

Managing Ireland's Coasts Sustainably

Sustainable Water Network (SWAN) position on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)

Many diverse activities and industries, along with some of our largest cities are located around Ireland's coast¹.

Often these activities are vitally linked to the coast itself, such as for marine & coastal recreation & tourism, fisheries & aquaculture, shipping & port activities, energy production, commerce & trade. These activities, operating at different spatial scales, can cause many, cumulative effects; inappropriate development, competing demands for natural resources, interference with natural processes, pollution, disturbance and/or displacement of priority species and habitat degradation, all of which need to be addressed.

Our coast is also a complex environment that is naturally continuously changing, and facing significant challenges including the need for climate change mitigation and adaptation e.g. adapting wetlands to deal with future climate change, rejuvenation of coastal economies, measures to address decline in social resilience, and balancing development with ecological quality. Successfully responding to these issues requires an ongoing process where two essential conditions are met:

- **all those with a stake in our coastal areas must be involved** in working collaboratively to understand the challenges and agree the best use of resources in order to manage activities in an integrated way, and;
- **coastal resources must be used in a sustainable manner**, so that development meets the needs of current generations without compromising future generations' ability to meet their own needs.²

Coastal stakeholders (both statutory and non-statutory) working together, sharing knowledge and information, enables more joined-up thinking and coherent policy development; better co-ordination of

¹ For the purposes of this document, the coast is taken to include land adjoining or near the sea and extends to include all the estuarine and marine waters within the Irish jurisdiction.

² This is the definition of sustainable development from the World Commission on Environment & Development (Brundtland Commission) Report 1987.

coastal activities; improved relationships between all parties; better quality of life; and sustainable resource use. Given the range of agencies and authorities linked with the diverse activities both on and offshore along our coasts, the current sectoral approach does not address the complex interactions between these activities and the coastal environment. **An effectively integrated management approach to our coasts (specifically Integrated Coastal Zone Management) is a process that can address social, economic, environmental and governance issues faced by coastal communities.** It allows us to secure healthy and thriving coasts and coastal communities in Ireland; and to meet our obligations in relation to the EU's Water Framework Directive (WFD), Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), and Habitats and Birds Directives.

SWAN recommends the following programme of actions to enable delivery of successful integrated management of Ireland's coasts and marine waters.

Clear commitment to integrated coastal management

1. Establish a national coastal policy and strategy to progress integrated management of coastal resources.

This must meet the requirements of the EC Recommendation on ICZM and incorporate existing experience of good practice and human capacity within local and regional government, state agencies, NGOs and other participants within ICZM initiatives.

2. Create a legal basis for ICZM in Ireland. There is an immediate opportunity of the Maritime Area and Foreshore (Amendment) Bill to deliver this.

3. National coastal policy and strategy must contain a strong commitment to public

participation. This must include stakeholder engagement and dialogue; capacity building; knowledge exchange; sharing of experiences; and fostering collaborative working relationships between all interested parties.

Structures and mechanisms to deliver integrated coastal management

4. Designate and resource a statutory body with responsibility for co-ordinating implementation of ICZM in Ireland. Such an organisation must be empowered to require the support of other statutory and non-statutory bodies.

5. Establish a National ICZM Implementation Group to implement policy and strategy on ICZM. This Group must include state and non-state actors.

6. Local government agencies must appoint coastal managers

with responsibility for liaison with local communities, existing stakeholder networks, and within local government and other relevant public bodies. Coastal managers must be consulted on planning proposals in marine and coastal environments.

7. Develop coastal stakeholder networks at regional and local scales as a means of delivering effective participative management, as set out in 3 above.

8. Use the opportunity afforded through the Maritime Area and Foreshore (Amendment) Bill 2013 to instigate a process of capacity building (e.g. within local authorities) for ICZM. Incorporate the experiences of local authorities already engaged in ICZM oriented initiatives.

9. Establish coastal partnerships and forums, based on successful best-practise examples, as a means for all interested parties to investigate best options for co-management of coastal resources, and co-existence between multiple users of coastal space within specific areas.

Scientific requirements for successful implementation

10. Decisions of Government Departments with responsibility for coastal management must reflect the most up to date scientific evidence.

They should develop more formalised working relationships between research / academia and local / regional / national government, and apply lessons learned from successful experiences of this.

11. Develop and maintain a single publicly accessible centralised resource as a means of collating all data and information for better decision-making for coastal management and planning, and to support implementation of legislation. This resource should include data from citizen science projects.

12. Undertake thorough long term data and ecological monitoring of the coastal zone. This is particularly important in light of climate change, biodiversity loss and expanding coastal uses.

13. Adopt methodologies for assessing single and multi-use cumulative impacts of coastal and marine developments.

Necessary actions for successful implementation

14. Establish a cross-compliance and enforcement mechanism across all marine planning and coastal management to ensure that the objectives of all marine

plans, strategies and laws (e.g. the WFD and MSFD) are achieved in a coordinated manner. This complements actions currently undertaken under the auspices of the Regional Seas Conventions, such as OSPAR.

15. Government and competent authorities must incorporate the coastal zone in all marine planning processes, including Marine Spatial Planning.

16. Engage with the Northern Ireland government to ensure that management of coasts is carried out on an all-island, internationally co-ordinated, basis.

17. Statutory bodies must support coastal and marine management initiatives that focus on awareness raising and training and that incorporate citizen science as part of their obligations for data collection and reporting.

18. Require full compliance with the Aarhus Convention by all bodies with a responsibility for the coastal and marine environment to support improved stakeholder participation.

Wider potential of integrated management

19. Use participatory implementation of ICZM and the advantages the process provides to support the implementation of

European Directives, such as the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Water Framework Directive, and Habitats Directive.

For example through:

- Improved stakeholder engagement and participation
- Integrated governance
- Consolidation of datasets
- Generation of data through monitoring conducted by coastal stakeholders

20. Use the opportunity of ICZM to ensure that all agencies involved in coastal and marine management appreciate and communicate clearly with stakeholders on two key issues of potential misunderstanding regarding coastal management:

- that sustainable growth and sustainable development are not the same³.
- that ICZM encompasses not just environmental but also social, economic and governance issues faced by coastal communities.

For further reading see: 'Mahony, C., Kopke, K., Twomey, S., O'Hagan, A.M., Farrell, E. & Gault, J. (2014) Integrated Coastal Zone Management in Ireland - meeting Water Framework Directive and Marine Strategy Framework Directive targets for Ireland's transitional and coastal waters through implementation of Integrated Coastal Zone Management. Report prepared under contract for Sustainable Water Network (SWAN).

³ Sustainable development is defined on pg.1. Sustainable growth is not possible on a planet with limited resources.