

Coastal Partnerships improve governance - UK

1. Policy Objective & Theme

- SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES: Preserving coastal environment (its functioning and integrity) to share space
- SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES: Sound use of resources and promotion of less resource intensive processes/products

2. Key Approaches

- Participation

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

Coastal Partnerships which are a means of strengthening governance by providing unique cross-sectoral, stakeholder participation for ICZM.

4. Overview of the case

Coastal Partnerships have been established around the UK as a means of delivering ICZM, conserving habitats and resolving conflict. They are seen as having a wealth of experience in facilitating and providing ICZM at a local level as well as developing strong relationships and diverse networks with community user and stakeholder groups. As such Coastal Partnerships represent good ICZM practice and reflect the EU ICZM Principle of public participation.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

Over 1/3 of the population lives within 10km of the UK coastline and almost 1/3 is developed, yet over 2000km is still protected for its wildlife or landscape. The UK ports industry is almost 3 times larger than any other EU state. 40% of all manufacturing industry is sited close to the coast. Of the total amount of money spent by UK residents on tourism, nearly half is on coastal recreation.

The responsibility for managing coastal resources lies within a variety of sectors. Different institutional levels have statutory responsibilities depending on the sector and coastal issue concerned. A participatory process is required to ensure that all sectors with an interest in the coast work together - both horizontally (across sectors) and vertically (between institutional levels) - to ensure it is managed sustainably

Since the early 1990s, over 60 Coastal Partnerships have been set up around the UK coast e.g. for estuaries, harbours, coastal regions. These partnership initiatives have evolved from a 'bottom-up' approach, with people involved from local communities, clubs and user groups to local authorities, statutory agencies, industries, water companies, port & harbour authorities and NGOs. They are largely non-statutory and voluntary.

b) Objectives

The aim of coastal partnerships is to improve decision-making by government, private and civil society stakeholders at a local/regional level.

Coastal Partnerships act as a regular forum or conference bringing together decision-makers with sectoral interest groups to debate current issues; they act as topic/focus groups to carry out specific tasks such as problem solving, report writing or policy development; and they develop communication mechanisms like workshops, websites, newsletters, and consultations involving government, private and voluntary sectors. Many partnerships in the UK have already been running for over 15 years and some have even become established as formal charities or companies.

6. Implementation of the ICZM Approach (i.e. management, tools, resources)

a) Management

Coastal Partnerships are formed from different groupings of government agencies, local authorities, private sector organisations and interested bodies working on coastal issues. They work on a regional and local level but can include national bodies.

Most Coastal Partnerships in the UK are run on a voluntary basis with financial support from partners (primarily local authorities and government agencies). Coastal Partnerships are engaged in supporting statutory decision-making processes as well as facilitating voluntary action. Many work closely with local coastal communities to foster a sense of ownership and stewardship over the coastal environment and its resources. Each Partnership is typically led by a management group consisting of a small number of representatives from key stakeholder organisations. They commonly employ a coordinating officer and in some cases a small team (of up to five staff) delivering core services and engaging in projects depending upon funding availability.

a) ICZM tools

Partnerships are an example of stakeholder participation. They are often responsible for drawing up agreed management plans and various strategies which the partners then implement.

7. Cost and resources

No costs are available.

8. Effectiveness (i.e. were the foreseen goals/objectives of the work reached?)

Coastal Partnerships have achieved change in policies, working practices, attitudes, actions undertaken, behaviour, and have had beneficial effects on society, environment and the economy e.g. they were the first organisations to bring together the variety of government bodies working on the landward and seaward side of the coastal zone, to make strategic assessments of important coastal issues in each place: they were the first to develop a comprehensive management plan or strategy for coastal space; they encourage practices based on the principles of environmental management which work towards sustainable outcomes, and are vital for more effective management. They have also had practical achievements in areas of monitoring, assessment, surveillance, evaluation, research, technical or engineering solutions. They also raise awareness in coastal communities and promote community-based responsibility. Coastal partnerships, in general, deliver their objectives and within the agreed planning timescale.

9. Success and Fail factors

Partnerships have attracted funding through collaborative ventures. They are impartial and able to work across sectors. They can mobilise support and involvement for issues and fill gaps where there is no sectoral responsibility. This all implies that the Partnerships are able to build consensus.

Failures have largely been due to an inability to engage relevant stakeholders, particularly private companies and key economic interest groups. Some have been unable to deal with politically sensitive issues and intractable problems. Lack of resources to implement plans is often a problem.

The main obstacle to greater success is the lack of a statutory or national programme to support Partnerships which, therefore, lack sustainable funding.

10. Unforeseen outcomes

The Coastal Partnerships have now organised themselves into a collective Coastal Partnerships Forum to improve the links between the individual Partnerships. It allows for exchange of experience and structured networking sessions at an annual meeting.

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13. Sources

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Coastal Partnerships Working Group 2008 (743.89 KB)

ICM - a comparative analysis of 4 UK initiatives (2.59 MB)

ICZM and coastal partnerships - reference (33.94 KB)

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