



Spatial Planning Working Group Focus Group Meeting, Amsterdam, 18 Aug 2005

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Development of criteria to assess proposals for spatial measures

1. Origin and context of proposal

At the Spatial Planning Working Group Meeting in London, May 12 2005, it was agreed to set up a small steering group, reporting to the SPWG, *'To develop clear criteria for assessing proposals for spatial measures, including MPAs and other managed areas, whether they are being established for fisheries management or other purposes'*.

This proposal was endorsed by the Demersal Working Group Meeting in Glasgow, 17-18 May 2005.

The proposal was adopted by the NSRAC Executive Committee in Hamburg, 28 June 2005.

The purpose behind this proposal was to ensure that:

- the NSRAC is in a position to promote to the Commission, Member States and other relevant bodies (notably ICES, OSPAR) a clear vision of the criteria that should be met by specially managed areas for fish stock conservation, and other spatial measures that might affect fishing
- such criteria will, in turn, assist these bodies in bringing forward proposals that are more acceptable to the NSRAC
- such criteria will also inform any spatial measures that the NSRAC itself may wish to propose

2. Preliminary thoughts on criteria

At the London meeting, it was agreed that spatial measures should include:

- Clear objectives, defining their management purpose

- An evaluation of how the measure is expected to meet that purpose
- Identified standards for success
- An analysis of the economic and social impact of the measures upon fleet segments and communities
- Assessment of wider (environmental) benefits and any adverse impacts
- Procedures and a specified period for review, and an exit strategy
- A sunset clause obliging relevant institutions to revisit these measures and to determine whether they serve the common good
- Communication of the results of any evaluation
- Consideration of any trans-boundary effects

It is the purpose of the focus group to develop this set of criteria and widen its scope to a greater spectrum of spatial measures.

3. Qualifying comments made at the London Meeting

- The above criteria are relevant to all fisheries management measures
- The Commission is expected to carry out an economic evaluation of any measure, although in practice this was not often done
- Many 'boxes' have been set up in the past – not for conservation purposes – but to reduce conflict. Applying the criteria listed above might in future prevent boxes being set up for political rather than scientific reasons

4. Reflections on criteria for spatial measures for strictly environmental purposes

Given the possibility of imminent proposals from the Commission for spatial measures for cod and other stocks, the priority for the NSRAC is to establish and communicate a clear set of criteria for spatial measures fish stock conservation purposes. The output of the Demersal Working Group in Glasgow last May clearly supports this view.

Such criteria could also benefit the selection of areas which are perceived to simultaneously deliver both fish stock conservation and wider environmental benefits.

However, in potentially widening the scope of criteria yet further to address also spatial measures for protection primarily of biodiversity, with no additional fish stock conservation aim, it is necessary to be aware that, outside the strict remit of the CFP, there is a significant history and legal basis for establishing areas for this purpose. This context (in terms of objective setting, selection criteria, institutional basis, governance, implementation etc) differs markedly from that of creating specially managed areas for purely fish stock conservation purposes. For example:

- Objectives for and Criteria for selection of, notably, Natura 2000 and OSPAR sites have been in place for several years and were arrived at after extensive discussion and consultation arising from the EU Directives and Ministerial commitments in OSPAR.
- The EU list of candidate Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) is broken down by biogeographic zone. The Atlantic candidate list (which includes the North Sea) was agreed last year and it is now the task of countries to designate them; the UK, for example, has recently designated its list of SACs on land and at sea.
- The Natura 2000 and OSPAR networks are regarded as a permanent tool to enable the relevant species and habitats to be maintained in 'favourable conservation status'; to this extent they differ from certain fisheries closures which may have a shorter lifespan.
- However, there will be a 6-yearly monitoring cycle to ensure that the network of designated sites fulfils the aims of the Directives (e.g. the network may be modified, for example, in the light of ecosystem changes induced by climate change).

This context therefore requires careful thought in terms of applying the North Sea RAC deliberations to managed areas of all kinds.

