

Summer 2023

Introduction

The most significant milestone to date has been reached over the last few months: the Orkney Islands Regional Marine Plan: Consultation Draft, along with six draft technical assessments, was submitted to the Marine Directorate (formerly Marine Scotland) in December 2022, for approval for public consultation, two months ahead of schedule.

Unfortunately, at the time of writing (August 2023) we are very sorry to say that Scottish Ministers have not yet signed off our draft plan for consultation in accordance with the agreed timeline i.e. it was due to be signed off by the end of April 2023. Therefore, all the islands' consultation visits we had planned for over the summer to consult on the draft plan have had to be postponed. We will provide updates as soon as we have any further news.

Finfish Farming Spatial Guidance

To support the implementation of the regional marine plan's aquaculture policy, the Orkney Islands Marine Region: Finfish Farming Spatial Guidance is being prepared. This is a decision support tool to inform decision making by public authorities and developers on finfish farm development and/or activities proposals in the Orkney Islands marine region by identifying areas of greater and lesser constraint for developments. It will provide greater clarity for stakeholders on the significance and sensitivity of identified environmental, social, economic and infrastructure features to finfish aquaculture development and/or activities.



As part of this, an online tool is being developed to allow users to identify nearby receptors by clicking on a desired point on an online map. The search distance from the clicked location can be set by the user (e.g. all receptors within 1km), which will identify and provide specific information on the receptors within the search radius.

The Finfish Farming Spatial Guidance (Consultation Draft) has been endorsed by committee for public consultation and will be available to view and comment on alongside the Regional Marine Plan consultation.

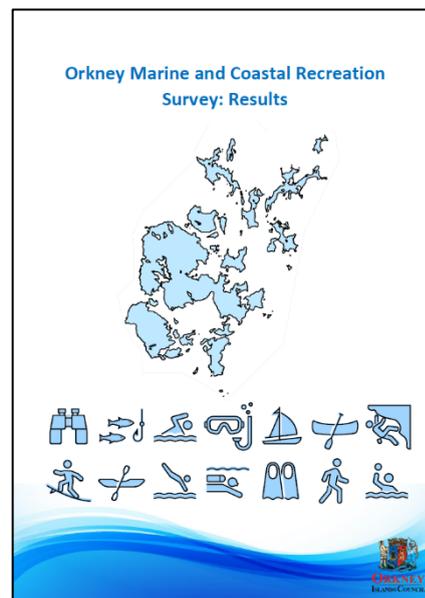
We are also starting work on Shellfish Farming Spatial Guidance. If you would like to discuss this with us please get in touch at marine.planning@orkney.gov.uk.

Orkney Marine and Coastal Recreation Survey: Results

In 2022, the marine planning team carried out the Marine and Coastal Recreation Survey. The purpose of this survey was to record where and when marine and coastal recreational activities are taking place around Orkney, to identify the facilities used during these recreational activities (e.g. carparks, piers, public toilets), and to find out more information on what new facilities people would like to see.

If you wish to view the results of the Marine and Coastal Recreation Survey, in which over 250 people recorded the areas they use for their recreational activities, then you can download the document from the OIC's [Marine Planning website](#), under the 'Related Downloads' tab at bottom of the page.

This is an evolving document that will be regularly reviewed and updated. If you would like to provide information about your coastal and marine recreational activities in Orkney, please get in touch with us at marine.planning@orkney.gov.uk as we would love to hear about them.



Orkney seagrass projects

Seagrass, the only flowering plant in our Scottish seas, is an important species and habitat around Orkney. It provides food and a habitat for many other species, provides a nursery area of key commercial species of fish and shellfish and stores carbon.



Seagrass bed in St Peter's Pool, Orkney. Image: Danny Morris

Project Seagrass was created with the approach of turning cutting-edge research into effective conservation action and education schemes, by collaborating with local communities and other stakeholders. As a dedicated team of seagrass scientists, they work to protect seagrass, and through seagrass, they support marine conservation more broadly. Over the last year, there have been talks, survey work and collaboration in Orkney with the MSPACE project outlined below. In addition, The Restoration Forth project, working with Project Seagrass, collected seagrass seed

from Orkney in July 2023 to use in habitat restoration work around the Forth estuary.

National Planning Marine Spatial Planning Addressing Climate Effects (MSPACE)

MSPACE is a three year project designed to drive forward the capability of the four UK nations in designing and implementing climate-smart marine spatial plans. It is being run by a number of organizations, including ICIT in Stromness.



As part of their work, they are exploring how to help us by providing modelling data to show the likely impacts on key species in response to climate change. This would help both developers and decision-makers make more informed decisions about species of economic and ecological importance as they adapt, or not, to the impacts of our changing climate.

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)

NPF4, published on 13 Feb 2023, sets out national spatial strategy for Scotland. It sets out the spatial principles, regional priorities, national developments and national planning policy. It is therefore the main **land use** policy document for Scotland and will be used to help determine land use planning applications for all of Scotland, including Orkney.

As it covers land down to Mean Low Water Springs, it overlaps with marine planning, which goes out to 12 nautical miles from Mean High Water Springs. Thus, as there is a deliberate overlap of policy within the intertidal zone, the draft Orkney marine plan has been updated to ensure it conforms with NPF4 as far as practicable.

One new element of NPF4 is the requirement for development proposals to contribute to the enhancement of biodiversity. This will therefore apply to land-use elements in the intertidal zone and to marine fish farming, as the latter falls under land-use planning requirements.

New Zealand coastal change game

We have a few things in common with New Zealand; an obvious one is we are both island communities. At 268,021 km²/103,483 miles², New Zealand has over 700 islands, but only about 10% of them are populated. This also means, like us, they have a lot of coastline (c. 15,000 km/9,300 mi), therefore are well aware of the issues of climate change and sea level rise. As part of their work to help people understand the potential impacts, The National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA) has recently developed the 'My Coastal Futures' game:

<https://mycoastalfutures.niwa.co.nz/> .

It helps game players to identify what is important to them, assess climate risk and resilience, and explore adaptation options. Given all the oceans are connected into one giant ocean, many of the issues will be similar for Orkney so this game could be useful for teachers, students and others to gain a better understanding of potential solutions.



New newsletter sign-up form

We have recently launched a webpage to allow new stakeholders and interested parties to subscribe to this newsletter themselves. This can be done at <https://www.orkney.gov.uk/Service-Directory/D/subscribe.htm>. As always, please feel free to pass this newsletter on to anybody who might be interested.

Contact us

If you have any queries, please contact us on the email address below.

Email Address: Marine.planning@orkney.gov.uk

Website: <https://www.orkney.gov.uk/Service-Directory/D/marine-planning.htm>

OIC Marine Planning Team

