

ABPmer to support the development of Ireland's marine plan

Recognised specialist in marine planning, ABPmer, has been appointed to support the development of a marine spatial plan (MSP) for Ireland.

This marine plan will cover Ireland's maritime area, including internal waters (sea area), territorial seas, exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and continental shelf. It is intended that a single plan will be prepared for the entire area with the possibility of more detailed regional plans being made at a later date.

It is understood that Ireland transposed the MSP Directive (EU Directive 2014/89/EU) through the European Union (Framework for Maritime Spatial Planning) Regulations in June 2016. These regulations established the legal basis and broad framework for Ireland to implement marine spatial planning through the development of an MSP (or plans) on a ten-year cycle. During 2017, a marine planning function was set up within the Irish Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and in December 2017 it launched its roadmap for delivering a national marine spatial plan.

A robust evidence base will be important to underpin the plan. ABPmer together with its partners will support the Marine Institute to develop the evidence base by auditing, collating and gathering data across a range of topics relevant to MSP. This includes marine activities and how they interact; climate change and related impacts; communities and health; cultural heritage; marine environment and biodiversity; and transboundary interactions with other jurisdictions.

Stephen Hull, Director at ABPmer based in Southampton commented: *'We are really excited to be helping the Marine Institute develop the evidence needed for the marine spatial plan for Ireland.'*

'Having the right data and information is the foundation for any marine plan and is driven by what a country is trying to achieve. Marine Planning in Ireland is particularly seeking to facilitate sustainable economic growth like aquaculture, renewable energy and recreation from its marine resources. This necessitates not only understanding the activities themselves, how they interact with each other and the environment but also the impacts on marine ecosystem services or the implications of climate change. Bringing all this together helps decision-makers recognise trade-offs in policy-making and so make fully informed and holistic decisions.'

It is reported that this study will be led and managed by ABPmer, supported by PML, LUC, Birdwatch Ireland, IWDG Consulting, MERC Consultants, MacCabe Durney and Barnes, with input from Stephen Jay (Liverpool

University), Karyn Morrissey (Exeter University) and independent economist Matt Rayment.

With regard to timetable the development phase is expected to run until Q3 of 2019 and will conclude with the publication of a draft Marine Spatial Plan and supporting environmental assessments for consultation.

It is intended that Ireland's national marine spatial plan will be finalised in 2020, and forwarded to the European Commission at that time, ahead of the due date for submission by Member States of their plans in March 2021.

To learn more about the marine spatial planning process for Ireland readers are invited to take a look here:

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/planning/marine-spatial-planning/marine-strategy/towards-marine-spatial-plan-ireland-roadmap>

About ABPmer

ABPmer is a wholly owned subsidiary of Associated British Ports Holdings Limited. It has been helping clients develop, manage, operate and protect the marine environment for more than 65 years and is known for its knowledge of the marine environment, technical ability and emphasis on service excellence.

All work is undertaken in accordance with a Quality Management System certified to ISO 9001 for the delivery of Environmental Consultancy and Research Services.

About the Marine Institute (of Ireland)

The Marine Institute is the State agency responsible for marine research, technology development and innovation in Ireland. It carries out environmental, fisheries, and aquaculture surveys and monitoring programmes to meet Ireland's national and international legal requirements. Furthermore, it provides scientific and technical advice to the Irish Government to help inform policy and to support the sustainable development of Ireland's marine resource and aims to safeguard Ireland's unique marine heritage through research and environmental monitoring.