

Maritime Spatial Planning Country Information

Ireland

Contact

MSP in general

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Last revision date

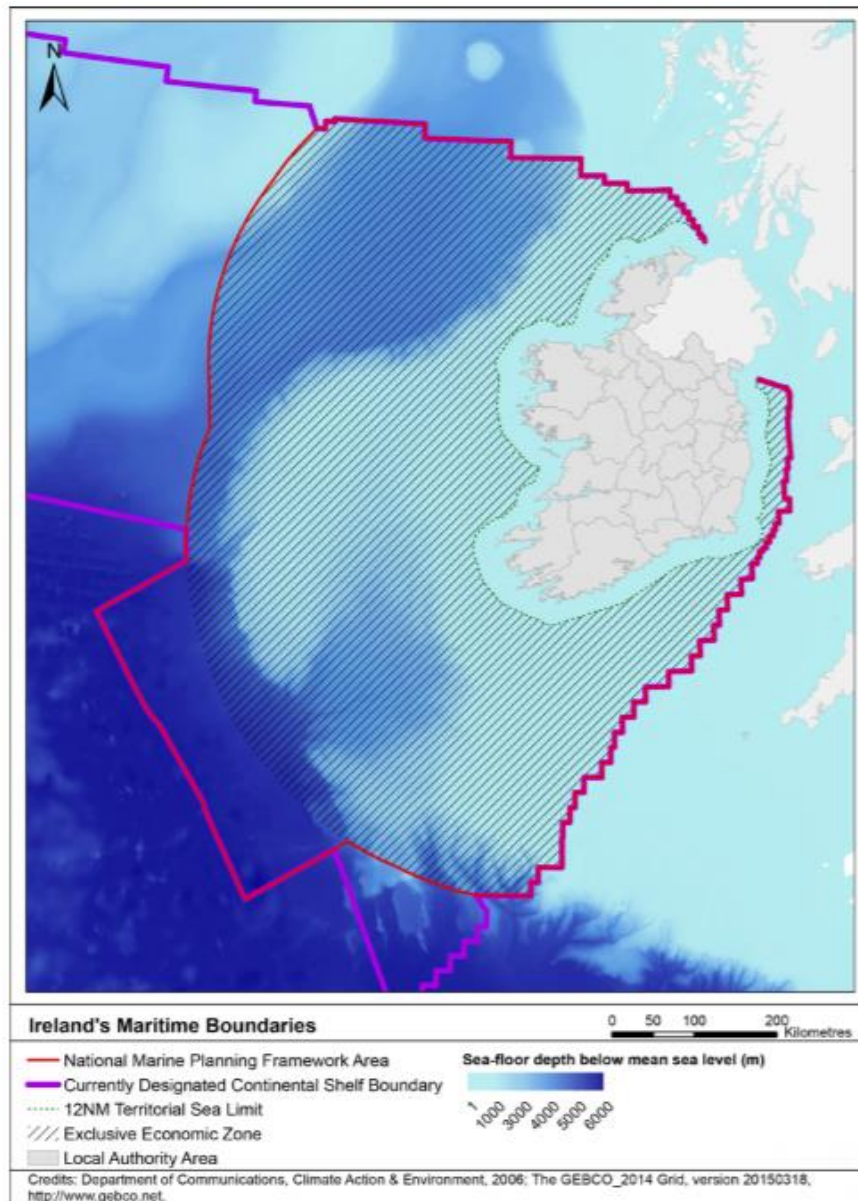
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Background Information

Basic facts on Marine Waters



Source: National Marine Planning Framework

The Irish maritime area extends over 490,000km² (approx. 7 times its terrestrial landmass) and comprises parts of the Irish and Celtic Seas, as well as the Atlantic Ocean and certain areas of the Continental Shelf, where Ireland has defined its EEZ . On 19 May 2006, Ireland submitted (jointly with France, Spain and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland -hereinafter referred to as the “four coastal States”), through the Secretary-General of the United Nations, to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf information on the limits of the continental shelf pertaining to these four coastal States in the area of the Celtic Sea and the Bay of Biscay, lying beyond 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the territorial seas are measured, in accordance with Article 76, paragraph 8 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) authorities and legislation

General

[The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government](#) (DHPLG) is leading the preparation of marine spatial planning on behalf of the Government, with input from other relevant Departments and Agencies including Ireland's [Marine Institute](#).

The marine plan will cover Ireland's maritime area, including internal waters (sea area), territorial seas, Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and continental shelf. A single plan will be prepared for the entire area initially, with the possibility of more detailed regional plans being made at a later date.

Planning at national level

- National Marine Planning Framework published in Nov. 2019 for period of public consultation until April 2020
- Marine Policy Statement published in Nov. 2019

National MSP authority

- Ireland's national competent authority for maritime spatial planning is the Department for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (DHPLG). More information can be found at:

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/planning/maritime-spatial-planning/maritime-spatial-planning-directive/maritime-spatial-planning>.

The DHPLG has been developing Ireland's National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF), which will be the overarching framework for decision making that is consistent, evidence-based and secures a sustainable future for the marine area. The NMPF will be Ireland's national marine plan. A first NMPF draft was published in November 2019 and was open for public consultation until the end of April 2020.

The DHPLG is in the final stages of consideration of the consultation submissions relating to the draft National Marine Policy Framework (NMPF). There are over 3,500 comments to consider from 225 submissions including those provided by neighbouring states.

As chapters are amended, relevant Government Departments are consulted to obtain approval for the updates being made.

A final version of the plan is to be submitted to the Oireachtas (Irish Parliament) for consideration before the end of 2020 as required by the legislation underpinning marine spatial planning in Ireland. Once this is complete the NMPF will need Ministerial sign-off before being published, which we expect in the first quarter of 2021.

A previous milestone in the process was the publication of, and consultation on, an initial report setting out the context in which the NMPF is to be developed and which helped to identify the key issues that marine planning needs to address. The [National Marine Planning Framework Baseline Report](#) was published on 18 September 2018. A series of regional public and stakeholder events were held nationally throughout October 2018 to launch the report and to inform and support public and stakeholders' participation.

Details

National level

The MSP Directive was originally transposed into national legislation by way of regulations made in 2016 (SI 352 of 2016). Since the regulations were made under the European Communities Act 1972, they were strictly limited to measures required to transpose the Directive. In October 2018, the regulations were repealed and replaced by [Part 5 of the Planning and Development \(Amendment\) Act 2018](#). Part 5 re-transposes the Directive in primary legislation and contains several measures that are additional to those required by the Directive, including:

- Adoption of the National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) by both Houses of the Oireachtas
- Review and replacement of the NMPF every 6 years
- Obligation for marine regulatory bodies to secure the objectives of the NMPF when making policies, plans, or granting consents
- Enforcement powers for the Minister if the foregoing obligations are not being fulfilled.

In November 2019, Ireland's first Marine Planning Policy Statement was published, following public consultation. It reflects the comprehensive updating and renewal of Ireland's marine planning system, which is currently underway, setting out core principles to inform evolving marine planning and the development management process. The Marine Planning Policy Statement:

- Describes the existing components of Ireland's marine planning system.
- Outlines a vision for the future development of the marine planning system.

- Sets out the overarching policies and principles that the Government expects marine planning bodies, and other public bodies that engage with the marine planning system, to observe (in terms, for example, of public engagement, transparency, governance, environmental assessment, climate action, and social and economic benefit).
- Sets out high-level priorities for the enhancement of the marine planning system in Ireland.

This Marine Planning Policy Statement is parallel to the 2015 Planning Policy Statement, which underpins the operation of the entire land-planning system in Ireland.

Regional level

During the public engagement phases undertaken by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, several stakeholders expressed the view that Ireland should also provide for Regional Marine Plans. The focus – in this first cycle of plan-making – has been on the preparation of a single National Marine Plan applying to Ireland’s entire maritime area, including internal waters (sea area), territorial seas, Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf. However, the Government is committed to preparing regional or sub-national plans in future MSP cycles. These would have a more local character and could potentially be more empowering for coastal communities throughout Ireland. National and sub-national plans will be known collectively as the NMPPF.

MSP set up process

In 2019, Ireland reached significant milestones on the way to meeting the MSP Directive objectives. In November 2019, on the same day that the first Irish Marine Planning Policy Statement was published, the draft National Marine Planning Framework (NMPPF) was launched for public consultation. There were over 3,500 comments to consider from 225 submissions including those provided by neighbouring states.

As chapters were amended, relevant Government Departments were consulted to obtain approval for the updates being made.

A final version of the plan was submitted to the Oireachtas (Irish Parliament) for consideration as required by the legislation underpinning marine spatial planning in Ireland. The plan was submitted and discussed by Dáil Éireann (Assembly of Ireland) on 29 March 2021. The full text of the [Maritime Area Planning Bill 2021](#) and accompanying [Explanatory Memorandum](#) were published on Monday 16 August 2021. The Maritime Area Planning Bill establishes in law a new marine planning system, underpinned by a statutory Marine Planning Policy Statement and guided by the National Marine Planning Framework. This legislation intends to put in place a comprehensive and coherent planning system for the entire Maritime Area. The new regime will consist of a development management regime from the high water mark to the outer limit of the State's continental shelf. Planning permission will be administered by An Bord Pleanála and the coastal local authorities. This publication was approved at Cabinet on 29 June 2021 and confirmed by An Taoiseach Michéal Martin TD on 1 July 2021, alongside Ministers Darragh O’Brien TD, Eamon Ryan TD and Peter Burke TD at the Commissioners for Irish Lights Headquarters in Dún Laoghaire.

Maritime Spatial Plans

Existing Maritime Spatial Plans

Ireland has established its National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) in July 2021.

Pilot plans or projects

Not legally binding:

- **Supporting Implementation of Maritime Spatial Planning in the Atlantic region (SIMAtlantic) (2019-2021):** SIMAtlantic seeks to strengthen links between those working on MSP in five Atlantic sea basin countries (Ireland, UK, France, Spain, Portugal). The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) is involved in Ireland.
- **Supporting Implementation of Maritime Spatial Planning in the Celtic Seas (SIMCelt) (2015-2018):** a cross-border project involving partners from the UK, Ireland and France. It aimed to support cooperation between Member States on the transboundary implementation of the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive in the Celtic Seas.
- **Transatlantic Planning in the European Atlantic (TPEA) (2012-2014):** the project tested a common cross-border approach to MSP, including a pilot area in the Bay of Cadiz across the Portugal-Spain border. TPEA was a pilot initiative, bringing together Government bodies, research centres and data agencies from the UK, Portugal, Spain, and Ireland. The work of the TPEA partnership focused on three key aspects of MSP: stakeholder engagement; governance and legal frameworks, and data management.

Aspects of the MSP process

Sustainable development and growth in the maritime sector

'*Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth – an Integrated Marine Plan for Ireland*' ([HOOW](#)) was adopted in 2012. It sets out the Irish Government's vision, high-level goals and key enabling actions to put in place the appropriate policy, governance and business climate to enable Ireland's marine potential to be realised. HOOW sets out a comprehensive range of actions across a number of sectoral areas, with key objectives to:

- Double the value of Ireland's ocean wealth to 2.4% of GDP by 2030
- Increase the turnover from Ireland's ocean economy to exceed €6.4bn by 2020.

To enable this, HOOW included a policy objective identifying the need for development of an overarching national marine spatial plan, underpinned by an efficient and robust planning and licensing framework.



Ecosystem-based approach (EBA)

Mentioned within the draft NMPF.



Resilience to climate change impacts

The Government published the [Action Plan to Tackle Climate Breakdown](#) in July 2019. The Plan sets out how the Irish Government will lead in responding to climate change by driving the delivery of policies to reduce emissions in all key sectors, including electricity, agriculture, transport, industry, buildings, and the public sector. The Action Plan builds on the activities already contained in the [National Mitigation Plan](#), the [National Adaptation Framework](#), the [National Development Plan](#), and the [Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan](#).

The Action Plan to Tackle Climate Breakdown features a strong focus on implementation, including clear timelines and the steps needed to achieve each action. The Action Plan also highlights the critical role of marine planning in the national climate action efforts in terms of, for example, meeting the renewable energy targets through planning for the delivery of offshore renewable energy (ORE), carbon capture and sequestration. The draft NMPF (2019) sets out the forward planning framework within which Ireland's ORE targets will be met, in conjunction with the new development management process for individual ORE projects. Climate action is also embedded as a key theme throughout the draft NMPF through the inclusion of a number of Overarching Marine Planning Policies (OMPPs) specifically aimed at ensuring that marine regulators and decision-makers take climate action into account when considering any proposal for marine use or activity.



Land-sea interactions

The draft NMPF (2019) mutually recognises the importance of integration and coordination with the land planning regime at national, regional and local levels. Both the MSP Directive and the Planning and Development Act 2018 (the national legislation transposing the Directive) require that land-sea interactions be considered. In future, it will be equally important that national, regional and local terrestrial plans be consistent with the NMPF, as will be required under the Planning and Development Act 2018.



Stakeholder Involvement

As set out in the Government's marine plan roadmap, [Towards a Marine Plan for Ireland](#) (December 2017), the Marine Planning Policy and Development Section within the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government has been carrying out extensive public and stakeholder engagement as the plan develops, including through the use of social media. The NMPF Stakeholder Advisory Group, chaired by the Minister of State with responsibility for Marine Planning, is the formal mechanism established to facilitate participation of relevant stakeholder groups, non-governmental organisations, professional bodies and technical experts in the planning process. Membership of the group is drawn from the economic, environmental and social pillars, and has been kept under review and updated to ensure that all interested sectors and stakeholders are represented. A list of those involved in the NMPF Stakeholder Advisory Group can be found in Appendix B of the draft [NMPF](#).



Co-existence of uses

The draft NMPF (2019) aims to support the optimal use of available space and requires consideration of the interaction of a proposal with other activities, either existing or planned. Proposals should demonstrate that they have considered how to optimise the use of space, including through consideration of opportunities for co-existence and/or cooperation with other activities, enhancing/supporting other activities where appropriate.



Transboundary cooperation

The MSP Directive and Planning and Development Act 2018 also obliges Ireland to consult and cooperate on a transboundary basis with neighbouring jurisdictions when developing marine plans. Transboundary consultation and cooperation are taking place on a mutual basis between Ireland and all of its neighbours in the North-East Atlantic Region: Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, England, and France. The draft NMPF (2019) supports the objective of transboundary consultation and cooperation by requiring proposals that have transboundary impacts beyond the maritime area, either on the terrestrial environment or neighbouring international jurisdictions, to show evidence of consultation with the relevant public authorities, including terrestrial planning authorities and other country authorities.



Use of best available data

The Marine Institute, Ireland's national marine data centre, hosts [Ireland's Marine Atlas](#) which is the principal repository of marine-related data used in development of the NMPF and which may support evidence-based decision making under the NMPF framework by marine regulatory authorities. The Atlas has been developed as a publicly accessible reporting and investigative tool for Ireland's reporting on ocean conditions as required under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the MSP Directive, the Water Framework Directive and other relevant EU Directives. The Atlas includes marine data such as administrative boundaries, protected sites, oil and gas, ocean features, fisheries and aquaculture, marine monitoring, seabed habitats, tourism and leisure, transport, infrastructure, discharge point sources, International Maritime Organisation protected areas and current/historical disposal sites.

Coherence with other processes

Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)

The Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government is also Ireland's national competent authority for implementing the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. Ireland has completed the initial assessment of its marine waters, established targets and indicators, established a monitoring programme and submitted its programme of measures to the European Commission. Implementation of the measures and monitoring programme is ongoing. More information can be found at: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/water/water-quality/marine-strategy/marine-strategy-framework-directive-msfd>.

In this context, while the NMPF is playing a role in Ireland's response to the MSFD's requirements, it should be viewed as a part of this wider picture.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

As part of the preparation of the Draft National Marine Planning Framework, a number of environmental assessments have been carried out. These include a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and an Appropriate Assessment (AA) that can be found alongside the [Consultation Draft NMPF](#). These assessments have been undertaken so the high-level impact of the proposed Overarching Marine Planning Policies and Sectoral Marine Planning Policies on the environment can be evaluated and used to inform the direction of the Draft NMPF. This is to ensure that the national objectives and outcomes respond to the sensitivities and requirements of the wider natural environment, i.e. the likely environmental consequences of decisions regarding the future accommodation of development and how negative effects can be reduced, offset or avoided.

Cooperation with third countries

To be updated after Brexit agreement.

Sources

References

Official National MSP webpage :

<https://www.housing.gov.ie/planning/maritime-spatial-planning/maritime-spatial-planning-directive/maritime-spatial-planning>

National Marine Planning Framework Baseline report (2018) :

https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/national_marine_planning_framework_baseline_report_0.pdf

Towards a Marine Spatial Plan for Ireland:

https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/towards_a_marine_spatial_plan_for_ireland.pdf

Enablers' Task Force on Marine Spatial Planning :

https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/towards_a_marine_spatial_plan_for_ireland.pdf

Our Ocean Wealth: <https://www.ouroceanwealth.ie/>

Marine Atlas : <https://atlas.marine.ie/>

Consultation on draft Regulations to transpose the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive into Irish law (2016) :

<https://www.housing.gov.ie/planning/maritime-spatial-planning/consultation-draft-regulations-tranpose-msp-directive-irish-law>

Regulations to transpose the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive into Irish law (2016) - S.I No. 352 of 2016 :

https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/public-consultation/files/2016_07_06_pdf_352_of_2016_0.pdf

Specific Citations

National Marine Planning Framework – Consultation draft :

https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/public-consultation/files/draft_national_marine_planning_framework_final.pdf