



Public Consultation on the MPA Advisory Group's Report entitled “Expanding Ireland’s Marine Protected Area Network”

Fields marked with * are mandatory.

Introduction

The survey below forms a vital part of the public consultation on the expert group report on marine protected areas (MPAs) published in January 2021 by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The report covers three main areas:

- **What** features of our marine environment should be protected
- **Why** they should be protected (including a socio-economic analysis of benefits/costs involved), and
- **How** they should be protected.

This open consultation aims to gather the views and perspectives of a wide range of people, in order to guide the Government in its work to extend Ireland’s network of MPAs. Please note that all survey responses and opinions you provide to this consultation matter to us. They will be recorded and, along with the expert group report, they will be taken into account as part of this process.

Guide to completing the survey

In this anonymous public survey, you’ll be asked a series of questions that have to do with conserving our living seas and oceans, including: how YOU think protected areas should be defined, what YOU think they should include, and what YOU think about some of the recommendations or implementation guidelines that have been proposed.

- Most of the survey questions are framed in a way that provides easy-to-answer options. Open text boxes are provided in many cases, in order for you to type or write in your answer in more detail.
- All boxes that are pre-filled with **Green Text** contain material taken directly from the published MPA report. We ask you to first read this material carefully and then answer the related questions immediately under the pre-filled box.
- The survey form also provides space for you to send in further comments and to tell us how you'd like to be kept informed about future progress, if so.

In order to get the best value out of your survey answers, it's essential that you make reference wherever possible to the relevant Part/section or Recommendation number in the MPA report that you wish to comment on.

If you'd prefer, the online version of this survey form can be filled in, saved and returned to at a later stage to complete it. To submit the survey to the consultation process, press the **Submit** button at the end of the survey. If you're saving your draft response, an automatic link to your survey form will be provided.

Starting with you

* A. Please select your gender

Please select one

- Female
- Male
- Other
- Prefer not to say

* B. Please select your age group (based on age at last birthday)

Please select one answer

- 12 or under
- 13 - 18
- 19 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 - 64

- 65 - 74
- 75 and over
- Prefer not to say

* C. Please select your sector or area of occupation

Please select one answer

- | | | | |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Agriculture & Forestry | <input type="radio"/> Education | <input type="radio"/> Industry | <input type="radio"/> Tourism & Travel |
| <input type="radio"/> Aquaculture | <input type="radio"/> Environment & Climate | <input type="radio"/> IT | <input type="radio"/> Transport |
| <input type="radio"/> Arts & Entertainment | <input type="radio"/> Finance & Insurance | <input type="radio"/> Public Sector | <input type="radio"/> Other (Please specify below) |
| <input type="radio"/> Business | <input type="radio"/> Fisheries | <input type="radio"/> Retail | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="radio"/> Construction | <input type="radio"/> Health | <input type="radio"/> Services | |
| <input type="radio"/> Crime & Justice | <input type="radio"/> Homemaker | <input type="radio"/> Student | |

Other Sector/Occupation:

D. If you are responding in a professional capacity, if possible please insert your organisation's name below:

Enter answer in the box

* E. Please enter your country of residence in the box below; If **Ireland** please state the county

Enter answer in the box

Your opinions on marine protected areas (MPAs)

In this section, we're interested in your views and perspectives on (A) what a "marine protected area" (MPA) should be or could be, and (B) what principles you think are important in the process for identifying, designating, implementing and managing MPAs in Ireland.

1. In your opinion, what would a **good and effective MPA** look like? (Please describe key characteristics or features of such a site, in the box below)

Enter answer in the box or select no answer below

If no answer, click below

No Answer

2. The MPA report describes a wide range of approaches to area-based conservation or protection of the environment and nature, for example. By drawing on global, regional and national experience and evidence, in its Conclusions and Recommendations section (section 3.6.1) the expert group provides a definition (below) of what an MPA could be:

A geographically defined area of marine character or influence which is protected through legal means for the purpose of conservation of specified species, habitats or ecosystems and their associated ecosystem services and cultural values, and managed with the intention of achieving stated objectives over the long term.

Do you agree or disagree with the **proposed operational definition for MPAs** in Ireland that's given in the green text above?

Please select one answer

Agree

- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know
- No answer

3. If you don't fully agree with this definition, what elements or features you would **Change** or **Add** or **Delete** in it? (Please enter information in the box below)

Enter answer in the box or select no answer below

If no answer, click below

- No Answer

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?

Please select one answer

- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know
- No answer

5. If you don't fully agree with this recommendation, please tell us why? (Please enter information in the box below)

Enter answer in the box or select no answer below

If no answer, click below

- No Answer

6. Part 1 of the MPA report considers why we should have more area-based protection of the marine environment in Ireland, and where there are important gaps or opportunities for improvement.

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? If so, please specify those animal/plant species and/or habitat types in the box below.

Enter answer in the box or select no answer below

If no answer, click below

No Answer

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?
(Please specify any such processes or features in the box below)

Enter answer in the box or select no answer below

If no answer, click below

No Answer

8. As part of their consideration of various types of area-based protection in the sea and other approaches to conservation (see sections 1.1.6 and 1.1.7 of the MPA report) the authors describe an additional type of managed site that's not really designed with nature conservation in mind but that can still contribute to marine biodiversity and long-term area-based conservation.

Such sites may come under the broad category of **Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs)**; these could include protected historical wrecks, protected spawning/nursery grounds for commercial fish or managed renewable energy sites, for example.

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?

Please select one answer

- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree

- Don't know
- No answer

9. If you don't fully agree with the inclusion of OECMs in an expanded MPA network, please tell us why? (Please enter information in the box below)

Enter answer in the box or select no answer below

If no answer, click below

- No answer

10. In examining the basis and the process for expanding Ireland's network of MPAs, in section 3.6.3 of the report the expert group makes a series of 66 recommendations, broadly covering:

- Ecological considerations
- Societal considerations
- Stakeholder engagement
- Governance and management
- Legislation
- Other considerations.

These important findings and conclusions informed a set of 14 key principles (below) that are recommended by the group in order to chart a way forward that is rational, well informed, evidence-based and balanced.

Recommended key principles stated in the report of the MPA Advisory Group (Oct 2020):

1. MPAs should be designated and managed to form a network that is designed to be coherent, representative, connected and resilient and to meet Ireland's commitments under international instruments such as the EU's Marine Strategy Framework Directive, OSPAR Convention, UN CBD and Aichi Targets (particularly Target 11) and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (particularly Goal 14).

2. 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

3. MPA site objectives may also focus on the prevention of impacts from specified pressures such as artificial light or noise or buffering against the effects of climate change.

4. Conservation is taken here to mean maintenance of or restoration to a state that is as close as possible to the expected structure and functioning of the ecosystem given the general physiography and location of the area or as compared to selected reference sites or states. In MPAs designated for biocultural diversity value, conservation of this value would be the primary objective.

5. Additional benefits of MPAs may include opportunities for research and environmental education and to create socio-economic added value, provided that these are not in conflict with the MPA site objectives.

6. A Systematic Conservation Planning (SCP) approach should be followed for planning, implementation and management of the expanded network, with a provision also for proposal of individual site-based MPAs.

7. In designing the network, consideration should be given to interactions with networks designated by other States in the same marine regions.
 8. 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.
 9. Management measures should be established as appropriate for each MPA to achieve its stated conservation objectives and taking account of socio-economic and cultural considerations.
 10. Management measures should be established as appropriate for each MPA to achieve its stated conservation objectives and taking account of socio-economic and cultural considerations.
 11. 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.
 12. Carefully designed monitoring should be used to assess efficacy of the network and inform periodic reviews and adaptations of designations and management measures.
 13. It is recommended that a national coordinating body should be established with the authority to coordinate planning and implementation, to foster good governance and ensure close collaboration among relevant departments and agencies and synergy with related undertakings such as the National Marine Planning Framework.
 14. New legislation is needed to establish the necessary framework for governance and management and appropriate resources and funding must be allocated to plan, implement, manage, monitor, and review the MPA network.
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Do you agree or disagree with the recommended principles for the process of MPA network expansion that are given in the green text above?

Please select one answer

- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know
- No answer

11. What would you **Change** or **Add** or **Delete** in these recommendations to help guide possible future steps in this process? (Please enter information in the box below)

Enter answer in the box or select no answer below

If no answer, click below

No answer

How should we expand our MPA network?

In this section, we're interested in your views and perspectives on (A) potential implementation steps and priorities in the delivery of an expanded MPA network, and (B) the principles you think are important in the process of engagement with all stakeholders, including the general public.

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? (Please enter information in the box below)

Enter answer in the box or select no answer below

If no answer, click below

No answer

13. In Part 3 of the report it's recommended that a **Systematic Conservation Planning** approach be adopted for planning, implementation and management of the expanded network, with some scope also for individual site proposals. Key phases and steps in the proposed planning approach are described in section 3.3.4 (including Figure 3.2 & Figure 3.3) of the report.

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

Please select one answer

- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know
- No answer

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? (Please enter information in the box below)

Enter answer in the box or select no answer below

If no answer, click below

No answer

15. When you consider a structured approach like this, are there any elements or steps that you think should be **prioritised** over others? If so, please specify those elements and/or steps in the box below.

Enter answer in the box or select no answer below

If no answer, click below

No answer

16. Regarding stakeholder involvement in the process, section 3.2 of the report describes the importance of recognising and understanding differences in personal or organisational interests, and in socio-economic, sectoral or cultural contexts, for example. It also examines how stakeholder and public participation in the MPA process can be fostered.

This work by the expert group, plus its engagement with a variety of representative organisations in Ireland (see Annex 1 of the report), informed the development of guidelines (below) for successful stakeholder participation in the MPA process.

General guidelines for successful MPA stakeholder participation processes stated in the report of the MPA Advisory Group (Oct 2020):

1. Identify and engage all relevant stakeholders early in the planning process.
2. Clearly define and communicate policy and scientific goals and objectives that are consistent with other legislative goals. This should also include clear communication both of what MPAs are and what they are not, generating a common understanding, as well as providing the political context.
3. Roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the planning need to be clearly defined and communicated.
4. Ensure that all involved understand the aim of the stakeholder participation process and provide clear rules, including aims and objectives, constraints, and codes of conduct (and consequences of not complying)
5. Providing science guidelines to ensure access to the best readily available scientific information, local knowledge, and spatial data by stakeholders, scientists, and decision-makers should be treated as a joint fact-finding approach.
6. Conflict among interests of stakeholders should be anticipated and acknowledged and discussions facilitated without bias (e.g. by using trained third-party facilitators), using an approach such as the Community Voice method.
7. Anticipate media attention and allocate media and communication to a dedicated spokesperson.

8. Accept that the process will take time and afford that time to the process. The process needs to engage appropriate groups early and ensure a just transition in the short and long term. Developing a model of community co-management has been proven effective to facilitate this, provided that it is properly resourced and appropriate responsibility and accountability for governance remains with the State.

9. Make use of the existing context in which an MPA is planned. This includes working with existing organised structures (e.g., CLAMS (see Box 9), Regional Inshore Fisheries Forum (RIFF), Irish Islands Marine Resources Organisation and use the National Marine Planning Framework and the mechanisms that it establishes.

10. Accept that the design of MPAs can change during the stakeholder process and keep in mind that the aim is to achieve policy goals and meet scientific and feasibility guidelines, while minimising potential socioeconomic impacts and find broad social support.

11. MPAs need to be carefully managed, monitored and evaluated. This involves detailed planning and financing.

12. Acknowledge that MPA development is not merely a “factual” process, but involves emotional, moral and value-based responses from all those involved.

13. Address potential power imbalances in the participatory process by facilitating an engagement/management model that acknowledges historical relationships and recognises inequities.

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?

Please select one answer

- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know
- No answer

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? (Please enter information in the box below)

Enter information in box

If no answer, click below

No answer

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? (Please enter information in the box below)

As mentioned under 'Guide to completing the survey', in order to get the best value out of your survey answers, it's essential that you make reference wherever possible to the relevant Part/section or Recommendation number in the MPA report that you wish to comment on.

Enter information in box

If no answer, click below

- No answer

19. If you would like to be kept informed on progress with the expansion of Ireland's MPA network, please let us know how you would like to receive such information? (Please note: this question is for general and anonymous purposes only. You will not be put on any mailing /subscription list without your express consent)

Select as many as relevant

- Website
- Social media
- Public service media
- Electronic newsfeed
- Newsletter/Magazine
- Other (please specify in the box below)

Other

What we will do with your responses

Thank you for taking the time to consider and respond to this public consultation. Please note that all survey responses and opinions you provide to this consultation matter to us. They will be recorded and, along with the expert group report, they will be taken into account as part of this process.

