

Wales Landscape Partnership
Seascapes and Marine Planning in Wales



Synopsis of technical Seminar

The Future Inn, Cardiff Bay

Tuesday 25th March 2014

SEASCAPES AND MARINE PLANNING IN WALES



The purpose of this report is to highlight the key points made during the presentations and discussions which formed the basis of the Seascapes and Marine Planning in Wales Seminar organised by the Wales Landscape Partnership and held in Cardiff on March 21st 2014.

It is anticipated that the outcomes of this Seminar will help inform and act as part of the ongoing dialogue about the marine planning process in Wales and the important place that Seascapes should have in that process.

Where relevant, reference will be cited of sources of detailed information about the matters discussed.

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Acknowledgements

Wales Landscape Partnership is grateful for the financial support provided by Natural Resources Wales which enabled this Seminar to be held. It also acknowledges the contributions made by those who made presentations and attended. Particular thanks is given to Edward Holdaway for shouldering much of the work in organising and compiling this synopsis.

1. Introduction and purpose of this Seascapes seminar

Context



The Welsh Government has embarked on the marine planning process for Wales. In doing so it has indicated that it wishes to see a Seascape Character Assessment [SCA] undertaken of the whole of the Welsh marine area over the next twelve months. The purpose of this Seminar was therefore to provide an insight into the approaches to SCA which are being developed in Wales and elsewhere and to explore how they might be used to achieve an all-Wales assessment of the character of its Seascapes.

In introducing the seminar, Edward Holdaway, (Wales Landscape Partnership), posed a number of questions, which delegates considered during the presentations and discussions:

- Is there a common understanding of what Seascapes are? Is the concept widely understood?
- How can we ensure that stakeholders and local communities buy in to the concept of Seascapes and the use of Seascape Character Assessment?
- How does the Marine plan fit with others existing and proposed strategic plans proposed for Wales e.g. the National Natural Resource Plan and the proposed National Development Framework?
- Is the link between land and sea being forged adequately by Seascape Character Assessment? Are we clear about how far Seascape Character Assessment should go inland?
- Do we need to consider undertaking Seascape Character Assessment at different scales for different purposes? Can Seascape Character Assessments of different scales nest with each other?
- Do we have a clear idea of the way in which Seascape Character Assessment will be used in the Marine plan for Wales? Will it simply be a statement of character or will it consider value, sensitivity etc.

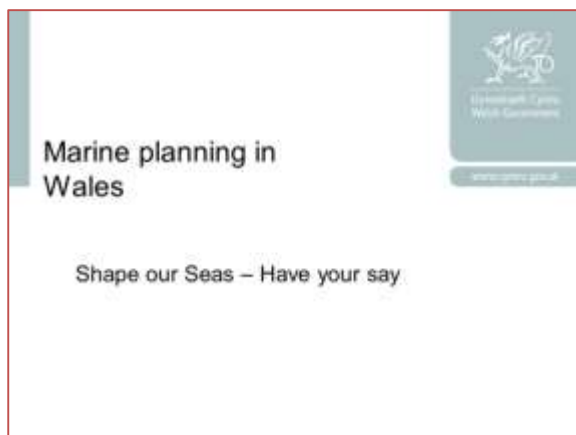


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2. The context for Marine planning in Wales

The Marine Plan process in Wales

Al Storer
Marine Department
Welsh Government



Al Storer set the scene for the marine planning process with a timely reminder that although Wales was just starting the process for its own seas, the overall process of marine planning in UK had in fact started some years ago and provided some parameters within which the plan for Wales' seas would be prepared.

In particular he stressed that:

- The statutory purpose of the marine plan is to secure the sustainable development of the marine area.
- Although Welsh Ministers are the Planning Authority, the UK Secretary of State for the Environment has to sign off the Off shore plan as well as the Inshore plan, if the latter addresses non-devolved matters.
- In the context of ICZM the marine plan has to be compatible with relevant Planning Act plans and other coastal plans, including National Park Plans.
- The Vision and high level Objectives have already been agreed by the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations – see "*Our seas a shared resource*"
- The UK Marine Policy Statement [MPS] was similarly adopted in 2011 – marine plans have to be in accordance with it
- The Marine Planning Statement makes reference to Seascapes – they should be taken as meaning "*landscapes with views of the coast or seas and coasts and the adjacent marine environment with cultural, historical and archaeological links with each other*"
- The Welsh Government intends to produce a single Marine plan by the end of 2015. Already a Statement of Public Participation has been consulted upon and further consultation can be expected on the Vision and Objectives in the Spring of 2014, a draft plan during the summer / winter of 2014/15

Natural Resource Planning and the link between land and sea

Russell De'Ath

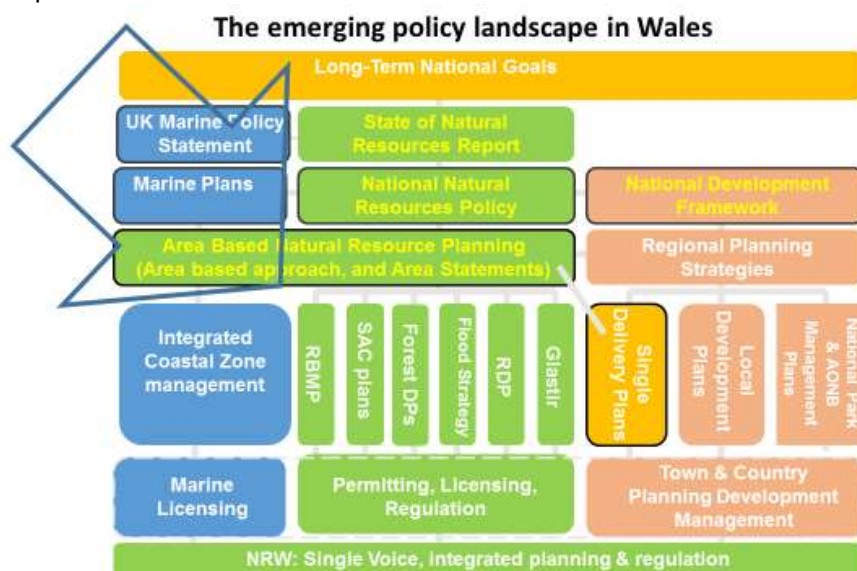
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Russell De'Arth introduced and outlined the proposed scope of the forthcoming Environment Bill and suggested that it provided a modern and statutory framework for the sustainable management of natural resources. He

described the emerging policy landscape in Wales with the Marine Plan [guided by the UK Marine Policy Statement] sitting alongside the proposed National Natural Resource Policy and Area based Natural Resource Plans. He emphasised that:

- natural resources in the Welsh context include landscapes and Seascapes
- an essential part of the approach to natural resource management, in the context of marine planning, is a sound understanding of the character of our coast and the link with land use management
- cultural ecosystem services – natural settings [landscapes and Seascapes], accessible green and blue space, recreation and tourism, appreciation of wildlife and nature, tranquillity, historic and cultural heritage, spiritual and religious values, education and scientific opportunities – are particularly important

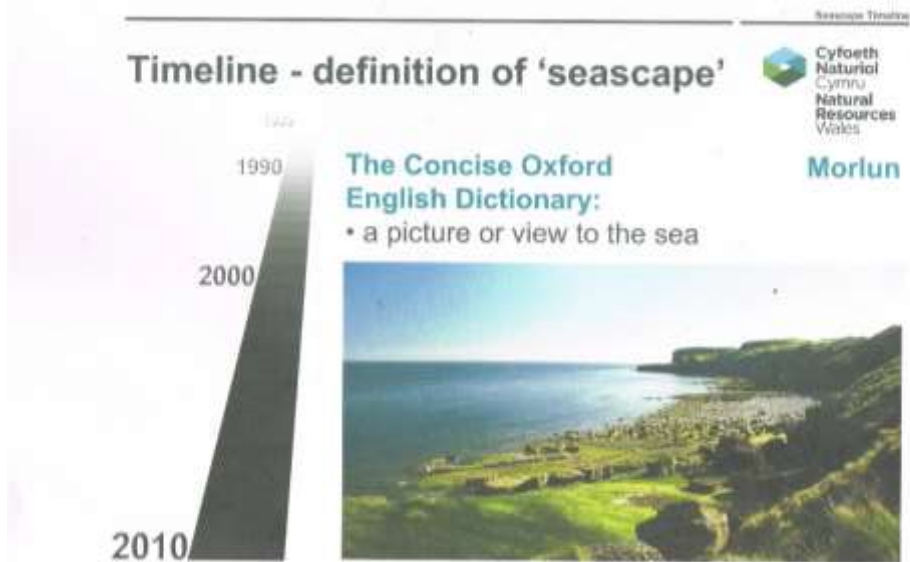


He referred to three trial areas where the Area management approach would be piloted i.e the Dyfi, Tawe and Rhondda and to the Welsh Government's intention to have legislation in place by 2016.

The development of Seascape Character Assessment in Wales

John Briggs
Landscape Architect
Natural Resources Wales

John Briggs succinctly described the key elements of the development of Seascape Character Assessment in Wales, in particular:



- The publication in 2001 of the "Guide to best practice in Seascape Assessment" and the "Seascape and visual impact assessment guidance" in 2005 – both with an emphasis on views from land to sea, sea to land and along the coast
- In 2009 CCW published a report "Welsh Seascapes and their sensitivity to offshore developments" – for the first time in Wales there was a comprehensive study, at a broad brush scale, of the characteristics and qualities that make each part of the coastline distinctive and give them a sense of place and of their sensitivity to development, in particular off-shore windfarms

- Studies of sensitivity assessment for off-shore wind farms, tidal stream generators and floating wave generators

- The recognition that Seascapes are a product of a wide range of influences – natural features and processes, human features and activities and perception and association

- ©John Briggs NRW





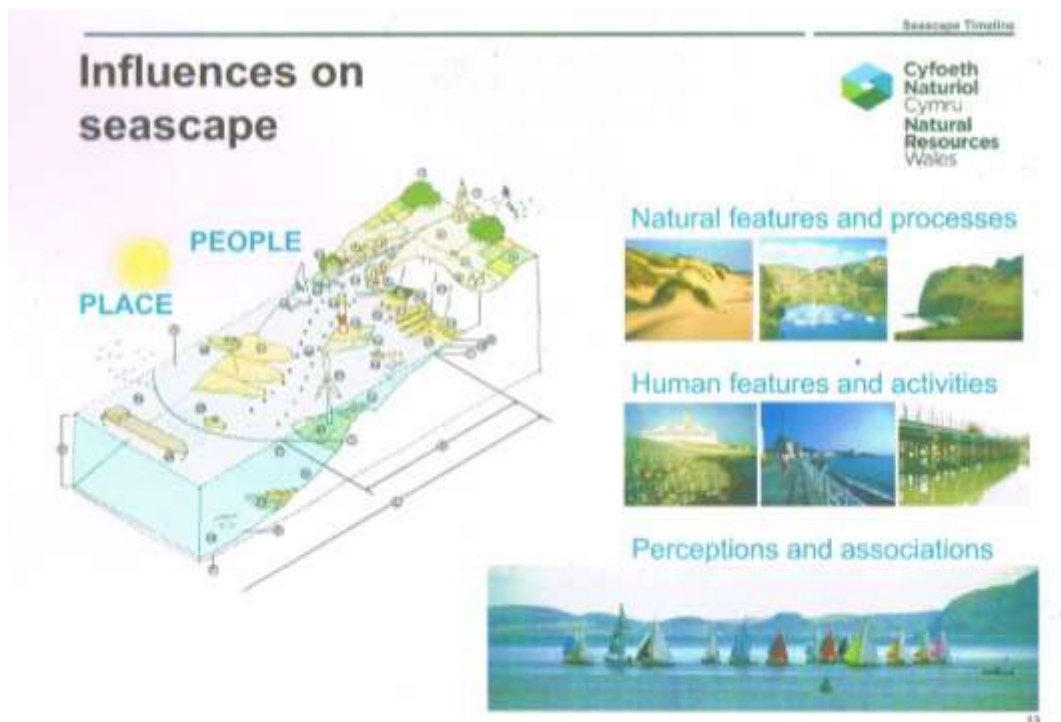
- In referring to the UK Marine Policy Statement, he noted that this states that references to seascape should be taken as meaning:

'landscapes with views of the coast or seas, and coasts and the adjacent marine environment with cultural, historical and archaeological links with each other',

He also emphasised that the Policy statement goes on to say that when considering the impact of development and activities planners should take into account

'existing character and quality, how highly it is valued and its capacity to accommodate change specific to any development.'

- In 2013 Seascape Character Assessment, at a more local level, had been piloted in Pembrokeshire and Anglesey / Snowdonia coast lines.



Marine Planning in England

David Hutchinson
Marine Maritime Organisation

David described how Marine Planning was progressing in England, where there are 11 plan areas. He emphasised that:



- The overarching driver was the increasing use of marine space and resources, impacting on the sustainable use of the marine environment
- The estimated time for preparing each plan – 2 years and 9 months – was very tight. The planning process for the East Marine Area plans had started in April 2011 and is likely to finish with the adoption of the plans in the summer of 2014
- The issues that the East

and South plans had to address were markedly different

He went on to describe how



- seascape was being dealt with in the South plans from the outset of the process, in particular how it was being split into visual and character elements and how a new methodology was being developed for the visual element.

- important stakeholder engagement was in dealing with seascape assessment, with 6 workshops

being held to consider key characteristics of marine character areas, their names and boundaries. The debate on these matters was also facilitated through the marine planning portal

3. Seascape Character Assessment in practice

The development of Seascape Character Assessment [SCA] as a technique to inform marine planning was illustrated by presentations from:

- the pilot projects initiated by CCW in Pembrokeshire (Simon White) - and Anglesey / Snowdonia – (Fiona Fyfe) and
- the Seascape Character Assessment undertaken for the MMO in the South Marine Plan area in England (Sally Parker)

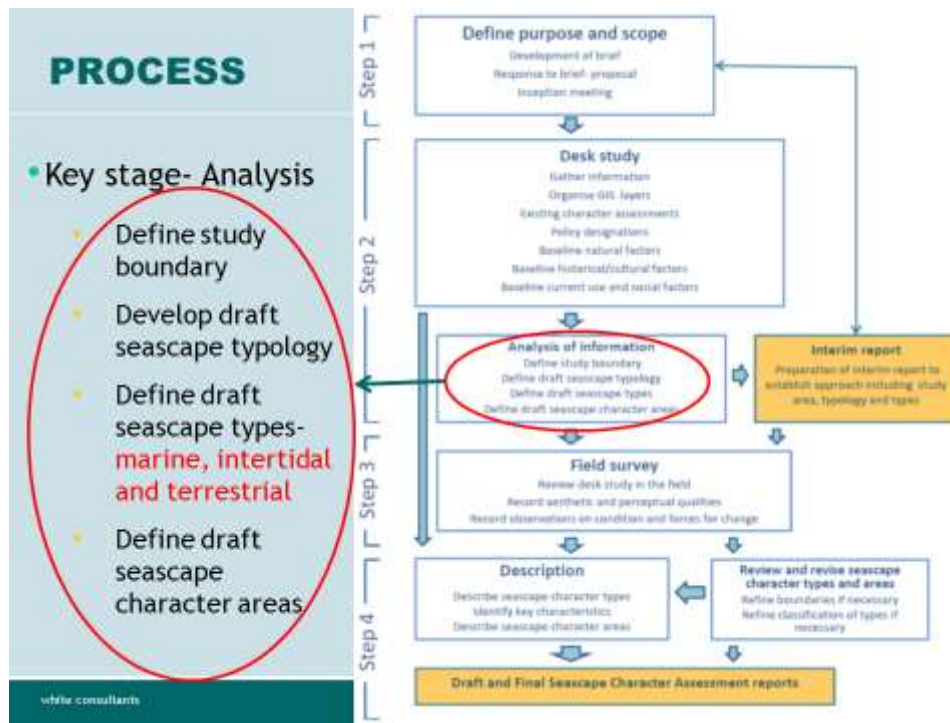


Pembrokeshire



Ynys Mon AONB and Snowdonia

The two pilot projects in Wales were undertaken at a local scale in respect of the Anglesey AONB and Snowdonia National Park and the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. Whilst they both aimed to make use of NERC 105 Guidance, they also were briefed to develop this approach further.



Whilst the details of the methodology used can be found in publications by the National Park Authorities for Pembrokeshire and Snowdonia and in the presentations made by Simon

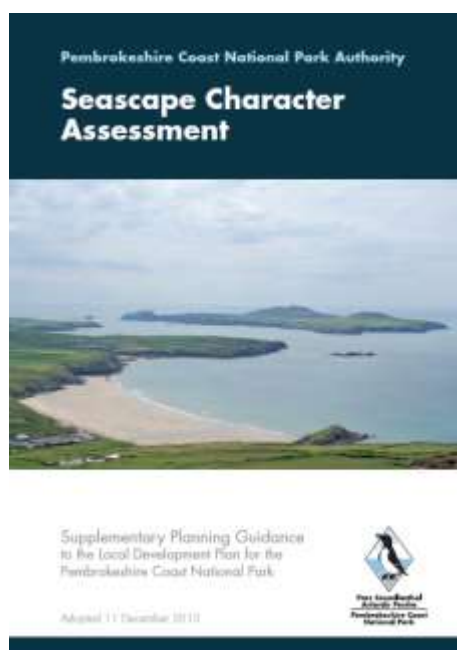
White and Fiona Fyfe [see Annex for details of their availability], the key characteristics of the approach to SCA can be described in brief as follows:



- it reflects the holistic approach to landscape [and by extension seascape] of the European Landscape Convention, embracing natural, cultural and perceptual qualities of seascape
- the study area includes coastal land, intertidal and marine environments and extends to the territorial limit [12 nm]
- the study area is divided into Seaside Character Areas [SCAs] – geographically distinct areas with a unique sense of place and made up of different combinations of Seaside Character Types [SCT]
- the projects were undertaken by multi-disciplinary teams

Profiles are provided for each SCA, covering:

Pembrokeshire	Anglesey / Snowdonia
Summary description	Location and context
Key characteristics	Summary description
Physical influences	Constituent SCTs
Cultural influences	Key characteristics
Aesthetic, perceptual & experiential qualities	Cultural benefits and services
Cultural benefits and services	Natural influences and sites
Forces for change	Cultural influences and sites
Key sensitivities	Perceptual qualities
	Forces for change & Inherent sensitivity



The projects raised a number of issues for consideration in the future:

- **Defining the inland boundary** – the Pembrokeshire pilot made use of the visibility study undertaken in earlier regional Seascape assessments; in contrast the Anglesey / Snowdonia pilot included all terrestrial SCTs immediately associated with the sea either physically [e.g. sand dunes] or culturally [e.g. harbours] and where necessary defined a “cut-off” using LANDMAP or physical features on the ground
- **Dealing with “settings”**- the Anglesey / Snowdonia pilot identified the fact that many areas of high land outside the study area made an important contribution to Seascapes – some are seamless with the coast, while others are further

inland. It was felt that it was neither practical nor desirable to include them in the SCA. However, in view of their important contribution to Seascapes by forming their inland settings and being focal points in views from the sea, the Pilot concluded that the SCA text should acknowledge this visual connection between seascape and land beyond the study area

- **Mapping using GIS layers of different scales** presented considerable problems of reconciliation

Sally Parker described the SCA process undertaken in the South England plan process, in particular how it had been divided into two parts

- A strategic character assessment; and
- A visual resource map – intended to be an objective baseline to provide an evidence base that is not too complicated and is practical not to involve development scenarios



Stakeholder consultation was an important part of the work – 6 workshops in total were held across the plan area. The existing coastal fora along the coast were particularly valuable in enabling the consultation process.

4. How are we benefitting from Seascape Character assessments?

A series of short presentations were provided to illustrate the uses to which SCAs are being put.

Edward Holdaway described how Pembrokeshire Coast National Park intended to make use of their SCA. The NPA starting point was that development and activity offshore can have an impact on the National Park itself and it wanted to have guidance that complemented the existing landscape character guidance.

The brief set out to secure an assessment that:



- Identified what is distinctive and special about different areas of the Park and the sea areas visible from it
- Outlined the sensitivities of those areas
- Described possible risks to the character of those areas
- Provided a commentary on future management
- Would be useful to a range of users
- Would have regard to the relevant tests of soundness for a local development plan

The SCA has already been adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance – though as yet there is no experience of its use. It is important that it will be used not only to assess the impact of landward development on the sea but vice versa in respect of marine development on the land.

The NPA expects to include the assessment in the Park Plan when it is reviewed later this year alongside the landscape character assessment [LCA]. One particular element of the Park plan is the Recreation strategy which is underpinned by the LCA of the Park, which informs the assessment of the capacity of particular areas to absorb recreation activity. The intention is for the SCA to complement the LCA in underpinning the recreation strategy and to inform the development of recreation policies in the future.

Efan Milner: Anglesey AONB described how



- timely the pilot project had been on account of the development pressures around the coast.
- The SCA is being adopted as a strategy rather than SPG. The strategy would still be a material consideration in all coastal / marine developments
- The SCA will form a key element of the AONB Management plan in describing the links between land and sea
- The Special qualities of the AONB may well be amended to reflect the relationship with the sea
- The SCA is helping the AONB team to engage with stakeholders on the interaction with the sea and in the development of a landscape partnership application

Ifer Gwyn: Snowdonia NPA described

how the SCA was being included in the Landscape SPG and would be reflected in the review of the Park's Management plan.



©Kate Aherne

Kate Aherne described

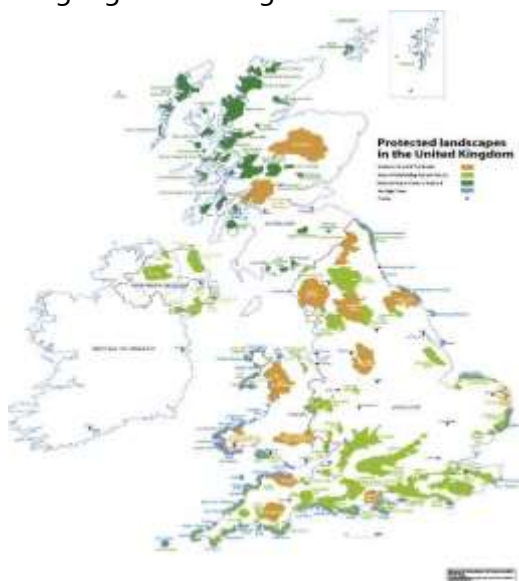
The uses of SCA in various circumstances – the Atlantic Array, Swansea Tidal lagoon and Tidal stream generation around the coast of Wales.

5. Seascapes and Marine Planning - Protected landscapes in England

Phil Dyke
National Trust
Coast and Marine Adviser

Since the advent of marine planning in England in 2010 Europarc Atlantic Isles (EAI) has worked alongside the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) to assist in the development of thinking and practice in marine spatial planning and integrated coastal management drawing on the principles outlined in the seminal document '*Making the Connection Between Land and Sea, 2007*'*.

An EAI report '*Coastal Protected Landscapes and the Marine Planning System, 2010*'* highlighted a range of actions that various actors from Government and its agencies



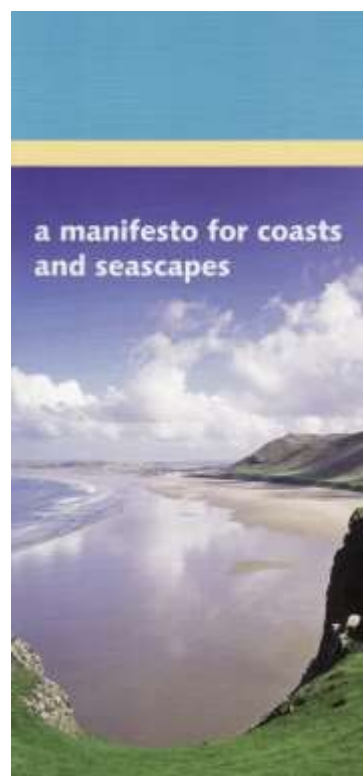
through to Local Authorities and individual Protected landscape managers could take to realise the benefits of a joined up approach to marine and coastal spatial planning and management.

Protected landscapes are in a good position to optimize the links between land and sea as a result of the integrative approach to their Management plans, the way in which they bring stakeholders together and their unique ability to focus on coastal landscapes and Seascapes. EAI Coast and Marine Working Group,

in collaboration with a number of partners, published an action plan in 2011 '*A manifesto for coasts and Seascapes*'* to give further voice to the importance of landscape and seascape in context of the development of marine planning.

The intervening years have seen the rapid development of marine planning in England with the MMO publishing its draft East Marine Plan in the Autumn of 2013 whilst in parallel beginning the process of developing South Marine Plan.

Early 2014 seemed an opportune time to reflect on and consider the experience of coastal Protected landscapes in the development of marine planning in England and to this end the MMO commissioned EAI to run Webinar on this subject and tease out some lessons learned.



As a consequence of the work undertaken by participants in this webinar Europarc Atlantic Isles Coast and Marine Working group made the following recommendations for the MMO to consider:



- That a member of the Protected landscape family in the South Plan area should be invited to join the Sustainability Appraisal Advisory Group (SAAG)
- An opportunity should be sought to deploy the significant advances in the use of SCA made by the MMO in relation to the South Plan Area back to the East Plan Area at the earliest opportunity. This could be via a collaborative project.
- MMO officers and Protected landscape managers in the South Plan area should meet on a bilateral basis to exchange information and identify mutual benefits that each can bring to the others spatial planning and management plan making processes.
- A mechanism needs to be found within the South Marine Plan making process to identify what good integrated coastal management looks like in the South plan areas; identifying what current good practice looks like and where there is room to improve integration.

In conclusion he emphasised that the opportunity for coastal Protected landscapes in Wales to ensure that the special qualities they derive from the marine environment and their association with it are not only fully recognised in the plan but are accorded the status that their national importance demands.

6. Rolling out a national Seascape character assessment for Wales

John Briggs

Natural Resources Wales

In looking to the future John Briggs emphasised that:

- Notwithstanding the fact that 70% of Wales' coastline is designated or registered AONB, National Park, Heritage Coast or Historic Landscape, ALL SEASCAPES MATTER
- The "USP" of SCA is its ability to link land and sea and to provide a framework for understanding and ultimately managing change in our Seascapes



- That a lot of SCA work has already been done in Wales both at a national level and a more local level [illustrated on the enclosed map]

In considering the Welsh Government request to NRW to undertake an SCA on an all-Wales scale, John Briggs outlined some of the issues pose by such a project, in particular:

- At what scale should the project be undertaken?
- What should the extent of the study area? How far inland and how far out to sea?
- What should be included beyond the description? Should it follow the MPS, which talks not just of character but also of quality, of how highly a seascape is valued and its capacity to accommodate change?
- Do we need a separate visual assessment in Wales, as has been done for the South area plan in England?



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7. Conclusions of the presentations and subsequent discussions

The presentations and discussions raised more questions than answers in relation to the use of SCA in preparing the marine Plan for Wales.



There was little questioning of the value of undertaking an all Wales SCA, particularly as so much work had already been undertaken in developing the necessary techniques, nor of:

- The need for an approach refined in Wales to meet its needs.
 - The framework it would provide for understanding such an important resource, particularly as a means of engaging local people and communities in recognising the value of the marine environment and their association with it
- The ability of an SCA to link land and sea
 - As an evidence base and tool to assist in policy development and decision making
 - Identifying the distinctiveness of particular areas, their sensitivity to change and the possible risks to their character



8. Summary of Seminar outcomes

The following issues and conclusions were identified from the presentations and discussion and subsequent reflection:

- **Need for clear guidance on SCA** – to ensure consistency around the coast and respect for the approach from all quarters [in particular to avoid arguments between developers and others]. The approach will be particularly important where cross border issues arise (Severn Estuary/ Bristol channel and North Wales – a task for NRW)



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- **The scale at which an all Wales SCA should be undertaken** – there was considerable sympathy for the view that, given so much of the coast has been already been covered by SCAs, the rest of the coast in Wales should be covered at a similar scale and then a national overview derived from the detail could be and should be produced for the all Wales Marine plan.
- **The status of SCAs** – the status of SCAs in marine planning needs to be clarified both at a national level and where SCAs are undertaken locally, especially when they address issues of sensitivity to change and risk to their character as well as the value of particular areas.
In the latter context it will be important to clarify how the areas of national and international importance of so much of the Welsh marine area and coastline [National Parks, AONBs, Heritage Coasts and marine SACs] will be addressed in the Marine plan

- **Seascapes and landscapes** – they are a key resource and their importance, particularly in providing a framework for planning should be recognised in the emerging Welsh Government’s ecosystem approach.
- **Where does marine planning fit in the emerging landscape policy in Wales?** – Greater clarity is needed as to how the marine plans for Wales will fit with the proposed National Natural Resource plan and the National Development Framework. Will these two high level plans eventually provide the national framework for the marine area as well as the land area of Wales?
- **Linking land and sea** – discussion focussed on whether in some way landscapes and Seascapes should be morphed, whether LANDMAP should be developed to cover the sea and whether the landward boundaries are right. No firm conclusions were reached, though on the question of landward boundaries there seemed to be some agreement that the inter visibility of land and sea should be an important criterion.



- **The separation of character from visual** – the separate visual resource assessment carried out for the English South plan aroused some discussion as to whether it would be appropriate in Wales.

The fact that Wales already had the basis of a visual assessment contained in the study undertaken to assess the likely impact of offshore wind developments gave

rise to doubts as to whether it was necessary. Furthermore, the SCAs in Wales already included consideration of views and the inter visibility of land and sea

- **Community buy in to SCAs** – a crucial task but very difficult to achieve without the presence of coastal Fora at a local level, such as the Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum. In this context the coastal Protected landscapes of Wales could provide the focus for engagement of local interests.

At a national level the potential of a group, such as the Wales Coast and Maritime Partnership, to bring together all the key interests would be considerable, especially to engage with the policy group set up by the Welsh Government.





May 2014