Marine planning workshops: Options

3 to 4 July 2012
Norwich and Hull

The plan options stage is a major step in the Marine Management Organisation's (MMO) marine planning process and addresses different alternatives for delivering the plan objectives. These options will be appraised and a preferred option or combination of options will be developed to the draft plan stage.

In order to gain stakeholder feedback on the draft options, two workshops were held with groups representing a range of marine activities.

The aims of the workshops were to:

- introduce the initial options and our approach to options development
- get feedback on the implications of each option for different areas of interest and how to address these implications
- understand the views on the proposed options and related responses.

55 stakeholders joined us over the two days in Norwich and Hull. The stakeholders represented all key sectors and the majority of attendees have continually engaged with us throughout the marine planning process. We will be taking all comments and feedback from the workshops into consideration between now and the end of July to work towards a preferred option and draft plan for submission to the Government at the end of September 2012.

Four options were presented to stakeholders at the workshops based on offshore renewable wind energy (A and B) and potential aggregate extraction sites (C and D) with assessment of compatibility for other sectors. These were chosen because the future projection of growth for other sectors was difficult to quantify and this was a tool to encourage discussion and to gain insight into sector specific implications and responses. For additional information on options generation and the specific options presented, please go to our website www.marinemanagement.org.uk/marineplanning/

Throughout the series of workshops, similar themes and issues were covered and we have identified a number of key messages for marine planning. The messages are split into overarching themes and sector-specific messages (in no particular order).

Overarching themes

- The potential displacement of sectors especially fishing was a recurrent theme, particularly for options A and C.
- Round 3 developers are keen to consider the opportunities for co-location within offshore wind farms and are keen to find ways to integrate other activities within the development areas.

- Need to consider the environmental impacts of the initial options on the environment and coastal erosion.
- There is a lot of interest for activities to co-locate through delivery of activities in the same location but at different times.
- Stakeholders would like to see research commissioned on a number of issues including the impact of cables on the environment (electromagnetic fields), suitable locations for future landfall of cables, greater understanding of shellfish wintering grounds and the impact wind deployment could have and the perceived link between aggregates extraction and coastal erosion. This research will not be in time to influences these plans.
- There is a need to define the terminology we intend to use in the draft plan and plan policies such as ‘safeguarding’ and ‘signalling.’

Sector-specific messages

- Marine planning could implement mechanisms to minimise the impact of cabling. It is important to note that many stakeholders were keen to see cables buried – a position the industry already supports.
- Shipping is a significant contributor to the east coast economy and re-routing leading to increased steaming times could impact on the economy and lead to greater displacement of other sectors.
- It was highlighted that data presented was not the most up-to-date and that the zone appraisal process by developers was superior, but the presented options were to generate discussion and to pinpoint issues for all areas of interests in order to input into option development. Furthermore, the target zone capacities are only projected to 2020 and not for the life of the plan (to 2033).
- There is a need to assess the potential growth of carbon capture and storage and the interaction with wind to include safeguarding of pipelines.
- There were questions about the potential co-location of aquaculture with Round 3 zones.

Options

Throughout the day we set tasks for stakeholders and in particular we asked for feedback on all options presented. An overview of the comments for each option is summarised below.

Option A

Option A was a developer-led option which gave priority to offshore renewable wind within Round 3 zones. This option was thought to give more certainty to investors and therefore, would give the biggest economic benefits to the area. It was also felt to be more in line with national policy with regards to national targets for renewable energy. This option was considered to displace other activities especially fishing and would restrict temporal co-location with other activities especially the potential for aggregate extraction before wind development. However, it was acknowledged that this option did not fully reflect reality as developers are looking at how other activities can be accommodated in Round 3. There was a feeling that the impacts of other activities on the environment should be minimised, where they are displaced.

Option B

Option B is the option which gives equal weighting to all sectors (technical, social, economic and environment) within Round 3 zones and it was felt that this would offer more opportunity to implement an integrated approach and would minimise impacts outside of Round 3 zones. However, communication between sectors must be a priority to ensure early engagement and reduce conflict between sectors. This was the most prevalent option (see table 1) as it has the potential for promoting co-location across all sectors.

Option C

Option C looks at the potential for aggregate resource outside of Round 3 zones and its compatibility with other sectors. It was felt that the exclusion of inshore aggregate extraction would minimise the impact on some inshore fisheries however the exclusion outside of Round 3 could displace other activities. As with Option A, it was felt that this would promote investment for wind (and also for the aggregates industry) by giving more certainty to investors.

Option D

Option D promotes co-location between aggregates and offshore renewable wind within Round 3 zones and would minimise displacement outside of these areas. It was felt that this could cause conflict as aggregate resource could potentially conflict with preferred areas for wind deployment but future extraction could be an option after wind decommissioning.

The following table summarises the preferred option or combination of options. Please note that the decision on the preferred option will be made based on a number of factors, one of which is the stakeholder input from the workshops.

Table	Preferred option
1 – Norwich	A + C
2 – Norwich	A + D
3 – Norwich	No preferred option – least favourable Option A
4 – Norwich	B + C
1 – Hull	B + C
2 – Hull	B + D – least favourable Option A
3 – Hull	B
4 – Hull	No preferred option – Option B more opportunity for integrated approach

Summary

We will be taking all comments into consideration and they provide us with stakeholder views which feed into the options process and development of a preferred option.

All comments will contribute to the collation of a preferred option and draft policies by the end of September 2012. Engagement with stakeholders will be targeted based on the key issues marine planning can address in these first marine plans. We will meet with stakeholders, bringing groups together where needed, to discuss specific issues and agree an approach to be reflected in the marine plan. The draft plan will be submitted for government clearance at the end of September and subject to a formal consultation (minimum of 12 weeks) in early 2013.

If you would like more information about marine planning, please email planning@marinemanagement.org.uk or call 0191 376 2790.