

Marine Spatial Planning Stakeholder Advisory Group

Report of Ninth Meeting held virtually 26th May 2020

1. Welcome and Introduction

Conor McCabe welcomed members and recalled that since the last meeting there had been the public consultation process on the draft NMPF which included regional and online events. Conor thanked members for their submissions and for their help in the overall effort of raising awareness around the plan-making process. The deadline of March 2021 for the submission of the plan to the EU Commission was confirmed to the group.

Conor then welcomed new members:

- Glenn Carr replaces Frank Ronan as representative of the Irish Ports Association
- Michael Hussey is the new Bord Bia Representative
- Ben Bennett is joining the group as an Adventure Tourism representative

Minister English reiterated a word of welcome to the group on his arrival and thanked all the members for their substantial submissions during the consultation process. The Minister also welcomed the new members to the group.

2. Overview of draft NMPF Consultation

Tom Woolley gave an overview of the 225 submissions received during the draft NMPF consultation process and the main points raised so far in the analysing of the submissions which still has a way to go yet. All the submissions will be published on the Department's website in the coming months.

In the discussion that followed the following points arose:

- For the presentation to be provided to group as soon as possible.
- Further meetings of the group are necessary to discuss further the submissions received. A proposed date of August was suggested

- When would the SEA be discussed further? It was conveyed to group that RPS are retaining their role on the SEA and that the papers on the SEA and AA were issued at the same time as the draft NMPF and that all comments that have come in on these are being looked at and will feed into the NMPF. DHPLG are happy to give an update on this at the next meeting
- Timescales for submissions being up on website. It was confirmed to the group that it will take approximately two months due to the time taken to complete redactions prior to upload to the website
- Is there a possibility of setting up working groups to develop other aspects that need extra work eg Marine Protected Areas (MPA)? It was confirmed that MPA's come under the Remit of Richard Cronin in Marine Environment but this will be raised with him. Minister English suggested that Richard comes to the next meeting to give an update to the group
- While all MPA's maps and features may not be identified in the NMPF at time of publication there will be guidelines and digital tools which can be updated post-publication

4. Next Steps in working arrangements for developing the NMPF

Conor McCabe gave a short update on the procedural and working arrangements to be employed over the next period with a view to producing the first NMPF by March 2021:

- Submissions received during public consultation on the draft NMPF will be taken into account in drafting the final NMPF, which will be done over the summer months
- Continued engagement with State Agencies and Government Departments on the final NMPF
- Deadlines for submissions changed over the past few months due to various circumstances however the end date remains the same
- Following initial sign-off the NMPF will be brought to Oireachtas in Q4 of 2020 before submission to the EU Commission in March 2021
- It is intended to hold a virtual Marine Planning (Policy) day for Government Departments and State Agencies in July. This will be the first of its kind to be held
- The Department will be developing offshore and development guidelines to coincide with the MPDM Bill
- The Department will be providing visualisation tests on general offshore wind
- A Communications protocol should be developed in relation to the interactions of fishing activities and ORE

- Development of a MSP IT Data Platform – will eventually represent all data for MSP which is related to the plan and used in decision making

In the discussion that followed the following points arose:

- Cross border participation was raised and it was confirmed that this falls under the remit of the Dept of Foreign Affairs and that they lead out on any cross border talks
- There was concern due to covid-19 about the economic impacts and the public health aspect and how it will affect the NMPF. The Minister mentioned that Public Health will be an ongoing process for the country. However economically a lot of the work has already been done on the NMPF and it will be a focus of any incoming government. It has always been acknowledged that the Marine sector would be about attracting and matching investment
- DAFM and Marine Institute are leading out on HOOW2 and it is timely that it is coming out now and not pre covid 19 as it will dovetail with the NMPF in job creation and investment
- There was concern about 25% of fishing waters being taken up by ORE and that renewables needs to be done in conjunction with the fishing industry. There was concern that meetings that were scheduled with the fishing industry have not happened. The Minister confirmed that a meeting will be arranged and that the fishing industry has to be fully involved in the development of the NMPF
- The Marine Planning Development Management (MPDM) Bill will be a key focus of the next Government

5. Next Meeting

A date for the next meeting will be circulated as soon as the submissions have been reviewed.

Minister English thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.