

Marine Strategy Framework Directive Newsletter

ISSUE 4

June 2011

Requirements of the Directive: A reminder

July 2012 – publish initial assessment of the status of UK waters.

July 2012 – publish characteristics of GES for UK waters, including associated targets and indicators.

July 2014 – monitoring programmes in place to measure progress towards GES.

Dec 2015 – programmes of measures for achieving GES developed.

Dec 2016 – programmes of measures for achieving GES implemented

EU Commission Decision on GES

In September 2010 the European Commission published a Decision on Criteria and Methodological Standards of Marine Waters. This is a key document which includes detailed criteria and indicators for each of the Descriptors of GES, which Member States must use as they implement the Directive and develop their environmental targets and monitoring programmes. This document is an important part in the process of setting out what achieving GES means in practice. The Decision can be found at:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2010:232:0014:0024:EN:PDF>

February 2011 Workshop

Defra and the devolved administrations hosted a successful policy workshop in February 2011 to update stakeholders on the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and inform the process of determining Good Environmental Status and associated targets and indicators. In particular the workshop highlighted that:

1. The question of scale is a critical issue. The importance of work underway within OSPAR¹ and the EU in order to reach a common understanding and approach to the Descriptors of GES was underlined. The MSFD team were able to reassure stakeholders that the UK is in a strong position in its dealings with other Member States and is working hard to ensure coordinated interpretations of the Directive.
2. Both quantitative and qualitative targets will be necessary in order to underpin our understanding of GES.
3. Determining a baseline for several of the Descriptors such as noise and seafloor integrity will be challenging given our differing levels of understanding.
4. Trend based targets will be adopted in the event that the evidence base does not support the establishment of quantitative thresholds.
5. It will be necessary to use different types of targets such as state, pressure and operational targets for certain Indicators.

The results of this workshop have been fed back to Cefas and JNCC who are currently leading the development of technical advice on options for UK targets and indicators for Good Environmental Status.

Technical Stakeholder Meetings

The Defra MSFD team organised two technical meetings on 25th March and 25th May 2011 in London to allow stakeholders an opportunity to provide technical input into the ongoing Cefas-led scientific advice process for Descriptors 2,3,5,7,8,9,10 and 11 and JNCC-led scientific advice process for Descriptors 1,4 and 6.

An 'issues log' of key points raised at the meetings is being prepared for circulation shortly; with specific actions assigned to Defra, JNCC and Cefas.

If you would like to read the full February workshop report or the 'issues log' for the two technical stakeholder meetings please contact

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¹ (the regional seas body whose jurisdiction UK waters come under)

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Next Steps: Stakeholder Engagement

The technical advice currently being developed experts led by Cefas and JNCC will be used by Defra and the Devolved Administrations to develop proposals for UK targets and indicators for GES, which we hope to formally consult on during the **winter of 2011/2012**.

What's happening in OSPAR?

The need to coordinate implementation at a regional seas level is explicit within the MSFD and it is through OSPAR that this coordination will take place.

The Intersessional Correspondence Group on MSFD (ICG-MSFD) met last on 19th April 2011. Amongst other things the group exchanged information on progress towards national implementation and considered a series of recently drafted advice documents on the Descriptors of GES from each of the OSPAR Committees. Discussions within the group indicate that the UK has made good progress in implementing the Directive in comparison to other OSPAR Contracting Parties which places us in a strong position to continue guiding the process of regional coordination.

Focus on Socioeconomics

The European Commission has set up a Working Group on Economic and Social Assessment (WG ESA) which has produced, co-led by the UK, a guidance document on the socio-economic aspects of the Initial Assessment

The working group consists of Member States, representatives from the European Commission, the European Environment Agency (EEA), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Regional Seas Conventions such as OSPAR, HELCOM etc.

The guidance document produced describes an approach to socio-economic analysis that uses the DPSIR (Drivers, Pressures, Status, Impact, Response) framework and accounts for the full range of ecosystem goods and services. Defra will be using this guidance document as we develop the socio-economic element of the UK initial assessment. Further details of the guidance document can be found on our website <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/marine/msfd/>

As part of their work to support Defra's implementation of the MSFD, Eftec and CEFAS have developed a "Handbook for Undertaking Socio-economic Analysis for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive: Practical Guidelines for Applied Analysis". This handbook has been developed to guide the internal work of the project. It outlines the scope of the socio-economic requirements of the Directive, and shows how these requirements can be delivered through the use of established economic tools, in particular cost-benefit analysis. Building on recent CEFAS and Eftec experience in analyzing the implications of the Directive, the handbook will be revised during July and made available to external stakeholders.

Defra and Marine Scotland have also let a contract to ABPMer to develop a "business as usual" scenario for the MSFD. The purpose of the business as usual scenario is to support the MSFD initial assessment, notably helping us to estimate the costs of degradation of the marine environment, as required by the Directive. The project will look at trends in uses of the marine environment, changes in drivers and pressures and hence the expected future state of the environment focussing on both the descriptors for Good Environmental Status and key ecosystem services going from 2007/8 to 2030. It will be an important input into the UK's own impact assessment and will help with further work to develop policy scenarios for future phases of the directive. The work is expected to be completed in June 2011 and will be disseminated to interested stakeholders. Main conclusions will be included in the UK's draft initial assessment.

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Contact the teams

Below are the key contacts in each of the government departments;

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Welsh Assembly Government

How does MSFD link with the Water Framework Directive, Habitats Directive and OSPAR?

Broad overlaps exist across the high level biodiversity and environmental quality aspirations of these four international obligations. Each of the three EU Directives aims to secure 'Good' or 'Favourable' status defined in terms of the conservation of habitats, species or a wider range of environmental parameters, and the OSPAR Convention seeks to 'protect and conserve' biological diversity. These four obligations are similar in that they all contain ambitious aspirations for biodiversity across the territories to which they apply - aspiring to achieve healthy marine ecosystems balanced with sustainable human use of the resources available. It would therefore seem reasonable to begin to align their monitoring and assessment requirements through national and international implementation as far as possible. This will ensure that a broadly equivalent standard for marine biodiversity and ecosystem health is being strived for across Europe and its regions.

In coastal waters, which extend out to one nautical mile², both the WFD and the MSFD apply. However, in these areas the MSFD only applies for aspects of Good Environmental Status that are not already addressed by the WFD. This includes the following areas:

1. impacts of underwater noise;
2. impacts of litter;
3. commercial fisheries;
4. certain aspects of biodiversity - the MSFD requirements cover all aspects of biodiversity (including food webs and sea-floor biodiversity), but the WFD only covers the following biological quality elements: benthic invertebrates, macroalgae, angiosperms, phytoplankton and transitional water fish.

Specific environmental objectives for inland, estuarial and coastal waters are set out in statutory River Basin Management Plans. Environmental protection and improvement measures for marine waters beyond coastal waters, and for impacts on coastal waters that are not covered by the Water Framework Directive will need to be covered by the targets and measures developed under the MSFD.

² Out to three nautical miles in Scotland