

Local participation in the ongoing management and development of the Bantry Bay coastal zone - IE

1. Policy Objective & Theme

- SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES: Preserving coastal environment (its functioning and integrity) to share space
- SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: Balancing economic, social, cultural development whilst enhancing environment

2. Key Approaches

- Integration
- Participation

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

The development of a consensus-based strategy for ICZM for Bantry Bay pioneered innovative, ground-breaking techniques in public participation. The initiative, through community consultations, agreed an approach to integrating the work of the key regulatory bodies involved in planning and managing the Bay area through the coordination of policies, plans and proposals for joint working. The outcome, therefore, was an approach to the management of Bantry Bay which involved the cooperation of over 70 organisations, businesses and regulatory bodies.

4. Overview of the case

Building consensus and avoiding conflict amongst all relevant stakeholders; developing an agreed coastal zone management programme in an area of high space and resource pressure which includes diverse attractions, economic activities and development potential.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

The Bantry Bay area is on the west coast of Ireland. It covers over 200 km of coastline and is home to over 12,000 people living in a variety of communities. It is an area of outstanding scenic landscape, that contains Ireland's state oil transshipment terminal, one of its largest fishing ports, the highest density of aquaculture units and is one of the busiest tourist areas. These diverse attractions, activities and development potential have increased the demand for the area's space and resources. The need for effective management of these activities has become increasingly apparent over time.

b) Objectives

The aim of this initiative was the development of a consensus-based strategy for ICZM for Bantry Bay. The team explored and developed innovative techniques in public participation and coastal zone management through the Bantry Bay Charter, published in September 2000. The intended outcome was the establishment of informal contracting between stakeholders to secure agreed strategies that respect sustainable development and integrated use of Bantry Bay.

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

a) Project Management

The Charter development involved a partnership between Cork County Council, the lead organisation, and the Coastal Resources Centre of University College Cork, the Nautical Enterprise Centre of the Cork Institute of Technology and residents of the Bantry Bay area. Other regulatory bodies, academic and other interests based outside the project area were appointed to an advisors group. A Management Committee was established at the outset: it comprised the project manager, one representative from each of the partners, a delegate from the stakeholder committee and when necessary, relevant external advisors. The Management Committee met at monthly intervals throughout the project. The work was initially supported for three years as an EU LIFE Project.

b) ICZM tools

The Charter was agreed through a process that involved several stages. One of the key aims of this process was to involve all stakeholders in the agreement of the Charter. Therefore, all stakeholders were invited to participate. A database was compiled, including all stakeholders identified and other interested parties. This database was regularly to be expanded and updated. Once the different stakeholder groups were identified, confidential meetings were held with each of them to discuss their concerns about the future management of the area. These combined concerns were used to make up a full list of issues that set the agenda to be addressed within the process. The individual issues on the list were not attributed to any stakeholder group. Detailed information on coastal zone management and activities in the Bantry Bay coastal zone was also presented at a special two-day event. A Roundtable structure was set up at which all stakeholder groups were represented. These representatives had responsibility to work, on behalf of stakeholders, towards consensus on management proposals. The objective of the Roundtable was to seek proposals that meet the various interests of all stakeholders as fully as possible. It developed an agreed set of ground rules to assist its operation. The Roundtable mandated a series of five Working Groups to concentrate on the broad areas of concern evident from the issues list. The Working Groups, involving all the stakeholder representatives with an interest in the issue under discussion, met regularly over eleven months (over fifty meetings in all). There were considerable commitments of time and energy by all those involved. When requested, experts were invited to make inputs to meetings. The representatives worked together to share information and to understand and appreciate the very different perspectives of the stakeholder interests that were present. The Groups identified common ground and developed options in response to the issues of concern. Summaries of each meeting were produced by non-partisan facilitators, who were employed to support the process and have been based in a dedicated office in Bantry, with an open reference library. The Working Groups generated twenty-three proposals, many of which involved input from more than one Working Group. These were widely publicised and disseminated through the media and to those on the database. Public consultation events were held and feedback was collected. Following considerable negotiation and discussion, agreement was reached on a final text; the proposals formed the basis for this Charter.

7. Cost and resources

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

The processes and principles were widely regarded as exemplary and in particular the inclusiveness of involvement and stakeholder consensus arising from a comprehensive, well-organised consultation programme.

9. Success and Fail factors

Initial EU funding was very important as was the exemplary dissemination of project objectives and outcomes via media, leaflets, newsletters, exhibitions and educational materials. This ensured full knowledge to all concerned. Information was gathered via a range of participative research techniques: questionnaire surveys, audits, public meetings, workshops and email. The zoning plan for the Bay gave specified users priority in certain areas. Several fundamental characteristics have been applied throughout the process which has always sought to be open, transparent, and inclusive; neutral; flexible and responsive to circumstances; to maintain dialogue; and to be informed by the participants themselves.

10. Unforeseen outcomes

The Bantry Bay Project won the prestigious National Planning Achievement Award, 2000 (awarded by the Irish Planning Institute) and a Special Merit Award for its “innovative participatory process” by the European Council of Town Planners in 2002. Following the end of the EU LIFE project, Cork County Council funded a project officer and assistant for two years from 1999 and a publicly accessible office in Bantry where the Charter and other documents including GIS information could be viewed by the community. However, there was a lack of support by regulatory bodies, and budgetary difficulties within the Council led to closure of the office in 2002. Since this time there has been no progress on implementing the Charter proposals leading to general disenchantment amongst stakeholders and residents. This case study demonstrates how an exemplary project eventually stopped due to lack of sustained financial and policy commitment from the regulatory authorities.

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13. Sources

- <http://bantrybaycharter.ucc.ie/>
- <http://bantrybaycharter.ucc.ie/pages/contacts/referencethree.htm>
- The Bantry Bay Charter (2006) Cork County Council



Bantry Bay Charter (172.75 KB) 