

Marine Protected Areas – Displacement Study

Introduction

1. The purpose of this paper is to set out a proposed approach to the study of displacement resulting from management measures within each of the possible Marine Protected Areas (pMPAs). The paper includes:
 - background information on management measures and displacement
 - principles underlying the study
 - the key proposed tasks
 - identification of those to be involved

Background: Management Measures

2. The consultation on possible Marine Protected Areas (pMPAs)¹ is accompanied by, amongst others, a Sustainability Appraisal Report, an Environmental Report, and a draft management options paper for each of the pMPAs².
3. Each management options paper:
 - outlines the conservation objectives for the protected features and the nature and distribution of the protected features in each of the pMPAs;
 - outlines the known activities that take place within the possible MPA;
 - summarises those activities which are considered capable of affecting the protected features of the possible MPA, and those which are not; and
 - for those activities which are considered capable of affecting the protected features, considers the pressures the activity may exert on the protected features.
4. Through the application of this approach, initial management options have been drafted for relevant activities:
 - no additional management is required (existing management is sufficient);
 - management is introduced to reduce pressure, or limit future pressure;
 - management is introduced to remove pressure or avoid pressure.

As noted in paragraph 6, these initial options are at an early stage and require to be reviewed.

5. On the basis of this information, the potential management measures that might be required to support achievement of conservation objectives for MPA features have been identified. The principles underlying the management measures are as follows:
 - The need for management will be determined on the basis of the features present and the risk each activity poses to achievement of the conservation objectives.
 - Only activities that are considered to negatively affect the features will require management.
 - Management will be on a feature by feature basis meaning there is the potential for zoned management within individual MPAs.
 - Stakeholders will be engaged in the development of management options.

¹ MPA consultation document is available at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/07/2072>

² Draft management option papers are available at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-consultation>

6. It should be emphasised that the management options papers are working drafts that have been produced to support initial discussions with stakeholders about management of activities in the possible MPAs. The development of site management is an on-going process which will continue after the conclusion of the formal consultation on the pMPAs. Changes will be made to reflect any relevant information that becomes available, e.g. through stakeholder discussions.

Background: Displacement

7. Displacement of marine activities, as a result of pMPA designation, is a key concern of some stakeholders. Displacement could result from the introduction of measures to manage pMPAs, and these management measures may have consequences for the environment:
 - Where no management measures are recommended, this would result in continuation of the status quo. Small-scale, local effects may occur but these are unlikely to be significant. (If they were significant, management measures would have been recommended.)
 - Where the recommendation is to reduce/limit pressures, this may result in amendments to current practices.
 - Where the recommendation is to remove/avoid pressures, this may result in the activity being discontinued or displacement of the activity to another location. This could result in new pressures in this location or an intensification of already-existing pressures.
8. The following marine activities have been reviewed for the SEA, in terms of the sensitivities of MPA features to these activities and the potential for management measures:
 - marine disposal
 - commercial fishing (mobile gear; static gear; diver-operated gear)
 - infrastructure (renewables; oil and gas; cables)
 - aquaculture (finfish; shellfish)
 - moorings/ anchorages
9. Very few of the biodiversity features are not sensitive to at least one of the marine activities identified in paragraph 8, and management measures have been proposed for all the features potentially affected. (No specific measures have been recommended for the management of geodiversity features.)
10. The activities which appear to have the greatest potential to result in displacement comprise:
 - commercial fishing using bottom-contact mobile gear, particularly hydraulic gear;
 - commercial fishing using diver-operated hydraulic gear; and
 - some use of static gear.
11. Some uncertainties remain, particularly with features where the recommendation has been to reduce and/or limit the pressure. Much of this uncertainty focuses around the type of measure to be employed, be it spatial and/or temporal restriction, or changes to gear types or target species.

12. Review of the potential for displacement has demonstrated the following:

- Designation of some pMPA features does not appear to require management measures, and these would therefore not result in displacement.
- Many of the management measures can be zoned, so it is likely to result in activities moving to another part of the pMPA, rather than being removed altogether (which would likely result in displacement) .
- For infrastructure (renewables, oil and gas, cables), MPA features will need to be considered in the course of project siting and design. For the purposes of this SEA, it has been assumed that such measures will be able to successfully mitigate adverse effects on these features, and that displacement will not occur.

13. For those activities where displacement will occur, it is not possible at this stage to identify alternative locations. This will be the subject of discussion with stakeholders in the course of the consultation. We are therefore unable to assess the potential environmental effects of new and/or intensified activity, other than to note the following:

- moving activities to new areas that are currently unused or have low levels of use would likely result in effects on the seabed, e.g. abrasion, surface damage, etc. The significance of these effects would depend on the nature of the seabed affected and the sensitivity of the habitat.
- moving activities to areas that are already in use may intensify existing environmental effects, including pressures on benthic habitats, pressures on fish stocks, risk of injury through collision, etc. Again, the significance of these effects would depend on the area in question, the type of activity and the current level of activity

Proposal

14. The following are key principles:

- The economic assessment focused on the potential loss of fishing activity. This study will focus on the identification of displacement.
- All parties with relevant information and experience will be asked to participate.
- This work will be undertaken alongside, and integrated with, the development of the management options.

Key Tasks

15. Key tasks include:

- review of similar studies from other countries.
- identification of current fishing activity, including location, target species and gear.
- identification of appropriate management measures.
- identification of potential for displacement and/or loss resulting from these management measures.
- identification of locations to which displaced activities may move, target species, gear etc
- review of (where available) environmental characteristics of these areas
- assessment of potential for environmental effects

Required Information

16. The information to be reviewed includes:

- SCOTmap
- VMS data
- Inshore Fisheries Group management plans
- socio-economic assessment (ABPmer)

17. Helpful information from the fishing industry could include:

- location of existing and potential future fishing
- target species
- gear
- local environmental information

Key Participants

18. Key participants in the study will include:

- Marine Scotland / Scottish Government
- Marine Scotland Science
- JNCC
- SNH
- fishing industry (inshore and offshore):
 - representatives of industry groups
 - individuals from the industry

19. A Project Steering Group will be established; membership will be subject to discussion but is likely to include:

- Marine Scotland / Scottish Government
- Marine Scotland Science
- JNCC
- SNH
- representatives of the fishing industry (inshore and offshore):

20. The members of the Project Advisory Group will also be consulted as the study progresses, to capture any existing information, interests and/or concerns.

Timescale/Next Steps

21. Once the principles of the proposal have been agreed, a timescale and tasked programme will be prepared and circulated to the Project Steering Group.

Scottish Government Environmental Assessment Team

16 October 2013