

ICZM policy in Northern Ireland (UK)

1. Policy Objective & Theme

- ADAPTATION TO RISK: Managing impacts of climate change and safeguarding resilience of coasts/coastal systems
- 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
- Knowledge-based
- Socio-economic

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

Building good working relationships between multiple regulatory bodies and avoiding conflict amongst relevant stakeholders to develop an agreed coastal zone management programme in an area of important economic, environmental and social value. The strategy was developed through consultation and is not a statutory document. It does not add to government departmental responsibilities but instead it seeks to prompt all relevant bodies to take steps to implement those actions to which they have agreed within the Strategy.

4. Overview of the case

Historically, policies aimed at achieving coastal management in Northern Ireland have focused primarily on individual sectoral interests such as aquaculture and fisheries, environment, waste management and tourism. This sectoral approach to managing coastal issues was not representative of the ICZM principles as set out by the European Commission. The Northern Ireland ICZM Strategy seeks to identify key factors affecting Northern Ireland's coast and put in place a series of widely supported aims at multiple governance levels through participation of relevant regulators and integration of common objectives and actions which will in turn promote a co-ordinated, sustainable approach to the future management of the coastal zone.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

The Northern Ireland coast is over 650km long and shows great diversity in coastal regime from the high-energy, rocky north coast open to the Atlantic Ocean to the low energy, high tidal range east coast which fronts on to the Irish. Many parts of the Northern Ireland coast are designated as 'Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty', 'Areas of Special Scientific Interest' and/or 'Marine Nature Reserves'. The Giant's Causeway is also designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The coast supports a large proportion of the Northern Ireland population and a great variety of economic activity as well as a range of leisure and recreational interests. The protection of the coastal and marine environment of Northern Ireland is shared among many Government and other non-statutory bodies. This approach can lead to disputes between departments that have conflicting management strategies and objectives.

b) Objectives

The Northern Ireland ICZM Strategy sets out long-term objectives for achieving sustainable coastal management through improvements to existing management systems and the development of new management systems while simultaneously identifying and dealing with potential areas of conflict. The over-arching objective was to put in place a series of “widely supported aims, objectives and actions” that promotes a “coordinated and sustainable approach to the future management” of the Northern Ireland coastal zone.

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

a) Management

In Northern Ireland the Department of Environment (DOE) is responsible for taking a lead on ICZM, however, given its integrated nature, this means that it impacts on most government departments and requires their collaboration. The Northern Ireland ICZM strategy was therefore developed in partnership with all relevant Government Departments. It is described as a ‘living document’, thereby reflecting the Government’s commitment to sustainable development through the key elements of society, environment, economics and integration. The strategy was informed by both direct consultation with coastal stakeholders and taking account of the wider policy context e.g. the UK Review of Marine Nature Conservation.

b) ICZM tools

The Strategy was developed through participation of all relevant Government departments, regulators and stakeholders. The strategy does not impose any new duties on regulators, public bodies, organisations or individuals. It does, however, advocate that relevant bodies use their existing powers to implement agreed actions. The strategy is organised according to four key themes: sustainable communities in the coastal zone; safeguarding and improving the environment within the coastal zone and maintaining and enhancing the economy of the coastal zone. This is supported by a cross-cutting theme, integration of planning and effort, to deliver these themes. Aims have been developed according to each theme covering topics such as sustainable communities, environment, economy and integration. A set of objectives, actions and indicators have been set out for each aim. Every attempt has been made to ensure the objectives are SMART (Strategic, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound) however the strategy recognises that some work still needs to be done in relation to this given that some of the objectives will require consensus across the board. For each specific objective a responsible organisation is identified. In some cases there may be more than one responsible organisation. It is envisaged that the Strategy will improve the way the coast is managed by promoting integrated management through encouraging bodies to work together and to consider management of the coastal zone as a whole. It will also promote a new approach to management that will bring users and regulators together to discuss and resolve issues at a local level. The strategy is accompanied by appointment of the Northern Ireland Coastal and Marine Forum (NICMF), a grouping of individuals from non governmental organisations with both thematic knowledge (from different sectors) and geographical responsibility (e.g. via the non-statutory Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty [AONB] management bodies). One role of the NICMF is to monitor the implementation of the strategy and report on progress to government.

7. Cost and resources

A full time coastal officer within the Department of the Environment’s Planning and Natural Resources Division is devoted to ICZM.

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

The ICZM Strategy recognises that some form of structure should be established “as soon as possible” to oversee the implementation of the strategy. Northern Ireland has an operational Coastal and Marine Forum, whose role is to oversee and assist in the Government’s implementation of ICZM through several different types of activity specified in the Forum’s remit. The Coastal and Marine Forum is an independent, non-statutory body made up of a cross-section of interests ranging from local government, business, agriculture, community, fishing and environmental bodies as well as from various geographical areas (Causeway Coast, Strangford Lough and Mourne Coast). The Forum provides expert advice, co-ordinates research, and provides support towards the achievement of the strategy objectives. It is also responsible for monitoring government’s progress in implementing the Northern Ireland Strategy and reporting against the targets and objectives contained in it.

9. Success and Fail factors

At the time of the adoption of the ICZM strategy, there were no specific resources set aside for the implementation of the objectives. The majority of the objectives, therefore, were an integral part of existing daily duties and programmes of responsible organisations. ICZM activity has been viewed seriously enough by NI government to have published the strategy, established the Forum and provided resources for monitoring ICZM. In terms of Government action and engagement in ICZM as suggested in the EC Recommendation, the ICZM strategy in Northern Ireland arguably reflects a higher degree of government buy-in than any other UK administration. The fact that the strategy is non-binding could suggest that it lacks 'teeth'. This in turn could result in slow progress in implementing ICZM or no progress on associated objectives and actions. Given its relatively recent adoption, however, this remains to be seen.

10. Unforeseen outcomes

The inter-departmental group envisaged in the strategy was not set up. Instead the Forum Chair may report to a high level inter-departmental group established to oversee implementation of the Water Framework Directive. This group agreed to take on ICZM as an additional responsibility. Since ICZM is driven by a Recommendation it was deemed a success that a government group responsible for overseeing a Directive was prepared to take on a lower level additional responsibility.

11. Prepared by













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13. Sources

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- Knight, J. and Cooper, J.A.G. 2002. Introduction in Field Guide to the Coastal Environments of Northern Ireland. Knight, J. (Ed.) ISBN 1859231586.

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|  | IAE_Report_web (3 MB) |  |
|  | Ireland_at_Risk_2 (1.88 MB) |  |
|  | Lee CFRAMS Draft Catchment Flood Risk Management Plan (12.89 MB) |  |
|  | Planning System & Flood Risk Management - Guidelines 301109 (1.83 MB) |  |
|  | Report of the Flood Policy Review Group (1.58 MB) |  |
|  | manseragh press release (27.09 KB) |  |