



Spatial Planning Working Group: work programme for 2009

Euan Dunn, Chair, Oct 2008

The SPWG will want to build on the progress it made on two fronts in 2008, namely its engagement with the development of:

- Offshore Natura 2000 network#
- Offshore windfarms

1) Offshore Natura 2000 network

We anticipate the Commission (DG Environment and DG Mare) holding **Regional Sea Moderation Seminars** at which the collective site proposals from all Member States will be addressed in the round for issue of coherence, representativity etc. The North Sea will be part of the NE Atlantic seminar.

The European Commission has so far been non-committal over the precise timetable of these seminars but have said they will review progress at the end of October 2008, with the expectation of a pre-seminar meeting in early 2009.

The NSRAC should attend the full seminar (if not the pre-meeting) with a clear position on the outcomes it is seeking. While it is not possible at present to predict the timing, the SPWG should hold a meeting in 2009 to prepare the NSRAC's position and discuss related issues. It is not intended, on this occasion, to hold this meeting jointly with the NWWRAC (which will also be part of the Commission's NE Atlantic seminar).

As soon as the timetable is clarified, the Chair will seek assistance from Defra to host this meeting.

2) Offshore windfarm development

In 2008, the NSRAC adopted a best practice protocol for engagement between the fishing industry and the offshore renewables industry over multiple issues arising from the development of windfarms.

The Commission responded to this protocol in October 2008 (see attached), stating that they intended to hold meetings at which such issues could be discussed in the context of Marine Spatial Planning following the adoption in Oct 2007 of the Integrated European Maritime Policy. The SPWG will respond to this letter and seek representation at any such meetings.

Fishermen's concerns are routinely overlooked by officials and representatives of the energy companies. This has led to a great deal of frustration in the industry. In the UK, the Crown Estate launched (June 2007) the so-called 'Round 3 Offshore Windfarm Planning Process' in which zones were put out for tender by developers. These zones include the Dogger Bank and the NE Norfolk Sand Banks, both of which are important fishing areas for various North Sea Member States. Any adjustments to these zones will take place in January 2009 upon the advice of a Strategic Environmental Assessment for Offshore Energy (SEA), and the final zones will be defined in March 2009 following public consultation on the SEA. A successful tenderer for each zone will then be finalised and planning of individual windfarm installations within each zone will commence.

Challenges for the NSRAC to engage with this process are:

- Inadequacies of spatial data on fisheries (fleet coverage, data resolution and integration into GIS decision-making support systems)
- Location decisions are taken early when there is typically only limited stakeholder engagement, so the fishing sector loses out by default to other competing interests
- Although the UK National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations (NFFO) is consulting with its membership, engagement at the local level is not going to occur, at least prior to the selection of zones in March 2009, and there are presently no provisions for engaging with the fleets of other Member States

Insofar as multinational fleets are involved, the NSRAC needs to take a view which therefore consists of two inter-related issues: (a) the UK Round 3 consultation; (b) provision (collection, analysis, publication) of spatial data on fisheries. The SPWG has already addressed (b) with results limited to the CEFAS-led Lot 7 project on data collection between the scientific community and fishermen.

In York, we need to re-visit this to see what more the NSRAC can and should do, including the possibility of a dedicated SPWG meeting in 2009 (although note that in order to have any real influence on the Round 3 process, this really needs to happen during January-March 2009 to enable a consultation response to the SEA, the precise timing to depend on the consultation deadline).

<p>Conclusion: SPWG Work Programme to include 2 (max) meetings in 2009.</p>
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