

Clew Bay Coastal Forum - IE

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
- SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: Balancing economic, social, cultural development whilst enhancing environment

2. Key Approaches

- Integration
- Participation
- Knowledge-based
- Ecosystems based approach
- Socio-economic

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

Community-based forum established to bring forward ICZM. This has been achieved through engagement with all relevant stakeholders and responsible regulators. This work has been supported through numerous short term European and national projects on aquaculture and fisheries.

4. Overview of the case

Clew Bay is a regionally important area for fisheries, aquaculture and tourism. Numerous short term projects have sought to develop ICZM in the Bay area in order to deliver better and more sustainable management of the Clew Bay area. The area operates one of the only Marine Forums in Ireland with representation from all stakeholders in the Clew Bay area. The Forum adopts a flexible and broad perspective, which recognises and builds on the complex series of relationships and commonalities that exist within the Bay.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

Clew Bay is a scenic area located on the west coast of Ireland. It is a shallow bay containing numerous sunken drumlins, which produce a complex current system within the bay. Clew Bay is a multi-resource and multi-user environment, important for tourism and aquaculture. In 1998, the Clew Bay Fisheries Co-operative was created to act as an over-arching organisation for fin and shellfish farming interests in the area. This Fisheries Co-operative was expanded to become the Clew Bay Marine Forum in November 2000. The rationale for the Forum was to initiate links with other maritime sectors operating independently within the Bay. The Forum includes representatives from the potfishermen community, those involved in marine services, fish buyers, processors, manufacturers and mussel, oyster, scallop, trout and salmon farmers. Links have also been established with Government departments, agencies and local authorities who have some statutory responsibility in the Clew Bay area.

b) Objectives

The long-term objective of the Clew Bay Marine Forum is to create a sustainable and equitable development plan for the future

of the Bay which reflects the input and needs from fishing, aquaculture, tourism and leisure interests and other marine stakeholders. Given the importance of aquaculture in the Bay and surrounding area, preservation of water quality suitable for aquaculture was a key objective for the Clew Bay Marine Forum. Another key objective of the Forum is to facilitate increased development of a wide range of marine activities reflecting the geographic location of Clew Bay.

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

a) Management

The Clew Bay Marine Forum represents a diversity of sectors including aquaculture, fisheries, island groups, community groups, academia and statutory agencies (Environmental Protection Agency, Marine Institute, Food Safety Authority of Ireland, Bord Iascaigh Mhara and Department of Agriculture, fisheries and Food).

b) ICZM tools

The Forum may be described as a liaison organisation, involved not only in day-to-day management and developing future management plans for the area, but also providing a link between industry and regulators as well as industry and the general public. A key role of the Forum is outreach and in this context the Forum hosts an annual seminar, attends and presents at many industry meetings as well as marine and coastal management conferences and workshops. At a more strategic level, the Forum responds to local and national policy proposals and developments. In Clew Bay itself the Forum assists with discrete aspects of policy implementation. The Forum is run on a voluntary basis. As much of the Forum's work relates to aquaculture, involvement in national and European research projects provides the Forum with resources to keep operating. This becomes more complicated in relation to developing marine tourism, for example, as the Forum does not currently have the resources to dedicate to work on this sector.

Due to the range of maritime activities going on in the Clew Bay area, participation of all relevant stakeholders in the Forum was essential. This provided an opportunity to learn about the concerns of other industries as well as formulate a coordinated response to issues of concern. The Forum recognises, for example, the importance of accurate baseline information. The Forum reviewed and assembled existing data, identified areas where more data was needed and where possible attempted to fill data gaps. In relation to water quality, for example, the Forum co-ordinated a weekly sampling programme for biotoxin, bacterial and phytoplankton monitoring. This provides additional sampling information for statutory bodies as well as providing data for future research thereby contributing to a clearer picture of how the Bay functions. Better knowledge of how the ecosystem functions should contribute to better and more appropriate management decisions.

It has involved working to retain the waters 'A' classification status by improving water quality monitoring in the Bay and addressing potential sources of pollution. The Forum also provides a practical project management and co-ordinating role. It oversees trials of farmed oysters and lobster re-stocking as well as assistance with stock conservation and enhancement, and support to research institutions. The Forum has been active in several EU projects including AquaReg and CoastAtlantic. In this regard the Clew Bay Marine Forum was instrumental in assisting Bord Iascaigh Mhara [Irish Sea Fisheries Board] and the Marine Institute in developing a Co-ordinated Local Aquaculture Management System (CLAMS) Plan for the area. This is an agency-led aquaculture management initiative which also has more integrated and sustainable management at its core. Safety and training support is also provided.

7. Cost and resources

The Forum receives funding from a range of sources including the marine industry sector, the Marine Institute and BIM. Participation in national and European research projects supplements the resources of the Forum.

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

The Forum initially identified management issues specific to the Clew Bay area. It brought these issues to the attention of the responsible authority. In some cases, issues identified were not adequately addressed within the existing management framework and consequently the Forum progressed work on these 'gaps' issues itself. This is particularly true in relation to

water quality monitoring. On an issue-by-issue basis, the Clew Bay Marine Forum believes that the Forum mechanism is producing better management structures and improvements within sectors such as aquaculture, fisheries, marine infrastructure and research.

9. Success and Fail factors

The sustainability of the Forum in future remains uncertain. Given its lack of dedicated resources and funding the functioning of the Forum is dependent on the continuing support of various statutory bodies. Secondly, a large proportion of funding for the Forum is derived from European projects, an income stream which cannot be relied upon in future. While the Forum has been successful in addressing information gaps and management issues specific to Clew Bay, it is reliant upon the voluntary input, time and dedication of the Forum members. Previous experience from this type of management model would suggest that while successful in the short-term, such success can be threatened by external factors in the long-term. In Clew Bay, for example, the Forum believes there is still a lack of co-ordination between activities and agencies. The Forum has suggested that “a Government-led strategy is required to support existing initiatives, encourage agencies and authorities to co-ordinate their resources and to focus on building a framework of bay management that will deliver real and noticeable benefits to all marine users” .

10. Unforeseen outcomes

At the time of formation of the Clew Bay Marine Forum, a draft Coastal Zone Management Plan for Ireland had been produced and was in the process of being taken forward by the relevant Government departments. This never happened and there is a lack of a strategic vision for coastal management in Ireland. As a result, many bottom-up, community-led approaches to coastal management such as this one in Clew Bay operate in a vacuum.

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13. Sources

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Brady Shipman Martin Report (3.78 MB) 



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