

The Forth Estuary Forum since the EU ICZM Demonstration Programme, Scotland - UK

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

- Participation

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

How local authorities, statutory agencies, commerce, industry, NGOs and other stakeholders can influence the development of a stretch of coastline through co-operating in a non-statutory body.

4. Overview of the case

The Forth Estuary Forum, set up in 1993, took part in the EU ICZM Demonstration Programme in 1996. They reached the objectives of their project and have since expanded and developed action plans based upon a 3 year business plan.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

The Forth Estuary Forum took part in the original EU Demonstration Programme that ran from 1996-99, with funding from the EU Life programme. The Forum was established in 1993, functioning on a voluntary and informal basis. It comprised representatives of local authorities, statutory agencies, commerce, industry, NGOs and other relevant stakeholders. The results anticipated from the project were an assessment of the effectiveness of a non-statutory voluntary partnership approach in developing integrated management of a large estuarine area; increased co-operation between all interests concerned and their commitment to sustainable development; improvement of environmental protection and the preparation of an integrated management strategy for the Estuary and Firth of Forth with the corresponding action plans.

The Forth of Forth lies on the east coast of Scotland and is a sheltered arm of the North Sea and the estuary of the River Forth, being one hundred kilometres long with a catchment of 4,500 km². 1.25 million people (over a quarter of Scotland's population) live around its perimeter, part of which is heavily urbanised and industrialised. It is a major commercial area and key centre for the oil industry, crude oil is exported from its shores and oil is processed for use in Scotland, the UK and Europe. This industrial infrastructure sits alongside important wildlife areas, sandy beaches, ancient fishing villages and stately homes all of which provide recreational space for residents and visitors to the area. The Firth of Forth and estuary have a great variety of natural habitats; mudflats, saltmarsh, grasslands & dunes and the rocky islands provide safe breeding areas for many thousands of sea birds including puffins, gannets, fulmars, guillemots and razorbills. It is a fish nursery ground for species such as flounder and a wintering area for herring and sprats. Salmon are once again using the river to gain access to upper reaches of the Forth for breeding. Seals are now a common site in the Forth and grey seals give birth in November at various rocky locations and islands including the Isle of May. Whales and dolphins are also noted on a regular basis. The Forth is designated a Special Protection Area under the Birds Directive and the Isle of May is a Special Area of Conservation for its breeding grey seal population.

b) Objectives

The Forum seeks to promote the wise and sustainable use of the Forth and to promote a co-ordinated approach to the management of the coastline and marine areas.

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

a) Management

The Forum is a charity and company limited by guarantee. The business of the Forum is managed by a voluntary Board of Directors which gives strategic direction to the Forum as well as overseeing financial matters, staffing and relevant legislation including health and safety. A Management Group provides guidance on the policy context in which the Forum operates and also advises on the overall direction of the Forum and on projects and work plans. The Management Group is drawn from local authorities and key agencies, organisations and businesses around the Forth and meets at least 4 times per year. The Forum currently employs 2 staff: a Forum Manager (full time) and an Office Manager (part time). The Forum also employed a Project Officer to run the Friends of the Forth project which ran from November 2005 until March 2009.

b) ICZM tools

In 1999, at the end of the EU Demonstration programme, the Forum produced the Forth Integrated Management Strategy which provides the framework for the work of the Forum. It was one of the first strategies for ICZM in Scotland. The Strategy has a series of Themes supported by Guidelines and Actions. It aims to promote integrated management by encouraging bodies to work together to consider management of the Forth and promote a new approach to management by bringing users and regulators together to discuss and resolve issues. The process of developing the strategy was deemed as valuable as the final document.

Since the publication of the strategy, the Forum Management Group has been working towards implementing the action points. The overall principles and themes of the Strategy are still relevant. However, in a changing financial and political climate the Forum has recognised that a more focused approach is needed to help its members, potential funders and the general public understand its work and plans for the future. For many organisations in the Forth, priorities have changed significantly over the years since the strategy was first agreed. Therefore, the action points are constantly under review. The Forum now operates to a 3 year Business Plan based on the guidelines and actions of the Strategy but recognising that members, funders and the Management Group require a simple, easily understood document which states clearly the objectives and actions over a specific period.

The Forum does not have any statutory powers or duties - instead it relies on persuading others to voluntarily adopt plans and policies in line with the Forum's aim and objectives. It has expanded to a membership of around 80 and established an office with two permanent staff and led on many projects and initiatives over the years.

7. Cost and resources

The Forum's current annual running costs are around £60,000. Membership subscriptions contribute ca. £18,000 and with the offer of core funding from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) of £25,000 per year anticipated income is around £43,000 per year. The Robertson Trust has agreed to fund Friends of the Forth communities work for a further two years with £15,000.

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

One of the Forum's earliest successes was the production of the Forth Integrated Management Strategy in 1999. They have established the highly successful Coastal Litter Campaign which ran from 2001 to 2004 which inspired communities and volunteers to help look after their beaches. The Forum set up Friends of the Forth in 2005 to help coastal communities take action to improve their local environment. They have also been instrumental in establishing the first Scottish 'managed realignment' feasibility study at Skinflats in Falkirk. With communication so important between the members and the general

public, leaflets, interpretative panels, newsletters, bulletins and a website are all produced. There is an annual conference organised on relevant topics.

9. Success and Fail factors

The Forum does not work in isolation. It is one of several Local Coastal Partnerships (LCPs) around Scotland. LCPs are represented on the Scottish Coastal Forum which is a grouping of organisations with an interest in coastal matters at a national level. The LCP's, including the Forth Estuary Forum, meet on a regular basis to discuss coastal and marine matters and develop joint projects and responses to marine legislation consultations.

The Forum does have sufficient reserves built up by prudent management of its resources and it can operate at this level for the next two years. Additional sources will need to be sought for specific areas of work and new funding will be required beyond 2011 to allow the Forum to continue.

10. Unforeseen outcomes

Within the current Business Plan period, the Scottish Parliament is expected to agree a Scottish Marine Bill. The legislation will introduce a new organisational regime for the marine and coastal environment. Within this, the future role of voluntary coastal partnerships is unclear. Therefore, the future of the Forum is uncertain but it is very probable that core funding from SNH will no longer be available making the continuation of the Forum dependant on finding alternative funding sources or ceasing to operate. It will be up to the Forum Directors to scrutinise the longer term implications of the Bill and plan and manage the future of the Forum accordingly.

11. Prepared by

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12. Verified by

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13. Sources

- Business Plan 2009-2011 (2009) Forth Estuary Forum
- The Forth Integrated Management Strategy: Promoting the Wise and Sustainable Use of the Forth (1999) Forth Estuary Forum
- www.forthestuaryforum.co.uk



Business plan 2009-2011 (503.4 KB) 



The Forth integrated management strategy (1.8 MB) 