooperation, effective stakeholder engagement, and appropriate management and monitoring based on the precautionary principle. Specifically, in relation to the MPA objective ‘Areas contributing to maintenance of ecosystem functioning and ecosystem services including carbon sequestration’ NIMTF would stress the point that ‘climate adaptation’ should be attributed equal significance to the carbon sequestration role of MPAs. Coastal habitats can also play crucial roles in coastal resilience to storm events, erosion, and sea level change.

- **Objectives for MPAs and the MPA network in Ireland may focus on the protection and recovery of:**
  Threatened or declining species or habitats, Important or ecologically significant species or habitats, Features representative of the range of features present in Irish waters, Areas of high biodiversity, naturalness or sensitivity, Areas contributing to maintenance of ecosystem functioning and ecosystem services including carbon sequestration, Areas with significant biocultural diversity value.
- **In designing the network, consideration should be given to interactions with networks designated by other States in the same marine regions.**

---

\(^7\) [Marine UNprotected Areas. Marine Conservation Society, 2021](https://www.marinematters.org/issues/unprotected-areas/)


\(^9\) Lyme Bay Fisheries and Conservation Reserve [https://www.lymebayreserve.co.uk/about/](https://www.lymebayreserve.co.uk/about/)
Early and sustained stakeholder engagement should be integral to the selection and management processes for MPAs. Engagement should be inclusive and equitable and the process should be designed to ensure that it is transparent, meaningful and facilitating.

Management measures should be established as part of the designation process.

Management of MPAs should be based on the best available evidence and on the precautionary principle.

Accountability: management plans should have clearly demarcated lines of responsibility and ensure adequate reporting and answerability from all stakeholders about the fulfilment of their responsibilities.

Carefully designed monitoring should be used to assess efficacy of the network and inform periodic reviews and adaptations of designations and management measures.

Transparency: management measures, monitoring programme, and condition assessments should be readily accessible to all stakeholders.

How should we expand our MPA network?

12. Informed by the expert group report, what do you think are the most significant challenges to implementation of an expanded MPA network in Ireland?

Early, transparent and participatory stakeholder engagement is key to the successful designation and management of MPAs. Lessons can be learned, for example, from experiences, successes and failures in parts of the UK:

The site selection and designation process of English Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) could have been much more successful had it engaged with stakeholders more effectively from the beginning:

The recent Benyon Review (2020)\textsuperscript{10} stated that ‘The earlier MCZ process... proposed 65 HPMAs which were known as ‘reference areas’. However, these 65 sites did not meet the ecological requirements (set out by the Ecological Network Guidance), and there was little stakeholder support. Therefore, government decided not to take them forward for designation at that time. The Panel was keen to learn from that experience and considered what government and others could do differently when considering HPMA designation in future’

The eventual challenges to designating specific MCZs in England were explored in more detail by De Santo (2015)\textsuperscript{11} stating ‘As part of implementing the 2009 Marine and Coastal Access Act (MCAA), the UK Government undertook an ambitious program of stakeholder-led site selection projects from 2009–2011 to designate a network of Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs). This process resulted in a list of 127 proposed MCZs designed to conserve biodiversity and reconcile socioeconomic concerns, however, citing budgetary constraints and evidence-related issues, the UK Government has proceeded with a tranche approach, designating far fewer sites than stakeholders had expected. Concerned with the Government’s lack of progress on the MCZ process, Parliament conducted two inquiries, highlighting problems with the Government’s approach. In addition, public confidence in the participative process

\textsuperscript{10} Benyon Review Into Highly Protected Marine Areas (2020)

\textsuperscript{11} Assessing public “participation” in environmental decision-making: Lessons learned from the UK Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) site selection process (2015)
has eroded, with particular despair expressed by participants in the regional projects, who invested considerable time and effort in the site selection process.’

Lyme Bay marine reserve in England, is now an example of effective and successful stakeholder engagement which brought about marine recovery alongside a thriving fishing industry.

‘Collaboration between fishermen, conservationists, scientists and regulators in Lyme Bay has achieved a “win-win” model for fishing and conservation. The fishermen involved have experienced increased catches, improved landing infrastructure and a higher catch per unit of effort. They are now enjoying higher prices for their catch from a market that is prepared to pay more for traceable, sustainable and high-quality fish and shellfish. Research has shown that this has led to higher levels of job and income satisfaction and a desire by younger generations to enter the industry. These benefits for fishermen have gone hand in hand with a measurable revival of marine habitats, rare species and some commercially important stocks”¹²

Lamlash Bay MPA, Scotland’s first No Take Zone is another example of bottom-up community driven MPA design and management.

‘The Firth of Clyde, on the west coast of Scotland, was once one of the most productive fishing grounds in Europe. However, successive decades of poor management and overfishing led to a dramatic loss of biodiversity and the collapse of finfish fisheries. In response, concerned local residents on the Isle of Arran, which lies in the middle of the Clyde, formed the Community of Arran Seabed Trust (COAST) in 1995. After 13 years of campaigning, a small (2.67 km²) area in Lamlash Bay became Scotland’s first no-take zone (NTZ) in 2008, and only the second in the UK. Since protection, biodiversity has increased substantially, along with the size, age and density of commercially important species such as the king scallop, Pecten maximus, and the European lobster, Homarus gammarus”¹³

13. Do you agree or disagree with the systematic, structured approach recommended by the expert group?

Somewhat disagree

14. If you don’t fully agree with the structured planning approach recommended by the expert group, what elements or features would you Change or Add or Delete in the proposed method to guide the process of expanding Ireland’s MPA network?

NIMTF believe that early, transparent and participatory stakeholder engagement is critical for successful MPA designation and successful management. Therefore, we suggest that stakeholders are involved in the process from the first step, arguably one of the most important steps, of the Systematic Conservation Approach outlines in Figure 3.3 - ‘Establish the framework and procedural guidance’.

Doing so at this early stage will help build trust between and stakeholders and the MPA expansion process.

15. When you consider a structured approach like this, are there any elements or steps that you think should be prioritised over others?
NA

16. Do you agree or disagree with the general guidelines for successful stakeholder participation set out in the MPA report and provided in the green text above?
Agree

17. When you consider the general guidelines for stakeholder participation (outlined in question 16), is there anything you would Change or Add or Delete in them to help guide possible future steps in the MPA process?
NA

Further comments

18. Do you have any further comments on the process of expanding Ireland’s MPA network that you’d like to add, in order to inform this consultation?
MPA management measures must include a degree of ‘future-proofing’, firstly through an adequate analysis of the likely impacts of climate change over different timeframes on the designation features (both at the site and from the wider environment/ecosystem-scale impacts), and secondly, a recognition that management must adapt to new evidence of risk and continue to assess not only a specific site but the entirety of the MPA network to ensure it is ‘climate smart’ and fosters resilience. Furthermore, considering the ever-increasing pressures facing the marine environment, including the twin climate and biodiversity emergencies, it is critical for Governments around the world to as soon as possible, implement robust, well-managed and ecologically coherent MPA networks to help marine habitats and species recover.

Contact:
Dr. Donal Griffin
Northern Ireland Marine Task Force Officer
donalgriffin@nimtf.org