

A REVIEW OF RELEVANT TERRESTRIAL AND LAND USE PLANNING POLICIES RELATED TO THE WELSH NATIONAL MARINE PLAN

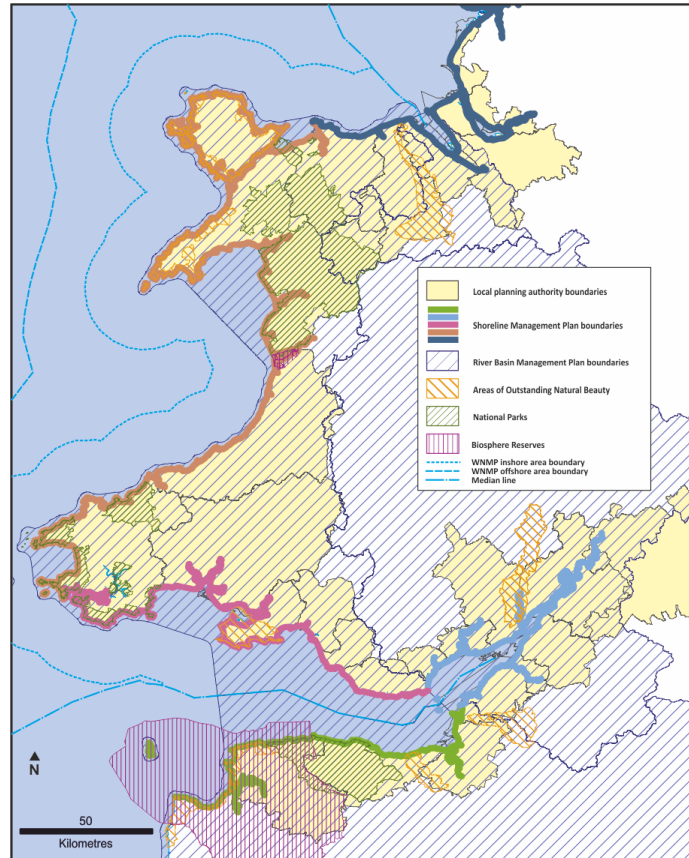
A project undertaken by the Severn Estuary Partnership/Cardiff University (2016)

Project Summary

Approach

This study was designed to provide a baseline of planning policy relevant to the Welsh National Marine Plan (WNMP) within development plans, Shoreline Management Plans, River Basin Management Plans and selected conservation plans. A simple content analysis approach was devised to identify coastal/marine policies relating to the the UK Government and Devolved Administrations' High Level Marine Objectives (*Achieving a Sustainable Marine Economy; Ensuring a Strong, Healthy and Just Society; Living within Environmental Limits; Promoting Good Governance; Using Sound Science Responsibly*) and related themes.

Boundaries of reviewed plans



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Findings

Development plans

The review has revealed a plethora of relevant policies of relevance to the emerging WMNP. Coastal matters within such plans are dealt with both explicitly and implicitly, with some topics, such as nature conservation and landscape protection, now deeply embedded in terrestrial planning culture. The wide variety of approaches to coastal policy tends to reflect the geographical remit of each plan as well as formal planning guidance from Government at the time of plan preparation. In the context of this study, not only has there been an extensive time period over which current adopted and emerging (draft) plans have been prepared (1996-), but there has also been a considerable variety of plan types (including structure, unitary and local plans) produced for the study region. Of particular note, has been the changing approach to spatial planning, both within Wales (through the Wales Spatial Plan) and within the English regions (regional planning) alongside diverging planning guidance and regimes in Wales and England, associated with devolution. This divergence is particularly apparent in the context of policy guidance relating to coastal risk.

In summary,

- Most plans contain a distinct coastal element. Many include specific 'coastal' policies relating to conditions or restrictions for new development, including policies for rural, undeveloped coastlines where development would only be permitted if a coastal location would be deemed essential (76% adopted plans; 82% draft plans). Fewer plans, however, explicitly defined a coastal zone (29% adopted plans; 18% draft plans). However, most refer to the specific characteristics of coastal areas in supporting text and a few include a reference to the importance of the coast in their vision statements. The key coastal themes considered within each development plan illustrate the diversity of approaches to coastal matters across the 'region' and the extent to which the geography of the LPA's coast in part dictates the focus of the development plan.
- 75% of the plans contain policies relating to specific marine economic sectors. Most policies relate to coastal tourism. Where plans have a marine or coastal sectoral policy, these generally promote the sector, rather than deter it.
- Under the *Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society* HLMO, aspects of safety, water quality and litter are scarce, with most identifying policies concerning biodiversity and nature conservation. Consideration of water quality, safety and litter generally relate to beaches.
- High regard is given to aspects of Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management with nearly all plans having either flood risk and/or coastal change policies. However, a smaller percentage of plans include reference to Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs) in supporting text for policies (44% adopted plans; 73% draft plans). The increase in such references within recent plans is noticeable. With regard to Natura 2000 sites, some Local Authority plans have policies referring to specific, named marine sites. Most have generic policies dealing with Marine Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) or European protected sites, and included reference to specific sites in supporting text. Generally recently developed plans include more detail on such sites.
- Only a small number of policies explicitly relate to coastal/marine aspects of the *Promoting Good Governance* HLMO. Within supportive text there is generally scarce reference to Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), Coastal Partnerships and other coastal networks, including Coastal Groups (coastal defence/shoreline management groups) and Relevant Authority groupings for Natura 2000 sites. There is

even less reference to marine planning, although a small number of draft plans include brief consideration of forthcoming Marine Plans, largely in supporting text. A slightly larger number of draft and recently developed plans refer to RBMPs with a small number including specific policies related to such matters.

- Although the development plan preparation process requires a strong evidence base, there are very few policies with an explicit coastal/marine dimension which relate to any of the key aspects of the *Using Sound Science Responsibility* HLMO.

AONB and biosphere reserve plans

Compared with the development plans, there are many fewer policies relevant to marine planning in these plans. However, there are occasional policies related to fisheries and offshore renewable energy generation.

River Basin Management Plans

There is a clear recognition of the pressures on the coastal water environment in all three River Basin Districts (RBDs). There is also a broad range of actions relevant to the WNMP both within the adopted 2009 and the 2014 consultation drafts. This includes specific actions relating to dredging activities, migratory fisheries, invasive species and pollution aspects.

Shoreline Management Plans

Given the central role played by Coastal Groups in SMP formulation, these plans not only set the policy for coastal defence management, but are also an important 'route map' for decision-makers. The policies within the SMP2s reflect broad-scale patterns associated with the geographical characteristics of the Wales' coasts. There is a clear focus on 'Hold the Line' (HTL) and 'No Active Intervention' (NAI) policies with 'Managed realignment' (MR) occurring along more limited stretches of coast. NAI policies are prevalent along much of Wales' rural rocky coasts whilst HTL policies are common in urban areas and where there is critical coastal transport infrastructure.

Recommendations

The summary findings and associated maps and tables provide a succinct overview of the extent and nature of marine and coastal policy content in terrestrial plans in Wales and adjoining local planning authorities. This package of 'evidence' could inform the future development of the WNMP. It is also suggested that elements of the methodology and approach could be modified for future, regular monitoring of integration between marine and relevant terrestrial plans. Finally, it is suggested that the results of the review are made widely available to stimulate discussion and joint working between land and marine-based planning regimes.

Full report: Ballinger, Rhoda C Ballinger (2016) *A review of terrestrial planning policies relevant to the Welsh National Marine Plan*, A report by the Severn Estuary Partnership/Cardiff University, Cardiff, 54 pp.

Acknowledgements

The author is particularly grateful to the following individuals for their invaluable contributions to this study, particularly their input to data collection (Dr Wendy Dodds and Dr Azmath Jaleel); data validation (Kathryn Dawson and Lucy Taylor); data checking and formatting (Zahra Fatima and Dr Azmath Jaleel); graphical (Geraint Ballinger) and cartographical (Alun Rogers) outputs. Special thanks are extended to Dr Iwan Ball and Mark Stafford for their guidance, particularly during the early stages of the project. Finally, the project team would like to thank WWF for providing the funds to support this research and for managing the project on behalf of the WNMP Stakeholder Reference Group.

