Towards a Multi-Sector Understanding of Challenges and Opportunities in MSP in the North Sea

Monday, 29 February 2016   2 – 5 pm GMT

Summary

Background

Sponsored and facilitated by World Ocean Council and the Scottish Association for Marine Science, the webinar engaged interested private sector parties in discussing challenges and perspectives on marine spatial planning (MSP) in the North Sea Region. Goals were:

1. Identification of opportunities and benefits for industry through MSP;
2. Identification of challenges in MSP; and,
3. Ideas for support and input by industry.

This summary provides key points from the discussion.

Potential Opportunities and Benefits for Industry through MSP

- **Early dialogue in the pre-planning stages can help to:**
    - Secure a more appropriate and balanced outcome for sectors;
    - Provide an understanding of users' needs from MSP;
    - More effectively address conflicts by clarifying actual versus perceived conflicts;
    - Facilitate multi-use of sea areas by encouraging advanced collaboration; and,
    - Provide early insight into planning implications of MSP, enabling industry input and feedback (such as a policy released for comment).
- **MSP can increase certainty for investors.**
    - Defining key areas for development provides certainty, particularly for projects which require 7+ years of lead in time for planning.
    - However, when the interaction of MSP with prevailing governance related to decision making on marine activities (e.g., EIA and licensing) is unclear, it may not provide certainty for investors.
- **MSP can address conflicts in a spatial dimension by providing clearer targets and properly defined areas.**
- **MSP can encourage co-location of uses.**
    - For example, co-locating tourism and some offshore developments (e.g. East Coast England wind farms) may have positive benefits.
    - MSP provides an integrated framework for optimizing benefits and can support multiple use.

- **MSP can offer a common information base.**
  - Different regulatory bodies and sectors can use MSP data to make decisions including biophysical and ecological information, human use aspects, distribution of activities and future planning of potential activities.

Challenges for Industry

- **Ocean industries seek clarity of the relationship between MSP and other governance mechanisms.**
  - The existence of other regulatory and management regimes complicates MSP processes. For example, fishery management councils have existing mechanisms and governance processes. MSP needs to account for these.
  - MSP needs to incorporate MPA processes when possible, rather than through separate planning. Early dialogue through MSP can help to explore appropriate locations for MPAs in relation to industry activities.
- **Sharing information and data among businesses and industries is often affected by commercial sensitivity.**
  - Private sector users will consider the proprietary nature of the information and how to remain strategic as they move forward in particular regions. This continues to be a market-based reality and planning efforts must recognise and adapt given the different timeframes of business development.
- **Gathering of data on marine activities is less mature than environmental data.**
  - The OSPAR Commission as Regional Seas Body for the Northeast Atlantic has been gathering data for a long time including trends in status of different human activities. This data is at a high-level scale at this stage which is less useful for smaller scale decision-making.
- **Data and information gathering and sharing needs to be consistent and compatible.**
  - OSPAR is looking at assessment and monitoring, agreeing templates, standardisation of formats and timeframes to enable comparisons. Even with this effort, data sharing remains problematic.
  - There also are challenges in the time lag in data to get the overall environmental and user picture.
- **Lack of funds hampers MSP efforts.**
  - Some regions will have more resources than others but reduced public funding to support MSP continues to hinder regional and national efforts.
- **Regulatory and authority gaps and uncertainties are challenges for the private sector.**
  - In the North Sea in particular, questions remain about the appropriate roles for EU Member States and the European Commission (EC). The EC has tried to initiate a number of preparatory projects for cooperation and harmonisation but there is still a question around who will lead MSP in the region. Good examples of where this works and where industry benefits would be useful to encourage cooperation.
- **MSP needs to take into account industries (like shipping) that work across jurisdictions.**
  - Consistency in the application and approach of regulations and policies is the mantra of the shipping industry. The purpose of the IMO is to set international regulations so that there is consistency for ships as they move through different jurisdictions. Disparities make it difficult for ship operators and can be expensive and unfair. MSP needs to move toward consistency as much as possible.
- **MSP processes need to be strategic to engage stakeholders.**
  - It is beneficial for stakeholders to know at which points in the MSP process are the most useful to engage. MSP can convene users but without a clear agenda or decision points, it is unclear to users if it is a good use of their time. MSP needs to be specific about what will be achieved and the outcomes of meetings and activities.

o There may be different approaches for different stakeholders. For example, trade associations may be able to better engage early in the process to keep many sector businesses informed. When the process reaches the point of data gathering, mapping or decisions regarding use areas, planners should consider outreach to individual businesses.

o Other key points from this discussion include transparency in the MSP process and providing agenda items up front.

Opportunities for Industry Engagement

- **Industry can make great contributions to data and information gathering, sharing and analysing.**
  o The European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODnet) (http://www.emodnet.eu/) consists of more than 100 organisations assembling marine data, products and metadata to make these fragmented resources more available. EMODnet is currently in its second development phase with the target to be fully deployed by 2020.
  o The European MSP Platform offers targeted information through several interactive formats. The interconnected functions offer a hub for Europe's network of MSP practitioners. (contact: David Johnson at david.johnson@seascapeconsultants.co.uk)
- **Industry can participate in formal and informal stakeholder groups.**
  o Some planning bodies maintain stakeholder liaison groups that enable stakeholders to attend pre-planning events, receive information quickly, and pursue opportunities to network with other stakeholders.
  o Some groups that currently exist:
    - MSP Research Network – http://www.msprn.net/ - an informal grouping of scientists, policy-makers and practitioners who wish to contribute to the development of marine spatial planning through academic-based research.
    - ICES Working Group Marine Planning and Coastal Zone Management - http://www.ices.dk/community/groups/Pages/WGMPCZM.aspx - ICES Working Group Marine Planning and Coastal Zone Management (WGMPCZM) discusses current developments around Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) and Coastal Zone Management (CZM) in the ICES area.
    - UK Marine Industries Alliance - http://www.ukmarinealliance.co.uk/
  o Upcoming Meetings include:
    - 8-9 June 2016 – Azores (contact: David Johnson at david.johnson@seascapeconsultants.co.uk)
    - DG Mare conference early 2017 – Information TBA (NIRAS contact: Sara Mendez at SMZ@niras.com
    - UNESCO conference early 2017 – Information TBA

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