

How effective are management schemes for European Marine Sites in English inshore waters?

Marine Theme Objective: Science for integrated Marine Management.

What's the problem?

We have a responsibility to manage the habitats and wildlife of our coasts and seas in a sustainable manner. One way of doing so is through the development of a network of well managed marine protected areas; such as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) established by the EU Habitats Directive (1992) and Birds Directive (1979) respectively. Under the Regulations that transposed these Directives, regulatory authorities have the ability where deemed appropriate to create management schemes to manage these European Marine Sites (EMS). Their purpose is to bring together bodies with regulatory or other responsibilities to manage their activities in a manner which helps conserve the feature for which sites have been designated. The first management schemes were established in some English EMS fifteen years ago. We want to learn about these schemes, to know whether they work, and what lessons can be transferred to the effective management of Marine Conservation Zones and the bigger suite of Marine Protected Areas (MPA).

What are the aims of the project?

Six management schemes were piloted for England by the UK Marine SACs LIFE Project, a £4m EU project that ran from 1996 to 2001 and many others have been established subsequently. This form of governance made provisions for the establishment of both a Relevant Authorities Group, composed of regulators, and an Advisory Group, composed of local stakeholders. In 15 years different models have developed, some schemes employ a project officer and are focussed strictly on habitats and wildlife matters; others have been absorbed into the work of coastal partnerships; and some are run by a lead authority that provides the secretariat.

We wanted to understand how effective each model is and whether they are cost-effective. To do this, we investigated 12 widely-spread examples out of 23 English and cross-border management schemes. A wide range of stakeholders were consulted, including Local Authorities, Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs), Ports and Harbours, wildlife groups and fishers.

With the planned designation of Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) under the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009), we want to use lessons from EMS management schemes to inform any future approach to MPA management in England.



Figure 1: Saltmarshes on the Wash managed under the Wash and North Norfolk Coast European Marine Site (EMS) Management Scheme.

Which policy areas will the research inform?

This work will inform our ongoing commitment to developing a network of Marine Protected Areas in England. Its outputs provide an opportunity to review the ways in which local governance of marine protected areas is achieved. It will also afford us an opportunity to examine the ways in which co-ordination of commitments to marine protection needs to be organised.

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What are the results from the project and how will they be used?

Five basic models for management of European Marine Sites (Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas) were identified. In some cases management schemes focussed entirely on statutory marine conservation responsibilities using a project officer. Others involved hybrids with complimentary management responsibilities, such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). In some cases the management scheme has been subsumed into the work of coastal and estuary partnerships. A few schemes rely on one of the regulators to provide secretariat with an underpinning document to guide actions. Other European Marine Sites have no management schemes and rely on different mechanisms, such as regulators acting independently, or the use of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) legislation to maintain the wildlife interest.

No single model was identified as the 'ideal' option. There is considerable variation in biological and social geography around England's coastline and the evidence points to choices that are best fitted to local conditions. It was recognised that a formal means of management was helpful in those places where there were numerous interactions that could have an impact on natural assets. In some cases, such as The Wash and North Norfolk Coast, the presence of a project officer to pursue issues that crossed the boundaries of constituent regulators was helpful. The presence of a project officer also meant that momentum was maintained in an environment where no single body has responsibility for driving marine conservation. Results also pointed to places where the management scheme approach had not achieved its desired outcomes.

It was recognised that the current need to streamline expenditure posed a challenge to existing management arrangements, and that the loss of just a single financial contributor might lead to management schemes ceasing to function in their current form. It was not possible to identify a funding model that would resolve this problem but ideas have been developed that might help to explain the cost-benefits of schemes that employ a project officer. This information will be considered further as we develop the MPA management programme.

These outputs point to the need for careful consideration of

the way in which management of marine protected areas is co-ordinated and delivered to maintain and enhance the marine habitats and wildlife that they support, while securing site compliance with legal and non-legal obligations. Report outputs will be used to inform an analysis of commitments, priorities and resources for EMS management within the wider context of wider current and future MPA management.



Figure 2: Map showing location of EMS and the sites selected for this study.

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Where can I find further information about this and related research?

This review was delivered by a consortium led by Bright Angel Coastal Consultants Ltd. For more information contact Roger Morris brightangel.coastal@gmail.com

Alternatively, please contact Defra's Marine and Science and Evidence Unit: marinescience@defra.gsi.gov.uk

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