

**Submission on the Draft National Marine Planning
Framework**

From the Directors of the three Regional Assemblies

April 2020



Draft NMPF Submissions,
Marine Planning Section,
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A Chara,

The Directors of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA), the Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) and the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) welcome the publication of the Draft National Marine Planning Framework (Draft NMPF) and the opportunity to make a submission on the same.

Each Regional Assembly has made a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for their regions.

- The RSES of the Eastern and Midland Region was made on the 28TH June 2019.
- The RSES for the Northern and Western Region was made on the 24TH January 2020
- The RSES for the Southern Region was made on the 31st January 2020

The Regions will play an active part in Marine Spatial Planning. Each RSES incorporate strategic objectives for marine sectors and align terrestrial planning priorities necessary to secure the objectives of the NMPF.

Further to the submissions on the Draft NMPF from our respective Regional Assemblies, the three Directors have come together to make a joint submission to reinforce the critical importance of effective integration between terrestrial and marine planning under the national, regional and local tiers of our planning system. The Draft NMPF states that a regional marine plan making process will be developed through a partnership approach between the National MSP team and Local Authorities working on a regional basis. The Regional Assemblies support a regional tier in MSP for effective implementation of the NMPF, similar to the statutory role of each RSES to provide a regional focus in the implementation of the NPF. We seek the inclusion of each Regional Assembly as a key stakeholder in partnership approaches between the Department, CCMA (including sub-committees such as Land Use and Transport) and coastal Local Authorities in developing Regional Marine Plans in our regions under MSP. The exclusion of the Regional Assemblies, who have a statutory role in regional planning would seem inconsistent with national policy. We consider that such Regional Marine Plans will assist the effective implementation of the NMPF. The process and timescale for preparation of such plans should be identified in the NMPF.

The existing regional tier, in terms of geography, structure, and statutory basis of the Regional Assemblies, are strongly placed to assist delivery of these Regional Marine Plans. We therefore recommend that the following points are fully considered in the preparation of the final NMPF and in the implementation structures that follow it.

- 1) Integration between Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and new Regional Marine Plans, aligned with both the NPF and NMPF, is required to embed regional maritime with terrestrial planning.
- 2) An example of shared priorities between regional terrestrial and marine plans is the provision of critical transportation infrastructure to strengthen connectivity to, from and between ports which are of strategic importance to our State's economy (Tier 1 and Tier 2 Ports of National Significance, Regional Ports, Fishery Harbour Centres). A key issue for Marine Spatial Planning is the co-ordination between terrestrial plans for improved landside access to ports and harbours and seaward access through marine plans. Co-ordination between both will ensure investment through the National Development Plan and subsequent investment plans for improved access are aligned priorities in land use and marine plans at national, regional and local level. There are other key sectors such as for example offshore energy production similarly dependent on such alignment and cross boundary policy coherence to fulfil their potential.
- 3) The NMPF is a high level and over-arching framework that is too broad to identify all the regional level enablers and priorities to protect our marine resources and drive marine sectors in the Region. Under national legislation, the Regional Assemblies have been established as essential mechanisms for translating and delivering national policy at the Regional scale. The three Regional Assemblies are tasked with a leadership role to co-ordinate, promote and support the strategic planning and sustainable development of the regions. They are therefore a key stakeholder well positioned for the development and implementation of Regional Marine Plans.
- 4) Through the successful development of the RSES's in the three Regions the Assemblies have an established track record in developing strategic approaches to development within an established coherent and democratically endorsed process. The RSES is a co-production prepared through extensive collaboration and partnerships. Through effective implementation, RSES monitoring structures will continue to harness these platforms and establish cross-sectoral and cross regional sectoral representation to implement RSES objectives which align with both the NPF and NMPF priorities.
- 5) The Regional Assemblies are experienced in the management and delivery of EU Operational Programme (over three successive programme periods since 2000) and EU Territorial Co-operation Programmes addressing increased capacity and knowledge on the marine including marine innovation and research, enhancing marine and coastal environments and building resilience to climate adaptation in coastal communities. This is added-value experience that the staff of the Regional Assemblies can bring to Regional Marine Plans.

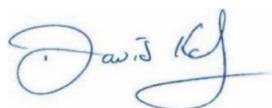
- 6) The Regional Assemblies are statutorily established, coherent and democratically mandated organisations with a track record of delivery. They provide a fit for purpose mechanism for assisting the delivery of Regional Marine Plans (in partnership approaches with the Department and coastal Local Authorities in each region) in concord with the land-based planning system. The development of alternative structures would not have the benefit of that coherence and could indeed undermine the existing Regional Planning structures in Ireland. We would therefore be strongly concerned at the development of any alternative regional structures.

The Directors of EMRA, SRA and the NWRA therefore recommend that the three Regional Assemblies and the established Regional Structures are positively positioned to assist the Department and coastal Local Authorities in the future regional-plan making process for Regional Marine Plans as expressed in the Draft NMPF. Resources and upskilling of professions in the area of marine spatial planning will strengthen the effectiveness of this opportunity.

The inclusion of Regional Assemblies on repurposed high-level Interdepartmental Groups and Stakeholder Advisory Groups to assist the Department and coastal Local Authorities and prepare towards implementation of the NMPF and future Regional Marine Plans is sought.

The Directors welcome the opportunity to give our views on the Draft NMPF and strongly encourage direct consultation in further stakeholder engagement.

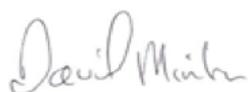
Mise le meas,



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