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Improving governance through local Coastal Partnerships in the UK

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The effectiveness of institutional arrangements and policies for governance has become a key question within the sustainability paradigm. The term 'Coastal Partnerships' describes a variety of arrangements in the UK that bring together interested stakeholders to advocate sustainable management of the coast, based on the principles of integrated coastal management (ICM). This paper considers the unique role, achievements and challenges facing local Coastal Partnerships in the UK. The paper examines empirical evidence of how Coastal Partnerships are contributing to sustainable coastal management. The first section considers their shortfalls, the second section their achievements, and the final section discusses their potential role in the context of the evolving policy framework. The policy drivers include European Directives, the reform of the Terrestrial Planning System, and proposals for Marine Spatial Planning through a UK Marine Bill. The authors present a blueprint for the future of Coastal Partnerships, based on this policy analysis. The findings contribute to the ongoing debate in geographical literature on how the scale and structure of governance can be best organised to deliver local sustainability.

KEY WORDS: coastal partnerships, integrated coastal management (ICM), coastal and marine policy, governance, evaluation, UK

Introduction

The place where the land meets the sea – the coast – is a particularly dynamic environment with a unique set of issues. The coast forms a field of research across a remarkable breadth of academic disciplines. These include earth systems science seeking a multidisciplinary understanding of large-scale change in coastal systems, ecological economics seeking to value coastal resources, and human geography considering our lived experience of coastal landscapes and seascapes.

The societal implications of coastal change are currently being examined by at least two groups of geographers. It is on the agenda of the International Geographical Union under the auspices of the Marine Geography Commission, Coastal Systems Commission and Oceans21 Committee. In the UK

it is the concern of the Coastal and Marine Working Group of the Royal Geographical Society. Similar initiatives exist in other countries (Smith 1990; Fletcher 2005). Within these groups, key themes of environmental geography such as environmental knowledge, institutions, policy, and sustainability are investigated. Many geographers working on coastal processes are concerned with the way management institutions can respond effectively to coastal change.¹ Other geographers are focusing on institutions and the way they mediate human–environment relationships at the coast.² They are keen to explore themes such as collective action, participation, vulnerability and risk, policy implementation, local to global problems and ecosystem-based management, as they apply to the unique institutional arrangements across the land–sea interface.

Table 1 Definition of Coastal Partnerships^a

Coastal initiatives	Categories defined by the English Coastal Partnerships Working Group in 2007
CP	Coastal (including estuary) Partnership or forum bringing together all sectors to advocate sustainable management of a coastal area based on ICM principles. www.coastalpartnerships.org.uk/
AONB/HC	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty: a partnership or initiative set up to manage a designated landscape in the coastal zone. www.countryside.gov.uk/LAR/Landscape/DL/aonbs/index.asp or non-statutory, Heritage Coasts www.countryside.gov.uk/LAR/Landscape/DL/heritage_coasts/
EMS	European Marine Site initiative set up to prepare and implement an EMS Management Scheme for a designated Special Protection Area/Special Area of Conservation. www.ukmarinesac.org.uk/uk-sites.htm
MNP/VMNR	Marine National Park or Voluntary Marine Nature Reserve set up to manage/protect an offshore park, reserve or protected area
CG	Coastal Group assisting production of shoreline management plans (SMPs) for flood and coastal erosion risk management. www.defra.gov.uk/enviro/fed/policy/CoastalGroups.htm
Other	A variety of other initiatives which include local authority strategies for the coast, ad hoc partnerships based on topics such as beach care, litter or marine wildlife

^aNot all of these programmes are operating across all of the constituent nations of the UK. Furthermore, the devolved administrations have their own approaches to engaging with Coastal Partnerships through the Scottish Coastal Forum, Wales Coastal and Maritime Partnership and Northern Ireland Coastal Forum.

This study investigates Coastal Partnerships as an approach within the regional and local scales of government in the UK, where the issues of coastal management are translated from policy into plans and actions by distinct organisations for discrete sections of coast and estuaries.

Coastal Partnerships are formed from different government agencies, local authorities, private sector organisations and interested bodies working together across the land–sea interface. The approach recognises that more integrated management of the coast is required to produce coordinated actions and equitable solutions. 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. Table 1 highlights how they operate concurrently with a variety of coastal initiatives that are more sectoral in focus. These include Coastal Groups, which support flood and coastal erosion risk management (Potts *et al.* 2005), and Schemes of Management for European Marine Sites, which set out nature conservation objectives for marine protected areas.

Over 60 voluntary Coastal Partnerships have developed around the UK coast since the early 1990s (Figure 1). 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 plus projects depending upon funding availability. Other defining features of the Coastal Partnerships tend to be: a regular forum or conference bringing together decision-makers with sectoral interest groups to debate current issues; the use of topic/focus groups to carry out specific tasks such as problem solving, report writing or policy development; and development of communication mechanisms such as workshops, websites, newsletters, and consultations to generate wide involvement from government, private and voluntary sectors. These structures have provided the momentum to formulate and implement voluntary coastal and estuary management plans and strategies. Figure 2 illustrates some key elements in the structure of most Partnerships. The day to day work of the partnership is typically facilitated by a partnership officer with support from key partners on a management group. Sectoral interests may be represented at a decision-making level on an advisory/steering committee, or through focus groups and/or a wider forum involving the local community. Coastal Partnerships have varying levels of engagement with local communities.

Some Coastal Partnerships have become established as formal charities and/or companies. However, many have no formal status, and they are fragile

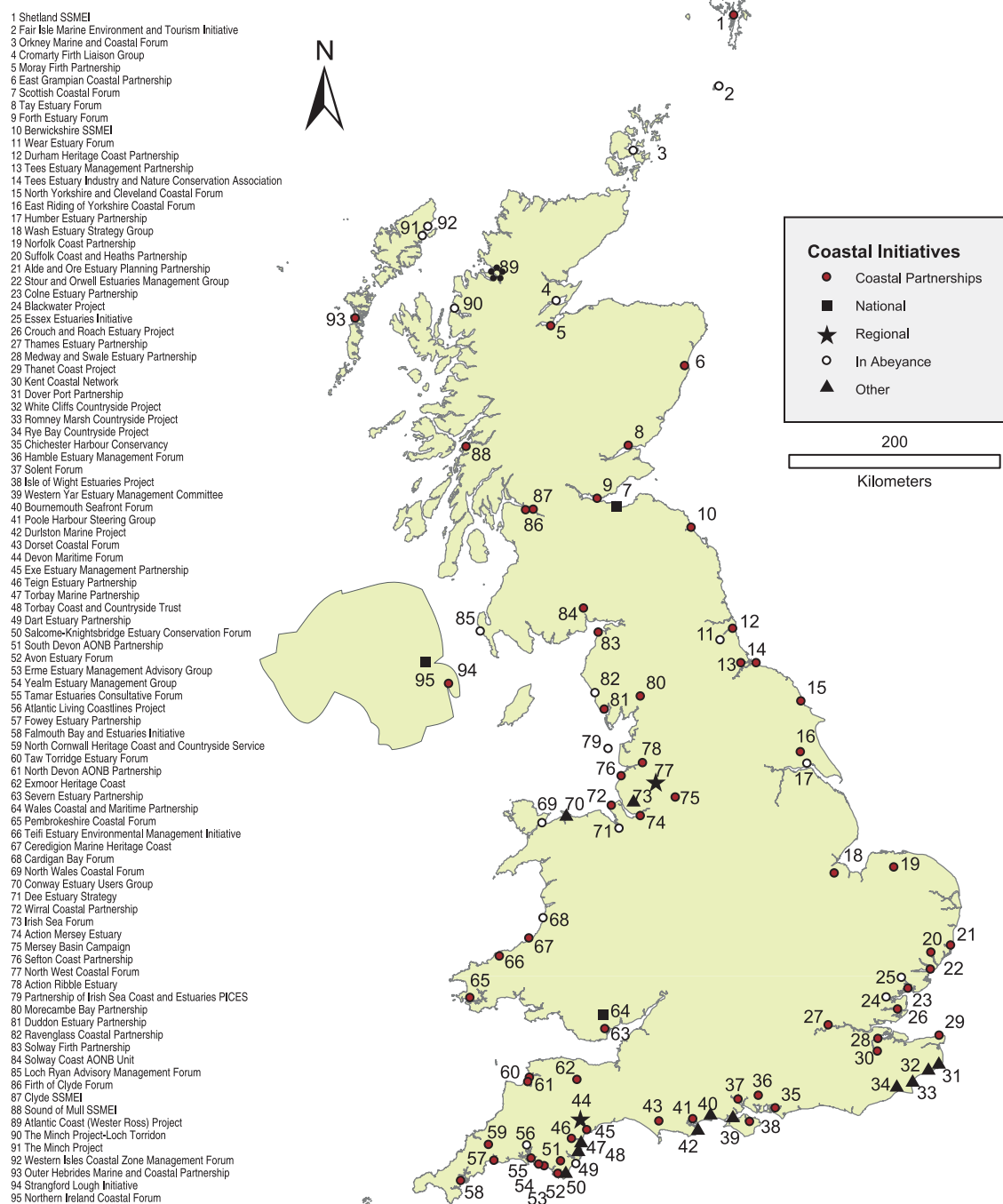


Figure 1 Coastal initiatives in the UK
 Note: Sectoral initiatives not shown (see Table 1)

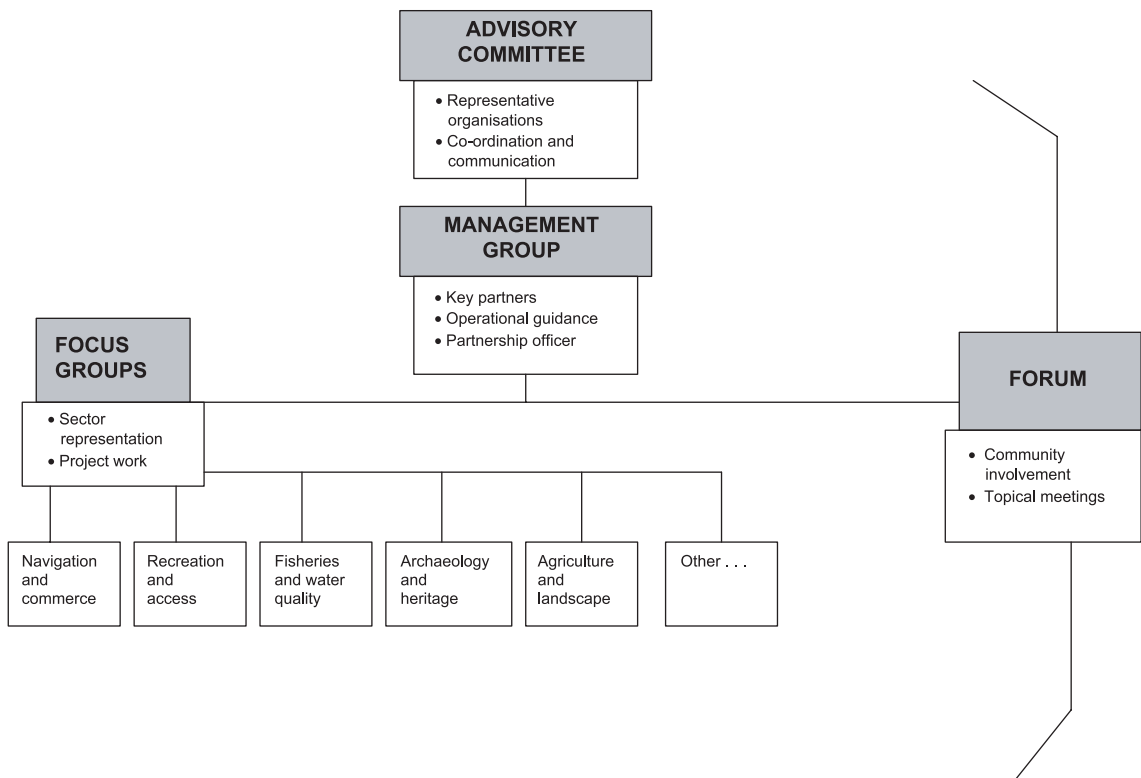


Figure 2 Example structure of a Coastal Partnership

Source: Based on Barker (2005c) and guidance from English Nature (1993) and Department of the Environment (1996)

enterprises, often suffering from a short-term approach to funding. Some have ceased to operate, gone into abeyance or lost the employment of a coordinating officer, such as the Dart and Dee Estuary Partnerships.

Partnership working is widely promoted as the key to overcoming the inertia inherent in modern administrations, to deal with problems that cross boundaries of responsibility between agencies, and that require the joint resources of state, private sector and society in order to produce more responsive and effective delivery of sustainability goals (Audit Commission 1998). At the same time, empirical research has documented the limitations and difficulties of acting locally in partnership (Evans 2004; Mitchell 2005).

The concept of 'governance' highlights that partnerships form one element within efforts of the state (through administration, laws and market mechanisms), economic actors and civil society, which define the values, legislation, policies and institutions for coastal planning and management. In this sense, the 'improved' governance highlighted in the title of the paper can be said to be those processes and structures that work towards effective,

efficient, equitable and legitimate sustainability outcomes (Adger *et al.* 2003).

The paper therefore considers what kind of contributions Coastal Partnerships are making. The first section considers research that has demonstrated the shortfalls of Coastal Partnerships. The second section presents research that has highlighted their benefits and achievements. The findings presented are based on a synthesis of results from a wide range of empirical research. The third major section of the paper sets out a blueprint for the future contribution of Coastal Partnerships, by considering what enabling conditions are required in order for them to play an effective role within the evolving policy framework (Ballinger 1999 2005).

The debate about coastal partnerships

The development of a UK Marine Bill has furthered debate about the appropriate arrangements for the planning and management of the UK coast. Many coastal initiatives are characterised by a partnership approach,³ reflecting a change in philosophy in the modern state towards more inclusive, participatory

and joined up governance. There have been a variety of national programmes that have led to their establishment, including the Countryside Commission's *Heritage Coast Programme*, English Nature's *Estuaries Initiative* and Scottish Natural Heritage's *Focus on the Firths*. In some cases local authorities had the foresight to develop 'bottom-up' initiatives with other partners. Many of the founding programmes envisaged that UK Coastal Partnerships would develop a broad role, driving sustainability, stakeholder involvement and integrated planning for the coastal zone. Yet the effectiveness of Coastal Partnerships has been increasingly questioned by critical comment from policymakers and academia. The following section reviews the evidence presented about the shortfalls in Coastal Partnerships.

Failure of Coastal Partnerships – internal constraints

Efficacy and efficiency Efficacy concerns the ability of the Coastal Partnerships to meet their internal goals. Jemmett *et al.* (1999), in a review of 39 estuary initiatives, question the efficacy of UK Coastal Partnerships in achieving their prescribed goals, including conflict resolution, awareness raising, integrating plans and policies, and promoting common understanding. Performance has been mixed, and the ability of non-statutory partnerships to influence other initiatives has been uneven (Jemmett 1998). Chaniotis and Stead (2007) compare two stretches of the North East English coast, one with and one without a current integrated coastal management (ICM) mechanism. Using attitudinal surveys, they find limited justification that ICM offers benefits over existing regimes. In particular, they document internal failures by initiatives to communicate and engage wider civil society within the ICM project, as envisaged within European guidelines (CEC 2000). Considering efficiency, a review by the Scottish Executive Social Research Unit (2002) documents the extensive in-kind contributions to Coastal Partnerships made by officers from member organisations, and the high 'transaction costs' of working in partnership.

Legitimacy Fletcher (2003 2007), drawing on data collected from 36 Coastal Partnerships, finds that the legitimacy that is claimed from stakeholder involvement is exaggerated, since Coastal Partnerships have often failed to adequately engage different constituencies. In particular, the private sector, small and medium enterprises, and key economic interest groups, such as fisheries and agriculture, are predominantly missing from the decision-making bodies of Coastal Partnerships. In some large urban estuaries Coastal Partnerships have also struggled to

engage local communities, and have consequently failed to address issues such as deprivation (Barker 2005a). Their democratic accountability sometimes rests on somewhat *ad hoc* use of consultation mechanisms.

Effectiveness Effectiveness concerns the ability of Coastal Partnerships to help achieve sustainable management and influence wider objectives. McKenna and Cooper (2006) question the effectiveness of non-statutory initiatives to deal with politically sensitive or intractable issues, since they are compromised by having to take a resource intensive, 'consensus' approach. Consequently they have made few contributions to major environmental improvements or development projects and instead have tended to focus on uncontroversial projects. Other issues that limit their influence and power are the short-term nature of projects, insecure funding and staffing.

Increased bureaucracy and implementation failure Hoare (2002) suggests that ICM plans add to a plethora of existing sectoral plans in a complex administrative situation, and can produce little return for effort in such circumstances. Furthermore these plans are left unimplemented as Coastal Partnerships lack manpower for stewardship of this process, and have few incentives or powers to induce action from member organisations.

Reasons for the failure of Coastal Partnerships – external constraints

The above evidence seems to indicate that Coastal Partnerships are not part of the solution for sustainable coasts. Some aspects of poor performance by Coastal Partnerships might be accepted by their advocates, but an alternative explanation is that these failures are driven by external factors that are symptoms of the need for improved planning and management of the coast (Shipman and Stojanovic 2007).

Considering the external constraints, UK Coastal Partnerships are not supported by a dedicated national programme. This means that there are no programmatic reviews against any national targets and objectives for the coast.⁴ There is a lack of sustainable financing mechanisms, and this has diverted much staff time towards securing ongoing core funding (McGlashan 2003). Furthermore, there is no training programme to develop a cadre of professionals who can deal with the complex interdisciplinary issues and political skills required of a Coastal Partnership coordinator.

Coastal Partnerships have an uncertain role in the broader framework for planning and management.

There is no statutory duty to support Coastal Partnerships or ICM.⁵ Yet partner organisations have had an increasing range of statutory duties at the coast, largely driven by supranational (EU) legislation, which have occupied their resources and diverted priorities away from partnership working (LGA 2002). The lack of regional and local prioritisation may have contributed to the failure to successfully implement a number of integrated management plans which were prepared by the majority of Coastal Partnerships (Gubbay 2002). There has been a lack of clear national policy for the coast, and the forthcoming UK Marine Bill accepts that the current legal and regulatory regime for coastal areas is complex and confusing. All these factors have contributed to uncertainty about involvement in Coastal Partnerships.

In these circumstances, Coastal Partnerships are operating on short-time horizons, and struggle to develop sustainable institutional mechanisms and social capital that are crucial for their success (Tompkins *et al.* 2002). In summary, it is likely that these external constraints have been the primary cause for the internal failures reported in the literature.

While the partnership model has been questioned as inadequate or hopelessly idealistic, a very different picture emerges when turning to evidence of their achievements. Effective Coastal Partnerships could be the solution to current bureaucracy, rather than a case of increased bureaucracy. The following section demonstrates how the work of Coastal Partnerships has produced changes in the approach to the governance of the UK coast.

Achievements of UK Coastal Partnerships

There has been no comprehensive review of the performance of Coastal Partnerships in the UK. English Nature (now Natural England) (Jemmett *et al.* 1999) conducted a review of estuary management in England, and the Scottish Coastal Forum has been active in commissioning research specifically on the effectiveness of Coastal Partnerships in Scotland (Gubbay 2001; Burbridge 2001; Scottish Executive Social Research Unit 2002).

A variety of methods are being used to assess the effectiveness of Coastal Partnerships (Putnam 1993; Lowry *et al.* 1999; Stojanovic *et al.* 2004). A key measure in the assessment considered below is the change that Coastal Partnerships achieve in policies, working practices, attitudes, actions undertaken, behaviour, and their effects on society, environment or the economy. A number of studies have focused on one or more of these measures.⁶

The following sections consider the case for Coastal Partnerships in the context of a large amount

of evidence about their achievements and benefits. Firstly about the kinds of improved governance that these initiatives engender; secondly the changes in attitudes and understanding that they create; and thirdly the on-the-ground actions which they deliver that contribute to coastal sustainability.

Improved governance

A number of studies assess Coastal Partnerships by comparing their work against theories and principles of environmental management. Key texts on environmental management and sustainability often focus on developing theory about successful practice. Over time these theories have been reflected within international guidelines and prescriptions, such as the principles of Ecosystem-based Management within the Convention on Biodiversity (AIDEnvironment *et al.* 2004) and the principles of ICM in the EU Communication on ICM (CEC 2000).

One method of assessing the effectiveness of Coastal Partnerships is to assess how they conform to or align with these principles. Taking nine principles of effective environmental management from academic literature, Stojanovic and Ballinger (forthcoming) found 66 common mechanisms and processes working within four Coastal Partnerships, contributing to good governance (and evidence for a further 83 mechanisms and processes in one or more cases). Space does not permit a detailed exploration of the results of the research, but taking just one example – comprehensive approaches to management – Coastal Partnerships were often the first organisations to bring together the variety of government bodies working on the landward and seaward side of the coastal zone, to make a strategic assessment of important coastal issues in each place. They were the first to develop a comprehensive management plan or strategy for coastal space (although the success of these plans in influencing other plans and policies has been questionable and they have been criticised for being ‘left on the shelf’ after completion). Partnerships have begun to collate information resources at an appropriate geographical scale from a variety of sources, not least contact databases of responsible parties and relevant stakeholders in the coastal zone. Some have attempted to coordinate this information to produce State of the Coast Reports.

Similarly, Gubbay (2001) reviews the working practices of Scottish Coastal Partnerships and how they contribute to the EU principles of ICM at a local level. The study concludes that Coastal Partnerships make improved provision for participatory planning and reflect the needs and specific characteristics of their local situations. Examples include Coastal Partnership officers working closely

with coastal communities to draw up voluntary codes of practice (e.g. for bait collection) and influence local byelaws (e.g. jet-skiing areas). This analysis was confirmed in a UK stocktake of ICM (Atkins 2004a), which has been followed by the preparation of national strategies on ICM in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.⁷ Although they acknowledge challenges, these strategies recognise the valuable role that Coastal Partnerships have played in generating cooperation among organisations and coastal users, raising awareness, and providing a neutral forum for debate.

The findings above demonstrate how Partnerships encourage practices based on the principles of environmental management, which work towards sustainable outcomes, and are vital for more effective management (Stojanovic *et al.* 2004). The approach taken by Coastal Partnerships is part of a wider transition in governance towards more participatory democracy. In previous decades, management regimes were divided amongst sectoral responsibilities and focused on regulatory and technical solutions. Coastal Partnerships are part of an area-based approach to management, in which strategic policies are translated into local actions for multiple uses. This recognises the need for joint working arrangements (around which different constituencies can coalesce according to their interests) because stakeholders have a mutual dependence on the integrity and functioning of coastal systems (Kidlow 1997; Burbridge 1999).

Changes in attitudes and understanding

Given the complexity of planning and management arrangements at the coast, a fundamental challenge is simply to increase awareness about coastal issues and improve communication about roles and responsibilities, which can lead to coordinated action. These kinds of achievements by Coastal Partnerships are more difficult to quantify. A number of studies have explored changes in attitudes. Lymbery (2006) found perceived achievements of the North West Coastal Forum (working at the regional scale in the UK) include acting to champion the coast as an asset so that it has greater consideration in a range of plans and projects. Similarly Cummins *et al.* (2004) consider four local initiatives in West Wales and highlight their role in raising awareness amongst coastal communities. A shared perspective is crucial in implementing sustainable solutions to problems such as flood risk, accelerated sea level rise, habitat loss, unsustainable fisheries, deprivation or outdated infrastructure. A number of Coastal Partnerships have sought to develop educational and outreach initiatives. These have involved festivals, posters and leafletting

campaigns, producing educational materials or facilitating community initiatives such as voluntary zoning schemes.

Actions to deliver coastal sustainability

UK Coastal Partnerships have undertaken action in response to a variety of coastal issues. Smith (1991) defines two broad categories of activity: those which improve management by strategic coordination of policy and the activities of statutory organisations; and those which are more on-the-ground, technical achievements focusing on monitoring, assessment, surveillance, evaluation, research, technical or engineering solutions. Additionally, one might consider 'bottom-up' community-based actions, in which resource users are empowered to take part in managing the coast and develop their own schemes.

The following sections illustrate some examples from a Good Practice Directory produced by CoastNet (2004) (a UK charity). Over 80 examples were collated using a proforma to assist Coastal Partnerships to record their achievements. The Directory provides a catalogue of ideas to be used in other contexts. It was also intended to demonstrate the added value of integrated management, by linking *outputs* (what the initiatives produced, e.g. a strategy, a code of practice) to *outcomes* (what changed because this work was done).

Contributions to strategic management Good practice examples range from preparing strategic guidance to running local 'planning for real' exercises. The Avon Estuary, Wash Estuary and the Alde & Ore Estuaries are cited as partnerships that have prepared plans and set up fora to encourage collaboration. Coastal Partnerships have also assisted with consultations such as for an offshore wind farm in the Solway Firth, or facilitating sector-specific working groups such as the Dredging Liaison Group for the Thames Estuary. New codes of conduct are often pioneered by Coastal Partnerships, such as on the Exe Estuary for kite-surfing and on the Pembrokeshire and Thanet Coasts for multiple coastal uses.

Contributions to technical management Good practice examples include a variety of projects relating to assessment and on-the-ground action. Those relevant to the first category include: the Solent Information Network and State of the Solent Report, the Clyde Coastal Zone Assessment Survey, moorings surveys on the Stour & Orwell estuaries, shark watching in the Solway Firth, monitoring of cetaceans and crab tiles in Devon estuaries, and research on water quality and diffuse pollution in the Dart Estuary. Those relevant to the second category include: restoration and regeneration projects for coastal habitats in the

Salcombe–Kingsbridge Estuary, and restoration of historic features on the Dart Estuary; tourism and access improvements on the Firth of Forth and Thames Estuary; promotion of environmentally friendly technologies for the farming sector around the Wash Estuary; marketing for sustainable fisheries on the Salcombe–Kingsbridge Estuary; interpretation of cultural heritage in Loch Ryan; and footpath and beachcare programmes in Morecombe Bay.

Promoting community-based and 'bottom-up' approaches Many of the projects listed have a significant element of community engagement. The neutral coordination role of a Coastal Partnership officer, combined with initiatives for communication and information sharing, are important in generating a sense of trust between communities and government bodies. This can encourage a stronger sense of ownership and responsibility among coastal users, which helps to deliver sustainability.

While Coastal Partnerships have been criticised for lack of direct, tangible outputs, the evidence presented above highlights their potential to deliver a wide range of benefits. Coastal Partnerships have been active in supporting strategic management, establishing and coordinating projects, and have also undertaken some direct action. The latter seems especially the case where there is a gap in responsibilities or activities of existing organisations, e.g. codes for recreational activity, or where multiple jurisdictions mean that a coordinated approach is vital, such as regional networks for coastal access.

Translating these benefits into outcomes for society and the natural environment is problematic (Bower and Turner 1998). The difficulties include attribution of effects and the lack of baseline information and data for evaluation. Jemmett *et al.* (1999) consider wildlife gain and environmental gain, and the Scottish Executive Social Research Unit (2002) look for evidence of environmental, social and economic gain. Listed environmental improvements include more environmentally sensitive windfarm development on the Solway, and beach cleaning/litter picking programmes. Societal improvements include sustainable cockle fisheries, contributions to marine leisure, access corridors on the shoreline, and improvements in cultural heritage. Economic benefits include sustainable harvesting of high-quality shellfish, bringing in additional tourists, and increasing the recognition of the importance of coastal tourism. In general, these assessments require greater engagement with scientists, and well coordinated and resourced networks for monitoring in the coastal environment. Greater science–policy interaction is required for evidence-based management and this is a role that Coastal Partnerships themselves are ideally placed to coordinate at a local level.

A blueprint for the contribution of Coastal Partnerships to a system for ICM in the UK

Despite the fact that Coastal Partnerships have demonstrated the ability to improve cooperation, develop on-the-ground projects and promote sustainability, they are not presently recognised within the national policy framework. The ICM strategies prepared for the constituent nations of the UK have recognised the contribution of Partnerships, and the Rural Delivery Report (Defra 2008a) has lauded their approach using the Dorset Coastal Forum as an exemplar. However, they are not mentioned in the national marine strategy of the Environment Agency or English Nature (Environment Agency 2005; English Nature 2005) nor provided any statutory support or national programme in the draft UK Marine Bill (Defra 2008b). UK government policy has emphasised greater community involvement in decision-making, within the Planning System and the consultations required by UK Regulations and EC Directives, as described below. On one hand the existing system is evolving towards greater integration and would benefit from the services provided by Coastal Partnerships, but on the other hand, Coastal Partnerships will have a marginal role unless they are embedded within the evolving institutional framework.

The evolving policy framework and the role of Coastal Partnerships

The evolving policy framework presents many opportunities for Coastal Partnerships to help make governance more effective and reduce bureaucracy. Table 2 presents a comprehensive overview of 14 policy areas and potential contributions by Coastal Partnerships that are discussed in the text below. The reader is directed towards the first column entitled 'Functional goals' which are required by policy and legislation, shown in the second and third columns. The corresponding columns show how Coastal Partnerships could contribute to these goals and provide examples of where this has happened in the UK.

Table 2 provides a truly comprehensive classification of management goals in the coastal zone. Space does not permit a detailed explanation. So leaving aside important issues such as climate change adaptation (Tol *et al.* 2008) and strategic environmental assessment (Barker 2005b), the text below therefore considers four key areas of legislation listed in the table – Terrestrial Planning, Marine Spatial Planning, EU Water Framework Directive, EU Habitats Directive – and how Coastal Partnerships could play a role in each of these policy contexts.

Table 2 Partnerships supporting policy and the functional goals of integrated coastal management

Functional goals	Policy focus	Examples of driving legislation/policy	Contributions of Coastal Partnerships	Examples
1. Ecosystem health	Chemical and biological components	Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC; Bathing Waters Directive 76/160/EC and amendments; OSPAR Commitments (EC 1996, XI/79.96)	Consultation and facilitation mechanism for coastal aspects of river basin management plan. Providing collaboration mechanism for sharing experience	Thames Estuary Partnership on the Liaison Panel for Thames River Basin District. Solent Forum water quality subgroup agree common approach to implementing Bathing Water Directive requirements
2. Water resource management	Hydrological components	Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC	Linking flow and groundwater issues in river basins with impacts in coastal areas	Mersey Basin Campaign. Dart Estuary Environmental Management
3. Pollution control and prevention	Contaminants	Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive 91/271/EEC; Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control Directive 96/61/EC	Awareness raising and organising clean-up activities	Morecombe Bay Partnership Beachcare Programme. Low Tide Day: local activities run by many Coastal Partnerships annually
4. Nature conservation and habitat management	Habitats and species	EC Marine Strategy Directive 2008/56/EC; EC Gothenburg Agenda; EC Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC	Secretariat services and hosting for European Marine Site implementation staff	Tamar Estuaries Forum adapted to form Management Group for European Marine Site. Humber European Marine Site implementation collaboration with Humber Industry and Nature Conservation Association
5. Natural hazard management	Risks to humans arising from climatological, oceanographic and morphological processes	English Making Space for Water Policy; EC Floods Directive 2007/60/EC	Support for shoreline management plans, flood risk management strategies, and coastal habitat management plans	Severn Estuary Partnership providing secretariat to Severn Estuary Coastal Group and vehicle for promoting the findings of the Coastal Habitat Management Plan
6. Spatial planning/development control. Regeneration and management of special kinds of place (resorts, ports, coastal towns)	Terrestrial space and development	European Spatial Development Framework 1999; UK Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004; Planning Bill 2008	Input of coastal strategies into regional spatial strategy and local development frameworks/local development plans. Facilitating development of supplementary planning documents	Solent Forum, hosted by Hampshire County Council, supporting development of regional coastal strategy. Essex Estuaries Initiative, supporting local authorities to prepare supplementary planning guidance to deal with adaptation to coastal change

Table 2 *Continued*

Functional goals	Policy focus	Examples of driving legislation/policy	Contributions of Coastal Partnerships	Examples
7. Marine (spatial) planning	Marine space and development	Draft UK/Scottish Marine Bills; Potential EC Maritime Directive; Integrated Maritime Policy COM 2007/575	Sub-regional marine spatial plans for high-density use coasts. Existing networks of stakeholders to facilitate plan preparation and implementation	Firth of Clyde Partnership to support development of marine spatial planning mechanism for inshore waters as part of Scottish Sustainable Marine Environment Initiative
8. Marine industries and human uses of the sea	Environmental protection; allocation and development; health and safety for specific human activities	Environmental Liability Directive 2004/35/EC; Various Sectoral Legislation: air, noise, waste, fisheries; EC Lisbon Agenda	Coordination of information, data and contacts (e.g. GIS maps)	Humber and Tees Estuary strategies developing assessments to improve environmental performance of industries
9. Contingency planning	Accidents and emergencies	MARPOL; UK Contingency Plan for Marine Pollution from Shipping and Offshore Installations	Access to information, data and contacts	Estuary Partnerships in South Devon working on habitat mapping in Lyme Bay for emergency response to oil spills
10. Environmental assessment	Major developments	EIA Directive 85/337/EEC as amended by 97/11/EC	Repository, key contact point and information management, consultation services	Poole Harbour Steering Group review of Environmental Impact Assessment for channel deepening
11. Strategic environmental assessment	Plans, policies and programmes and their impacts on the environment	SEA Directive 2001/42/EC	Information, contacts and data for coordination of strategic and cumulative assessments	Cromarty Firth Liaison Group Data and Information Partnership (now subsumed in Moray Firth Partnership)
12. Management of heritage	Cultural heritage and archaeological artefacts	UK Heritage Protection Bill	Consideration of seascape/landscape in local development plans	Chichester Harbour Conservancy/Thames Estuary Partnership developing projects to survey the archaeological and cultural heritage resource
13. Management of coastal access	Access points and networks	UK Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000	Generation of regional marine and terrestrial access networks	North West Coastal Forum project on regional coastal path
14. Climate change strategies	Adaptations required by climate change impacts	UK Climate Change Bill; Forthcoming EC Climate Change Directive	Consideration of mitigation and adaptation strategies specific to coastal issues	Severn Estuary Partnership Climate Change Research Advisory Group

Terrestrial Planning System or terrestrial spatial planning The Terrestrial Planning System acts as the gatekeeper to development in the coastal zone (Taussik 2007), including for the landfall of marine developments, so it is crucial for local planning authorities to be engaged with coastal issues. Explicit consideration of coastal issues within the planning system has been mixed. Considering the English system, Planning Policy Guidance for the Coast (PPG20) has not been updated since 1992 and does not reflect the new sustainability led system under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004). Coastal Partnerships can play a crucial role in maintaining the capacity of Planning Officers to respond to the important coastal dimensions of flooding, access, nature conservation and the impacts of development (Kidd *et al.* 2003). Local authorities have been key supporters of policy coordination across local authority and regional administrative boundaries. For example, the Severn Estuary Partnership area includes jurisdictions of 14 local authorities, three Environment Agency regions, the Government Office for the South West and the devolved Welsh Assembly Government.

There is scope for Coastal Partnerships to have a greater role in supporting policy delivery. Regional spatial strategies are prepared at an appropriate scale to highlight strategic coastal issues, but there is no requirement for the coast to be considered. Other planning documents such as Local Development Plans/Frameworks, Local Area Agreements and Statements of Community Interest could also provide a vehicle to engage with coastal issues. A review by Tyldesley (2005) suggests that local authorities should cooperate together to prepare supplementary planning documents for the coastal zone, but that this work would be dependent on improved resources and time commitment to ICM. This may be especially valuable in contexts where local authorities can share expertise about solutions on a regional basis, such as dealing with risk of flood and coastal erosion and accelerated sea level rise. Finally, Coastal Partnerships could also play a role in linking terrestrial to marine spatial planning, and ensuring better integration between plans and policies.

Marine Spatial Planning Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) is being presented within the draft UK Marine Bill (Defra 2008b) and Scottish counterpart (The Scottish Government 2008) as a way to provide forward planning for marine areas and deal with projected development pressures, such as renewable energy, aggregate dredging, port expansion and coastal recreation. MSP will provide a framework for dealing with existing and potential conflicts between activities. The proposals provide for the

creation of new statutory bodies and a more integrated system of regulation offshore. MSP will require some form of institutional process for setting and implementing objectives. Coastal Partnerships have already brought together many of the stakeholders who utilise the marine environment through the preparation of voluntary coastal strategies and plans. Existing knowledge, data and contacts can be built upon to support implementation of the Marine Bill. Marine Spatial Plans will be developed at a regional sea scale, but arguably, there is a need to provide more detailed guidance for intensively used urban coasts, such as the Thames and Solent. Coastal Partnerships could facilitate a series of nested 'Coastal Area Action Plans' at the sub-regional scale. This approach is reflected in previous Scottish proposals (where legislation has already extended responsibility of local government bodies further seaward in relation to aquaculture developments). A review by AGMACS (2007) called for a system of Regional Policy Statements for Scotland's coastal and inshore waters. Figure 3 illustrates how this could be achieved by dividing the Scottish coast into appropriate sections to provide a comprehensive set of Regional Policy Areas, based on existing Coastal Partnerships or joint local authority administrations. The preparation of Regional Policy Statements could utilise the deliberative processes established through Coastal Partnerships.

EC Water Framework Directive Estuaries and coastal areas are partially included in the Water Framework Directive (WFD) (out to 1 nautical mile in England) as there are important linkages between catchment planning and the ecosystem health of the estuaries and coastal waters. Coastal and Estuary Partnerships provide access to existing information, knowledge and contacts for the lower catchment, estuary and coastal areas. A review by Atkins (2004b) suggests that the Environment Agency should maximise the potential of Coastal Partnerships to support the delivery of the WFD by using them as a discussion forum and to facilitate a framework for solving coastal issues.

EC Habitats Directive Schemes of management developed for the marine Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) require management of the impacts of human activities on conservation features. This work has sometimes overshadowed the support from the statutory conservation agencies to Coastal Partnerships. However, some schemes have 'piggy-backed' on existing Coastal Partnerships and benefited from existing collaboration, improved mutual understanding and good stakeholder relations (Morris 2008). Where schemes have not coordinated with

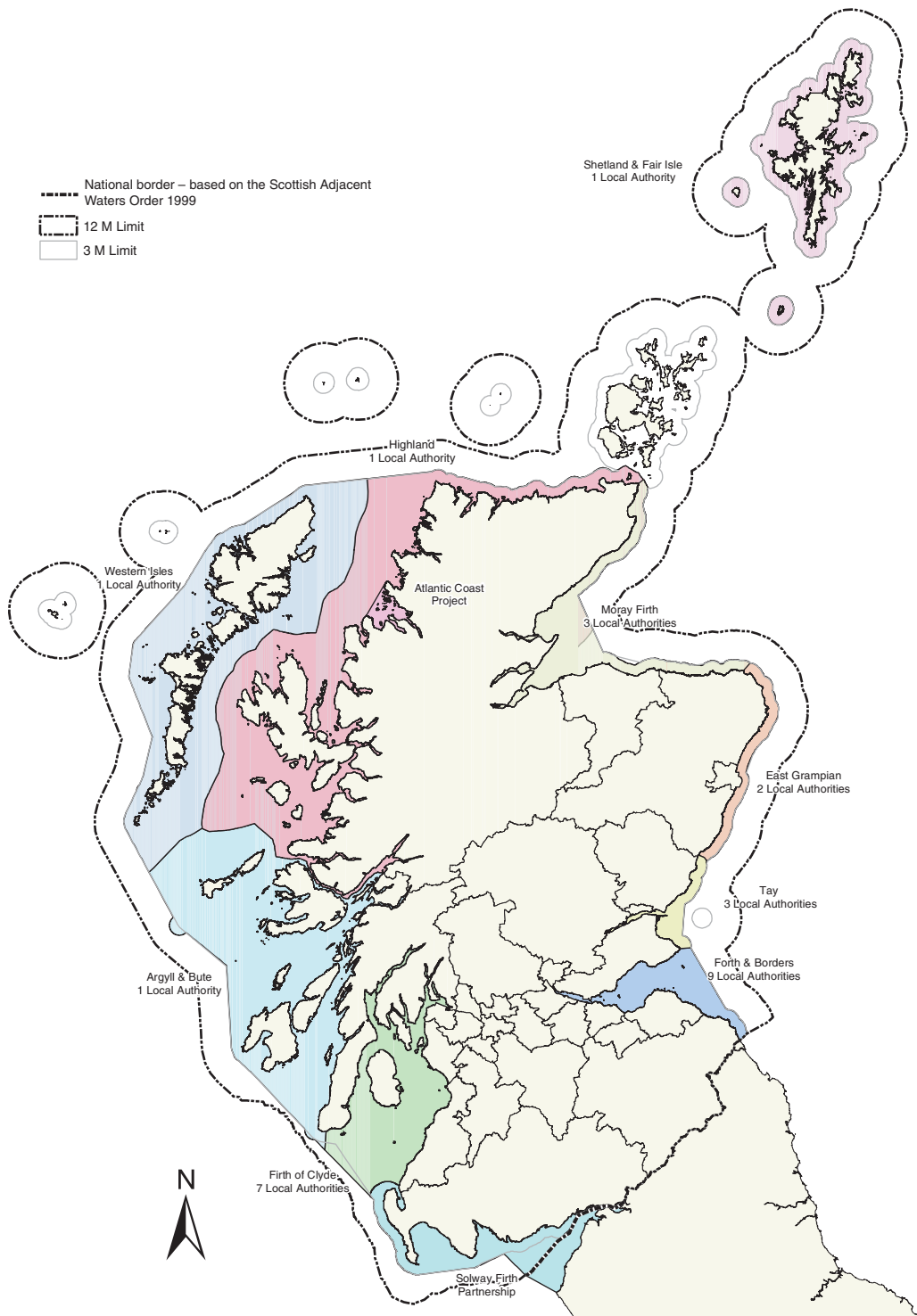


Figure 3 Proposed spatial expression of coastal policies
 Source: Proposed by Scottish Coastal partnership in AGMACS (2007)

Coastal Partnerships for implementation, there has sometimes been confusion with the duplication of initiatives, or alienation of local stakeholders through the absence of a multi-stakeholder approach, which becomes detrimental to the internalisation of conservation goals by target organisations.

Summary Coastal Partnerships can provide a vehicle to facilitate policy implementation and the delivery of ICM at the regional and local level. Many organisations and coastal stakeholders could benefit from working in partnership for the coastal area. However, Coastal Partnerships will play an increasingly marginal role unless they are included within the institutional framework. The evidence presented about Partnerships going into abeyance demonstrates a weakening in baseline support from statutory agencies and local authorities. The development of a UK Marine Bill is an opportunity to decide the future for Coastal Partnerships. Either a longer term commitment must be made to the partnership approach or alternative solutions must be found to provide supporting mechanisms to deliver ICM at the local level.

Delivery mechanisms and the role of coastal partnerships

Marine bills and ICM In order for Coastal Partnerships to contribute to the policy areas listed above, they require a secure role within the institutional framework. The draft UK and Scottish Marine Bills are key pieces of legislation to be consulted upon in 2008/9 which will define the future institutional framework for marine and coastal areas. If Coastal Partnerships are to provide a future mechanism for implementing ICM, they should be included as part of the delivery of services in the Marine Bills. In response to the Marine Bill White Paper consultation (Defra 2007) and ICM strategy consultation (Defra 2006), a group of Coastal Partnership Officers in England proposed a vision for delivering ICM with appropriate services at nested scales of government (Table 3).

Table 3 envisions Coastal Partnerships as part of a clear programme with an established role. The following measures within the UK Marine Bill would support this future role.

- A statutory basis for ICM within the Marine Bill or a framework law (Halcrow 2005).
- Leadership in ICM from national and regional government.
- A statutory duty to be placed on competent authorities to deliver ICM and recognition of the contributions of local authorities within Public Service Agreements.

Table 3 UK Coastal Partnerships' role within the evolving policy framework

National	The proposed Marine Management Organisation to provide strategic direction for coastal policy and Coastal Partnerships; coordinate the input of statutory agencies; establish indicators and monitoring
Regional Seas Units overseen by a new Marine Management Organisation	Among their other duties, to identify scales for coastal plans and strategies as part of a Marine Planning System, promote regional coordination, provide training, and an information hub to coordinate research and monitoring
Coastal sub-regions – where required	Coastal Partnerships to coordinate strategies across administrative boundaries and provide a regional stakeholder network
Local delivery	Coastal Partnerships to develop local plans and strategies, stakeholder and public engagement; identify and resolve local issues, facilitate policy delivery and undertake ICM project work. Facilitated by coastal/estuary partnership officers or officers sited within partner organisations

Source: Adapted from the Coastal Partnerships Working Group response to the Marine Bill consultation (Barker and Hewett 2007)

- Formal recognition that Coastal Partnerships provide a mechanism to support delivery of ICM at a local level and to link MSP and terrestrial spatial planning.

This kind of delivery framework, described above, will provide a secure basis for Partnerships to deliver a range of strategic benefits to the advantage of many sectors, including the following.

- Aligning policies between sectoral agencies and across the land–sea interface.
- Identifying synergies and opportunities to work together and jointly prioritise actions, through the ICM cycle of issue identification, policy formulation, implementation and evaluation.
- Developing diverse local solutions for sustainability which are responsive to the characteristics of the local areas.
- Avoiding deliberation fatigue by sharing discursive and communication vehicles.
- Providing a single window of services to reduce bureaucracy for businesses (Rabbits 2002) and cater for formal involvement of the public through a broad partnership which is responsive to local communities (O’Riordan 2005).

Other international experiences in South Africa (Celliers *et al.* 2007), the Philippines (White *et al.* 2006), Norway (Hovik and Stokke 2007) and Canada (Bastien-Daigle *et al.* 2008) document the importance of establishing networks and partnerships to deliver ICM at the local level. Though not without their challenges, and despite different contexts, these may offer valuable lessons in the debate on the future of Coastal Partnerships in the UK. In the Canadian case, \$6 million investment in programmes since 1991 is estimated to have leveraged significant investments in scientific activity, employment, taxes and improved economic performance (EUCC 2006). A financial cost benefit of English Coastal Partnership working has also recently been completed (Defra *et al.* 2008).

Conclusion

The paper started by presenting evidence in the debate on the effectiveness of Coastal Partnerships. Internal failures include mixed performance in achieving goals; failures in communication and engagement, particularly of private sector stakeholders; and the difficulties and limitations involved in taking a resource-intensive, consensus approach.

The second section highlighted how a range of external constraints are contributing to these failures. The lack of a statutory basis or ongoing national programme has prevented Coastal Partnerships from becoming sustainable institutions with social capital, hampered the implementation of plans, and

eroded commitment to partnerships. It was argued that external constraints have been significant and offer a convincing reason why there has been so much variation and failure in the performance of Coastal Partnerships. On this basis, the partnership model itself cannot be dismissed. The paper continued by outlining a range of achievements, reported through research which has used a variety of methods, including performance evaluation, governance capacity assessment and outcome assessment. The paper listed practical examples of on-the-ground achievements.

The final part of the paper presented a blueprint that envisages Coastal Partnerships as a key mechanism within the institutional framework for ICM. The blueprint clearly outlined the role of Coastal Partnerships in supporting marine and coastal policy delivery at the local level. Coastal Partnerships are not the whole solution. Their limitations may be linked to unrealistic notions of achievement for voluntary initiatives. Coastal Partnerships may need to do a better job of promoting their potential role. Their strengths lie in their locally adaptable approach, and neutral role to promote dialogue and communication between different stakeholders.

The analysis presented in the paper illustrates the complexity of the bureaucracy in the coastal zone, which itself is evolving towards greater integration. At the same time, there are new and increasing pressures on coasts from resource use, development (including the legacy of past decisions) and environmental change (not least impacts of climate change). The question remains whether stakeholders will accept that Coastal Partnerships are an appropriate arrangement to move beyond the maximisation of individual interests, and contribute to more effective delivery of sustainability at the local level by establishing a process for collaborative learning and governance.

Notes

- 1 See, for example, Clark (1978), Carter (1988), Hooke and Bray (1995), Pethick and Crooks (2000), French (2004), Hansom and McGlashan (2004), Orford and Pethick (2006) and Cooper (this issue).
- 2 Stoddart (1987), Cooke (1992) and O’Riordan (2004) consider the fundamental contributions of environmental geography. See also Steers (1978), Jones and Burgess (2005) on collective action, Treby and Clark (2004) on participation, McFadden *et al.* (2007) on vulnerability and risk, Ballinger *et al.* (2005) on policy implementation, and Viles and Spencer (1995) on local to global problems, and Peel (this issue).
- 3 The initiatives are known by a variety of titles, including Partnership, Forum, Network, and in the unique case of Chichester Harbour Conservancy, a new authority has been established by statute.

- 4 Neither is the work of Coastal Partnerships valued in the Public Service Agreements which are used to evaluate the outputs of local authorities.
- 5 A major review of ICM in the UK conducted by the House of Commons Environment Select Committee (1992) recommended some form of statutory backing for ICM, but since that time government has consistently opted for a voluntary basis.
- 6 These assessments are informed to some extent by the methodological perspective of critical realism (Sayer 2000). Critical realism is a philosophy of scientific investigation which takes seriously the existence of structures and mechanisms and the causal tendencies they demonstrate. For example, the partnership approach can be seen as having a number of causal tendencies, and these will be exercised dependent on the contingencies of place and time, i.e. the causal powers can be possessed unexercised, exercised unactualised or actualised undetected (Bhaskar *et al.* 1998).
- 7 Defra has provided support to Coastal Partnerships through national strategies, which are at various stages of completion and can be found on the Defra website: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/ENVIRONMENT/water/marine/uk/iczm.index.htm>

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