

Links between the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and other legislation

Factsheet 2

December 2012

Background

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) aims to achieve Good Environmental Status (GES) in marine waters by 2020. GES involves protecting the marine environment, preventing its deterioration and restoring it where practical, while using marine resources sustainably. The Directive is very wide-ranging and sets out eleven descriptors of GES relating to biological diversity, non-indigenous species introductions, commercially exploited fish and shellfish populations, food webs, human-induced eutrophication, sea floor integrity, impacts on hydrographical conditions, concentrations of contaminants, contaminants in fish and other seafood, marine litter and underwater noise.

The aims of the Directive are consistent with the UK Government and Devolved Administrations' vision of clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas, as well as with the

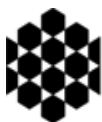
commitments made in the UK Government's Natural Environment White Paper to be the first generation "to leave the natural environment...in a better state than we inherited it"¹.

Charting Progress 2², the most recent assessment of the state of the UK's seas, recognised that although many aspects of the UK's marine environment are improving (e.g. the impacts of contamination), other aspects (e.g. seafloor habitats, fish populations) are degraded and continue to be adversely affected by human activity.

The Government and Devolved Administrations have already committed to taking many measures which will improve the state of the UK's marine environment as part of ensuring sustainable development. These existing measures will all support the achievement of GES under this Directive.

¹ Natural Environment White Paper, p.3 www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm80/8082/8082.pdf

² <http://chartingprogress.defra.gov.uk/>



How will existing legislation and policies help the UK achieve GES?

The Government and Devolved Administrations are implementing existing European and national legislation (e.g. the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009), the Marine (Scotland) Act (2010) and the proposed Northern Ireland Marine Bill) which will all contribute to achieving GES in our seas, as well as fulfilling wider sustainable development objectives.

The **Wild Birds and Habitats Directives** already provide protection to key species and habitats. Management measures to implement these Directives will play a significant role in achieving the GES targets for biodiversity, food webs and sea-floor integrity.

When completed, the UK marine protected area network will include Natura 2000 sites under the Wild Birds and Habitats Directives, as well as sites designated under national legislation. The network will be critical for helping move us towards the GES targets for biodiversity and sea-floor integrity; and for meeting the MSFD's requirements to put in place spatial protection measures which contribute to a coherent and representative network of marine protected areas.

Measures being taken as part of the implementation of the **Water Framework Directive (WFD)** will play a major role in ensuring GES is achieved for contaminants (Descriptor 8) and eutrophication (Descriptor 5). The WFD plus the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive, through marine licensing, should be sufficient to achieve GES for hydrographic conditions (Descriptor 7) across our seas. For more detail on how the MSFD and the WFD will interact see Factsheet 1.

The Government and Devolved Administrations are seeking radical reform of the **Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)**, including better fisheries management and integration of fisheries and conservation policies. We expect a reformed CFP to play a critical role in supporting the achievement of GES both for commercial fish stocks (Descriptor 3) and wider biodiversity (Descriptors 1, 4 and 6), ensuring consistency across European waters, promoting sustainable stocks and fishing practices.

Marine planning is applying an ecosystem-based approach to managing human activities: avoiding pressures from human activities compromising the marine ecosystem and enabling sustainable use of our seas by current and future generations. The UK Marine Policy Statement is the framework for marine planning, bringing together UK marine policies and reflecting European and international commitments and recommendations applying to the UK. Marine plans, as part of their objective of sustainable development, will help to implement measures for GES and will be aligned with GES monitoring requirements, where appropriate. They will also guide marine licensing decisions, where projects will also be assessed through existing regulations such as the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations and the Habitats Regulations.

To achieve GES some **additional management measures** are likely to be needed. Fisheries management measures are already mentioned earlier (see also Factsheet 4). For litter, some additional measures are likely to be needed to reduce the amount of litter on coastlines and in our seas. For noise, a noise registry for loud, low, impulsive sounds over a particular

threshold will be developed. Further work is currently being carried out to assess what additional measures might be needed to reduce the risk of introduction and spread of non-indigenous species.

You can find out more about the MSFD at:

www.defra.gov.uk/environment/marine/msfd/

If you have any questions, please contact:

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