



Stakeholder Engagement, Facilitation & Mediation

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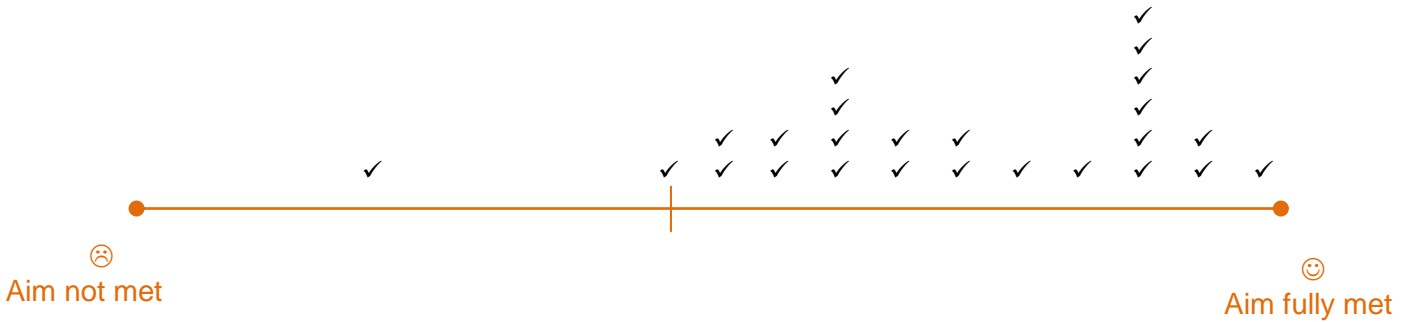
# **ISCZ: End of Process Evaluation**

## **Summary and Analysis**

Report: 13<sup>th</sup> September 2011

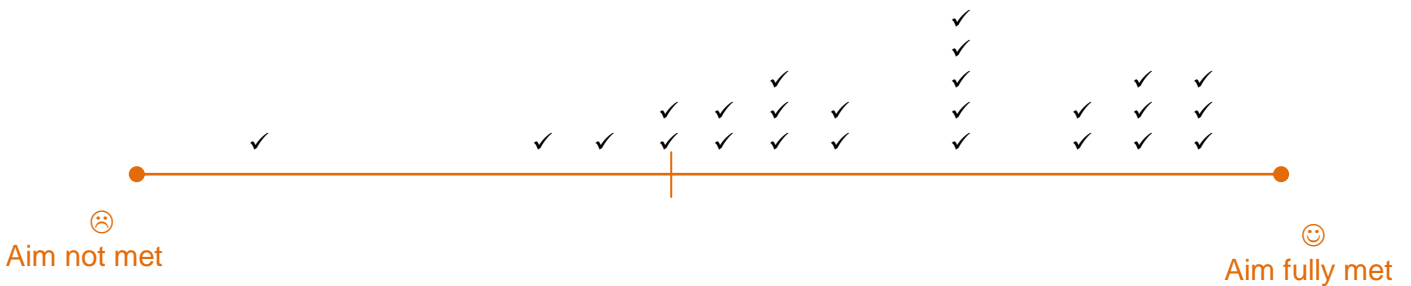
**Indicative scores / responses by ISCZ RSG members to questions asked in evaluation forms at their last meeting in July 2011.**

A representative group of regional stakeholders (the RSG) drew up proposals for a regional MCZ network, following a set of ecological design guidelines signed off by Government.

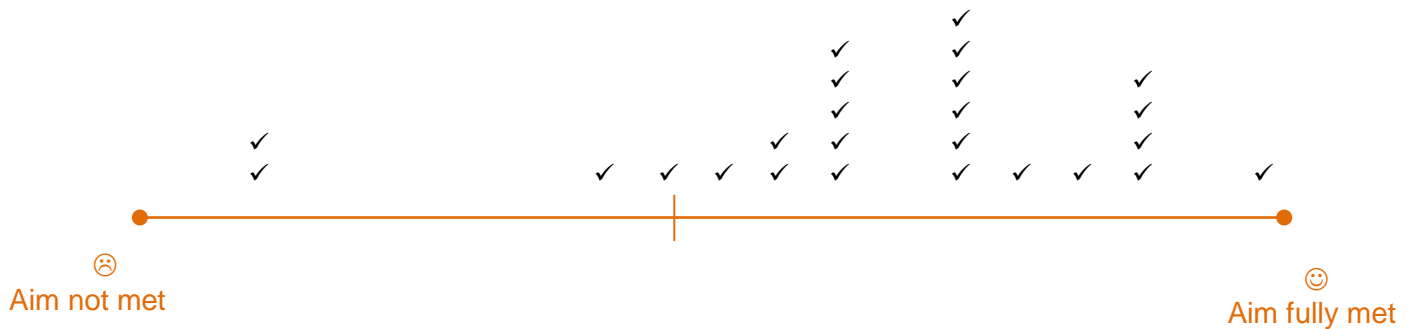


There was a structured, coherent and transparent process that allowed the RSG to:

- o build up a knowledge base and an understanding of the issues
- o explore potential solutions to these issues.
- o have a central role in planning,
- o have a process of negotiation and resolution of conflict between differing needs and interests



There was good decision making to identify the location for MCZs and the decisions were taken by stakeholders





***This is a summary of the comments made by ISCZ RSG members in their evaluation forms at their last meeting in July 2011, re-grouped under subject headings.***

## **Analysis and summary of stakeholder comments:**

This summary is intended to give a sense of the range and content of stakeholder<sup>1</sup> comments, and identify the most common where possible. It is based on a qualitative analysis of the comments and therefore does not attempt to quantify the comments.<sup>2</sup>

In order to produce a summary of stakeholder views, comments were first grouped under broad subject headings (A – L below). The comments in each section were then grouped according to sub-topics, and in some cases according to the subjective evaluation implied by the statements (e.g. generally positive, or critical). Where relevant, comments were included more than once under different headings for the purposes of analysis. Quoted comments are included for illustrative purposes and, while they may be indicative of the views of other stakeholders they should not be taken to be representative.

### **A. About the make up of the RSG**

There were several positive comments made on the range and appropriateness of sectors and groups involved, although a few others were critical of the absence of certain stakeholders in the early part of the process. One respondent noted that “Coastal MCZ [would be] likely to involve wider range of stakeholders not yet engaged”.

A few comments were made around stakeholders’ effectiveness in representing the views of their constituencies; one noting a perceived reluctance for some to commit to decisions on behalf of those not present; another referring to an ‘inevitable’ sense of exclusion among those less directly involved.

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<sup>1</sup> The term ‘stakeholder’ is used throughout to represent both stakeholders and stakeholder representatives.

<sup>2</sup> Terms such as ‘a few’, ‘several’ and ‘a number of’ represent different numbers of comments in different contexts, but can generally be taken to mean 3, 4 and 5+ respectively. Where only one or two stakeholders made particular comments, this is specified.

## **B: About how the RSG worked as a group**

Several stakeholders stated that the RSG worked either reasonably well, well or very well. One noted the challenge of working with very diverse interests stating that the group “all pulled together, compromised when necessary, but always tried not to affect the interests of other stakeholders if at all possible”. Another noted that the ‘RSG has clearly been and felt central to planning”.

Transparency was mentioned by three stakeholders. One commented that there was a high degree of transparency created through participation in the process, and two stating that there was a lack of transparency. In one case this was in terms of the awareness of stakeholders not in the RSG (who might not have internet access) and in the other in terms of “decisions being interpreted differently to original intent”.

A few comments indicated that some stakeholders felt that some groups and/or individuals appeared to have ‘louder’ or ‘stronger’ voices, with one mentioning gender-dominance. Two other comments were positive, stating the all stakeholders were able to contribute. Another noted a problem with “consistency of attendance”, acknowledging that this was perhaps inevitable.

A few comments related to issues which stakeholders felt could have been better addressed, or remain unresolved. There was a concern expressed around the “balance of certain individuals / groups”, and the effect that this had on decisions, although the groups and individuals were not specified.

## **C: About the job the RSG did in relation to the ENG**

Most stakeholder comments indicated that they felt that the aims of the RSG’s work in relation to the ENG were either wholly or largely achieved, although several comments referred to limitations and hindrances, including the late arrival of guidelines. One stakeholder commented that although the final network was not a “ ‘gold plated’ solution, it was an optimum working solution, taking into account industry and specialist interest activity’.

Some aspects were felt to have not been adequately addressed, namely: “geodiversity and biodiversity”; “quality of broadscale habitat”; and “sub-tidal mud”. One stakeholder stated that they felt there was a need to revisit sites and as this was not possible the “network [is] probably sub optimal as a result”. Another felt that the requirements of the ENG will not be fully met until the national consultation has taken place.

## **D: About guidance and guidance documents**

Comments were largely critical of the [DEFRA] guidance and guidance documents, in that they was not available, arrived late, were unclear, inadequate, or kept changing, and that this made the decision process more difficult. One stakeholder stated that the late arrival of documents “jeopardised the process and could have advanced project outcomes”. Another commented that the “RSG all wanted clearer guidance re potential management implications before potentially relinquishing “rights” to an activity in a proposed MCZ/ reference area”. One comment referred specifically to the limitations of guidance on mobile species.

## **E: About the choices of sites**

A few comments were critical of the way sites were initially selected by the project team, who lacked local knowledge. Although the reasoning for this was understood (including a government requirement for a ‘neutral’ view) the feeling was that the process would have been better with earlier stakeholder input. Two comments noted a lack of knowledge on the part of stakeholders, in relation to the use of maps and “detailed knowledge of specific locations”. A few stakeholders commented that at least some consensus was achieved through negotiation, although one (who joined the process later) thought that there was a lack of clarity as to why certain adjustments were made, and another stated that the sites chosen were those which were harder to modify later on.

There were two comments specific to the implications and management remaining unclear, or uncertain. One stakeholder noted that “we were asked to make decisions about sites without knowing this which hinders the process enormously and is a fundamental flaw of this process. This should have been the first information provided”.

One stakeholder referred to the end result as a “pragmatic compromise” and another noted that the process was not yet finalised, although “there is some level of understanding of the likely results”. One comment emphasised the importance of communicating key points of the outputs to stakeholders, along with an understanding of the process which achieved them.

## **F: About ownership of the work**

In respect of the sense of ownership of the work, the majority of comments were positive, with several stating that the process and final recommendations were well understood by the members of the RSG. Two stakeholders commented positively on the collation and distribution of information outside the group. However several expressed concern about how the recommendations were being, or would be, communicated to stakeholders who were not RSG members, and others who were not directly involved in the process but would be impacted by it, including “significant parts of the fishing industry”. Two stakeholders made general recommendations for ongoing support to interpret the work, and to “win support for pMCZs”. Two specific recommendations were that the recommendations have “exceptional clarity” and that more information on “coordinates, length, and size of zones” is provided.

## **G: About the use of data & information**

There were several fairly positive comments made about the use of data, stating that it was reasonably good and used well, within the constraints of quality, availability and time. A few stakeholders referred specifically to the value of detailed and up to date subject knowledge, and local knowledge, provided by ‘experts’ within the RSG and focus groups. In addition one noted that “the focus meetings especially, allowed data, issues, solutions, networking to be fully explored”. However another felt that “more scientific and ecological input at every meeting from people with a high level of knowledge of [the] Irish Seas region would have been beneficial”.

There were a number of, at least partly, critical comments in respect of data which was included late in the process, either because it had arrived late (although in some cases this may have been referring to guidance documentation), or been excluded from consideration in the early part of the process. Specific mention was made of “ecological data” in several comments, although most acknowledged that this had been included, and used well, later in the process.

A number of comments were made in respect of the general availability, quality and provenance of the data, and these comments were mostly critical. Data was described variously as “poor”, “inadequate”, “lacking in detail / scale”, “verbal or dated”, “incorrect”, “not always accurate”, and “not available” (for the proposed sites). Two comments stated that the data/science was “still evolving”, and one stakeholder questioned the robustness of specific data sets provided by NGOs. A few stakeholders noted that the data was probably the best that they could expect to be

provided, or found by the project team, in the time available. However one felt that “the best evidence was not used in many decisions”. Two stakeholders referred to specific data that could have been sought to inform the project: one referred to post-graduate research, especially on geodiversity; the other to the potential inclusion of “more detailed seabed data available in the Northern Irish administration”.

## **H: About the process**

General comments on the process were mostly positive, describing it as well structured, and for the most part transparent. A few comments referred to the complexity of the process, and the conflict and other difficulties involved. Comments seemed to reflect a sense of improvement through the process with several stakeholders mentioning difficulties in the early stages, it being “less stable” or “difficult to understand”. One stakeholder felt that it had taken too long to look at coastal and inshore sites which were more controversial. One stakeholder stated that the process had been “very inconsistent to other regional projects which has made participation on a national level difficult”. Another noted that while there had been “varying success in terms of achieving some specific parts of the work ... overall [this was] a much better approach than usually encountered”. One stakeholder noted that the management of the sites and reference areas were not brought up until the end of the process and that this was not a coherent approach.

## **I: About decision making**

The majority of comments in relation to decision-making were largely positive, and most noted that this improved in the latter part of the project. There were specific comments on the “good negotiation and resolution process”; the (necessarily) iterative nature of the process; and the good use of summaries to check what had been agreed. Specific criticisms of the early part of the process were that sessions appeared “random” or “rushed” and that decisions were “process-driven rather than evidence-based”. One stakeholder felt that the “early ‘voting’ system should never have been used to reach consensus or decisions”. Another stated that decision making improved “when stakeholders formed better relationships”. One comment related to a concern that “agreements from RSG’s appeared to back track / alter on couple of occasions”, although no specific details were given.

## **J: About the facilitation**

The majority of comments were critical, or very critical, of the first facilitator. Specific issues included: a focus on process, rather than the resolution of key issues; lack of opportunities for small group discussion; a lack of flexibility; and a failure to take RSG concerns into account. Two comments also referred to stakeholders feeling “patronised” or “upset”. One felt that poor facilitation at this stage had led to the group losing their academic advisor (Chris Frid).

The majority of comments in relation to the second facilitator were either positive, or very positive, stating that the process “improved considerably” from this point. Specific comments included: that the facilitator was more “professional”, “more focused” and good at time-keeping and enabling all stakeholders to contribute. For one stakeholder allowing more time for discussions meant that “more fair decisions [were] made”. Most stakeholders appeared to feel that the process was well governed/managed by the second facilitator, although one was critical of a perceived tendency to “paraphrase” and “lead”, and a failure to note “pertinent information”.

There were a few more ambivalent or mixed comments: that both consultants “brought some important strengths to elements of the project”; that second facilitator was “marginally” better than the first and that both “had a difficult task to do especially bringing the group together initially”. One stakeholder felt that the change of facilitators had not helped the process and that the terms of reference for facilitators were unclear.

## **K: About the ISCZ project team**

The majority of comments on the project team were either positive or very positive, and while a few were qualified, or contained specific feedback points, none were negative. Stakeholders described the project team generally as “good”, “great” and “excellent”, and specifically as “supportive”, “approachable” and “professional”. There seemed to be a general recognition that the project team had worked hard to respond to queries and provide information, whilst working under the pressure and with a large workload. One stakeholder commented that the team had “worked indefatigably to support stakeholders [they were] always quick to respond and most helpful when queries raised”. Another stated that “they seemed to be well on top of the technical issues and frank where knowledge was scant”.

A few stakeholders qualified their feedback, with one stating that the support had not been good to begin with, but had improved “as the project progressed and involvements / implications became better understood” and another that “sometimes there was confusion which was not fully resolved”. Specific feedback points related to a perceived “lack of understanding from the team on certain areas e.g. whether wind farm sites would MPAs” and that better resources could have been provided, citing the example of the size of maps used in workshops.

## **L: Other comments**

A number of general comments were made on the process as a whole, and its outcome, which were mostly positive: that the process, though challenging, had achieved its objective; that cross-sectoral awareness and understanding had improved; and that strong working (and personal) relationships had resulted. One stakeholder felt that: “The most valuable element has been stakeholder engagement and the ongoing relationships that will need to be maintained. Awareness and understanding of other sectors needs is far more important than the actual designations”.

One stakeholder felt that considering the Irish Sea area as a whole, rather than just the territorial boundaries would have “improved the representivity of MCZs in the region”; another that data for adjacent water should have been made available; and another that geodiversity had not been given the same weight as biodiversity.