

General Overview

SEPA welcomes the Marine Scotland consultation on the draft Scottish Marine Regions Order 2013. Defining the geographic extent of the Scottish Marine Regions is seen as a very positive step relating to the spatial planning of the marine environment.

SEPA believes the management of these Scottish Marine Regions via the Marine Planning Partnerships will be essential for the successful delivery of aims of the National Marine Plan at a local and regional level.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

1. Do you agree with the proposals set out in the draft Scottish Marine Regions Order 2013?

Yes No

If no, please explain why not and your suggested alternative(s).

SEPA welcomes the proposals relating to the defining of the geographic boundaries for the 11 Scottish Marine Regions. This is a positive step in the development of the marine planning at the regional level, under the framework of Scotland's National Marine Plan.

2. Do you have any further comments? In particular we are seeking views on

- the drafting of the Order;
- the co-ordinates establishing the marine region boundaries;
- the boundaries outlined at paragraph 8 above;
- the names of the regions suggested; and
- the illustrative map.

SEPA supports the creation of these eleven Scottish Marine Regions, which will then be used for the purposes of regional marine planning. This will allow for strategy planning of the marine environment; as well as prioritisation at the local level. The Scottish Marine Regions and the Marine Planning Partnerships will be best placed to implement the UK Marine Policy Statement and will aid and assist in the planning of the marine environment.

SEPA is aware of the difficulties in establishing appropriate boundaries in the marine environment, which align with other marine boundaries already in existence. SEPA supports the rationale of 11 Scottish Marine Regions, which will be large enough to allow for appropriate spatial planning and also reflect similar biological and geographical traits within each region.

It is acknowledged that the proposed Scottish Marine Regions (SMR) have some boundaries which are broadly similar to the Local Plan Districts (LPD) established under the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 and the Area Advisory Groups (AAG) for river basin management planning. However, there are other boundaries where there

is little alignment. SEPA feels that it is more important to ensure that the SMRs, LPDs and AAGs liaise together to improve the environment, than have all boundaries aligned.

The role of the Marine Planning Partnerships to co-ordinate and inform other local engagement groups will be vitally important to help ensure that Scotland meets its environmental objectives, as specified under the Water Framework Directive, the Floods Directive and Marine Strategy Framework Directive. Specifically this would relate to the liaison of the Marine Planning Partnerships with the Area Advisory Groups and the Flood Risk Management (FRM) Local Advisory Groups or FRM Partnerships, where appropriate, established under the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 (i.e. offering a better connectivity between terrestrial planning for fluvial and coastal flooding and the marine plans).

In 2011 SEPA consulted on the names of the Local Plan Districts under the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009. A map of the Local Plan Districts can be viewed on SEPA's website at this link:

http://www.sepa.org.uk/flooding/flood_risk_management/national_flood_risk_assessment/information.aspx

Amongst the responses received by SEPA were suggestions from local stakeholders that the district name 'Outer Hebrides' would be preferable to 'Western Isles' and this region name was changed to 'Outer Hebrides'.

3. Do you believe that the creation of Scottish Marine Regions discriminates disproportionately between persons defined by age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, race and religion and belief?

Yes No

SEPA has no comment to make on this question.

4. If you answered yes to question 3 in what way do you believe that the creation of Scottish Marine Regions is discriminatory?

N/A

Conclusion

SEPA supports the introduction of the 11 Scottish Marine Regions and the defining of each marine region boundary. This will allow for a Marine Planning Partnership to be established in each marine region in the near future, which in turn will allow for the local management of marine spatial planning. The Marine Planning Partnerships' co-ordination and change with other local engagement groups will be vitally important to help ensure that Scotland meets its environmental objectives.