



**BalancedSeas**

Delivering Marine Conservation Zones in the South-East

Regional Stakeholder Group  
**Progress Report**  
Iteration One

30 June 2010



## First Regional Stakeholder Group Progress Report

### IMPORTANT - PLEASE READ

The Balanced Seas Regional Stakeholder Group (RSG) is making this first progress report available to show the steps it has taken in the process to recommend Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) in the south east.

The details enclosed in this report **do not represent proposed MCZs** but show broad areas of interest. These have been identified by the RSG, using the data and information available to them, and focusing attention on the need to protect the broad-scale habitats listed in the Ecological Network Guidance. This does not necessarily mean that MCZs will be recommended in these areas, nor that unmarked areas will not be considered during later discussions.

This Progress Report has been presented to the Science Advisory Panel (SAP), an independent body of expert marine scientists appointed by Defra, who will provide feedback on the RSG's work so far. The SAP has been presented with Progress Reports by all four Regional MCZ Projects so that they can assess the progress being made towards developing a national Marine Protected Area network that meets the requirements set out in the Ecological Network Guidance (ENG).

By making this report available, the RSG would like to share information about their progress to ensure openness and transparency about their discussions and developments within this iterative process.

The RSG are not inviting direct comments on the Progress Report. If, however, you would like to contribute your views to the MCZ planning process, please look on the [Our Stakeholders](#) and [Get Involved](#) webpages to find out about contacting your relevant sector representative.

A further two progress reports will be published by the RSG prior to submitting their recommendations for MCZs in June 2011. This Progress Report is not a public consultation, but is a snapshot of the participatory planning approach towards recommending MCZs. A public consultation will be held in 2011/12 after the recommendations from all four MCZ projects have been submitted to Defra in October 2011.

## Balanced Seas Regional Stakeholder Group Iteration One Submission

This document details the process by which the Balanced Seas Regional Stakeholder Group came to submit 'broad areas of interest' for the 1<sup>st</sup> iteration to the Science Advisory Panel (SAP), along with a list of significant issues that the RSG felt were necessary to address in the next iteration.

### Explanation of the process

#### 1) Preparation for 1<sup>st</sup> iteration

- Introductory RSG meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> April, involving:
  - Presentation of the Project aims and objectives, deadlines and required outputs
  - Presentation on the basic conservation planning steps and the role of Marxan<sup>i</sup>
  - Multi-sector sub-groups given a map book of the major human activities and asked to map their sectors' activities onto a regional level base map of EUNIS Level 3 and consider potential overlaps
- Local Group introductory meetings held (April/May) and members asked to identify 'flags' for RSG (potential areas for MCZs, important activities in the sub-region or areas of high conflict)
- First draft of the Regional Profile compiled

#### 2) RSG identification of areas to protect broad-scale habitats

Two day meeting on June 7/8<sup>th</sup> held to focus primarily upon identifying areas for broad-scale habitat protection.

- Intertidal broad-scale habitats were omitted from analysis and consideration (data not yet available)
- Project region was split into three sub-regional areas<sup>ii</sup> for working groups
  - Southernmost project border to Brighton (Solent/West Sussex working group)
  - Brighton to Deal (East Sussex/South Kent working group)
  - Deal to Northernmost project border (Essex/Thames/North Kent working group)
- Materials for each working group were tailored to the sub-regional level and included:
  - Base maps of UKSeaMap 2010 EUNIS Level 3 habitats and bathymetry
  - An acetate grid overlay dividing the area into numerically referenced cells of 25km<sup>2</sup>
  - Acetate overlays of the existing protected areas, habitat and species FOCI and the major human activities occurring (industry, inshore fisheries, >15m vessel fisheries, shipping)
  - A target sheet of high, medium and low priority broad-scale habitats, identified according to the proportions occurring<sup>iii</sup> and sub-regional minimum and maximum target amounts displayed in km<sup>2</sup> and equivalent grid cell number. This target sheet took into account the contribution of existing Protected Areas (PAs) based upon an interim gap analysis undertaken by the project team (assuming ALL broad-scale habitats within PAs receive adequate protection)
  - summary of ENG principles for broad-scale habitats (at the subgroup level, this meant that each working group needed only one replicate example of each high priority habitat, but at least two working groups shared each habitat as a high priority)
  - Interim protection measures (as developed by Finding Sanctuary)
  - Helpful information: Local Group flagged areas, alternative suggestions for protected areas (Sussex marine Sites of Nature Conservation Interest and Marine Conservation Society 'Your Seas, Your Voice' sites) and RSG members' own sectoral knowledge
- Working groups asked to try and find areas containing the appropriate amount of broad-scale habitat (at the grid cell resolution) to meet each of the sub-regional targets, according to habitat priority.

- Each working group was facilitated by two members of the project team to encourage the consideration of all the relevant data layers, explain the process and guidelines and to record the comments and outputs. Depending upon the sectors and knowledge within the working groups, some areas were identified for features other than broad-scale habitats as they were considered to be important. These have been included as they will obviously contribute to future iteration work.
- Feedback sessions were held periodically to enable all RSG members to provide comment on broad areas of interest identified by all working groups. The working groups were requested to take these comments into consideration in their work and to respond
- Following feedback sessions, working groups were asked to identify areas where they were more confident that the area might be recommended as an MCZ in the future, based upon either the amount of available information, knowledge or level of consensus.
- Caveats to each area recommendation and additional data needs were recorded throughout
- A communication statement was drafted by the RSG to describe their outputs and caveats to the SAP

## Significant issues raised by RSG

- 1) The quality and quantity of data (both biological and socio-economic) does not currently allow the recommendation of MCZs with high confidence.**
  - Quality of Broad-scale EUNIS Level 3 map is very poor. Certain habitats marked do not bear resemblance to reality. This created huge reticence to recommend broad-scale habitat areas, particularly where there was low confidence in the habitat and it was felt the impact on (and subsequent response from) the wider stakeholder sectors would be considerable.
  - SeaZone depth area vector dataset (used in the meeting) is primarily used for navigation purposes. It would be extremely valuable to have access to, and base decisions upon, the XYZ SeaZone dataset, as this provides a much clearer indication of the extent of rock features and additional topographic features that would add confidence to the EUNIS Level 3 habitat data.
  - Amount and quality of the species and habitats data is very low. There are several issues within this:
    - Better data on species and habitats do exist but were not incorporated into the national contracts as expected and this was disappointing to those stakeholders whose organisations had contributed data.
    - Recent data should be incorporated wherever possible but is a time-consuming job that will fall to the Regional Projects.
    - Additional supporting information is necessary on the records themselves (e.g. are these single capture points for species? What is the difference between a single oyster record and oyster bed records)
  - Offshore fishing fleet – VMS data records do not take into account the considerable activity of the <15m fleet fishing beyond 6nm. Fishermap aims to tackle this data gap and progress towards this aim should be shared with the RSG to provide them with reassurance.
  - Inshore fishing fleet – Fishermap must address the gap in the representation of the smaller boats.
- 2) The current definition of protection measures is still too vague to suggest which activities might be restricted or allowed.**

Interim protection measures document (as produced by Finding Sanctuary) was used to work on sites for the first iteration. However, wording /concepts still create confusion, particularly:

- a. Seafloor protection – not clear if the word ‘significantly’ allows the performance of activities temporarily, and/or in spatially limited and/or distinct area. Some recognition that some static fishing gears can damage the seafloor is necessary.
- b. Water column protection – although the activities excluded did not include benthic fishing gear, the suggestions was made that the description of protection necessary would prevent these gear types from being allowed within an area designated for water column protection.

**3) Where conflicts of interest occur (between socio-economic sectors), insufficient guidance exists on how choices should be made and who will ultimately make them.**

When the choice between two similarly biologically valuable sites rests upon the difference in impacts between two or more sectors (e.g. aggregates vs fishing), who takes the difficult decision of which impact is less acceptable, the RSG themselves or the Minister? The latter would mean very few concrete decisions could be taken by the RSG regarding candidate sites and options would be overly numerous. If it is the former option, guidance needs to be provided as early as possible for discussion.

**4) Compatibility of certain activities needs to be clarified urgently**

The potential for co-location of MCZs with activities such as wind farms and aggregate licensed areas is one that is attractive to many stakeholder sectors. Crucial decisions of this nature cannot be made until the compatibility of specific levels of activity is clarified (e.g. Rounds 1, 2 and 3 wind farm areas). In addition, how should the buffer zone around wind farms be treated by MCZ recommendations?

**5) Regionally specific issues**

The Balanced Seas project area includes the busiest shipping lane in the world and contains a significantly high level of overlap between human activities. Since targets are set at the national scale, some members of the RSG are concerned that these important regional constraints are not being taken into account, which will put huge pressure on commercial activities in the Balanced Seas project area.

---

<sup>i</sup> Marxan was explained as a useful conservation planning tool that would be used to assist the RSG. Due to time constraints and data availability, it was not used for the outputs of the first iteration but will be employed for future work.

<sup>ii</sup> These sub-regional working groups were developed to facilitate working group progress and did not correspond to the geographical limits of the Balanced Seas Local Groups

<sup>iii</sup> Broad-scale habitat priorities were established by calculating the proportional maximum and minimum ENG broad-scale habitat targets at the sub-regional level and then allocating ‘top’ priority to those habitats where a significant amount of the target needed to be found in that sub-region. ‘Medium’ priority habitats were those where proportional amounts were smaller but a replicate example could to be found outside of the sub-region where the habitat was a top priority. Lowest priority habitats were considered those that occurred in very small amounts at the sub-regional level or were met as top or medium priority habitats elsewhere.

## Balanced Seas Regional Stakeholder Group comments to the Science Advisory Panel on progress for Iteration One

### Context

For the purposes of Iteration One, discussions were focused upon considering areas for protecting broad-scale habitats. For greater working efficiency, the RSG was split into three sub-regional working groups<sup>1</sup> and priority<sup>2</sup> broad-scale habitats were identified for each working group. Where it was appropriate to the task, additional information, such as available finer-scale habitats/species data and the input from Local Groups, was taken into account. However, at this early stage, choices for potential areas were strongly influenced by available socio-economic information and the need to protect broad-scale habitats, less so the high-quality fine-scale biological data across the region.

### Progress

Within the RSG's remit to inform, rather than make, decisions, the outputs for Iteration One were based primarily upon the available broad-scale EUNIS Level 3 data, which we considered to have inaccuracies. We felt that a great deal of positive progress and learning came from the work towards Iteration One, but much of this concentrated upon the *process* of considering MCZs, *rather than the concrete recommendations and/or boundaries themselves*.

The submitted plan will show:

- shaded areas we are calling 'broad areas of interest', where we have considered protecting broad-scale habitats (*subject to safety considerations and current regulations*)
  - using the available UKSeaMap 2010 draft data
  - incorporating socio-economic factors
  - based on what we currently know
  - subject to further discussion/inputs/data
  - acknowledging that in many cases, the particular features of interest are far smaller than shown by the shaded area
  - considering that protection measures would not necessarily be homogenous across any future MCZ.
- slightly heavier shaded patches within these early areas of investigation where,
  - subject to further discussion/inputs/data (particularly from the Local Groups), we have higher confidence in their potential inclusion in any eventual MCZ (e.g. due to existing areas of designation/agreement; higher confidence in habitat data, relatively low contention)

Additional caveats for individual sites will be stated within the accompanying text.

It must be noted that areas that are left blank are not precluded from consideration at a later stage.

In summary, this is the product of our first work together as we look for potential MCZs.

- We believe it represents a good encouraging start with much constructive discussion
- However, we share serious concerns about the quality and quantity of both socio-economic and habitat (biological and physical) data and would hope to be examining improved data when progressing with future iterations
- We need to work at higher definition in some areas and to seek more local input (e.g. Local Groups), especially inshore
- We recognise that there are further difficult decisions ahead.

---

<sup>1</sup> In order to contain roughly comparable areas, these did not correspond to Local Group boundaries.

<sup>2</sup> Priority habitats were defined by the proportions falling within the sub-region.



## Iteration One

This map shows the broad areas of interest selected by the Balanced Seas Regional Stakeholder Group for future investigation. They do not represent Marine Conservation Zones at this stage and are subject to change.

