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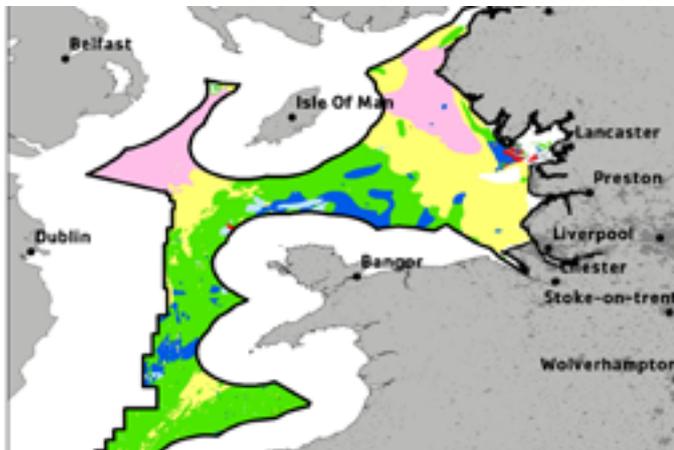
Irish Sea Conservation Zones is a project to help secure a healthy and productive future for the Irish Sea. We are working with people who have an interest in the Irish Sea and its future to recommend sites for Marine Conservation Zones in parts of the Irish Sea.

SECOND SNAPSHOT OF POTENTIAL ZONES

The latest thinking on potential new conservation areas in the Irish Sea is outlined in the Irish Sea Conservation Zones' second progress report.

Comments on the potential zones are being invited and will be considered as the project continues to refine its proposals.

The report shows the current thinking of the project's Regional Stakeholder Group, a group of around 40 people drawn from a diverse range of interests in the Irish Sea. It identifies the sizes, shapes and locations of ten possible new Marine Conservation Zones including, for the first time, zones in inshore waters of the Irish Sea project area, as well as offshore.



However, the second progress report is only a snapshot of the group's work so far.

It does not contain concrete recommendations for the locations of Marine Conservation Zones in the Irish Sea and the potential zones shown in the report are liable to change at later stages in the project.

Greg Whitfield, project manager at Irish Sea Conservation Zones, said: "I want to thank the regional stakeholder group for all their hard work over the last year, as well as the many people who have taken the time to fill out our questionnaires and feedback forms.

"It is now really important that people take a look at the potential zones and give us their feedback on them. The better the information we have, the better the Marine Conservation Zones that are recommended by the regional stakeholder group will be."

The aim is for Marine Conservation Zones to have the least impact possible on people's activities, but some restrictions will apply as the zones must meet guidelines for protecting species and habitats.

A third progress report will be available in late February next year. The final recommendations will then be presented to the government in June next year. A formal public consultation on the proposed zones will follow in late 2011 and early 2012.

The Second Progress Report and feedback forms can be downloaded from www.irishseaconservation.org.uk/progress-reports or requested by calling 01925 813 200.

YOUR INFORMATION IS KEY

We'd like to thank everyone who took the time to meet our liaison staff or fill in questionnaires during 2010.

By the end of the year we had met almost 3,000 people at over 230 meetings in 92 different locations in North West England, Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland and the Isle of Man.

As well as providing opportunities to talk to people about the project, the team gathered almost 300 questionnaires from sea users that capture vital firsthand knowledge about the Irish Sea. The questionnaires cover over 40 per cent of known UK commercial fishing vessels operating in the project area, as well as many recreational activities.



MEET THE TEAM



GREG WHITMAN: PROJECT MANAGER

Greg took over as Irish Sea Conservation Zones project manager in September, having previously worked as the project's Marine Protected Area planner since May 2009. He is a geomorphologist who has recently been awarded a PhD for his research on the impact of environmental change on the Bergantes River in Spain over the last 200,000 years. Having made the natural progression from rivers into the marine environment, he is currently enjoying applying his expertise to the Irish Sea Conservation Zones project, as well as acquiring new skills in a diverse and challenging role.

FISHERIES GUIDE

An easy-to-use guide to when and how any fishing regulations would be applied in Marine Conservation Zones is now available.

When Marine Conservation Zones are designated in 2012, it will not automatically mean that commercial fishing in that site will be restricted. Some species, habitats and features that will be protected by the zones are not sensitive to fishing activities, so no changes will be needed.

Also, any fishing restrictions that are required in Marine Conservation Zones will be applied on a case-by-case basis. This means that some may come into effect as soon as the zone is designated while others taking longer.

Defra is keen that non-regulatory measures such as voluntary agreements should be considered, as well as regulations such as fishing bylaws.

The guide can be downloaded from the Resources page of our website www.irishseaconservation.org.uk or requested by calling 01925 813 200.



MANX MARINE NATURE RESERVE

Proposals to create a new marine nature reserve at Ramsey Bay on the Isle of Man have opened to consultation.

The bay lies within the Isle of Man's inshore waters and so is separate to the area being looked at for possible Marine Conservation Zones in the Irish Sea.

John Shimmin, minister for the Isle of Man's Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture, said: "The Manx Fish Producers Organisation has proposed 40km² of Ramsey Bay and the Ballacash Channel as an area to be closed to scallop dredging and queenie trawling.

"This positive and proactive move by the Manx fishing industry is a fantastic development in the sustainable management of Manx seas.

"By working together to protect Ramsey Bay we can ensure the long-term future of our fisheries and at the same time the spectacular marine life of the area.

"Ramsey Bay is particularly suitable as a marine nature reserve because it will allow the Isle of Man to protect areas of diverse marine habitats including maerl beds, eelgrass meadows and kelp forests.

"These habitats are important because they are home to numerous species of plants and animals, stabilise the seabed, keep our seas clean and also store carbon like tropical rainforests."

Tom Bryan-Brown, chief executive of the Manx Fish Producers, said: "The fishermen of this organisation have proposed that this area of Ramsey Bay should be shut down to scallop and queenie fishing.

"This will hopefully help the stocks of scallops and queen scallops but will also by association, fulfil the Island's obligation to the protection of particular marine species and habitats.

"The fishermen are pleased to be taking a proactive role in the creation of this Marine Protected Area."

PROJECT PARTNERS



SISTER PROJECTS

