



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Project Ireland 2040
**National Marine
Planning Framework**
Public Consultation
Report 2021



Prepared by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
[gov.ie/housing](https://www.gov.ie/housing)

Foreword



Peter Burke, T.D.

Minister of State with
responsibility for Planning and
Local Government

The development process of the National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) is something I believe the Irish State can be very proud of. In my role as Chairperson of the Marine Spatial Planning Advisory Group, I have seen first-hand the benefits of our comprehensive approach to public consultation over a three year period, beginning with the public consultation on the NMPF Baseline Report, and continuing through to the draft NMPF consultation, which involved public town hall events in coastal locations throughout the country, in addition to the first online consultation event held by a Government Department. This comprehensive public engagement process, which is outlined in greater detail in this document, significantly informed the final NMPF. I would also like to acknowledge the valuable contribution made by my predecessor Damien English T.D., in his role as Chair of the NMPF Advisory Group.

I am also delighted to note that Ireland's NMPF development process has been highlighted in the MSP global International Guide on Marine/ Maritime Spatial Planning. The MSP global Guide is the result of a joint initiative by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO, in order to support the development and implementation of marine/maritime spatial planning (MSP) processes worldwide. The purpose of the guide is to assist governments, partners and MSP practitioners globally in the development of marine spatial plans, and to capture the evolution and lessons learned globally on MSP since the first guide was published in 2009 by IOC-UNESCO.

In a further testament to the consultation approach taken by Ireland in developing the NMPF, it is a considerable source of pride to be able to inform our citizens that the European Commission have selected Ireland's NMPF public consultation as an example of European Union best practice in "the implementation by European Union Member States of Directive 2014/89/EU on Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP Directive)". I believe that the inclusion of the NMPF consultation process in these significant European Union documents strongly validates the comprehensive approach taken by my Department during the development of the NMPF, and sets a new standard for future public consultations.

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Executive Summary

In 2014, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union adopted Directive 2014/89/EU. This directive established a framework for Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) and required all coastal Member States to establish maritime spatial plans by 31 March 2021, and to provide the European Commission with their final maritime spatial plans by 30 June 2021. Ireland has transposed the MSP Directive through Part 5 of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018.

The Government subsequently published a roadmap for the development of Ireland's first marine spatial plan, titled "Towards a Marine Spatial Plan for Ireland" in December 2017. There were four broad stages identified in the development of the plan.

- Stage 1, of which the Roadmap formed a central part, was the start-up or activation phase during which the Government's proposed approach to developing MSP was announced and initial contact made with stakeholders. This ran until the end of 2017.
- Stage 2, the main development stage, commenced in Q1 2018 and ran until April 2020. It involved the preparation and publishing for public consultation of the Draft NMPF and associated environmental reports- which was preceded by the publication of the National Marine Planning Framework Baseline Report in September 2018.
- Stage 3 was the finalisation phase during which the Draft NMPF and associated environmental reports were amended as required based on the feedback received in the public consultation.
- Stage 4 is the implementation, monitoring, enforcement and review commencing on adoption of the NMPF, which is the next stage of Marine Spatial Planning in Ireland.

In 2018, the Department produced a baseline report which gave a snapshot of primary human activities in the maritime area. Following a public consultation on this document, including information events around the country, this baseline report was then used as the basis for production of the draft NMPF in November 2019 and another formal public consultation.

In May 2021, the Department finalised the NMPF, following four years of intensive development work. The development process featured hundreds of meetings, two formal Public consultations and three published documents. The resulting NMPF is a national document that sets out the State's approach to managing Ireland's marine activities and ensuring sustainable use of marine resources to 2040. The Framework, bringing together all maritime based human activities, articulates the Government's vision, objectives and planning policies for each activity. It outlines how they will interact with each other in an ocean space that is under increasing spatial pressure.

Throughout the NMPF development process, the Marine Planning Policy and Legislation team travelled to numerous coastal counties to present on the plan and to consult with the public, usually in the evenings to allow for post-work hours attendance. Sector specific presentations were themed in relevant regional coastal locations, such as Offshore Renewable Energy in Arklow and Fisheries in Killybegs. Local and relevant speakers from various stakeholder groups were invited to attend and present their view of the planning framework.

In recognition of the fact that some individuals or organisations experienced challenges in completing National Marine Plan Framework (NMPF) submissions by the initial deadline of 28th February 2020 due to restrictions relating to the national response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the then Minister Damien English twice extended the deadline for NMPF submissions, firstly to 9th April 2020, followed by a further extension to 30th April 2020.

225 formal submissions to the draft NMPF public consultation were received by the Department. These submissions were subsequently collated and assessed, being further broken down into over 3,500 individual comments specific to each relevant section of the NMPF. Comments varied considerably in terms of length and complexity, and the variety of issues addressed within those comments. Interim reports of the public consultation were made available on the Department's website, detailing the volume of comments received on each particular NMPF chapter, along with the 'most commented on' topics within each of those individual chapters. The (redacted) submissions themselves were also made available for online public viewing in August 2020.

A full Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment of the draft NMPF were undertaken to ensure every marine activity, marine user, marine life, ecological and possible climate implications were considered and catered for.

The final NMPF was approved by Cabinet on 23rd March 2021, and was subsequently voted on by Seanad Éireann on 19th April 2021, and Dáil Éireann on 12th May 2021. Following the positive resolutions by both Houses of the Oireachtas, the Minister of State for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Peter Burke, T.D., formally established the NMPF on 20th May 2021. The NMPF was officially launched by An Taoiseach, Micheál Martin, T.D., in an event held at the facilities of the Commissioners of Irish Lights in Dun Laoghaire on 01st July 2021.

Introduction

Public participation was an integral element of the NMPF consultation process. The Department strongly believes in the importance of engagement and education about all of Ireland's marine resources, the NMPF and the proposed marine planning system. Through Government initiatives such as SeaFest, Ireland's national maritime festival, and other outreach activities, the Department worked in partnership with other stakeholders such as the Marine Institute, to promote marine education opportunities, a strengthening of our maritime identity and to increase awareness of the NMPF throughout the public consultation process.

This public consultation report has been prepared to document the process of consultation undertaken on the draft NMPF, the level of stakeholder participation that took place and to present the output of the process. By means of providing a context for this consultation report, sections 1-5 first set out background information as to the roles of the relevant decision makers in the NMPF development process.

Sections 6-11 set out the background for the development of the NMPF, focusing on topics that directly influenced the NMPF, such as the European Union Directive, the Programme for Government and the required Environmental Assessments.

Section 12 provides an overview of the public consultation process.

Section 13 provides information on the communications processes utilised to promote public awareness of the consultation process.

Section 14 details the events participated in by the Marine Planning Policy and Legislation team during the NMPF development process.

Section 15 outlines public participation levels in graph form, outlining who responded to the consultations, how stakeholders were categorised, and how many comments were received from those categories of stakeholders.

Section 16 outlines where significant changes were made to the draft version of the NMPF following the public consultation. Each chapter of the NMPF is titled in the same order as it appears in the NMPF, categorising the changes as following:

- Changes to Objectives
- Changes to Policy
- Changes to Key References
- Changes to Supporting Text
- Changes not made (sample comments)*
- Response/Reasoning for changes not made

*Section 16 also provides examples in each NMPF chapter where changes were not made in response to submissions. Due to the volume of comments, it was not possible to include an individual response to each and every comment received. Examples of the types of comments received are provided for each chapter, with the Departmental responses for those selected comments also included.

Roles

1. The Minister

Development of the National Marine Planning Framework has been led by Peter Burke, T.D, and Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Minister Burke took an active role in the NMPF development process by chairing the meetings of the Marine Spatial Planning Advisory Group, whose work over a three year period, informed the final NMPF.

2. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage has responsibility for the Irish Planning process, under the Planning and Development Act 2000, and by the Planning and Development Regulations, which:

- set out the procedures for applying for and obtaining planning permission
- define those types of development which are exempt from the planning process
- define the special requirements for protected structures, conservation areas and areas of special planning control
- set out the development plan process, at local and regional level
- give a structure to planning and development contribution fees
- establish and govern the operation of An Bord Pleanála, Ireland's planning appeals body

3. The Marine Spatial Planning Advisory Group

The MSP Advisory Group, chaired by the Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, was established in 2018 to facilitate participation in the Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) process by all relevant marine stakeholders from the economic, environmental and social pillars. The intended purpose of the Advisory Group was to harness the potential and capacity of a broad range of sectors including representation from the public sector, business, environmental, social and knowledge based sectors to guide strategic thinking and decision-making in the preparation of marine spatial plans.

The work of the Advisory Group throughout this process was of an exceptional standard, with thorough and detailed discussions on all aspects of the NMPF taking place at each meeting. These discussions in turn informed the work of the Inter Departmental Marine Legislation Steering Group and strongly influenced the final NMPF. Eleven meetings of the Stakeholder Advisory Group were convened during the development of the NMPF, and the reports of these meetings and associated documents can be found on the Department's website. Appendix A lists the full membership of the MSP Advisory Group.

4. The Marine Legislation Steering Group

The Marine Legislation Steering Group is a cross-departmental group chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach. Membership comprises senior representatives of those departments with marine responsibilities, which are; [Housing, Local Government and Heritage](#); [Agriculture, Food and the Marine](#); [Environment Climate and Communications](#); [Transport](#); [Foreign Affairs](#); and [Public Expenditure and Reform](#), in addition to the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel.

5. RPS Group (Environmental Consultants on Natura Impact Statement, Appropriate Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment)

Founded in 1970, RPS is a leading global professional services firm. On behalf of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, RPS prepared the documentation to inform the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) processes carried out on the NMPF. This work was undertaken in parallel with the plan-making process and ensured environmental effects were assessed and environmental protections were integrated into the final NMPF.

Background to the development of NMPF

6. European Union Directive

In 2014 the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union adopted Directive 2014/89/EU. This directive established a framework for MSP and details the main goals (Article 5) and minimum requirements (Article 6). The MSP Directive was originally transposed into national legislation by way of regulations made in 2016 (SI 352 of 2016). Since the regulations were made under the European Communities Act 1972, they were strictly limited to measures required to transpose the directive. In October 2018 the regulations were repealed and replaced by Part 5 of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018. Part 5 re-transposes the Directive in primary legislation and contains a number of measures that are additional to those required by the directive, including:

- Adoption of the National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) by both Houses of the Oireachtas;
- Review and replacement of the NMPF every 6 years;
- Obligation for marine regulatory bodies to secure the objectives of the NMPF when making policies, plans, or granting consents; and
- Enforcement powers for the Minister if the foregoing obligations are not being fulfilled.

7. Marine Planning Policy Statement

Ireland's first Marine Planning Policy Statement provides for the preparation, adoption and review of statutory marine planning policy statements on six-yearly cycles. It reflects the comprehensive updating and renewal now underway of Ireland's marine planning system, setting out core principles to inform evolving marine planning and development management process. The Marine Planning Policy Statement:

- Describes the existing components of Ireland's marine planning system;
- Outlines a vision for the future development of our marine planning system;

- Sets out the overarching policies and principles the Government expects marine planning bodies and other Public Bodies that engage with the marine planning system to observe (in terms, for example, of public engagement, transparency, governance, environmental assessment, climate action, social and economic benefit); and
- Sets out high-level priorities for the enhancement of the marine planning system in Ireland.

This Marine Planning Policy Statement serves as a parallel to the 2015 Planning Policy Statement, which underpins the operation of the entire land planning system in Ireland. The Statement sets out a vision for marine planning as follows:

“A marine planning system with clear forward planning, development management and enforcement elements that promotes and sustains ocean health, and supports the sustainable (recreational) enjoyment, management and use of Ireland's marine resource.”

The policy statement also sets out ten strategic principles to guide all marine planning activity—forward planning, development management and enforcement. These strategic principles have therefore informed the development of this plan and the plan represents a spatial articulation of the MPPS.

8. Baseline Report

The National Marine Planning Framework Baseline Report was published on 18th September 2018 and set out:

- the policy, legislative and regulatory context for marine spatial planning and the development of Ireland's first plan;
- a description of the “as is” situation in terms of existing sectoral development and activities in Ireland's maritime area, including an identification of the future opportunities and constraints for each;
- an initial elaboration of potential high level objectives for Ireland's first National Marine Planning Framework; and

- a number of consultation questions or issues intended to prompt discussion and consideration amongst stakeholders. Responses to these questions were a crucial input to the draft plan, as outlined in the Report on the Public Consultation Process.

Public consultation on the NMPF Baseline Report was open for three months from 18th September to 14th December 2018. Five regional events were held to launch the Baseline Report and promote awareness of the opportunity for public participation in the process. The Department received 173 responses to the consultation from a broad range of stakeholders, including members of the public, coastal community groups, environmental NGOs, sports bodies, stakeholder representative bodies, fisheries organisations, energy providers, Local Authorities, public sector bodies, political representatives and parties, and higher education bodies. Submissions received by the Department during this consultation phase informed the development of the draft NMPF. Further information on the Baseline Report is available on the [Department's website](#).

9. Draft NMPF

Public consultation on the draft NMPF commenced in November 2019, with a further 7 coastal regional events taking place between November 2019 and March 2020. Due to Covid-19 related restrictions, the final public consultation event was held online in April 2020. In addition to these public events, the Marine Planning Policy and Legislation team of the DHLGH continued to promote awareness, understanding and public participation in the planning process throughout the consultation process, arranging or participating in over 150 conferences, seminars and stakeholder events. Table 1 below details the NMPF-specific public consultation events held by the Department during the NMPF development process, while Table 2 records significant other consultation events participated in by the Department's Marine Planning Policy and Legislation Team during the past 4 years.

10. Project Ireland Marine 2040

The Programme for Government committed to the establishment of Project Ireland Marine 2040 and this marine governance group, working under the broader Project Ireland Delivery Board, will provide leadership and oversight during the implementation of the NMPF. A central and successful underpinning of Project Ireland 2040 (the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan (NDP)) has been the alignment of spatial and investment plans. The successor plan to Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth (HOOW) and the NDP review will complement the NMPF in terms of strategy and investments. Together, the NPF and NMPF will form the statutorily based spatial planning framework and the NDP is the key investment plan, covering all sectors, irrespective of whether the investment is on land or sea. As the implementation phase of the NMPF commences, further opportunities for public engagements and consultations related to the Marine Spatial Planning process (in the context of Project Ireland Marine 2040) will occur in the near future.

11. Programme for Government

The Programme for Government contained several public commitments which are reflected throughout the NMPF, where applicable. Some of these commitments are now delivered, more are currently being finalised, while others remain works in progress. These commitments included;

- The prioritisation of the passage of a balanced and Aarhus Convention compliant Marine and Planning and Development Management Bill, subsequently retitled as the Maritime Area Planning Bill, through the Oireachtas. The MAP Bill was initiated in August 2021, and subsequently underwent legislative scrutiny by the relevant Dáil and Seanad committees during November and December 2021. The MAP Bill was enacted by President Higgins on 23rd December 2021, thus becoming the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021.
- A commitment to publish Ireland's first ever marine spatial planning policy, setting out a clear vision for the future development of our marine planning system. The development of this policy will involve a full public and stakeholder consultation. (NMPF Adopted May 2021)

Public Consultation Process

12. Public Consultation overview

Public consultation on the NMPF began in 2018, commencing a lengthy process, during which the Marine Planning Policy and Legislation Unit attended a large number of national and international Marine Spatial Planning events, numbering over 150 in totality. In addition to the public consultation events outlined in the Baseline Report and Draft NMPF sections above, the Department have met and engaged with a wide variety of Marine stakeholders over the course of the last 3 years. These include bodies and agencies such as our European MSP counterparts, our United Kingdom marine planning neighbours, our Fisheries community, our regional Port authorities, Marine social scientists, Marine safety experts such as the Commissioners for Irish Lights, our Defence Forces who have responsibility for Sea Fisheries Protection, Aquaculture representatives, Environmental groups and Marine Industry representatives, particularly those involved in Offshore Renewable Energy and Electricity generation.

13. Promotion of the Public Consultation phase of the draft NMPF

A. Launch and Announcement of the Public Consultation

The draft NMPF was launched by the then Minister of State Damien English, T.D. at the Commissioners of Irish Lights, Harbour Road, Dun Laoghaire, on 12th November 2019. Also in attendance were the Marine Planning Policy & Legislation team of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, in addition to the MSP Stakeholder Advisory Group and members of the national press.

B. Engagement with Media

As part of the Irish Examiner's Ocean Week 2020, the following article outlining the primary aims and objectives of the NMPF appeared in that publication on 31st July 2020. <https://www.irishexaminer.com/sponsored/arid-40021070.html>

C. Social Media

All public consultation events were featured on MPPL's Twitter account (@MSP_Ireland), while the communications team of the Department also featured the details of each consultation event on the Department's Facebook page in advance of the meetings.

D. Advertising

Public consultation events were advertised extensively at local level in local and regional newspapers prior to the events taking place. The following table contains the titles of regional newspapers that contained advertisements for the various draft NMPF public consultation events that took place between 2018 and 2020.

Westmeath Examiner	Donegal Democrat
Westmeath Independent	Dundalk Democrat
Connacht Tribune	Kilkenny People
Clare Champion	Leinster Express
Connaught Telegraph	Leinster Leader
Meath Chronicle	Leitrim Observer
Irish Independent	Limerick Leader
Irish Times	Clonmel Nationalist
Wexford People	Nenagh Guardian
Wicklow People	Tipperary Star
Sligo Champion	Galway Advertiser
Drogheda Independent	Western People
The Kerryman	Roscommon Herald
Munster Express	Marine Times
Limerick Post	Inshore Ireland
Irish Examiner	Seachtain
Midland Tribune	The Corkman
Waterford News & Star	Enniscorthy Guardian
Carlow Nationalist	New Ross Standard
Northern Standard	Gazette Group
Longford Leader	Inishowen Independent
The Inish Times	Donegal News

E. Website

The Department's website was updated on a regular basis with the times, locations and dates that public consultation events were taking place. The Department also collated a mailing list of over 700 individuals and organisations who expressed an interest in Marine Spatial Planning since the NMPF process began- these individuals and organisations were also informed of each of the public consultation meetings in advance via email correspondence.

14. Public Participation Methods

Table 1- Regional Public Consultation Events held on Baseline Report and draft NMPF

Date	Location
2 October 2018	WIT, Waterford
5 October 2018	Town Hall, Galway
12 October 2018	Sligo IT, Sligo
19 October 2018	Cork University Hospital, Cork
23 October 2018	DIT, Grangegorman
12 November 2019	Greenhills Hotel, Limerick (2 sessions)
26 November 2019	Westport Town Hall, Westport (2 sessions)
2 December 2019	Connacht Hotel, Galway (2 sessions)
10 December 2019	Meadowlands Hotel, Tralee
12 February 2020	Arklow Bay Hotel Arklow
17 February 2020	DIT, Grangegorman
2 March 2020	LYIT, Killybegs
21 April 2020	Online

Table 2- Summary of significant stakeholder events participated in by MPPL team during Public Consultation process.

Marine Spatial Planning Events	Date	Location
Public MSP/NMPF Consultation meetings open to all		
Public MSP meeting, Kilmore Quay	Mar 2018	Wexford
Public MSP meeting, Gorey	May 2018	Wexford
Public MSP meeting, Passage East	May 2018	Waterford
Public MSP meeting, Ringaskiddy	May 2018	Cork
Public MSP meeting, UCC	May 2018	Cork
Public MSP meeting, Killary	June 2018	Galway
Seafest 2018	June 2018	Galway
Public MSP meeting Galway Atlantaquaria	June 2018	Galway
Public MSP meeting, Dublin	July 2018	Dublin
Public MSP meeting, Clare	July 2018	Clare
Public MSP meeting, Wicklow	July 2018	Wicklow
Public MSP meeting, Kerry	July 2018	Kerry
Public MSP meeting, Donegal	July 2018	Donegal
Public MSP meeting, Mayo	July 2018	Mayo
Public MSP meeting, Sligo	August 2018	Sligo
Baseline report consultation event Waterford	October 2018	Waterford
Baseline report consultation event Galway	October 2018	Galway
Baseline report consultation event Sligo	October 2018	Sligo
Baseline report consultation event Cork	October 2018	Cork
Baseline report consultation event Dublin	October 2018	Dublin
Public MSP meeting, Bantry	November 2018	Cork
Draft NMPF Consultation public event, Greenhills Hotel, Limerick	November 2019	Limerick
Draft NMPF Consultation public event, Westport	November 2019	Mayo
Draft NMPF Consultation public event, Galway	December 2019	Galway
Draft NMPF Consultation public event, Tralee	December 2019	Kerry
Draft NMPF Consultation public event, Arklow	February 2020	Wicklow
Draft NMPF Consultation public event, T.U Grangegorman	February 2020	Dublin
Draft NMPF Consultation public event, Killybegs	March 2020	Donegal
Draft NMPF Consultation public event, Online	April 2020	Online
Environmental		
Ecosystem Services Workshop Marine Institute	June 2018	Galway
Climate Change Workshop Marine Institute	June 2018	Galway
Dept Culture, Heritage, Gaeltacht Workshop	February 2019	Dublin
National Strategic Environmental Assessment Forum	February 2019	Dublin
DAFM Climate Change Seminar	March 2019	Cork
Ocean Irish Expedition	April 2019	Wexford
International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) meeting	April 2019	Galway
INFOMAR seminar	October 2019	Kerry
National Strategic Environmental Assessment Forum	February 2020	Dublin
International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) Working Group for Marine Planning and Coastal Zone Management (WGMPCZM))	April 2020	Online
Coastal Change Strategy Group	September 2020	Online
Chartered Institute of Ecology & Environment Management - Workshop	October 2020	Online

Economic		
Marine Renewables Industry Association (MRIA) Emerging Technologies Forum	Feb 2018	Dublin
Smartbay MSP seminar	March 2018	Galway
Drogheda Port	April 2018	Louth
Stakeholder meeting with Waterford/Bellview Port	April 2018	Waterford
Stakeholder meeting with Wicklow Maritime Business Development Group	April 2018	Wicklow
Presentation at OREDP/DECC Working Group Meeting	July 2018	Dublin
Meeting with IBEC	October 2018	Dublin
DECC Workshop	January 2019	Dublin
Aquaculture Meeting Clonakilty	February 2019	Cork
DECC Workshop	February 2019	Dublin
Wind Energy Ireland Conference	March 2019	Dublin
Aquaculture Workshop	March 2019	Sligo
EDF Renewables	March 2019	Wexford
Eirgrid/Celtic Interconnector meeting	April 2019	Wexford
IBEC Transport & Infrastructure Council	February 2020	Dublin
Wind Energy Ireland Conference	September 2020	Online
Marine Renewables Industry Association (MRIA) Conference	October 2020	Online

Social		
Irish Fish Producers Organisation (IFPO)	March 2018	Donegal
Federation of Irish Sport - MSP SubGroup	April 2018	Dublin
Stakeholder meeting with Southeast RIFF	April 2018	Wexford
Stakeholder meeting with North RIFF	May 2018	Donegal
Stakeholder meeting with West RIFF	May 2018	Galway
Stakeholder meeting with Southwest RIFF	May 2018	Cork
Stakeholder meeting with Killary Adventure Centre	May 2018	Galway
Stakeholder meeting with Northeast RIFF	June 2018	Dublin
Stakeholder meeting with Irish Marina Operators Association	June 2018	Wexford
Meeting with Green Schools Initiative	July 2018	Dublin
Meeting with Green Schools Initiative	January 2019	Galway
Marine Social Sciences Ireland (MARSSI) Academic Policy Workshop	March 2020	Dublin
Access2Seas - Udaras na Gaeltachta	March 2020	Online

International		
Transnational meeting on MSP in France and neighbouring States	March 2018	Paris
First workshop of the International Forum for Maritime Spatial Planning	May 2018	Brussels
Five Administrations meeting (Ireland, Northern Ireland, England, Wales, Scotland)	June 2018	Cork (2 meetings)
MSP Challenge Workshop Scotland	August 2018	Edinburgh
Atlantic Stakeholder Platform Conference 2019	November 2019	Porto
Member State Expert sub-group on MSP	November 2019	Riga
UNESCO / European Union MSP Forum - Global Meets Regional	November 2019	Riga
Irish Sea Maritime Forum Steering Committee	January 2020	Glasgow
European Union-Taiwan round table on Offshore Renewable Energy	June 2020	Online
Welsh Marine Planning Stakeholder Reference Group	November 2020	Online

Safety at Sea/Defence Forces		
Irish Lights Strategy Launch	April 2018	Dublin
Stakeholder meeting with Irish Water Safety	April 2018	Galway
Stakeholder meeting with Commissioners of Irish Lights	June 2018	Dublin
Sea Fisheries Protection Authority event	February 2019	Cork
Sea Fisheries Protection Authority event	February 2019	Dublin
Defence and Naval Service Meeting	April 2019	Cork
Sea Fisheries Protection Authority event	April 2019	Donegal

Planning/Legal/Local Government		
Irish Planning Institute Annual Conference	April 2018	Kerry
Law and the Environment 2018, UCC	May 2018	Cork
Association of Irish Local Government meeting	March 2019	Waterford
Association of Irish Local Government meeting	March 2019	Wicklow
Association of Irish Local Government meeting	March 2019	Sligo
Law and the Environment 2019, UCC	April 2019	Cork
Workshop on consent system DECC	April 2019	Dublin
Marine Legislation Steering Group meeting	May 2019	Dublin
Planning Division Continuous Professional Development (CPD) - Draft National Marine Planning Framework Update	April 2020	Online
Irish Planning Institute- Transforming the Power System for Future Generations CPD meeting	September 2020	Online
Irish Planning Institute event	March 2020	Online

Email address;

A consultation specific email address, MSP@housing.gov.ie was provided for all NMPF consultation related correspondences.

Mail address;

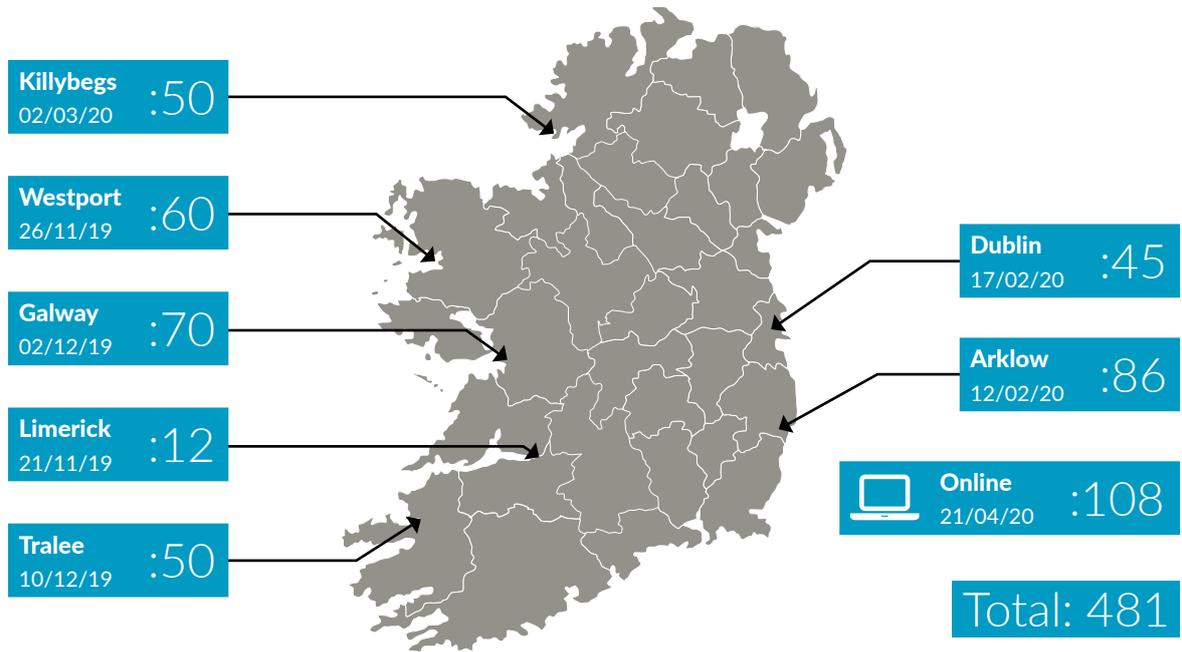
The Marine Planning Policy and Legislation unit postal address was provided for all consultation related correspondences.

An Roinn Tithíochta, Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta, Bóthar an Bhaile Nua, Loch Garman, Y35 AP90.

(Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Newtown Road, Wexford, Y35 AP90)

15. Level of Participation

Draft NMPF Regional Public Consultation Events Attendance

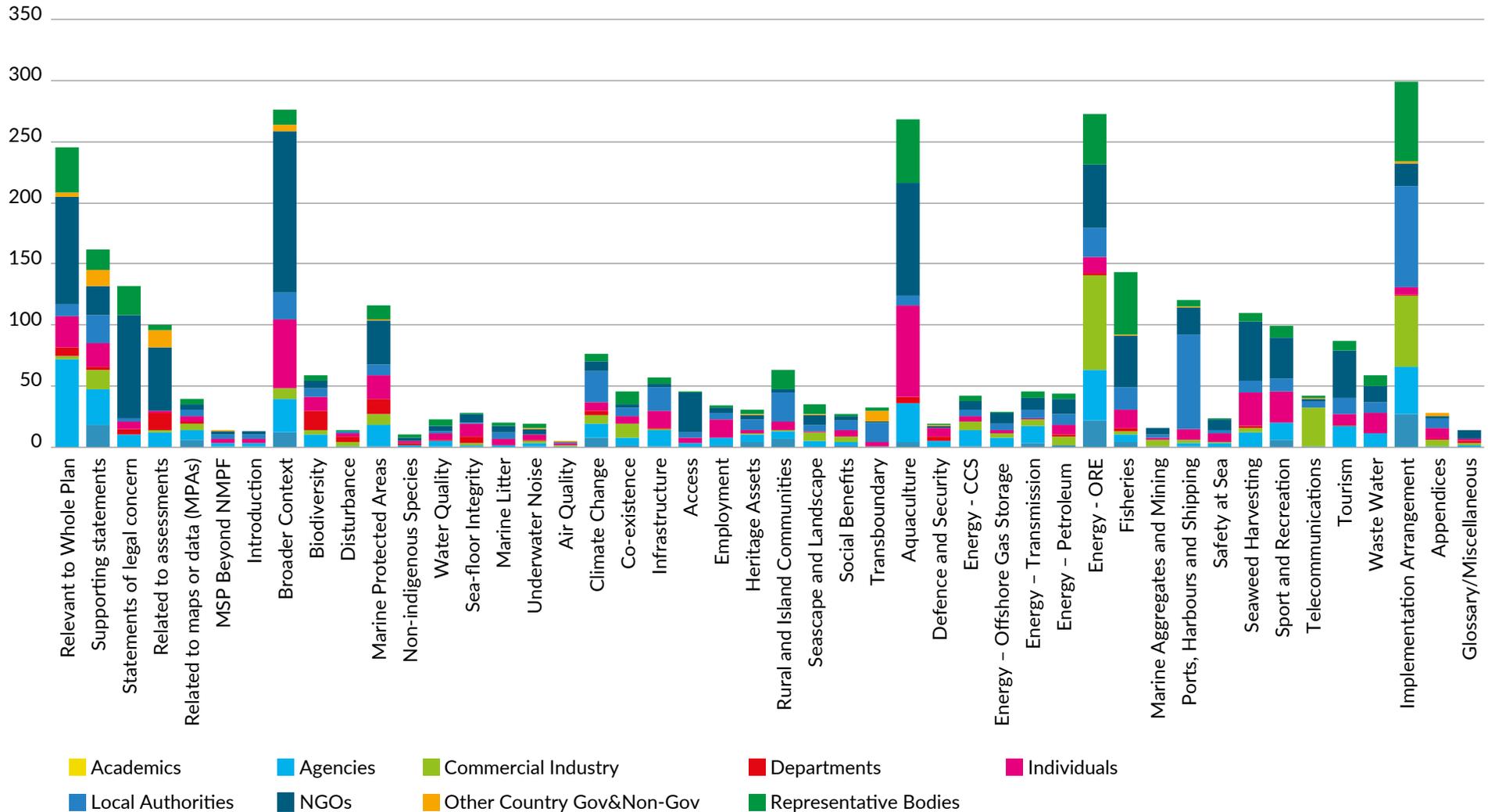


Who responded to the Questionnaire

Public Consultation - Comments by Category and Group

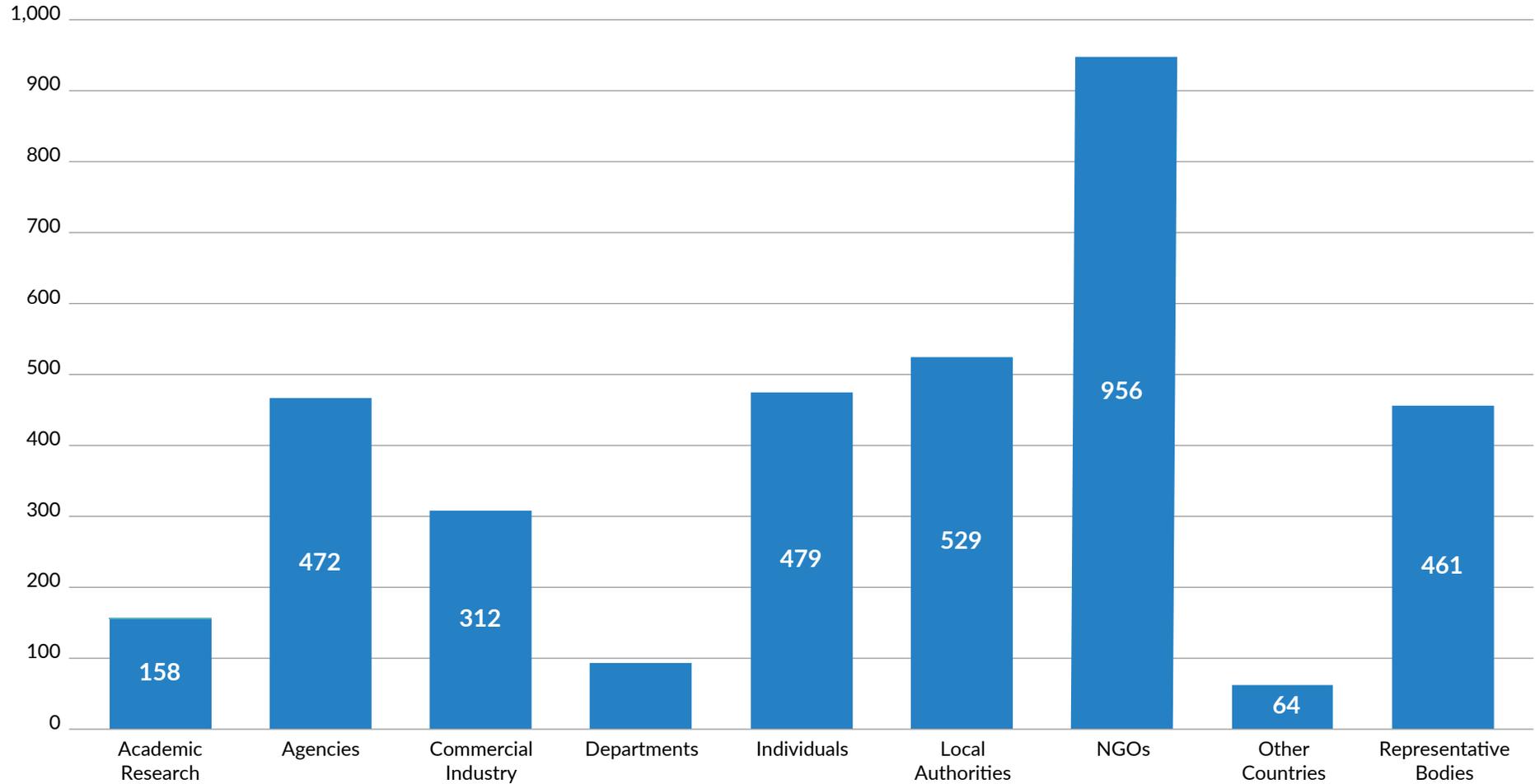
Total Submissions received: 225

Total comments made: 3,525



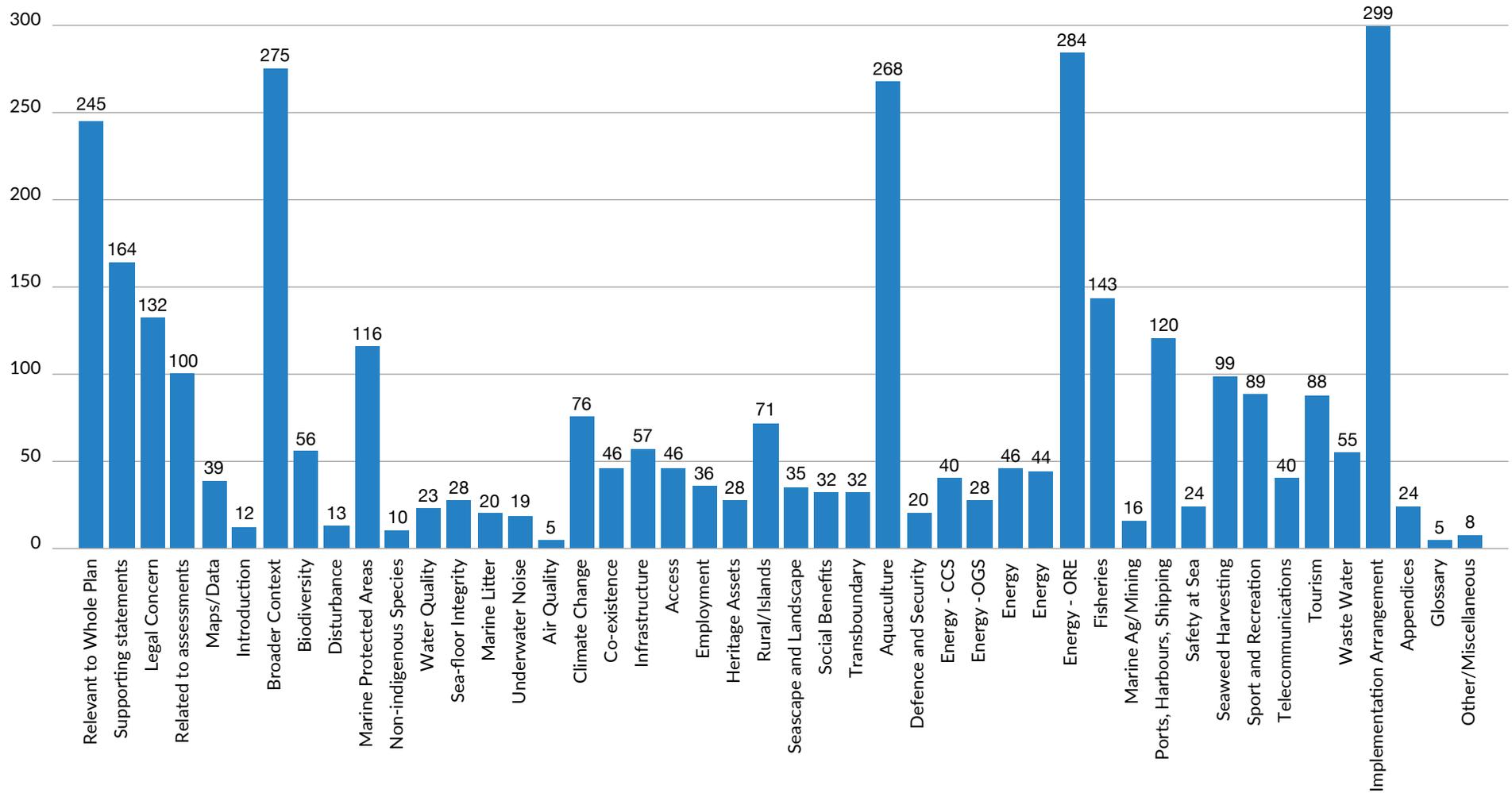
Public Consultation - Comments by Submission Groups

Total Submissions received: 225
Total comments made: 3,525



Public Consultation - Comments by Category - Figures

Total Submissions received: 225
Total comments made: 3,525



Changes applying to entire NMPF;

The need to emphasise the importance of site and route selection was raised by a significant number of submissions. In addition, and despite multiple statements to the contrary, a perception existed among a number of stakeholders that NMPF policies could be used to override environmental considerations, which is emphatically not the case. In response, these issues are directly addressed by new text on the need for environmental assessments and site/route selection in the Introduction chapter, specifically the “How this document should be used” section. This new text states:

“It should be kept in mind that use of the NMPF in determinations does not replace or negate the need for other regulatory requirements particular to specific proposal types and scales, Public bodies, decision making processes or locations. Such requirements may apply at any stage of a proposal, from related investigative and feasibility studies to operations. There is an important role for route and site selection at all phases of planning and development to avoid environmental impacts. Requirements include relevant environmental assessments such as, inter alia, Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA), as appropriate. Any project that may give rise to likely significant effects on the environment will need to be accompanied by one or more of the following, as relevant:

- An Ecological Impact Assessment Report;
- Environmental Report;
- An Environmental Impact Assessment Report if deemed necessary under the relevant legislation (statutory document);
- Natura Impact Statement if deemed necessary under the relevant legislation (statutory document); and
- Article 12 (Habitats Directive) Assessment on Annex IV species.”

16. Structure of Consultation Report

This Consultation Report lists the chapters of the NMPF in the same order as they appear in the NMPF. There have been over 5,000 individual changes to the draft NMPF during the NMPF finalisation process. This Consultation Report document does not address each and every one of those changes individually, but focuses on an overview of the most significant changes to Objectives, Policies, Key References and Supporting Text for each individual chapter. Similarly, for ‘Changes not made’, selected examples of submission comments in each chapter are provided, with the Department’s response also being included for each of those sample comments. The structure of the Consultation Report for each chapter is as follows;

- Changes to Objectives
- Changes to Policy
- Changes to Key References
- Changes to Supporting Text
- Changes not made
- Department response to changes not made

Marine Planning in Broader Context

This chapter is an introductory chapter providing detailed background context information on Marine Spatial Planning in Ireland, and does not contain any objectives or policies. However, the chapter has been updated on review with the following changes to text among those included;

New Marine Planning Policy developments are added to the existing text, such as the commencement of Project Ireland Marine 2040, which is the Marine Governance group that the Government has committed to establishing in the coming months.

Details of what was then the forthcoming Maritime Area Planning Bill (since publication of the NMPF, the Bill has been enacted, and is now the Maritime Area Planning Act) which sets out a vision for an integrated Marine Planning system, with distinct forward planning, development management and enforcement components. Details of these components are included in new text. These changes were primarily as a result of providing updated information on Government policy, which has developed considerably since the publication of the draft NMPF.

Table of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been added to this chapter, listing how each goal will be aided by the NMPF policies of each separate most relevant Marine chapter. This table has been added in response to submissions stating that Socio-Cultural and Non-Material benefits of engagement with the sea should be given greater emphasis in the NMPF, in addition to submissions specifying that the inclusion of relevant SDGs would be beneficial to the broader concept of Marine Spatial Planning. The SDGs outline the broader context of the benefits of Marine Spatial Planning, and are matched to the most relevant chapters of the NMPF. Each chapter of the NMPF also includes the SDG icons most relevant to that chapter.

Insertion of a new text section detailing the links between the NMPF and the Circular Economy, outlining how Ireland's Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy will prioritise research in innovation in the Marine sector. This text was added as an example of relevant ongoing Government Policy developments in the Marine sector.

The term 'ecologically sustainable growth' is added to the description of Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth (HOOW) Goal 1 in response to submissions pointing out that sustainable growth is not singularly economic, and should be integrated with ecological and social sustainability.

Updates to the Transboundary Cooperation section to reflect the latest MSP developments in surrounding jurisdictions, as MSP development in England, Wales and Northern Ireland has advanced since the publication of the draft NMPF. These changes were updated after engagements with our neighbouring jurisdictions relating to the ongoing development of Marine Spatial Planning in our respective countries.

Changes not made:

Comment summary; NMPF should outline the consent process

Response; The consent process is fully outlined in the MAP Act, which was not finalised at the time of going to print. The next iterations of the NMPF will include these details.

Comment Summary; Fisheries and Aquaculture is not covered by the MAP Bill (now the MAP Act)

Response; This is outside the remit of the NMPF, current Government policy is that these activities remain the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. Fisheries and Aquaculture policies are however, addressed by the NMPF.

Comment summary; Wildlife crime, or activities resulting in the degradation of sensitive habitats, should be heavily punished.

Response; The NMPF has no function in legislating for criminality or custodial sentencing- this is a matter for the Department of Justice, the NPWS and the Courts service and is outside the remit of the NMPF.

Overarching Marine Planning Policies

This section explains the overarching marine planning policies (OMPPs) in this section, which apply to all proposals capable of having an impact in the maritime area. Though there have been changes to individual policies contained within the NMPF, there has been no change to the concept of the OMPP's applying to the all proposals and thus, no change in this section.

Environmental – Ocean Health

Chapter 5 provides an overview of the Environmental objective and policy approach of the NMPF, while the objectives and policies of each specific NMPF environment-related sections are outlined in subsequent chapter 5 sub headings. These each contain individual policies relevant to the specific sub heading. There are no 'Changes not made' in this section as the majority of submission comments were responded to, either in this overview, or elsewhere in the various individual sub-headings within Chapter 5 .

The overview provided in Chapter 5 has been substantially changed since the draft NMPF, outlining comprehensive detail of existing environmental measures, inclusive of the relevant European Union Directives and containing details of Ireland's obligations on same. The overview also benefits from the inclusion of a detailed table (Table 3) on 'Qualitative descriptors for determining Good Environmental Status (GES) and Irish Marine Strategy environmental targets' which describes each relevant environmental section, and provides detail of the Irish Marine Strategy environmental targets for those sections.

These substantial changes were implemented as a result of a combination of various points made in a number of submissions, in addition to Department engagements with our colleagues in the Marine Environment division, whom MPPL liaised closely with in relation to all marine environment related chapters of the NMPF.

Several submissions also commented on the concept of integrated coastal management, the inclusion of which they felt would benefit the NMPF. In order to provide that support for integrated coastal management in the NMPF, and to provide a clear mechanism to maintain, restore and enhance biodiversity in the coastal zone, the key objective of the Environmental - Ocean Health section references integrated management approaches, as follows:

“Comprehensive, integrated management of human activities-based on the best available scientific knowledge about the ecosystem and its dynamics, in order to identify and take action on influences which are critical to the health, diversity and productivity of marine ecosystems, thereby achieving sustainable use of ecosystem goods and services and the maintenance of ecosystem integrity.”

New text also outlines the approach to marine environment planning policies, specifying that in several sections of this chapter, sets of policies include those supporting activities that have a positive impact or enhancement effect, in addition to policies that set out where steps need to be taken where significant impacts might arise from a proposal. This approach was taken as a result of multiple public submissions requesting clarity on a variety of environmental issues.

The following text is also contained under Key Issues for Marine Planning for the Environmental and Ocean Health - Biodiversity section in response to submissions pointing out issues that may affect species, such as seasonality and mobility of same:

“Periods of breeding, rearing, hibernation and migration are considered as especially sensitive periods in relation to disturbance. These periods can only be defined by using a species-by-species approach, due to ecological, biological and behavioural differences between species. The seasonal and temporal variations which exist are species and project dependent and individual projects will need to consider these temporal aspects of highly mobile species. Decision-makers will need to apply the best available evidence and the precautionary principle on a case-by-case basis. Accounting for disturbance and displacement includes compliance with relevant regulations including those related to management of the breeding places of any wild animal, the breeding and resting sites of bats and otters, and photography and filming of wild animals or birds.”

A further table on the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) Timeline for Ireland has been added to Chapter 5, detailing the time periods in which certain actions have to be taken by the state in order to comply with the MSFD Directive. Good Environmental Status (GES) text has also been substantially reviewed and updated to include specific environmental targets where relevant, in addition to explanation of the relevant descriptors themselves. These have been added in response to submissions requesting further clarity on Ireland’s environmental obligations, including actions, targets and relevant timelines for same.

Biodiversity

Related to the point above in Environmental-Ocean Health, Biodiversity Policy 1 has been updated with references to both species migration and the requirement for the proposal to comply with environmental assessments and the objectives and policies of the NMPF. The new text for Policy 1 states;

“Proposals incorporating features that enhance or facilitate species adaptation or migration, or natural native habitat connectivity will be supported, subject to the outcome of statutory environmental assessments accepted by the relevant authority and where they contribute to the policies and objectives of this NMPF. Proposals that may have significant adverse impacts on species adaptation or migration, or on natural native habitat connectivity must demonstrate that they will, in order of preference and in accordance with legal requirements:

- a) avoid,
- b) minimise, or
- c) mitigate significant adverse impacts on species adaptation or migration, or on natural native habitat connectivity.”

Change to Policy 2 to include enhanced protection of the environment, policy now states that proposals are subject to the outcome of statutory environmental assessment processes and decision making by the competent authority. Proposals must also contribute to the policies and objectives of the NMPF. Policy also states that proposals must avoid significant reduction in the distribution and the net effect of habitats that important species depend on, including avoidance of activity that may result in disturbance or displacement of habitats.

Change to Policy 3 to state that proposals must seek to enhance marine or coastal natural capital assets where possible, and also that proposals must demonstrate that they will, in order of preference, avoid, minimise or mitigate significant adverse impacts.

A new policy, Biodiversity Policy 4, has been added which specifically deals with mobile species:

“Proposals must demonstrate that they will, in order of preference:

- a) avoid,
- b) minimise in accordance with legal requirements, or
- c) mitigate significant disturbance to, or displacement of, highly mobile species.”

These changes are as a result of submissions requesting further and enhanced environmental protections in Biodiversity policies.

Changes to key references to include; Marine Strategy Framework Directive and relevant MSFD reports; Guidance on Articles 12 & 16 of Habitats Directive; OSPAR Recommendations adopted by contracting parties related to Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats; Wildlife Act 1976; Threat Response and Conservation Plans; Irish Wildlife Manuals; Irish Rare Bird List; and update of relevant key references provided by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). These new inclusions are as a result of MPPL engagements with Marine Environment and NPWS colleagues, in addition to suggestions made by a number of submissions.

Changes to supporting text include a detailed breakdown of the latest NPWS six yearly report on the conservation status of the habitats and species listed in the European Union Nature Directives, compiled in 2019 (post draft NMPF publication). In relation to the impact of Fisheries on Biodiversity, new supporting text outlines the context of disturbance and the effects of same on species when species have to expend energy avoiding human activity or output. These changes are in response to submissions highlighting the effects of disturbance on a variety of species.

New supporting text also incorporates detailed descriptions of the relevant Birds and Habitats Directives, inclusive of accounting for disturbance and displacement and the regulations required to comply with the Directives. The supporting text also includes a section on Natural Capital Accounting, and how that relates to the Government's National Biodiversity Action Plan, specifying the outcomes of the INCASE project, which will highlight challenges, knowledge gaps and data gaps and will recommend a framework to operationalise Natural Capital Accounting in Ireland. Several submissions outlined the concept of Natural Capital Accounting and how that could play a role in NMPF implementation, while other submissions requested further clarity on the definition of Natural Capital Accounting.

In response, and with reference to trade-offs, the following information on Natural Capital Accounting is noted under 'Key Issues for Marine Planning' in the Biodiversity section:

"The concept of natural capital is fundamentally about natural assets, for example wetlands, rivers, coastal habitats, woodlands and forests. These assets deliver a flow of services that economies depend on, from provision of food, fuel and fibre that are traded on markets, to non-market services like flood mitigation, air and water purification, and carbon sequestration, as well as less tangible benefits such as physical and mental health, inspiration and wonder... Assessing natural capital assets in terms of their biophysical condition, their risk of being depleted, and, where possible and practical, their value to society in economic terms, enables a better understanding of trade-offs, and may usefully inform resource allocation decisions that enhance the value of these natural assets rather than degrade them."

Inclusion of new Maps on Distribution and Range of Bottlenose and Common Dolphins; Distribution and Range of Leatherback Turtles; Seabird Breeding Distribution. Submissions outlined suggestions for a variety of extra inclusions to existing Maps. Due to space constraints, it was not possible for the Department to include each and every suggestion, but the new maps reflect some of those requests.

Inclusion of the view of Biodiversity Ireland on the NMPF, specifically referring to Biodiversity.

Changes not made

Comment summary; The NMPF Planning Policies for Biodiversity should include a specific policy to prioritise the Natural Capital approach, increasingly recognised as central to an ecosystem approach to marine management.

Response; Biodiversity policy 5 recognises the need to apply a natural capital approach. Additional guidance and relevant research has been added to supporting text in response to other feedback provided during consultation. Biodiversity policy 4 supports proposals that protect, maintain, restore and enhance the distribution and net extent of important habitats and distribution of important species.

Comment summary; Before any further development takes place, Government must provide a comprehensive independent cost-benefit analysis in which the environmental and economic costs of proposed developments are assessed against benefits.

Response; These matters may be considerations as part of developing specific ORE guidelines (Appendix F, Action 1) during the implementation phase of the NMPF.

Comment summary; To properly engage with the marine planning framework, biodiversity protection and habitat preservation, climate change mitigation, requires not merely, that the current baseline of impacts be clearly stabilised but also that a review of the impact of current commercial practices on the marine environment is undertaken.

Response; The NMPF is future focused and it is not intended that policies be applied retrospectively. The NMPF provides a framework of policies to ensure the environment is considered in a way that helps to avoid the environmental matters highlighted. Monitoring of the NMPF and its use in future will help us understand how this approach might be further enhanced.

Comment summary; Propose harnessing local knowledge of ecologically important areas, creating a platform that would be used to provide up to date data for locating ecologically sensitive areas prior to planning applications. This platform should be easy to input into. The data would create a map of ecologically important areas that would be open and available for anyone to access. This platform could be added as a layer in the existing marine atlas.

Response; This is a helpful suggestion and will be considered in the development of the digital tool to accompany the NMPF. The digital tool is due to launch in the coming months, and will be available to view on www.marineplan.ie

Protected Marine Sites

This is an entirely new section in the NMPF, addressing the important environmental topic of Protected Marine Sites such as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protected Areas (SPA) and Marine Protected Areas. In the draft NMPF, this section was named Biodiversity and Marine Protected Areas, the separation of those chapters in the final NMPF is made to reflect both the importance of Protected Marine Sites, and to provide responses to multiple submissions outlining the significance of this process. Alongside NMPF development, a process is underway that will identify Ireland's approach to MPAs: (<https://www.housing.gov.ie/water/policy/marine-strategy/ministers-obrien-and-noonan-announcecommencement-consultation-process>). The final NMPF reflects developments in the Marine Protected Area process at time of publication.

In response to submissions requesting further updates on the process of identifying Ireland's Protected Marine Sites, the following new text has been added to the Background and Context subsection which sets out the MPA development process:

"A commitment has been made in the Programme for Government to develop comprehensive legislation for the identification, designation, and management of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in Irish territorial waters. In addition, the National Biodiversity Action Plan includes Action 6.2.2 that commits to extending Ireland's Marine Protected Area network. In autumn 2019, the Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage initiated a process aimed at expanding Ireland's network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the coming years. The first step in this process was to convene an advisory group to provide independent expert advice and recommendations on the processes required and the challenges to be addressed in expanding Ireland's MPA network. In October 2020 the group submitted its report to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage. This report, Expanding Ireland's Marine Protected Area Network, was published in January 2021 and will be subject to public consultation to encourage the wider public to submit their views on the best way forward for our natural marine environment, our people and how Ireland's network of MPAs should be expanded."

The Department also intends to begin developing legislation on the identification, designation and management of MPAs in 2021. In relation to GES, a series of updated/reformulated policies is included under the Marine Protected Sites section in the final plan with specific reference to GES Descriptors 1 and 4 and their associated targets.

Four new Planning Polices have been drafted with the above considerations in mind.

Policy 1 states that Proposals must demonstrate that they can be implemented without adverse effects on the integrity of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Where adverse effects from proposals remain following mitigation, in line with Habitats Directive Article 6(3), consent for the proposals cannot be granted unless the prerequisites set by Article 6(4) are met.

Policy 2 states that Proposals supporting the objectives of protected marine sites should be supported and:

- be informed by appropriate guidance
- must demonstrate that they are in accordance with legal requirements, including statutory advice provided by authorities relevant to protected marine sites.

Policy 3 states that Proposals that enhance a protected marine site's ability to adapt to climate change, enhancing the resilience of the protected site, should be supported and:

- be informed by appropriate guidance
- must demonstrate that they are in accordance with legal requirements, including statutory advice provided by authorities relevant to protected marine sites.

Policy 4 states that Until the ecological coherence of the network of protected marine sites is examined and understood, proposals should identify, by review of best available evidence (including consultation with the competent authority with responsibility for designating such areas as required), the features, under consideration at the time the application is made, that may be required to develop and further establish the network. Based upon identified features that may be required to develop and further establish the network, proposals should demonstrate that they will, in order of preference, and in accordance with legal requirements:

- a) avoid,
- b) minimise, or
- c) mitigate significant impacts on features that may be required to develop and further establish the network, or
- d) if it is not possible to mitigate significant impacts, proposals should set out the reasons for proceeding.

The draft NMPF contained 5 key references under the draft chapter title of 'Marine Protected Areas'. Following analysis of submissions, and in addition to engagements with relevant stakeholders, a new set of 24 key references relevant to Protected Marine Sites have been included in this new NMPF section, significantly expanding on the references most relevant to Protected Marine Sites. Please see full NMPF for details of these new inclusions.

New supporting text explains the background and context of Ireland's marine environment, sustainability and the legal Directives underpinning Ireland's obligations under those directives, such as the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the Birds & Habitats Directives. Further text outlines the existing network of Ireland's protected marine sites, and the types of habitats and species that are protected within them.

As stated at the outset, these changes are responses to multiple submissions addressing the topic of Protected Marine Sites (or Marine Protected Areas, as they were referred to as in the draft NMPF). Those submissions varied considerably in terms of length and complexity, and the Department has done its utmost to both address and incorporate as many submission suggestions as possible. The objectives, policies, key references and supporting text in this section are drawn from a combination of public submissions and Department engagement with relevant stakeholders such as the Marine Environment unit of DHLGH and NPWS.

Inclusion of the view of the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group on the NMPF, specifically referring to Protected Marine Sites.

Changes not made

Comment summary: A clear definition of the MPA and its conservation objectives should be established at the outset based upon the features and ecosystems it seeks to protect. Improved understanding will lead to better and more willing management of sites.

Response: The concerns raised here will be addressed through the parallel, targeted Government initiative on MPAs (<https://www.housing.gov.ie/planning/marine-planning/marine-protected-areas/call-collective-action-ministers-obrien-and-noonan>)

Comment summary: In the absence of a coherent MPA network, GIS layers should be made available to planners which identify the location of ecologically sensitive and important habitats and species. This data should be used to preserve key areas from further degradation until adequate MPA legislation is enacted.

Response: Where possible, such GIS information will be made available via a digital tool being developed to accompany the NMPF. This tool will be available to view on www.marineplan.ie

Comment summary: We would like to see the execution of sensitivity mapping as a matter of urgency to identify areas of probable future MPAs. Strict policy should be introduced to protect these areas from further degradation until MPA legislation is enacted.

Response: Sensitivity mapping is being explored under the MPA process currently underway. This issue is subject to a separate process outlined in the updated chapter.

Comment summary: The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) will need a lot more funding if it is expected to conserve and protect natural habitats that are under increasing pressure from increasing uses every day!

Response: Funding is outside the remit of the NMPF, which is a Planning Framework.

Comment summary: We would suggest that option D be entirely removed from the NMPF, and that if a proposal will damage the integrity of the site, and the impact cannot be mitigated for, then it should not be allowed to proceed.

Response: Non-designated sites are subject to different considerations when compared to protected sites. Both types of site are provided for in the NMPF.

Non-indigenous Species

Change to the statement at start of chapter outlining how the policy seeks to contribute to MSFD GES descriptor 2 *“Non-indigenous species introduced by human activities are at levels that do not adversely alter the ecosystems.”* to include the associated binding environmental target for MSFD Descriptor 2- D2T1, which states: *“The number of non-indigenous species which are newly introduced via human activity into the wild, per assessment period, is minimised and where possible, reduced to zero.”* This change is in response to submissions requesting further clarity on how the policy will contribute to GES targets.

Following analysis of submissions, and in addition to engagements with relevant stakeholders, significant changes have been made to key references to include; Marine Strategy Framework Directive - Article 11 Monitoring Programmes Report; Marine Strategy Framework Directive Ireland- Programme of Measures Summary Report; Marine Strategy Framework Directive 2008/56/EC Article 17 update to Ireland’s Marine Strategy Part 1: Assessment (Article 8), Determination of Good Environmental Status (Article 9) and Environmental Targets (Article 10); European Union Regulation 1143/2014 on Invasive Alien Species; Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR); 2020-01 Joint Harmonised Procedure for the Contracting Parties of HELCOM and OSPAR on the granting of exemptions under International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships’ Ballast Water and Sediments, Regulation A-4; International Maritime Organization (IMO) Ballast Water Management Convention; International Maritime Organization (IMO) Biofouling Guidelines; Invasive Alien Species Pathway Action Plans (being prepared by NBDC); and the National Biodiversity Data Centre Catalogue of Ireland’s Non-native Species.

Supporting text in ‘Key Issues for Marine Planning has been amended as a result of submissions requesting the inclusion of examples of proactive approaches to the management of Non-indigenous Species. New supporting text now lists the protocol measures to be put in place for management of such species as follows:

“The reduced risk of introduction and / or spread of non-indigenous species must be demonstrated in all proposals. Examples of how to avoid or minimise the risk of introduction, transportation and / or spread of non-indigenous species include, but are not limited to: biosecurity action planning, implementation and monitoring during the operational stages of a proposal; providing freshwater wash-down facilities in new marinas, clubs and training centres with appropriate training facilities; maintaining boat hulls clear of fouling organisms, particularly when moving to and from different areas; cleaning boats and equipment (for example aquaculture cages, fouled buoys and lines) before transporting them from one water body to another; cleaning and drying recreational gear (for example dive and fishing gear) after use; and minimising the amount of vessel traffic to offshore platforms.”

Other changes to supporting text include a section on the importance of public consultation and awareness raising being a key component in minimising the introduction and spread on non-indigenous species. New text also identifies that all proposals **must** reduce the risk of the introduction and/or spread of non-indigenous species, as opposed to the draft NMPF wording of ‘**should** reduce’ New text also addresses the potential impact of climate change, acknowledging that movement of species may occur due to changes in sea temperature. New supporting text outlines that under the Fish Health Directive (2006/88/EC) all aquaculture production businesses must obtain fish health authorisation (FHA) from the Marine Institute. Part of the requirements for FHA include a biosecurity plan outlining biosecurity measures and disinfection protocols to mitigate risk of invasive species introduction. These changes were made as a result of a variety of public submissions on various topics relating to non-indigenous species. Generally, submissions sought to enhance the strength of policy and supporting text wording, and some also pointed out what they believed were omissions from the draft NMPF text.

Inclusion of the view of the Marine Institute on the NMPF, specifically referring to Non-Indigenous species.

Changes not made

Comment summary; The non-native species risk assessments undertaken by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) and the National Biodiversity Data Centre should be frequently updated, and expanded beyond those undertaken for non-native species which are subject to trade or potentially subject to trade.

Response; While the Department does not necessarily disagree with this comment, this suggestion is outside the remit of the NMPF, and is a matter for consideration by the appropriate bodies, in this case, the NPWS, the IFI and the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

Comment summary; Ensure direct legal provision in Ireland of the Ballast Water Convention should be undertaken as a matter of urgency.

Response; The Biodiversity Action Plan (rather than the NMPF) sets out the Government's commitment to ratify the Ballast Water Convention.

Comment summary; The European Commission Council Regulation 708/2007 concerning the use of alien and locally absent species in aquaculture should be strictly enforced.

Response; This regulation is considered in relation to aquaculture licensing. In the opinion of the Department, related enforcement should be related to that licencing process rather than form part of the NMPF.

Water Quality

Inclusion of statement at start of chapter outlining how the policy seeks to contribute to specific binding Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) Descriptor environmental targets. New text now includes the specific targets that have been identified, which are D5T1, D5T2, D5T5, D8T1a, D8T1b, D8T2, and D8T3. Please see full NMPF for descriptions of the various targets in the opening text of the chapter. These changes are in response to submissions requesting further clarity on how the policies will contribute to GES targets.

Change to Key References to include Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North East Atlantic (OSPAR); EPA catchments. ie website; and the River Basin Management Plan. These inclusions were made following analysis of submissions, in addition to engagements with relevant stakeholders such as the Marine Environment unit of DHLGH and the NPWS.

Under Key Issues for marine Planning, the following supporting text is added in reference to proposals, water quality and the RBMP:

"In accounting for water quality in decision-making, Public bodies should seek to ensure consideration of those measures set out in the RBMP programme of measures that are of relevance to any particular activity being considered. The following aspects of any proposal may be relevant in identifying and managing water quality matters: water body (or bodies) potentially affected, including adjacent water bodies, duration of the activity, location characteristics e.g. rate and frequency of 'flushing' action by the sea, physical footprint with respect to the water body size, scale and type of impact - in particular any measures that may impact upon water quality including during construction, relating to operational activities, and in decommissioning, cumulative impacts in a given locality (both the addition of new planning applications to the existing number of developments within the locality, and multiple new applications within a locality) the potential for heat transfer and / or increased turbidity mitigation measures that could reduce any potentially adverse impact, presence of sensitive habitats and species (with reference to the Register of Protected Areas under the Water Framework Directive), and presence of contaminated sediments."

Supporting text on the River Basin Management Plans has also been added under the 'Interactions with Other Sectors' subsection on wastewater Treatment and Disposal. These changes were in response to submissions outlining that the links between Water Quality policies and the RBMP should be enhanced.

Further changes to supporting text include inserting further information on the process of Eutrophication, in addition to further information on River Basin Management Plans (RBMP), and how those are implemented at local level. New text also outlines the links between the Water Framework Directive and the Birds and Habitats Directives, with specific reference to water-dependent Natura 2000 sites. Additional supporting text has also been included to address the issue of cumulative impacts. New supporting text has also been added to aid thinking in identifying possible sources of significant adverse impact on water quality such as the scale and type of impact, whether that is during construction, operational activities or decommissioning. These changes were as a result of suggestions for amendments from a variety of public submissions.

Inclusion of the view of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on the NMPF, specifically referring to Water Quality.

Changes not made

Comment summary; According to very recent AIE documents, the Marine Institute do not hold any records of toxic pesticide use on so called Irish organic salmon farms.

Response; This issue is not in the remit of the NMPF, which is a planning framework.

Comment summary; Concerning the planning policies proposal guidelines, I wish to express my concern surrounding the integrity of enforcement. Our water quality both inland and at sea is vital for life on earth to survive. Practices that have the potential for jeopardising the quality of our waters should not be considered fit for purpose.

Response; Enforcement is a matter to be considered in line with the decision making process used to apply the plan rather than being a concern for the NMPF itself, which is a planning framework. The proposed approach to monitoring and enforcement is outlined in the 'Implementation and Monitoring' chapter of the NMPF. Enforcement will be a matter for a variety of state bodies and agencies, depending on the responsibilities of those agencies and bodies, rather than the NMPF itself.

Sea-floor and Water Column Integrity

Inclusion of statement at start of chapter outlining how the policy seeks to contribute to specific binding MSFD Descriptor environmental targets. New text now includes the specific targets that have been identified, which are D6T1, D6T2, D6T5, and D7T1. Please see full NMPF for descriptions of the various targets in the opening text of the chapter. These changes are in response to submissions requesting further clarity on how the policies will contribute to GES targets.

New Sea-floor and Water Column Integrity Policy 1 is added as follows:

“Proposals that incorporate measures to support the resilience of marine habitats will be supported, subject to the outcome of statutory environmental assessment processes and subsequent decision by the competent authority and where they contribute to the policies and objectives of this NMPF. Proposals which may have significant adverse impacts on marine, particularly deep sea, habitats must demonstrate that they will, in order of preference and in accordance with legal requirements:

- a) avoid,
- b) minimise, or
- c) mitigate significant adverse impacts on marine habitats, or

d) if it is not possible to mitigate significant adverse impacts on marine habitats must set out the reasons for proceeding.”

In response to submissions outlining their concern that draft NMPF policy did not contain reference to environmental protections, the amended policy text now states that proposals will only be supported subject to the outcome of statutory environmental assessment processes and subsequent decision making by the competent authority, and where they contribute to the objectives and policies of the NMPF.

Insertion of new Policy 2, which states;

“Proposals, including those that increase access to the maritime area, must demonstrate that they will, in order of preference and in accordance with legal requirements:

- a) avoid,
- b) minimise, or
- c) mitigate adverse impacts on important habitats and species.”

This policy has been inserted in response to submissions requesting that potential impacts on species be specifically addressed in the NMPF.

Insertion of new Policy 3, which states;

“Proposals that protect, maintain, restore and enhance coastal habitats for ecosystem functioning and provision of ecosystem services will be supported, subject to the outcome of statutory environmental assessment processes and subsequent decision by the competent authority, and where they contribute to the policies and objectives of this NMPF. Proposals must take account of the space required for coastal habitats, for ecosystem functioning and provision of ecosystem services, and demonstrate that they will, in order of preference and in accordance with legal requirements:

- a) avoid,
- b) minimise, or
- c) mitigate for net loss of coastal habitat.”

This policy has been inserted in response to submissions requesting that coastal habitats and ecosystem services be specifically protected by NMPF policy. While some submissions focused on the protection and maintenance of existing habitats, others pointed out the potential of developments to restore or enhance same- this policy aims to respond to all of those viewpoints.

Change to key references to include Marine Strategy Framework Directive - Article 11 Monitoring Programmes Report; Marine Strategy Framework Directive Ireland - Programme of Measures Summary Report; Marine Strategy Framework Directive 2008/56/EC-Article 17 update to Ireland's Marine Strategy Part 1: Assessment (Article 8), Determination of Good Environmental Status (Article 9) and Environmental Targets (Article 10); Habitats Directive – Annex I that sets out habitats considered threatened; Guidance on Articles 12 & 16 of the Habitats Directive; Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR); 2012-03 OSPAR Guidelines on Artificial Reefs in relation to Living Marine Resources; Irish Wildlife Manuals-Threat Response and Conservation Plans; National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) – Reefs; and EPA - Dumping at Sea (DaS permits). These inclusions were made following analysis of submissions, in addition to engagements with relevant stakeholders such as the Marine Environment unit of DHLGH and the NPWS.

The revised Sea-floor and Water Column Integrity section includes substantial changes to supporting text in order to address a variety of public submissions and multiple points raised within those. Among those points raised were the requirements for MSP to contribute to achievement of GES. In response, the following supporting text has been added;

“MSP in Ireland – including the forward planning and accompanying decision-making processes –is required to make a positive contribution towards the achievement or maintenance of GES in relation to sea-floor integrity.”

Further detail on this aspect is also inserted under ‘Background and Context’ as follows:

“MSP in Ireland – including the forward planning and accompanying decision-making processes –is required to make a positive contribution towards the achievement or maintenance of GES in relation to sea-floor integrity. In addition to enabling creation and application of plans, decision-making processes, such as the current Foreshore Consenting process, provide a mechanism under which Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Directive (HD) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directives and associated national regulations as set out in Ireland's Planning and Development Acts and Regulations can be applied. It should be noted that whilst deep sea habitats are a focus of this policy, this is complemented by other policies in this NMPF that address a wide range of other areas, including policies related to biodiversity and MPAs.”

In response to other points raised in submissions, updated detail of the current status of the process to identify Ireland's Marine Protected Areas is included in supporting text. The also outlines the Department's intention to begin developing legislation on the identification, designation and management of MPAs in 2021.

Changes to supporting text have also been made to reflect developments in the knowledge of deep water ecosystems, which has progressed significantly in recent years- new text accurately reflects this knowledge, which provides detail of soft bottom sediments and an array of different forms of reefs on hard ground. This change is as a result of public submissions outlining same.

Further changes to supporting text to provide further information on biodiversity in deep sea habitats, detail of the Habitats and Birds Directives, and recognition of the need for Ireland to improve its data knowledge of same, which is being carried out via seabed mapping programmes such as INFOMAR. Inclusion of text on important habitats and important species, and how those are defined.

Under ‘Key Issues for Marine Planning’ for the Sea-floor and Water Column Integrity section, the following is added with respect to management plans:

“Application of these policies should account for any Threat Response and / or Conservation Plans and / or Management Plans in place.”

Inclusion of new maps, displaying Benthic Broad Habitat Type, Seabed Substrate Classification and Distribution of Coastal Habitats. Submissions outlined suggestions for a variety of extra inclusions to existing maps. Due to space constraints, it was not possible for the Department to include each and every suggestion, but the new maps reflect some of those requests.

Inclusion of the view of Science Foundation Ireland Research Centre for Energy, Climate and Marine (MaREI) on the NMPF, specifically referring to Sea-floor and Water Column Integrity.

Changes not made

Comment summary; A Dumping at Sea Permit was awarded in 2017 to facilitate removal of accumulated sand from the bases of the seven small wind turbines on the Arklow Bank. The permit for this activity was awarded by the EPA without any Environmental Impact Assessment.

Response; As outlined in the introductory chapters, the NMPF will not replace or remove existing regulatory regimes or legislative requirements governing the operation of various marine sectoral activities. It is not intended that NMPF policies will be applied retrospectively. Rather, it will provide an overarching framework for their continued operation.” In addition, the Ports and Shipping section of the NMPF recognises that: “Dredging and disposal are licensed activities and their environmental impacts are assessed by DHPLG/EPA during licensing procedures (see relevant policies).”

Comment summary; The impact of all fishing gear which comes in contact with valuable seafloor habitats such as bottom trawling techniques, should be widely analysed, regulated and phased out.

Response; Steps are being taken through the programme of measures of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive to address this concern. Specific measures include M035, M036, M037, M050 and M108. The Interim Progress Report on the Implementation of the Programme of Measures of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive 2008/56/EC can be viewed at https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/83db8-marine-strategy-framework-directive-200856ec/?referrer=http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/2019_10_01_interim_report_-_final.pdf

Comment summary; I see that some fishing activity can affect the pelagic and seabed, certain types of fishing activity should be restricted to help save the habitat.

Response; Fishing restrictions will be decided through application of Common Fisheries Policy in Ireland, including consideration of conservation management considerations. Potential restrictions on fishing activity is outside of the remit of the NMPF.

Comment summary; This section omits to discuss the massive impacts on Irish Shelf habitats and species due to bottom trawling by commercial fisheries or the degree of habitat loss resulting, nor is there a focus on how this may be managed or how restoration of impacted seafloor habitats may be prioritised. There is also a failure to highlight deep-water trawling as the major impact on deep sea habitats in Irish waters, the degree of loss resulting, or how any future attempts to revive these highly destructive fisheries may be managed under the NMPF.

Response; Management of fisheries with respect to deep sea species is addressed through Programme of Measure (POM) M093 “**M093- To implement Council Regulation (EC) No. 2347/2002 establishing specific access requirements and associated conditions applicable to fishing for deep-sea stocks and support strengthened measures in any amendment to the Regulation.**” The NMPF has no function in fisheries management, which is the responsibility of the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Marine Litter

Inclusion of statement at start of chapter outlining how the policy seeks to contribute to specific binding MSFD Descriptor environmental targets. New text now includes specific targets that have been identified, which are D10T1a and D10T1b. Please see full NMPF for descriptions of these GES targets in the opening text of the chapter. These changes are in response to submissions requesting further clarity on how the policies will contribute to GES targets.

Marine Litter Policy 1 has been updated to include reference that proposals that could potentially increase the amount of litter discharged into the sea area (either intentionally or accidentally) **must** include measures to avoid, minimise or mitigate litter (for example, such as the development and inclusion of a waste management plan in proposals). This change is in response to submissions requesting clarity on the types of mitigation strategies that would be appropriate in this scenario.

Changes to key references to include Marine Strategy Framework Directive - Article 11 Monitoring Programmes Report; Marine Strategy Framework Directive Ireland Programme of Measures Summary Report; Marine Strategy Framework Directive 2008/56/EC Article 17 update to Ireland's Marine Strategy Part 1: Assessment (Article 8), Determination of Good Environmental Status (Article 9) and Environmental Targets (Article 10); Port Reception Facilities Directive (Directive (EU) 2019/883), to be transposed by April 2021; Directive (EU) 2019/904 on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment (Single Use Plastics Directive), to be transposed by 3 July 2021; Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR); Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy; Microbeads (Prohibition) Act 2019; and European Green Deal – Ireland. These inclusions were made following analysis of submissions, in addition to engagements with relevant stakeholders such as the Marine Environment unit of DHLGH and the NPWS.

In addition to the amended wording of the policy above, and also in response to the same submissions, the supporting text under 'Key Issues for Marine Planning' also expands on the need for waste management plan to reduce litter, stating the following:

"Decision-makers considering proposals for marine related activities shall consider the need for a waste management plan, which includes measures to minimise the risk of litter escape. Measures included within such a plan should be determined by the specification of the proposal (e.g. location, scale, nature of activity etc.) that will in turn define the appropriate consideration of marine litter policy. Such measures could include: avoid – avoiding the discharge of any items of marine litter during development and once operational via methods outlined in a thorough waste and litter management plan; minimise – developers will monitor and remove any items of marine litter from the development and other sources in the area surrounding the development, during development and once operational outlined in a thorough waste management plan, and; mitigate – developers will monitor and remove any items of marine litter from the development or other sources in the area surrounding the development as well as;

Once operational support a re-use or recycling scheme for marine litter or extend their clean-up operation further into the surrounding area to leave the maritime area cleaner than before their development e.g. consider sea bins or financially support coastal clean-up operations; consider use of bio-degradable and / or natural materials where practical – all of which can be outlined in a thorough a waste management plan.

Where appropriate, proposals shall include an explanation or evidence of a plan to manage waste and litter during all phases e.g. construction, operation and decommissioning / end of life. Any proposed installations aimed at concentrating and collecting marine litter in Irish waters should be assessed for their potential impact on marine species, particularly marine pelagic species."

In response to a variety of submissions, substantial changes have been made to supporting text to include further information on the definition of Marine Litter, the European Union JRC report on Harm Caused by Marine Litter (which addresses submissions on the effects of marine litter on species), legislation measures under the European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy, the steps taken by the Government to date to tackle Marine Litter, in addition to the inclusion of details of the Government's *Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy*.

An example of one of those changes is in relation to microbeads, where additional supporting text now states;

"The Microbeads (Prohibition) Act 2019 (Commencement) Order 2020 (S.I. 36 of 2020) was signed into law in February 2020. The purpose of the Act is to reduce inputs of microplastic pollution into marine and fresh waters. The Act prohibits the manufacture or placing on the market of cosmetics and personal care products that may be washed or rinsed off with water, as well as household and industrial cleaning products, and that contain plastic microbeads."

Other submissions called for recognition of the effects on species caused by litter collection infrastructure, and in response, the following supporting text has been added;

"any proposed installations aimed at concentrating and collecting marine litter in Irish waters should be assessed for their potential impact on marine species, particularly marine pelagic species."

New supporting text in response to submissions requesting further information on the Government's approach to tackling the issue of marine litter is addressed by the inclusion of the following supporting text;

"The Government has committed in its current programme to aggressively tackle the issue of waste, ghost nets and illegal dumping in the marine environment through rigorous implementation of the Port Reception Facilities Directives and by requiring all Irish fishing trawlers to participate in the Clean Oceans Initiative, ensuring that plastic fished up at sea is brought ashore."

And also;

"In September 2020 the Department for the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) published the Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy. Key targets in the Plan include: a ban on single use plastics (SUPs) items including cotton bud sticks, cutlery, plates, stirrers, chopsticks, straws, polystyrene containers and oxo-degradable plastic products from July 2021; a commitment to ban further products in the future; reducing the number of SUPs being placed on the market by 2026."

Inclusion of the view of Bórd Iascaigh Mhara on the NMPF, specifically referring to Marine Litter.

Changes not made

Comment summary; This sign (illustration provided) is an example of how we can encourage our citizens to take action towards protecting their environment for future generations. Although, I would stress that a more permanent sign would be appropriate.

Response; Local authorities are responsible for monitoring and managing the beaches in their relevant area (<https://www.beaches.ie/contact-local-authorities/>). While the Department is in broad agreement with this comment, the measures suggested would be for the relevant Local Authority to adopt.

Comment summary; I call on the department to clamp down on the Aquaculture industry to improve their practice and take responsibility for their careless methods. Again, not to generalise, it is not every business that is causing harm.

Response; Enforcement in relation to marine litter should be considered in the context of licensing of particular activities, which are statutorily obliged to consider NMPF marine litter policies on adoption of the NMPF.

Comment summary; Given the issue of marine litter deriving from marine construction materials, such as occurred in Dun Laoghaire with plastic fibres in concrete, and polystyrene foam from marina and aquaculture installations, the NMPF should consider regulation of construction materials used in marine developments based on assessment of their potential to cause marine plastic pollution at any phase in their life cycle.

Response; The policy and supporting text include reference to the construction and operational phases - the materials mentioned in this comment should be identified as part of considering these activities. Regulation of construction materials is outside the remit of the NMPF, which is a planning framework. The regulation of construction materials, including the Waste Action plan for a Circular Economy, is addressed by the following Government policies under the remit of the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, which can be accessed at <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/c305a-construction-and-demolition-cd-waste/>

Underwater Noise

Underwater Noise Policy 1 has been significantly revised and expanded in response to submissions and recommendations. In particular, emphasis has been placed on to the need to integrate application of this policy alongside other environmental assessments where they are required. The new and expanded policy states the following:

“Proposals must take account of spatial distribution, temporal extent, and levels of impulsive and / or continuous sound (underwater noise) that may be generated and the potential for significant adverse impacts on marine fauna.

Where the potential for significant impact on marine fauna from underwater noise is identified, a Noise Assessment Statement must be prepared by the proposer of development. The findings of the Noise Assessment Statement should demonstrably inform determination(s) related to the activity proposed and the carrying out of the activity itself. The content of the Noise Assessment Statement should be relevant to the particular circumstances and must include:

Demonstration of compliance with applicable legal requirements such as necessary assessment of proposals likely to have underwater noise implications including but not limited to: Appropriate Assessment (AA); Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA); Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA); Specific response to ‘strict protection’ requirements of Article 12 of the Habitats Directive in relation to certain species listed in Annex IV of the Directive; Species protected under the Wildlife Acts. An assessment of the potential impact of the development or use on the affected species in terms of environmental sustainability; Demonstration that impacts on marine fauna are to be minimised; Measures to mitigate any impacts which the proposed development or use may place on marine fauna.

Demonstration that significant adverse impacts on marine fauna resulting from underwater noise will, in order of preference and in accordance with legal requirements be:

- a) avoided,
- b) minimised,
- c) mitigated, or
- d) if it is not possible to mitigate significant adverse impacts on marine fauna, the reason for proceeding must be set out. This policy should be included as part of statutory environmental assessments where such assessments are required.”

Changes to key references to include the addition of:

- Marine Strategy Framework Directive - Article 11 Monitoring Programmes Report;
- Marine Strategy Framework Directive Ireland Programme of Measures Summary Report;
- Marine Strategy Framework Directive 2008/56/EC Article 17 update to Ireland's Marine Strategy Part 1: Assessment (Article 8), Determination of Good Environmental Status (Article 9) and Environmental Targets (Article 10);
- EC Guidance on Articles 12 & 16 of the Habitats Directive;
- Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR); OSPAR Monitoring Guidance for Underwater Noise in European Seas;
- Marine Planning Policy Statement;
- NPWS summary of European Union Directives (Habitats, Birds) and assessments (AA, EIA, SEA);
- NPWS Guidance on Appropriate Assessment for Planning Authorities;
- National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021;
- and Wildlife Acts.

These inclusions were made following analysis of submissions, in addition to engagements with relevant stakeholders such as the Marine Environment unit of DHLGH and the NPWS.

A number of submissions highlighted that underwater noise was one of a range of energy related impacts humans have in the maritime area as a result of activities. Light was provided as an example of another. Having considered these submissions, and reflected on the fact that it has been identified at the European level that the strongest effects from these activities on the marine environment are caused by underwater noise, it was considered that focus in this chapter on noise was appropriate. Impacts from other sources of energy may be addressed through Biodiversity policy 4 concerning disturbance.

In response to submissions requesting recognition of same, energy caused by human activities has been added to supporting text regarding energy in the marine environment, under 'Background and Context'.

In response to submissions requesting examples of avoidance, minimisation or mitigation, some suggested criteria for impulsive and continuous noise have been added to 'Key Issues for Marine Planning' as follows:

"For impulsive noise, measures could include:

Avoiding impact – marine mammal observers or passive acoustic monitoring that can stop noise generation while sensitive species are present. Not generating impulsive noise during sensitive periods (such as breeding, rearing, hibernation, migration);

Minimising impact – eliminating or controlling noise at source, for example using alternative quieter approaches like drilling foundations instead of piling; and

Mitigating impact – soft start piling allowing sensitive species to avoid the area or attenuation measures, for example bubble curtains or pile collars."

For continuous noise, these measures could include:

Avoiding impact – changing vessel routing away from sensitive species or areas; Minimising impact – designing specifications to reduce operational vibration (for example, in vessels or infrastructure) or imposing speed restrictions in sites of sensitivity that reduce noise generated; and Mitigating impact – using attenuation measures, for example acoustic baffles.

A number of submissions highlighted the role of noise registers. In revising the text, it has been highlighted that a registry of impulsive noise has been developed by ICES to specifically support OSPAR contracting parties in providing information for regional assessments for MSFD descriptor 11. Ireland has reported data to this register. Ongoing support for development and contribution to this register is set out in the NMPF as follows:

"Proposals should seek to contribute to the OSPAR register of impulsive noise that has been developed by ICES to support contracting parties in providing information for regional assessments including for MSFD descriptor 11."

Inclusion of the view of the Irish Centre for Research in Applied Geosciences (iCRAG) on the NMPF, specifically referring to underwater noise.

Changes not made

Comment summary; Any coastal or marine development should be assessed for likelihood to generate increased vessel traffic, vessel noise and shore-based noise, and its potential impact on marine species and habitats.

Response; The updated Underwater Noise Policy 1 provides for noise assessment. Disturbance from other energy sources, such as light, is covered in Biodiversity policy 4.

Comment summary; We suggest modernising regulation regarding marine noise pollution, to decrease disruption to protected species and habitats. Average marine noise should become an essential measure of environmental health, and taken into account when planning permission and licensing.

Response; The NMPF approach to policy on underwater noise signifies an update to regulation. Application of the revised underwater noise policy will be undertaken cognisant of any wider environmental assessments undertaken that will ensure particular habitats and / or species are considered. Consideration of impacts upon areas not yet designated is addressed in policies in the Biodiversity and Protected Marine Sites chapters.

Comment summary; Re: Section 3.132: Marine mammal observers should NOT be a key way to avoid underwater noise impacts. This reliance on a single person is open to corruption and errors. Underwater noise can travel far distances and an observer may not be able to properly identify whether or not a sensitive species is too close, especially in less-than-ideal conditions such as fog. The use of a designated “marine mammal observer” is simply a way to allow business to look better on paper.

Response; The use of Marine Mammal Observers is suggested as a measure among others that could be used, rather than being identified as “key”. The policy is not explicit on use of observers and the most appropriate measures will be determined in relation to particular individual cases and circumstances.

Air Quality

Change to Policy 1 to include enhanced protection of the environment, policy now states that proposals are subject to the outcome of statutory environmental assessment processes and decision making by the competent authority. Proposals must also contribute to the policies and objectives of the NMPF. This amendment is in response to submissions requesting enhanced environmental protections and strengthening of policy.

Change to key references to include Air Pollution Act 1987; Air Quality Standards Regulations 2011; AirQuality.ie (Air Quality Index for Health-AQIH); Environmental Impact Assessment; EPA licencing; European Union (National Emissions Ceilings) Regulations 2018; and National Air Pollution Control Programme. These inclusions were made following analysis of submissions, in addition to engagements with relevant stakeholders such as the Marine Environment unit of DHLGH, the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, the Department of Transport, and the NPWS.

Change to supporting text in response to submissions on best practice with regard to air quality control in the area of shipping. New supporting text now states ‘

“Prevention of pollution by international shipping represents a significant element in the work of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), where substantial progress has been made in lowering shipping emissions. In relation to shipping, since January 1, 2020 the IMO has implemented a sulfur cap, which set a limit concerning higher sulfur contents in fuel oil consumed by ships, decreasing sulfur content in the fuel from 3.5% to 0.5%.”

Inclusion of the view of the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications on the NMPF, specifically referring to Air Quality.

Changes not made

Comment summary; The second Air Quality policy requires action where it is likely to result in any increase in air pollution. This should be amended to significant increase.

Response; After consultation with other relevant State Bodies and agencies, in addition to consultations with Environmental Consultants (RPS), the Department made the decision not to amend the wording of this policy, as the addition of the term ‘significant’ in the context of air pollution would reduce the strength of the policy, which is not the intention of the NMPF.

Climate Change

Change to Policy 1 to include enhanced protection of the environment, policy now states that proposals should demonstrate how they: avoid contribution to adverse changes to physical features of the coast; enhance, restore or recreate habitats that provide a flood defence or carbon sequestration ecosystem services where possible. This policy should be included as part of statutory environmental assessments where such assessments are required. Amended policy text now states;

“Proposals should demonstrate how they:

- avoid contribution to adverse changes to physical features of the coast;
- enhance, restore or recreate habitats that provide a flood defence or carbon sequestration ecosystem services where possible.

Where potential significant adverse impacts upon habitats that provide a flood defence or carbon sequestration ecosystem services are identified, these must be in order of preference and in accordance with legal requirements:

- a) avoided,
- b) minimised,
- c) mitigated,
- d) if it is not possible to mitigate significant adverse impacts, the reasons for proceeding must be set out. This policy should be included as part of statutory environmental assessments where such assessments are required."

New Policy 2 has been inserted to include enhanced protection of the environment, addressing estimation of likely generation of greenhouse gas emissions, measures to support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, likely impact of climate change effects upon the proposal, measures incorporated to enable adaptation climate change effects, and the likely impact upon climate change adaptation measures adopted in the coastal area relevant to the proposal. Policy also states that proposals must consider all of the above for the lifetime of the proposal. New policy now states;

"For the lifetime of the proposal, the following climate change matters must be demonstrated:

- estimation of likely generation of greenhouse gas emissions, both direct and indirect;
- measures to support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions where possible;
- likely impact of climate change effects upon the proposal from factors including but not limited to: sea level rise, ocean acidification, changing weather patterns;
- measures incorporated to enable adaptation climate change effects;
- likely impact upon climate change adaptation measures adopted in the coastal area relevant to the proposal and/or adaptation measures adopted by adjacent activities;
- where likely impact upon climate change adaptation measures in the coastal area relevant to the proposal and/or adaptation measures adopted by adjacent activities is identified, these impacts must be in order of preference and in accordance with legal requirements:
 - a) avoided,
 - b) minimised,
 - c) mitigated,

- d) if it is not possible to mitigate significant adverse impacts, the reasons for proceeding must be set out."

These policy changes have been inserted in response to a variety of submissions requesting further environmental protections, in addition to specific protections for coastal habitats, ecosystem services and natural flood defences by NMPF policy. Submissions also focused on the generation of emissions, the longer term impacts of climate change and the need to adapt to those, and the need to consider the lifetime of proposals. While some submissions focused on the protection and maintenance of existing habitats, others pointed out the potential of developments to restore or enhance same- the above policy changes and amendments aim to respond to the viewpoints received in various public submissions.

Changes to Key References to include Agriculture, Forest and Seafood Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan; Biodiversity Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan; Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill 2021; Climate Action Regional Offices; Climate Ireland; Flood Risk Management Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan; and Local Authority Coastal Erosion Policy and Practice Audit. These inclusions were made following analysis of submissions, in addition to engagements with relevant stakeholders such as the Marine Environment unit of DHLGH, the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, and the NPWS.

In response to submissions requesting clarity on actions currently being taken by Ireland in relation to climate change, new supporting text also identifies a publication by the OPW as an example of a current action being undertaken in Ireland:

"In 2019 the OPW published the Flood Risk Management Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan. DHLGH and OPW have put in place a National Coastal Change Management Strategy Steering Group that is considering the development of an integrated, whole of Government coastal change strategy. This initiative, which will evolve over time, and others related to it, will shape the role of the NMPF in relation to coastal change in the future."

In response to submissions requesting further consideration be given to the assessment of the projected impacts of climate change, the following supporting text has been added;

“As climate change will affect multiple actors and sectors, the adaptation process needs to be open, transparent and inclusive, and involve relevant stakeholders. There are a wide range of adaptation planning frameworks and tools available to facilitate planning for climate adaptation. In general, available frameworks and tools revolve around a number of key steps including: defining objectives; risk assessment; an examination of adaptation options; and developing, implementing and monitoring adaptation plans.”

In response to submissions requesting that coastal erosion be addressed in the NMPF, the following supporting text is added;

“DHLGH has put in place a National Coastal Change Management Strategy Steering Group that will consider the development of an integrated, whole of Government coastal change strategy. This initiative and others related to it will shape the role of the NMPF in relation to coastal change in the future.”

Further changes to supporting text outline the Government’s commitments to greenhouse gas reduction targets, details of the next Climate Action plan which is currently being prepared, the Agriculture, Forest and Seafood Climate Change Sectoral Action Plan, the changes in the maritime area that are attributed to Climate Change, the role of Local Government in adaptation to Climate Change, and the need to protect coastal habitats and species, specifically referring to the Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs). These changes were as a result of submission comments and suggestions, which varied considerably in terms of length and complexity. This particular chapter of the NMPF was subject to significant changes, inclusions and amendments, and with that in mind, it is advised that stakeholders view the full NMPF for relevant details of other changes.

Inclusion of the view of Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) on the NMPF, specifically referring to Climate Change.

Changes not made

Comment summary; In summary, our position on climate science is that, while there is some GHG-influence, the observed rate of warming does not present any immediate threat. Forty years of global satellite temperature data confirms that the Earth is warming by around 0.1°C per decade, indicating less than 1°C further increase by 2100. These hard facts (and many others) do not point to any climate “breakdown”.

Response; The climate change text in the NMPF is in line with the Government’s climate change position, which in turn is based on best available science. The Department does not agree with the analysis outlined in this comment, and disregarded this comment when amending NMPF text.

Comment summary; It is true that habitats that provide flood defence and/or carbon sequestration should be protected. But, it is very disappointing to find that the associated maps on page 64-65 indicate carbon sequestration in terms of marine sediments instead of marine habitats! Kelp forests are a major source of natural carbon sequestration AND flood defence, but these important habitats are not mentioned in this section or on any of the accompanying maps at all.

Response; Mapping of kelp forests in relation to carbon sequestration functions is not currently available. The Department will seek to include further climate change related mapping in future via the digital NMPF tool and NMPF revisions.

Comment summary; Ireland’s past and present inability to enforce protective regulatory practices bodes ill for any MSP that sees greater and poorly regulated exploitation of the marine environment that does not address the origin of the climate crisis and ecological destruction.

Response; Enforcement related to Marine Spatial Planning is being addressed through the Maritime Area Planning Act. The implementation and enforcement objectives of the NMPF are set out in the relevant chapter. Enforcement will be the responsibility of a variety of Departments, State Bodies and Agencies, depending on their marine responsibilities. The NMPF itself, being a planning framework, does not have a role in enforcement.

Economic – Thriving Maritime Economy

No changes to draft NMPF Policy.

Change to supporting text -Inclusion of Maps of Marine Related Businesses per Electoral District. This was in response to submission requests asking for more detail of marine related businesses in Ireland. Other suggested changes to maps could not be included due to space constraints, but it is expected that the forthcoming digital tool will significantly expand on a variety of relevant marine maps and activities over time.

Co-existence

The phrase ‘state the case for proceeding’ has been rephrased as ‘set out the reason for proceeding’ in Coexistence Policy 1 and is clarified as follows in supporting text:

“The final part of policy 1 identifies the need to set out the reason for proceeding where significant adverse impacts, such as displacement, cannot be minimised or mitigated. Where this is required a related statement should include content; related to demonstrating how optimisation of space might be achieved; what measures are proposed to minimise and mitigate significant adverse impact (if such steps are not possible, a description of why this is); setting out the reason why a given proposal should proceed in light of the likely impact.

Where a project is required to carry out other / related assessments, such as undertaking an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), compliance with this policy should be integrated with this / these processes.”

Change to supporting text to include further explanation of Co-existence Policy 1, specifically in relation to where there is a requirement to carry out environmental assessments. New supporting text also states that consultation will likely be a requirement of the statutory decision making processes, which will consider identification of issues during consultation, how these were addressed, the outcomes of the consultation process, and related assessments required for specific developments. This change is in response to submissions requesting further clarity on consultation and the need for environmental assessments to be carried out.

New supporting text in the Key Issues for Marine Planning subsection also highlights the need for structured communications and consultation between relevant marine users, and further flags that the development of national, regional and local plans and strategies are a way of planning for co-existence. Supporting text has also been added which outlines that coexistence between activities should be informed by consultation to aid in decision-making and the identification of issues, and also signposts to particular chapters which set out considerations for consultation (Transboundary, Defence and Security, Energy – Offshore Renewable Energy, Fisheries, and Ports, Harbours and Shipping). This text was added in response to submissions stating that communication and early consultation engagement was critical to successful co-existence – the signposts to other sections were included as relevant examples of marine activities that would require consultation and/ or early engagement.

In response to submissions stating the opportunities for clustering of marine activities and the importance of ‘blue growth’ – the following text was added to background context;

“Promote initiatives that facilitate and support clustering for marine innovation and entrepreneurship, aligning ‘blue growth’ with the sustainable use of shared marine resources.”

The following supporting text has also been added in response to a combination of submissions addressing communications, engagement and the identification of co-existence opportunities.

“In considering co-existence, structured communications between relevant marine users can be used to identify and account for opportunities and challenges arising from shared use of the maritime area. Such communications should be used to better understand other marine users and related concerns, including temporal use patterns, which can then be mapped to inform proposals.”

Inclusion of the view of the Bryden Centre (Letterkenny Institute of Technology) on the NMPF, specifically referencing Co-existence.

Changes not made;

Comment summary; Inclusion of stakeholder engagement guidelines in the NMPF

Response: While this suggestion is reasonable, on further analysis the Department believes that a singular communications template would be difficult to implement in each and every case, given the wide variety of potential engagements, the variances in the amount of stakeholders required to input on specific engagements, and the varying complexities of same. The Department does recognise that stakeholder engagements will be frequently required on implementation of the NMPF, and will examine these on a case by case basis as they arise. The Department will recommend the setting up of working groups if and when required. One such group has been identified in relation to Fisheries and ORE developments, and will be commenced in Q1 2022. The Department will monitor the outcomes of this group, which also has the potential to serve as a communications template for other similar marine related working groups.

Comment summary; Zonal areas should be put into place to benefit everyone

Response; While the Department is in agreement with the broad sentiment expressed in this comment, the NMPF itself does not set out zones for maritime activities. Zoning will be a separate process, which is outlined in detail in Appendix D of the NMPF.

Comment summary; Proposal for the development of a marina, outlining potential co-existence opportunities, at a specific named location

Response; Specific developments are outside the remit of the NMPF, which is a planning framework document outlining considerations that development proposals are required to undertake.

Infrastructure

Several submissions stated that the links between land and marine planning should be further emphasised. In response, the National Planning Framework has been inserted as a Key Reference, given the links between Marine planning and Land planning, which are particularly important in terms of infrastructure planning.

Submissions from environmental NGOs commented on the importance of site selection in marine planning, particularly in relation to infrastructure developments. In response, and specifically under the Infrastructure section in 'Key Issues for Marine Planning', the following supporting text referring to the importance of site selection has been added:

"Robust site selection and relevant appropriate environmental assessment (such as Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and / or Ecological Impact Assessment) should be used to inform decisions on land-based infrastructure which facilitates marine activity."

The following supporting text has been inserted into this section to address submission comments relating to road transport, appropriate infrastructure and sustainable infrastructure;

"Sustainable Infrastructure should be a key concept of a local authority's Development Plan, informing actions and strategy around economic development. Proposals for appropriate infrastructure that facilitates enhanced transport and digital connectivity, or improves access to the marine area for both leisure and commercial marine users, should be considered in plan development. Proposals which adapt or repurpose existing marine infrastructure facilities to ensure their sustainability or increase access for marine users, should be supported."

The term '*related transport infrastructure*' has also been added to the supporting text in the Background Context section in direct response to several submissions outlining the importance of appropriate land based infrastructure and the linkages between land and marine planning.

The scenario of where population growth occurs, the encouragement of proposals to expand public leisure marine facilities, such as slipways, walks and marinas should take place, has been included in new background context text in response to submissions requesting that population growth and consequential demand for marine leisure amenities be acknowledged in the NMPF.

Inclusion of the view of the Commissioners of Irish Lights on the NMPF, specifically referencing infrastructure.

Changes not made;

Comment summary; Drydocking within the state is now a unitary choice and is limited to vessels of medium size

Response; This is outside the remit of the NMPF and is a matter for the Department of Transport, and/or National Ports Policy, or individual Port masterplans.

Comment summary; The provision of subsea fibre optic cables to provide telecommunications capacity into the future is vital for sustainable island communities.

While the Department is in agreement with this submission comment, the provision of same is outside the remit of the NMPF, and is a matter for the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, and the Department of Rural and Community Development.

Comment summary; The construction of further fossil gas infrastructure is not necessary for Ireland's energy security.

Response; The Department notes this comment, but also notes that the comment is the opinion of an individual submitter. The Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications is currently carrying out a review of the security of energy supply of Ireland's electricity and natural gas systems, which is focusing on the period to 2030 in the context of ensuring a sustainable pathway to 2050.

The outcome of this review will determine the need for additional transmission/import capacity and the policy context within which it could be developed in Ireland. It will also inform the need to update or develop the necessary regulatory frameworks, including future iterations of the NMPF.

Social – Engagement with the Sea

Inclusion of the view of Marine Social Sciences Ireland (MARSSI) on the NMPF, specifically referencing social-engagement with the sea. There are no changes to the existing objectives in this section.

Access

Change to Access Policy 2, strengthening the environmental aspect of the policy in order to support planning proposals '*subject to the outcome of statutory environmental assessment processes*', and where '*they contribute to the policies and objectives of the NMPF*'.

Change to supporting text to include information on the importance of robust site selection and relevant environmental assessments- which should be used to inform decisions on land based infrastructure facilitating access.

These changes occurred due to public submissions on Access highlighting the gap between the broad policy of wishing to improve access, and the need to balance that ambition with the goal of environmental protections that conserve important habitats and species.

Several submissions pointed out that access to the marine for people with disabilities or mobility issues should be addressed in the NMPF. The Department agreed with these submissions, and amended 'Background Context' supporting text to state that;

"Access may include increasing the number of points at the coast that can be accessed, or improvement of facilities at existing access points to enhance inclusivity, for example, the installation of hand rails to assist entry and exit to and from the water for disabled people."

Inclusion of the view of the Association of Irish Local Government (AILG) on the NMPF, specifically referring to access.

Changes not made;

Comment summary; To increase accessibility to beaches, maybe consider the introduction of bus routes to and from. This will help the general public as well as tourists who visit Ireland.

Response; While the Department is in broad agreement with the suggestion, this is outside the remit of the NMPF and is a matter for the Department of Transport and/or local authorities.

Comment summary; Access to cliff/coastal walks/ right-of-ways should be provided for and/or legislated for in the NMPF.

Response; This is a matter for terrestrial planning and outside the remit of the NMPF. The NMPF is a planning framework document and does not amend terrestrial planning legislation.

Employment

Employment Policy 1 has been updated as follows and now includes the diversifying of skills:

"Proposals should demonstrate contribution to a net increase in marine related employment in Ireland, particularly where the proposals are; in line with the skills available in Irish coastal communities adjacent to the maritime area; Improve the sustainable use of natural resources; diversify skills to enable employment in emerging industries."

This change was made in response to submissions stating that the existing policy did not have enough emphasis on the sustainability factor of increased employment, and also those submissions identifying that diversification of skills would be critical in the context of emerging marine industrial developments.

In response to submissions stating that environmental factors were not given enough consideration in the draft NMPF, the following supporting text has been added to address the need to consider environmental impacts when increasing marine employment growth:

"Increased growth in marine employment can impact on the environment when physical infrastructure necessary for that growth is physically located in the marine area. To avoid adverse impacts, opportunities identified for increased employment also need to consider the appropriateness of the physical setting, potential impacts on biodiversity, landscape and seascape, heritage assets and existing marine access. Appropriately planned and sited development and associated supply chains can help encourage investment and stimulate demand for marine products and services."

Other related changes to supporting text identifies that increased employment can, in some cases, affect the marine environment. Updated text outlines that potential impacts on the marine environment, heritage assets, access etc. should also be considered, with the aim of avoiding adverse impacts on same.

Inclusion of the view of Fáilte Ireland on the NMPF, specifically referring to employment.

Changes not made;

Comment summary; Maritime seafarers have historically had difficulty obtaining sea time on vessels, particularly while training for their first professional certificate. I would like to see all vessels trading regularly in Irish waters to have a minimum number of Irish national as officers and crew on board.

Response; This suggestion is outside the remit of the NMPF and in the opinion of the Department, a probable contradiction of European Union employment law.

Comment summary; Insertion of a policy promoting the role of monitoring & research to help drive low-risk commercialisation of the offshore wind, wave and tidal sectors.

Response; This comment will be considered during the implementation stage of the NMPF. Should a policy around monitoring and research be developed during this stage, the policy will be included in future iterations of the NMPF.

Comment summary; Proposal for the development of a marina, outlining potential employment opportunities, at a specific named location.

Response; Specific developments are outside the remit of the NMPF, which is a planning framework document outlining considerations that development proposals are required to undertake.

Heritage Assets

Change to Key References to include Ireland's National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage National Assets, and Part IV (Architectural Heritage) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)

Some submissions enquired about the legislation protecting underwater heritage such as shipwrecks, and in response to those submissions, the following new supporting text relating to underwater archaeology legislation has been added under Background and Context:

“Legislation is in place to protect wrecks and archaeological objects in Ireland’s territorial waters, in the intertidal zone and within the inland waterways. Section 3 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1987 is the primary piece of legislation for the protection of wrecks over 100 years old, and archaeological objects underwater irrespective of age. Wrecks that are less than 100 years old and archaeological objects, or the potential Underwater Heritage Order (UHO) can be placed on a wreck or object if it is considered to be of sufficient historical, archaeological or artistic importance to merit such protection.”

Several submissions also noted that the impacts of developments on heritage assets and/or degradation of same as a result of maritime activity were not sufficiently addressed in the draft NMPF. In response, under ‘Key Issues for Marine Planning’, the following text emphasises that consideration of potential impacts and expert advice will be required at all stages:

“Proposals should consider the potential impact of their application on heritage assets from the earliest stages of project development, taking into account the potential risk of damage to, or degradation of, assets. Expert advice will be required at all stages to inform the development of the proposals.”

A variety of submissions pointed out that intangible cultural heritage was not sufficiently addressed in the draft NMPF. In addition to the change to key references outlined above, other changes in response to those submissions include changes to supporting text provide further information on Ireland's intangible cultural heritage, including examples among the 30 elements of living Irish heritage which have received official recognition from the United Nations. The existing Map of the Wild Atlantic Way has also been updated to include Coastal UNESCO sites, further addressing the omission of same from the draft.

Inclusion of the view of The Heritage Council of Ireland on the NMPF, specifically referring to Heritage Assets.

Changes not made;

Comment summary; The mention of Natural Capital should be accompanied by a clear definition for the sake of clarity. Despite this, the emphasis on natural assets and the need for their careful management is welcomed.

Response; While the Department did not provide a definition of same in this chapter, a more substantial piece on Natural Capital Assets has been included in the Biodiversity chapter (P.36). This text outlines the inclusion of commitments to develop a natural capital asset register and national natural capital accounts, as well as the integration of these accounts into policy and decision-making.

Comment summary; This section needs to be amended to “Cultural and Heritage Assets”.

Response; This suggestion was put to the Heritage section of the Department, who were satisfied with the draft NMPF title, so this remained unchanged. However, additional supporting text on cultural assets, including intangible cultural heritage, has been added to the NMPF.

Comment summary; The importance of unpaid work especially in the context of female participation in the marine space is currently overlooked and should be formally recognised.

Response; While the Department does not necessarily disagree with this comment, it is outside the remit of the NMPF to address issues of equality and/or unpaid work.

Rural Coastal and Island Communities

Change to Planning Policy 1, in order to significantly enhance sustainability aspect of policy in relation to coastal and island communities. The change in policy wording states that proposals should be inclusive of continual education, skills development, and training in Marine sectors, in order to improve the sustainability, social benefits, economic well-being and resilience of these communities. These changes are a significant enhancement of the draft NMPF policy, and were inserted as a response to several public submissions outlining the belief that the existing policy was too narrow, and did not sufficiently address enough of the issues most relevant to rural coastal and island communities.

Change to Key References to include Island Policy Consultation Paper and Our Rural Future- Rural Development Policy 2021-2025. This was provided as a means of updating the NMPF with the latest Government policy developments relating to rural coastal and island communities.

Other submissions from environmental NGOs commented that sustainability was not afforded enough prominence in this chapter. In response, under 'Key Issues for Marine Planning' (P.95), the existing text notes the following with reference to sustainability- new additional text in bold:

"Subject to compliance with all applicable environmental assessments and regulatory controls, proposals that might be supported by this policy include, but are not limited to: ...
Proposals generally that would contribute to the sustainability and/or maritime cultural identity of rural coastal and / or island communities."

Some submissions believed that the variety of challenges faced by local communities were not fully outlined in the NMPF, and provided some examples of same. While not possible to address each and every concern that submissions outlined, changes to supporting text in response to these comments include further information on Government Policy developments relating to rural and island coastal communities, providing a brief overview of the 'Islands Policy' and 'Our Rural Future' policies. In addition, new supporting text has been included to outline some of the challenges facing rural Ireland, with particular reference to the Marine sector.

Inclusion of the view of Cómhdháil Oileann na hÉireann on the NMPF, specifically referring to Rural Coastal and Island Communities.

Changes not made

Comment summary; Support ring-fenced funding to ensure the sustainability and viability of rural Gaeltacht communities involved in indigenous industries, such as schemes to cover costs of dredging of fishing ports that are silting up.

Response; The NMPF has no role in the allocation of funding, this suggestion is outside the remit of the NMPF.

Comment summary; I strongly support Recommendation 2 of the Oireachtas Joint Sub-Committee on Fisheries that the current governance arrangements are not the best working model and that "one Government Department or Agency should have more marine-related activities brought under its aegis - perhaps based on the Scottish model".

Response; Governance arrangements for Fisheries are outside the remit of the NMPF, and are a matter for the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Comment summary; We are proposing the creation of new community co-managed areas around the offshore islands to be investigated in conjunction with island communities and relevant agencies.

Response; The Department will consider this comment (example taken from a lengthy and detailed submission) in the context of the Implementation stage of the NMPF. As this suggestion is, at this point, only a proposal, the Department was not in a position to confirm the commencement of island community co-managed areas at the time of publication of the NMPF. These type of constructive comments are especially welcomed by the Department, and provide excellent feedback from individuals or organisations as to their interpretation of the NMPF, and how they hope to benefit from the policies and objectives outlined in the document.

Seascape and Landscape

In response to suggestions made in several consultation submissions, Policy 1 has been updated. Changes include highlighting the need to consider this policy as part of statutory environmental assessments and changes to phrasing to highlight that any seascape and landscape impacts to be considered should be significant in nature.

Key References have been updated in line with consultation submission suggestions to include Environmental Impact Assessment, Regional Seascape Character Assessment (consultation version) and Heritage Council – Seascape and Landscape - A Review of International Practice.

Consultation submissions have also informed revision of supporting text with the following added with regard to adverse impacts in the 'Key Issues for Marine Planning' section of the chapter;

“The final part of this policy identifies the need to set out the reason for proceeding where significant adverse impacts on the seascape and landscape of the area cannot be avoided, minimised or mitigated. Where this is required, reasoning should include how optimisation of space might be achieved, what measures are proposed to minimise and mitigate significant adverse impact (if such steps are not possible, a description of why this is), as well as setting out the reason why a given proposal should proceed in light of the likely impact. Reasoning should also include identification of any public benefits that may be achieved through the proposal to allow consideration alongside identified significant adverse impacts.”

Change to Key References to include Environmental Impact Assessment, Regional Seascape Character Assessment (consultation version) and Heritage Council – Seascape and Landscape- A Review of International Practice. These were included after analysis of public submissions and suggestions for additional key references contained within.

The following explanatory text was added to support the change to policy that highlights the need to consider statutory environmental assessments. This text also responds to submission queries requesting details of the types of environmental assessments that may apply with regard to development proposals, and also what type of development proposals that may require those assessments to be carried out.

“Proposals may be subject to statutory environmental assessments. Such assessments may include an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) under the EIA Directive (2014/52/EU). Where the development is of a type that requires mandatory EIA, is above Specific Thresholds, is a type of project that could lead to effects and / or is in a sensitive location and / or effects of the project could be significant, an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) must be prepared. Article 3(1) sets out what an EIA must consider.”

In response to submissions requesting further clarity on the Government’s approach to the drafting of development guidelines, an additional change has been made to supporting text to outline the work on the National Regional Seascape Character Assessment carried out in 2020 by the Marine Institute. This assessment will provide baseline information for further NMPF related work, such as the drafting of guidelines articulated in Appendix F of the NMPF.

A map of Seascape Character Areas and Coastal Types developed as part of the Assessment has also been added to the NMPF. The Department will also seek to include further spatial evidence to support seascape assessment in future updates to marineplan.ie, a digital tool currently being developed to support NMPF implementation.

In response to submissions stating the importance of route and site selection with regard to visual impacts, the following text was added under ‘Key Issues for Marine Planning’ to include reference to site and route selection;

“Routing and site selection are important tools in ensuring impacts on seascape and landscape are minimised and mitigated. This should be a factor in early stages of plan or policy development or before beginning formal application / permitting as appropriate.”

Inclusion of map of Seascape Character Areas and Coastal Types. The Department will also seek to include further seascape related mapping in future via the digital NMPF tool and also in future iterations of the NMPF.

Inclusion of the view of the Marine Institute on the NMPF, specifically referring to Seascapes and the recent project on Ireland’s Seascape Character carried out by the Marine Institute.

Changes not made;

Comment summary; Having regard to the supporting actions of the NMPF and the forthcoming spatial designations, it is considered an opportune time to complete the National Landscape Character Assessment. The relationship between land to sea and sea to land interactions need to be carefully planned especially in aligning with terrestrial planning frameworks and plans.

Response; As a The National Landscape Character Assessment is a separate objective under the National Planning Framework, it is outside the scope of MSP remit of the NMPF, and therefore not a focus for the NMPF, which has no prescribed function in the completion or delivery of the National Landscape Character Assessment.

Comment summary; A number of submissions identified that cumulative impact in relation to visual impact should be considered in the marine planning process. It was highlighted that seascape effects may be signified by changes in the character and quality of the seascape as a result of a development and that there may be practical ways of managing this impact including the use of visual breaks between projects.

Response; The matters raised in these valued observations concerning cumulative impacts in these comments will be considered in more detail during development of the forthcoming Statutory Guidelines that will be published after the NMPF. The development of these guidelines will be subject to a separate, specific public consultation processes. See Actions 1 & 2 of Appendix F in the NMPF for further details. It should also be noted that beyond the Seascope and Landscape Chapter, provision is made in the Energy – Offshore Renewable chapter for the requirement for visualisation assessments.

Comment summary; Our membership are particularly concerned with issues affecting the east coast. The coastal landscape is central to the well-being and tourism potential of Dun Laoghaire and Dublin, affecting millions of people who avail of the east coast landscape and seascape - Seapoint, Dun Laoghaire Harbour, DL Baths, Dalkey, Killiney beach and headland, the Bray to Greystones walk, as well as the new Wicklow Greenway. It is vital that Ireland's unique, natural landscape and seascape is preserved from inappropriate marine development, and that the landscape is protected by a professional, transparent and democratic Marine Spatial Strategy.

Response; Policies in this chapter and the ORE chapter of the NMPF provide opportunity to assess these concerns. The Designated Marine Area Plan (DMAP) process set out in the Maritime Area Planning Act will guide future spatial strategy for ORE, in addition to statutory ORE guidelines. These will also involve stakeholder engagement and further public consultation opportunities.

Social Benefits

Several submissions stated that sustainability and environmental concerns were not sufficiently emphasised in this section of the draft NMPF. In response, changes were made to supporting text under 'Background Context' outlining that sustainable development requires balanced assessment of environmental, social and economic cumulative impacts. New text inserted recognises Ireland's need to protect Marine biodiversity and manage natural resources in harmony with surrounding ecosystems, paving the way for an Integrated coastal management approach.

The Background and Context section now states the following in relation to sustainable development and the need to protect environmental resources:

“Sustainable development requires balanced assessment of environmental, social and economic cumulative impacts. Consideration of social impacts is especially necessary as they are particularly problematic to measure due to being more qualitative, indirect and diffuse. Now, more than ever, there is a recognition that we need to protect and conserve our rich marine biodiversity and manage the available natural resources in harmony with surrounding ecosystems, whether they are biological or physical resources, such as energy.”

Inclusion of the view of Science Foundation Ireland Research Centre for Energy, Climate and Marine (MaREI) on the NMPF, specifically referring to Social Benefits.

Changes not made

Comment summary; Where the population is expanding, marine leisure facilities need to be expanded in a similar way to sports pitches are provided on the land as a part of town planning.

Response; This suggestion was also made in the Infrastructure chapter by the same submitter. On examining the suggestion in further detail, the Department believe that it was more appropriate for the Infrastructure chapter and amended supporting text in that section accordingly. This suggestion was not included here to avoid duplication.

Comment summary; There is little reference in the document to “social dividend” for local areas and as mentioned previously, in this context it is of concern that the economic benefits outweigh the social (and environmental) throughout the document.

Response; The NMPF seeks to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development of marine plan areas through balancing their environmental, social and economic dimensions and benefits. There is no general prioritisation of one activity over another.

Comment summary; I disagree with this definition of sustainable development! Sustainable development should be about easing environmental pressures and developing in ways that will not create environmental pressures rather than balancing economic gains against environmental damage.

Response; The Programme for Government, the Climate Action Plan and the post Covid-19 economy, to mention but three current topical issues, require that the NMPF addresses the economic aspect as well as Social and Environmental aspects. The NMPF seeks to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development of marine plan areas through balancing their environmental, social and economic dimensions and benefits. There is no general prioritisation of one activity over another.

Transboundary

Change to Policy 1 to require proposals to consider Transboundary impacts throughout the lifetime of the proposed activity. This change was as a result of submissions from neighbouring jurisdictions requesting a strengthening of the policy in order to consider longer term impacts.

Change to Key References to include Atlantic Action Plan and Strategy, Environmental Impact Assessment Directive, Marine Plan for Northern Ireland, NMPF, National Planning Framework (NPF), Scotland's National Marine Plan, Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, and Welsh National Marine plan. These were included after analysis of public submissions and engagements with the Marine management organisations of neighbouring jurisdictions.

Some submissions requested recognition of a cross border approach to regional marine planning for the North West which would emphasise the importance of working together for economic advantage through coordinated support for the region's ports and marine industries. In response to those comments, additional supporting text has been included under 'Key Issues for Marine Planning' as follows;

"As sub-national marine spatial planning develops in Ireland, it will be informed by transboundary considerations both in relation to land-based concerns and in relation to transboundary matters."

In addition to the above, and in response to similar submission comments, further changes to supporting text include linking the Transboundary policy with chapter 7 of the National Planning Framework (NPF), which specifically focuses on co-operation with Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom; '

'The NPF sets out a basis for cross-border cooperation in Chapter 7 -Working with Our Neighbours. This includes national policy objectives specifically focused on co-operation with Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom addressing matters such as environment, investment and infrastructure.'

Other changes to supporting text to include information on sub-national planning, and also further explanation of the NMPF itself being included in key references- this change being based on the fact that many other Marine Activities outlined in the NMPF also have cross border implications, such as Telecommunications, Marine Litter, Biodiversity etc., as pointed out in several submissions.

In response to submission suggestions that the Transboundary section could also include references to other marine evidence portals and/or databases maintained by neighbouring jurisdictions, (which submitters felt would be useful information to plan proposers in assessing likely impacts on neighbouring marine areas), the following has been added to supporting text.

"In relation to proposals being informed by transboundary considerations, chapters of this NMPF and equivalent chapters in relevant neighbouring marine plans relating to activities that could be cross-border in nature may be relevant e.g. Telecommunications; Energy – Transmission, Biodiversity; Marine Litter; Seascape and Landscape; Climate Change; Ports, Harbours and Shipping; Safety at Sea. Marine evidence portals and/or databases maintained by neighbouring jurisdictions may also be useful to in assessing likely impacts on neighbouring marine or maritime areas."

In response to further submission comments, changes to supporting text also include details on Intrerreg, a European Union project that supports cross border co-operation, and the revised Atlantic Action Plan 2.0, which is a strategy for European Union member states with Atlantic coasts to unlock the potential of the Blue Economy.

Changes not made

Comment summary; We again call on all relevant Government departments to keep the pressure on the United Kingdom Government to find an agreeable solution to the resolution of jurisdictional issues in Lough Foyle and Carlingford Lough.

Response; This matter is reflected in 'International Boundary Issues', in Chapter 3 (Page 22) of the NMPF.

Comment summary; The decision not to include Carlingford Lough in the Marine Spatial Plan until after Brexit is worrying.

Response; Reference is made to cross-border organisations such as the Loughs agency that manage the Loughs with input from both Northern Ireland and Ireland. On a broader level, cross-border issues such as this, which will determine the approach to marine planning around Carlingford and Foyle, will be discussed by the British-Irish Council.

Comment summary; We note that in assessment of the Transboundary Policy (section 9.2.19.1, pg 146 of the SEA Environmental Report), the need for a feedback loop to address consultee comments, was raised and that this will be addressed as part of a future implementation strategy.

Response; The Department welcomes this comment, and confirms that liaison with Northern Ireland will be a consideration in NMPF implementation.

Key Sectoral/Activity Policies:

Aquaculture

In response to submissions stating that ecological sustainability should be inserted as an objective for Aquaculture, an amendment has been made to the objectives to include reference to ecological sustainability, best practice and scientific expertise in relation to licencing of aquaculture. Reworded objective states;

“To support a diverse, compliant, growing aquaculture sector that operates in a modern licensing and enforcement system to produce high quality food, protects and enhances the social and economic fabric of rural coastal and island communities, and conserves biodiversity around our coasts in line with ecological sustainability.”

In addition to the change in objective, and in further response to those submissions, there has also been a change made to Policy 1 to specifically include the term ‘sustainable development’, and also to explicitly state support for proposals that enhance resilience to the effects of Climate Change. Reworded policy now reads;

“Proposals for **sustainable development** of aquaculture that:

- demonstrate use of innovative approaches, and/ or
- contribute to diversification of species being grown in a given locality, particularly proposals applying a multi-trophic approach, and / or
- **enhances resilience to the effects of climate change** should be supported.”

In response to submissions pointing out that Aquaculture also has a land based aspect in the majority of cases, a new additional 3rd Policy has been added to address land based coastal infrastructure that supports aquaculture proposals, provided that the necessary environmental safeguards contained within the authorisation processes are met. Policy 3 states;

“Land-based coastal infrastructure that is critical to and supports development of aquaculture should be supported, in accordance with any legal requirements and provided environmental safeguards contained within authorisation processes are fully met.”

Other submissions believed that the NMPF should refer to ICZM in this section of the NMPF. In response, reference to Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) is included in the Aquaculture section under Interactions with Other Sectors as follows:

“BIM have established the Co-ordinated Local Aquaculture Management Systems (CLAMS) process, a nationwide initiative to manage the development of aquaculture in bays and inshore waters throughout Ireland at a local level. In each case where the CLAMS process is applied, a plan is established that fully integrates aquaculture interests with relevant national policies, as well as: Single Bay Management (SBM) practices, the interests of other groups using bays and inshore waters, Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) plans, and, County Development plans.”

In response to a variety of submissions, further changes to supporting text provide an update to the number of licencing determinations made by the Department to the end of 2020. New supporting text sections also inserted in ‘Interactions with other Activities’ on the topics of Aquaculture interactions in relation to Climate Change, in addition to providing detail on the need to consider site selection and impacts on MPAs, SACs and SPAs, emphasising that these considerations should take place at the earliest practicable stage of the application process. New information supplied in text on applications for finfish aquaculture licences, which after May 2017, must be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment. New text has been added to the Sustainability Issues section specifically addressing issues relating to European conservation sites, while further supporting text has also been added to highlight the tools being used to minimise and mitigate environmental impacts.

Inclusion of updated map of Licenced Aquaculture Sites in Ireland, the updated map now includes Fishery Order Sites.

Inclusion of the view of IFA Aquaculture on the NMPF, specifically referring to Aquaculture.

Changes not made

Comment summary; We note that no reference is made to shellfish waters designated under the Shellfish Waters Directive by the Department by Regulations made between 2006 and 2009. We have concerns that aquaculture licences for shellfish production have been, and are being, issued for areas outside of designated shellfish waters thus impacting on other uses of these areas such as receiving discharges of treated municipal waste water.

Response; This comment relates to the licensing of aquaculture activity rather than the NMPF, which has no role on the issuing of Aquaculture licences.

Comment summary; If and when the MPDM Bill is taken back up by the new government, the inclusion of aquaculture and fisheries in the new regime must be of highest priority. The NMPF must clearly state this need and highlight the risks of not including an activity in an MSP.

Response; The Department notes the view expressed in this (and similar) submission comments. Aquaculture and Fisheries are both included in the NMPF and decisions, plans and policies relating to these activities must be in line with the objectives of the NMPF. At time of publication of this document, licensing of Aquaculture and Fisheries remain outside the scope of the Maritime Area Planning Act. Their future inclusion under this Act is a matter for the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Comment summary; Aquaculture developments need to be assessed for physical impacts on marine habitats, shading of benthic species, pollution generated, potential introduction of invasive species, potential impact of escapees (including genetic impacts), potential for health impacts on wild fauna (e.g. sea lice), potential for generating human/wildlife conflicts (e.g. locating fish farms near to seal colonies), potential barrier effects for marine species, potential exclusion of marine species from preferred habitats, and potential for chemical and noise pollution.

Response; The NMPF introduces a number of policies to enhance / direct the considerations accounted for during aquaculture consenting. Beyond this, any change to the aquaculture consenting processes is beyond the scope of the NMPF.

Comment summary; It is understood that the reform of the aquaculture licencing system remains under the remit of DAFM, however, given that it is the system that oversees the detailed planning process for an aquaculture site and that multiple departments and agencies have a role in processing aquaculture licences, it appears as an obvious omission that no practical steps to improving the system appear in a document titled “The National Marine Planning Framework”.

Response; The NMPF includes aquaculture objectives and policies, ensuring that it is represented. The matter of changes to the way in which aquaculture is regulated is beyond the scope of the NMPF. Regulation of aquaculture licencing is a matter for the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Defence and Security

Submissions pointed out that environmental concerns were absent from draft policies. This has been addressed by a change to Defence and Security Policy, amalgamating previous Defence and Security policies 1 and 2 into a single policy. The new amalgamated policy also states the condition that any proposal will be subject to the relevant environmental assessments. The redrafted single policy now states;

“Any proposal that has the potential to interfere with the performance by the Defence Forces of their security and non-security related tasks must be subject to consultation with the Defence Organisation. This includes potential interference with:

- Safety of navigation and access to naval facilities;
- Firing, test or exercise areas;
- Communication, and surveillance systems;
- Fishery protection functions.

Proposals should only be supported where, having consulted with the Defence Organisation, they are satisfied that it will not result in unacceptable interference with the performance by the Defence Forces of their security and non-security related tasks. **Any proposal will be subject to the relevant Environmental Assessments as set out in section 1.11 of the NMPF.”**

Change to key references to include Defence Forces Built Infrastructure Programme 2020-2025 and White Paper update 2019.

Change to supporting text to include further detail on the responsibilities, support and services provided by the Naval Service. In response to submissions opining that the state should invest in further maritime capabilities, the information on Air Corps is updated to provide latest information on the procurement of new maritime aircraft. In response to submissions querying the longer term effects of the United Kingdom’s departure from the European Union, there is acknowledgement inserted in supporting text that full implications of Sea Fisheries protection have not yet fully emerged in the post-Covid and post-Brexit context.

Several submissions believed sustainability was not addressed in enough detail with regards to Defence and Security. In response, the 'Issues for sustainability' text has been enhanced to outline the Defence Organisation's ongoing support of the Climate Action Plan and steps they have taken to reduce energy consumption, dating back to 2008. The Defence Organisation also reaffirms their commitment to meeting 2030 and 2050 energy related targets. The Defence Organisation recognises the designation of Cork Harbour as a Special Protected Area in 2000, and will take full cognisance of that in relation to any further future developments or proposed developments to the Naval Service Base in Haulbowline.

Inclusion of the view of the Department of Defence on the NMPF, specifically referring to Defence and Security.

Changes not made

Comment summary; To afford a modicum of protection and enforcement of national and international environmental law in our littoral zone, with immediate effect, grant onto our naval forces [INS] the limited power to enforce these laws in this zone without the presence of a Garda on board.

Response; This is outside the remit of the NMPF, which is a planning framework and has no role in the designation of legal powers to our Defence Forces.

Comment summary; In conflict or emergency the Naval Service should have a Port of refuge with fuelling and repair facilities on hand. It should be a port with 24/7 access. Possibly Sligo or Killary could be developed.

Response; While the Department does not necessarily disagree with this suggestion, the designation and location of such facilities is a matter for the Departments of Defence and Transport, respectively.

Comment summary; Defence and Security, this area is vital for the enforcement of fishing regulations. I think harsher measures should be enforced on those who break these regulatory laws.

Response; The NMPF has no role in legislating for, or sentencing breaches of fishing regulations.

Energy – Emerging Technologies (Carbon Capture and Storage, and Hydrogen)

Change to Key References to include Directive 2009/31/EC on the geological storage of CO² and OSPAR 2007-2012 Guidelines for Risk Assessment of CO² in sub seabed geological formations. This change was inserted at the suggestion of the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, and is linked to the changes in supporting text.

Several submissions pointed out that there were not any Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) policies contained in the draft NMPF. While this was still the case at the time of NMPF publication, in response to those submissions, there have been substantial changes to supporting text to provide updated context as to the reasons for this. New supporting text outlines the role of the European Union directive on Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS), and new supporting text now includes further information on the CCS Steering Group, who have been appointed by the Government to further examine the feasibility and suitability of CCS in an Irish context. Further changes to supporting text reflect the Government's position that specific marine planning policy development for the commercial deployment of CCS will be considered in the context of the outcome of future Energy policy and regulatory development in the areas of CCS.

The feasibility study referred to in the text will be led by DECC. To elaborate on this, the following supporting text has been added to Background and Context:

"The Steering Group is tasked with: considering and assessing the wider issues (European Union and national regulatory, environmental, technical and financial) around the feasibility and suitability of the utilisation of CCS in Ireland to contribute to the country's decarbonisation of Ireland, in a cost effective manner; assessing CCS technologies for deployment in Ireland; and; overseeing the progress of CCS feasibility studies and research undertaken by State Bodies and, where appropriate, others, including their scope, major deliverables and expenditure and provide direction on these as required."

Several submissions, mainly from the Energy Industry, sought clarity on the Government's planned approach to Hydrogen energy and/or development of same, as Hydrogen was not referred to in the draft NMPF. In response, the Government's position on Hydrogen is also addressed in a new supporting text section, outlining that the Programme for Government sets out the need to invest in Green Hydrogen research, while clarifying that Blue Hydrogen is currently not considered to be in keeping with 2050 emissions targets.

In response to submissions requesting that environmental concerns be carefully considered when planning for the deployment of new energy technologies, new supporting text also states that whole of life financial and environmental costs should be considered when appraising any CCS proposal in the future.

Inclusion of the view of Ervia on the NMPF, specifically referring to Carbon Capture and Storage, and the potential of Hydrogen production.

Changes not made

Comment summary; We recommend the inclusion of policies for Carbon Capture and Storage, in compliment to objectives for this sector under Draft NMPF.

Response; As per NMPF text, the formulation of policy in relation to CCS & Emerging Technologies be considered when the Steering Group has concluded their ongoing work. There are also considerable legal issues to resolve should the group recommend that the use of CCS should be facilitated- these challenges are also outlined in NMPF text. CCS policies will be included in future iterations of the NMPF should they be formulated by the time of publication.

Comment summary; The NMPF should focus on emissions reductions by proposing policies for transitioning away from fossil fuel use rather than relying on an uncertain technology such as CCS.

Response; The NMPF does not state anywhere in the document that there is, should be, or will be; any reliance on CCS. The NMPF makes provisions for further research into CCS, as with ongoing and future technological developments, it remains possible that CCS can play a part in reaching future emissions reduction targets.

Comment summary; Appropriate legislation needs to be in place for CCS deployment.

Response; The NMPF acknowledges that there are considerable legal challenges to resolve should the CCS Steering Group recommend that the use of CCS should be facilitated in Ireland- these challenges include transposition of the relevant European Union directive and amendments to existing legislation. These legal issues are also recognised in the NMPF text.

Energy – Natural Gas Storage

Chapter name revised to Natural Gas Storage on advice from the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications. Submissions pointed out that the draft NMPF objective promoted the analysis of options for increased natural gas storage, without enough further context being outlined. In response, the text stating the objective has been amended to reflect that support of the development of natural gas storage is conditional on being appropriate in the context of the outcome of the review of the security of energy supply of Ireland's electricity and natural gas systems, which is being carried out by the Department of Energy, Climate and Communications. The focus of this review is to ensure a sustainable pathway towards 2050.

Other submissions pointed out that the draft (then titled 'Offshore Gas Storage') chapter did not contain any policies. A new policy, Natural Gas Storage Policy 1, has been added to the final NMPF to reflect the Government position on Natural Gas Storage, and the requirement for environmental assessments. This new policy text explicitly states the requirement for environmental assessments and acknowledges the work being led by DECC in carrying out the review of the security of energy supply. Support for gas storage proposals will only be considered if they are in keeping with the outcome of the review referred to in the objective.

Change to key references to include National Energy and Climate Plan, and the Programme for Government.

Change to supporting text- references in the draft NMPF to the Shannon LNG project have been deleted, in keeping with the Government commitment outlined in the Programme for Government commitment that it does not support the importation of fracked gas and subsequent withdrawal of the Shannon LNG terminal from the European Union projects of Common Interests. While several submissions also outlined their opposition to both the import of LNG and development of LNG terminals, the primary reason for this change was the withdrawal of support for LNG in the programme for Government, which preceded the conclusion of NMPF submission analysis.

Note; subsequent to the publication of the NMPF, the Office of the Attorney General has since determined that it has not proved possible to provide a legal basis for Ireland to legislate domestically for a ban on the import of fracked gas. The Attorney General has determined that:

It is not possible for Ireland under the European Treaties or European Union Directive 2009/73/EC concerning common rules for the internal market in natural gas:

- to legislate for a ban on the import of fracked gas
- to ban the import into Ireland of fracked gas
- to prevent the processing of fracked gas in the State

Ireland is undertaking a review of the security of energy supply of Ireland's electricity and natural gas systems. The review will inform whether it would be appropriate, or not, to develop LNG terminals in Ireland and, if any such terminals were to be developed, whether they should only be in order to provide a contingency supply in the event of failure of existing natural gas supply infrastructure. Further details on the Government's position on LNG can be found at gov.ie - Policy Statement on the Importation of Fracked Gas.

In response to submissions outlining concern for sustainability and the potential of investing in 'stranded assets', new supporting text also outlines that the DECC is carrying out a review of the security of energy supply of Ireland's electricity and natural gas systems which is focusing on the period to 2030 in the context of ensuring a sustainable pathway to 2050. The text further acknowledges that natural gas storage installations and activities could have potential adverse ecological impacts which would need to be identified, analysed and mitigated against as part of the forward planning and development management stages of marine planning.

Supporting text also updated to reflect that the policy context around the need for natural gas storage will be determined by the outcome of the review of the security of energy supply of Ireland's electricity and natural gas systems.

Inclusion of Gas Networks Ireland's view on the NMPF, specifically referring to Natural Gas Storage.

Changes not made

Comment summary; If Ireland were to build an LNG terminal, it is acknowledging that we don't want fracking in our country, but don't mind if other communities are damaged due to fracking. Building an LNG terminal is putting money into a system which we have already begun to move away from.

Response; The NMPF accurately reflected the Government's position on LNG as stated in the Programme for Government at the time of NMPF publication, therefore omitting references to the Shannon LNG terminal. Subsequently, advice from the Attorney General's office has since determined that it has not proved possible to provide a legal basis for Ireland to legislate domestically for a ban on the import of fracked gas. Please see note above.

Comment summary; Diversification of gas supplies is a key issue for Ireland as post Brexit in 2021 the country will no longer be directly connected to the European Union gas pipeline network via the United Kingdom. Diversification of gas supplies via LNG import terminals and/or further domestic indigenous gas production will be required.

Response; The Department of Energy, Climate and Communications is currently carrying out a review of the security of energy supply of Ireland's electricity and natural gas systems. This comment has been forwarded to DECC for consideration. Any future policy positions that emerge from this review will be reflected in future iterations of the NMPF.

Energy – Offshore Renewable

Change to objectives to reflect changes to Government Policy- new objectives state;

1. The aim of the Government to significantly decrease greenhouse gas emissions and accelerate the transition to cleaner energy, in line with national and European Union policy.
2. The aim of increasing the use of sustainable ORE in an efficient and co-ordinated manner.
3. The aim of supporting strategic growth of the ORE industry
4. The aim of developing a robust, effective and transparent consenting process, to ensure environmental protections are built in.

Change to policy 1 to reflect latest Government renewable energy targets, the Government's commitment to minimising impacts on the marine environment, marine ecology and maritime users, while including enhanced environmental protections that outline all proposals will be rigorously assessed to ensure compliance with environmental standards.

Change to Policy 2 to ensure that proposals must be consistent with National ORE policy, and confirmation that proposals designated as 'Relevant Projects' will be prioritised for assessment under the new consenting regime, this in order to enable delivery on the Government's 2030 renewable energy targets.

Change to Policy 8 to ensure that consideration of existing cables passing through or adjacent to areas for development should be included in statutory environmental assessments, where such assessments are required.

Change to Policy 9 to ensure that visualisation assessments must be included as part of the statutory environmental assessments, where such assessments are required. The policy acknowledges that Ireland-specific visualisation assessment guidelines are not yet available, but states that until these are available, policy and best practice guidelines should be used.

It should be noted that while several submissions made similar suggestions for changes to draft NMPF ORE objectives and policies, the primary reason for these changes was the ongoing development of Government policy for ORE, which preceded the conclusion of NMPF submission analysis.

Additional changes to supporting text outline the Government's updated ORE targets for 2030, most notably the increase from 3.5GWs to 5GWs. In response to submissions requesting that environmental considerations be outlined, new supporting text also outlines the details of the types of environmental assessments referred to in the ORE policies, such as EIA and EIAR. Several submissions requested that updated information on Floating Offshore wind energy should be provided, and in response, new supporting text contains this updated information, stating the potential of same as a renewable energy resource.

Several submissions, mainly from the energy industry, requested further clarity on the status of existing ORE project proposals. In response, the NMPF contains new text on the Transition Protocol, which addresses certain Offshore Wind projects (designated as 'Relevant Projects') in the context of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021. Other submissions requested information on visualisation impacts, and in response to those submissions, NMPF text on same has been amended with regard to visualisation impacts. New text outlines the work carried out by the Marine Institute on the Regional Seascape Character Assessment, which will inform the drafting of statutory ORE development guidelines, these in turn will address visualisation guidelines, which will also include a public consultation element.

Inclusion of the view of Wind Energy Ireland on the NMPF, specifically referring to ORE.

Changes not made

Comment summary; The absence of the identification of strategic locations or the Spatial Designations (which are to be zoned within the Marine Planning and Development Management Act) at this stage in the Plan making process is a significant gap in progressing this sector.

Response; The Government's approach to identification of strategic locations is outlined in Appendix D of the NMPF. The Maritime Area Planning Act will enable the Government to develop and implement Designated Marine Area Plans (DMAP) which will identify these strategic locations. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage has commenced legislative development on DMAPs, and currently, this ongoing work remains a Government priority.

Comment summary; Ensure the offshore wind industry, where practicable, be populated by Irish workers.

Response; This suggestion is outside the remit of the NMPF and in the opinion of the Department, a probable breach of European Union employment law.

Comment summary; With the most abundant wave energy resource in Europe, Ireland is uniquely placed geographically to harness this clean renewable energy. Initial studies have shown that wave energy harnessing will have a far less overall environmental impact than other ORE types.

Response; As stated in the NMPF (and acknowledged by the submitter in this case), tidal and wave technologies are at an early stage of development, and the level of risk and ecological significance is largely unknown. Ireland will continue to monitor developments of this technology, some of which is currently being tested at the Smartbay site in Galway Bay. Any future policy developments arising from the outcome of wave technology developments will be included in future iterations of the NMPF.

Comment summary; The tax, royalty and licensing arrangements for development of wind energy need to have clear benefits for the Irish people.

Response; Taxation and royalty are outside the remit of the NMPF and a matter for the Department of Finance, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, and the Revenue Commissioners. With regard to licencing, a new maritime consent regime will be established following the commencement of the Maritime Area Planning Act. As part of this new consent regime, a new Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) will be established in order to undertake certain functions such as assessing and granting Maritime Area Consents.

Energy - Petroleum

Government approval was given on 2 February 2021 to draft amendments to the Petroleum and Other Minerals Development Act 1960 which would give statutory effect to ending the issuing of new licences for the exploration and extraction of gas. This commitment will be provided for in legislation at the Committee Stage of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill 2021. In alignment with the Government decision to cease the issuing of new licences for the exploration and extraction of gas, the draft NMPF petroleum objectives have been deleted and replaced by a single objective, stating the aim of ensuring good regulatory practices in managing existing authorisations for exploration and production. It should be noted that several submissions also pointed out the contradiction in the draft NMPF in terms of continued support for petroleum production contrasting with the Government's stated commitments to transitioning to a low carbon future.

Changes to Policy- Petroleum policies have been reduced from three to two, in accordance with the Government decision to cease the issuing of new licences for the exploration and extraction of gas. The previous Petroleum Policy 1 has been deleted. Renumbered Petroleum Policy 2 is revised to specifically reference existing authorisations. These changes have been made to account for the government's revised position on petroleum exploration, though again, several submissions contained similar suggestions and recommendations.

Change to Key References to include Energy Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1995, Exploration Database (IPAS), Financial Capability Assessments, Licences and Maps, Method for Assessment of indemnity/insurance of Petroleum Authorisation Holders, Oil and Gas Tax Terms, Petroleum (Exploration and Extraction) Safety Act 2010, Petroleum (Exploration and Extraction) Safety Act 2015, Policy Statement- Petroleum Exploration and Production Activities as part of Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Economy, Programme for Government- Our Shared Future, Sea Pollution Act 1991. These changes were as a result of a review of this chapter by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications.

Change to supporting text outline the decline in supplies from the Corrib gas field and the decommissioning of the Kinsale gas field in 2021. Recent changes to Government policy on petroleum exploration (see changes to objectives and policies above) are further detailed in new supporting text, clarifying that the relevant Department (DECC) are no longer accepting new applications for exploration licences for gas and oil. Supporting text now outlines that the current focus remains on managing existing authorisations which can continue on their existing terms. Although the changes to the draft NMPF were primarily as a result of the change in Government policy, several submissions expressed the same broad opinion that future petroleum exploration should be ceased.

Supporting text has also been added to this chapter which sets out the government's revised position on petroleum exploration, as outlined above. In response to several submissions requesting that environmental issues be considered when planning energy developments, new supporting text in 'Issues for Sustainability' outlines the commitment of the Government to the process of decarbonisation and ending of the use of fossil fuels. This section also has a new insertion of text outlining the ObSERVE Programme, undertaken by the Department of Energy, Climate and Communications (DECC) in conjunction with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), which is a significant data acquisition programme designed to acquire baseline environmental data. NPWS and DECC have committed to further environmental survey work in this regard.

Inclusion of the view of Emerald Floating Wind Project on the NMPF, outlining their role in the Energy transition from fossil fuels to renewable resources.

Changes not made

Comment summary; Current import dependency levels do not pose a security of supply risk; as outlined above, Ireland's gas supply is resilient to a range of potential disruption scenarios.

Response; This is a subjective assessment and does not take into account that security of energy supply is subject to change given events such as the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union, to name but one potential disruption to supply.

Comment summary; Offshore exploration can play a key role in Ireland's much-needed economic recovery and energy independence, and so must be continued.

Response; The position/opinion stated in this submission is not compliant with current Government Energy Policy.

Comment summary; It should perhaps be noted that in other jurisdictions the presence of complex offshore structures and fishing exclusion zones have provided ideal habitat for a variety of fish and other species particularly as a nursery zone.

Response; The Government's approach to identification of strategic locations is outlined in Appendix D of the NMPF. The Maritime Area Planning Act will enable the Government to develop and implement Designated Marine Area Plans (DMAP) which will identify these strategic locations. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage has commenced legislative development on DMAPs, and currently, this ongoing work remains a Government priority. With regard to Marine Protected Areas (MPA), the final report of the MPA Advisory Group - established in 2019 to provide independent expert advice and recommendations on potential processes and requirements for expanding Ireland's marine protected areas network - is now undergoing an extensive public consultation. All relevant Government Departments with marine responsibilities will be statutorily obliged to consider the outcomes of this process.

Energy – Transmission

New objectives have been added to the final NMPF as a result of a review by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications. The additional objectives are included to reflect ongoing changes in Government policy on Energy Transmission. The new objectives state;

- The aim of developing the offshore electricity transmission system in order to link offshore and onshore electricity grids, which is necessary for development of Ireland's ORE sector.

- The aim of supporting additional gas transmission, conditional on that being in keeping with the outcome of the review of the security of energy supply of Ireland's electricity and natural gas systems, which is being carried out by the Department of Energy, Climate and Communications.
- The aim of protecting the two existing national gas interconnector pipelines that are vital to the security of Ireland's energy supply.

It should be noted that while several submissions did contain similar suggestions, the changes to the objectives were primarily as a result of changes in Government Policy, which in some cases, preceded the submission analysis stage of the draft NMPF.

Some submissions mentioned the omission of environmental requirements in draft NMPF policies. In response, changes have been made to Policy 1 in order to provide for further policy context, in addition to further environmental protections. Policy 1 now provides a background to the security and diversity of Ireland's energy supply, and the need to link the offshore and onshore grid systems. Policy 1 also states that proposals are subject to appropriate environmental assessments.

Change to Policy 4 to state that the designation of land based zones for the purposes of co-ordination and integration with relevant Marine plans must be considered, where appropriate. This new policy text reflects the content of some submissions which pointed out the links between terrestrial and marine planning should ideally be stronger.

Change to Key References to include European Union TEN-E Regulation, and Guidelines on Best Environmental Practice (BEP) in Cable Laying and Operation. These were inserted on the advice of the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications on review.

Several submissions pointed out the importance of transmission systems in supporting our society and economy, and felt this aspect was somewhat understated in the draft NMPF. In response, changes to supporting text now provide further detailed information on Ireland's all island electricity system (the Single Electricity Market), the need for enhanced interconnectivity, the development of two new interconnectors between Ireland and France (Celtic Interconnector) and the Ireland and Wales (Greenlink) Interconnector. Further changes to supporting text on Gas outline that the Kinsale Gas field has now expired, while supply from the Corrib Gas field is declining, thus emphasising how vital the two existing gas interconnectors from Scotland are to the security of Ireland's energy supply.

Other submissions pointed out a gap in highlighting environmental impacts. In response, new supporting text highlights the European Union BEAGINS project as a baseline study for the environmental effects relating to offshore transmissions system development. New text also outlines that the proposed new interconnectors are also undergoing stringent social impact assessments so that any adverse impacts on the environment, communities, or geographical settings can be pre-empted and prevented.

Changes to supporting text on interactions with other sectors and sustainability outline how care must be taken to limit potential disturbances to the marine environment, marine ecology, shipping routes and fishing (among others), and further states that transmission site selection will seek to minimise impacts on European nature sites and marine ecology from both an offshore and onshore perspective.

Inclusion of the view of Eirgrid on the NMPF, specifically referring to Energy Transmission.

Changes not made

Comment summary; Ireland's security of energy supply does not require the construction of more gas transmission infrastructure.

Response; This is a subjective assessment and does not take into account that security of energy supply is subject to change given events such as the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union, to name but one potential disruption to supply.

Comment summary; All consideration of gas transmission and the associated infrastructure needs to take into account the issue of gas infrastructure becoming a stranded asset as Ireland transitions away from fossil fuel use as required by national and European Union law.

Response; While the Department is not in a position to disagree with the potential possibility of transmission infrastructure becoming a stranded asset in time, this comment does not take into account any transitional period between existing supply and a low-carbon supply coming on-stream, nor provides any suggested alternative energy supply source for this transitional period. Without wishing to pre-empt the outcome of the security of energy supply review currently being carried out by DECC, one possible outcome is that it could prove to be the case that further international interconnectors are required to secure Ireland's energy supply during this transitional period.

Fisheries

Inclusion of extra objective, which aims to sustain primary food producers contributing to food security at a national and European level. This was included at the suggestion of submissions from a number of Fisheries organisations, particularly with reference to food security in the context of Covid-19.

Fisheries Policy 1 is updated to clarify the impacts relate to the fishing activity rather than other receptors, which was a clarification sought by a number of submissions.

Change to Policy 2, which outlines that where significant impact upon fishing activity arising from any proposal is identified, a Fisheries Management and Mitigation Strategy (FMMS) should be prepared by the proposer of development. Development of this strategy should be coordinated with other relevant assessments, such as Environmental Impact Assessment, where possible. This policy was previously Policy 5, but been moved in response to submissions which pointed out that this policy is linked to Policy 1 and would be more appropriate to insert here.

Change to Policy 3 to include enhance environmental protections, policy now states that support for enhanced sustainability of the industry is conditional on proposals fully meeting the environmental safeguards contained within authorisation processes. This change is in response to several submissions suggesting enhanced environmental protections be added to the policy.

Fisheries Policy 5 has been clarified to reference all proposals with the addition of 'Proposals, regardless of the type of activity they relate to...' This clarification was sought by a number of submissions. Further change to policy 5 in response to submissions suggesting enhanced environmental protections to state that if proposals cannot avoid, minimise or mitigate significant adverse impact, the reasons for proceeding must be set out in the proposal.

Change to key references to include Birds Directive, European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Sea Fisheries) Regulations 2013, Foodwise 2025, Habitats Directive, Inshore Fisheries Forums, and updated the 'BIM- The Business of Seafood' reference to the latest (2020) edition. These additions were as a result of analysis of submission comments and engagements with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

In response to submissions outlining gaps in information around the impacts of climate change in this section, the following supporting text has been added;

"As identified in the Agriculture, Forest and Seafood Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan, the expected impacts upon fisheries activity arising from climate change include:

- reduced shell growth as a result of ocean acidification in commercially important species such as Oysters and Mussels
- increased risk to fishing fleets and harbour infrastructure due to increased intensity of storms and the frequency of storm surge events
- changes to traditional fisheries as the distribution of certain fish stocks moves Northwards. As these impacts emerge, operational and infrastructure changes will be necessary to enable a sustainable fishing industry to adapt."

In response to a variety of submissions comments on various aspects of Fisheries, further changes to supporting text include outlining that our fisheries industry contributes to national and European food security, provision of details of the most important species for Irish fishing vessels, and the inclusion of an overview of Foodwise 2025, which is the ten year strategy for the agri-food sector. Other changes to the supporting text include updated details of the Irish offshore fleet, the need to evaluate and consider potential impacts on fishing as part of the planning/proposal process, and a new paragraph on environmental safeguards in authorisation processes. The demonstrated capacity of the inshore fishing fleet to successfully co-exist with other marine activities is also referenced in supporting text. How climate change affects fisheries is also outlined with reference to the Agriculture, Forest and Seafood Climate Sectoral Adaptation Plan, as outlined above.

The supporting text on Issues for Sustainability is also expanded to state that proposals should outline how they will contribute to sustainable fishing practices: The overall aim is to manage fisheries in a way that is sustainable both economically and environmentally. In responding to NMPF policies in relation to fishing, the way in which proposals support sustainable fishing practice in line with the various initiatives outlined here in supporting text should be described as part of related authorisation processes as required. This text was added as a result of submissions outlining the importance of sustainability in fishing and fisheries management.

Inclusion of the view of BIM on the NMPF, specifically referring to Fisheries.

Changes not made

Comment summary; The other issue is that of fishing boats coming in too close to the shore off Greystones and dredging up and destroying the sea bed and habitats of marine creatures. We are aware that fishermen have to make a living but destroying mussel beds and taking all the scallops is not sustainable.

Response; Fisheries management to the local level identified is not possible through the NMPF. Conservation opportunities are being examined through a separate Marine Protected Area (MPA) process that will subsequently update the NMPF.

Comment summary; The designation and careful management of no-take Marine Protected Areas will further facilitate sustainable fishing.

Response; A separate MPA process is underway (<https://www.housing.gov.ie/water/marine-environment/marine-protected-areas/marine-protected-areas>) that will consider fishing in that context with outputs used to update future iterations of the NMPF.

Comment summary; This consultation document does not address the wider ecological impacts of overfishing on birds and marine mammals. Seabird population collapse is becoming increasingly common in the North Atlantic, due to the bird's inability to find enough fish to feed their young. A 2018 report from the RSPB on the Shetland Islands revealed catastrophic seabird population collapse, attributable to declining marine feed sources. Overfishing also severely impacts on marine animals, for example the NPWS highlighted in 2016 that six species of cartilaginous fish are Critically Endangered and a further five species are Endangered.

Response; The aim of the NMPF is to establish a planning policy that recognises and manages the interactions between different economic activities. Fisheries management falls under the Common Fisheries Policy, while environmental management includes, among others, the birds and habitats directives and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. The NMPF is not intended to replace existing environmental and fisheries management processes, which are outside of the scope of the NMPF.

Comment summary; The generic prioritisation of access to fishing areas is unhelpful and, as with any blanket declaration, fails to assess the merits or otherwise of continuing access to fishing areas (for example by considering damage to habitats or species from current fisheries) on a case by case basis.

Response; NMPF policies do not prioritise access beyond existing levels. The merits of any fisheries access proposal will be assessed against other considerations in the NMPF including those policies concerning marine environmental considerations.

Comment summary; Take steps to implement the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication by including an objective to achieve SDG Target 14b (access to resources and markets), measured by Indicator 14.b.1.

Response; The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries are voluntary only and therefore not suitable to include within the statutory NMPF.

Mineral Exploration and Mining

It is anticipated that a policy statement on mineral exploration and mining will be finalised in 2021. This will focus on supporting Ireland's transition to net zero greenhouse gas emissions. Future exploration and mining for scheduled minerals is not anticipated at this point and any potential activity in this area will depend on future exploration and mining technologies, and national policy on mineral exploration and mining.

Accordingly, the chapter has been renamed to 'Mineral Exploration and Mining' from 'Marine Aggregates and Mining'. A national policy position on marine mining is in preparation and has been added to the chapter's key reference list.

Given the forthcoming policy statement outlined above, the objectives in this section are reduced from three to one, the single objective being to maximise the contribution that the environmentally sustainable exploration and mining sector makes to our society, in line with national policy on mineral exploration and mining. The reduction in objectives in this section also reflect the opinion contained in several submissions that support for future mining of aggregates, as outlined in the draft NMPF, was not compatible with current Government policy on transitioning to a low carbon economy.

In addition to the changes in objectives, and for the same reasons, the three previous draft policies have been deleted and have been replaced with one policy which explicitly acknowledges environmental safeguards, as follows:

"Only proposals which are in line with national policy on mineral exploration and mining should be considered, provided they fully meet the environmental safeguards contained within the mineral exploration and mining consent processes."

Change to key references to include A Social, Environmental and Economic Assessment of Galmoy and Lisheen Mines, An Economic Review of the Irish Geoscience Sector, Continental Shelf Act 1968, International Seabed Authority, Minerals Development Acts 1940-1999, Policy Statement on Mineral Exploration and Mining (draft forthcoming), and the Sea Pollution Act 1991. These have been inserted on the advice of the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications on review of this section.

Change to supporting text also outlines that there has been no mining of scheduled minerals in Ireland to date, and little or no exploration to date either. As stated above, a policy statement on mineral exploration and mining is currently being drafted and is expected in 2021. New supporting text states that it is not anticipated that future exploration and mining activity will take place, and any potential future activity is dependent on future exploration and mining technologies, and National policy on mineral exploration and mining. It is expected that the policy statement will focus on supporting the transition to net zero greenhouse gas emissions.

In response to several submissions outlining concern for the environment as a result of proposed mining activity, further changes to supporting text for this chapter outline Ireland's commitment to transitioning to a circular economy. This text also adds that the European Commission has acknowledged this in the European Green Deal, which sets out a roadmap to carbon neutrality by 2050 but identifies that access to raw materials is key. The new text also acknowledges that marine minerals in the international seabed area cannot be exploited before the effects of deep-sea mining on the marine environment, biodiversity and human activities have been sufficiently researched, the risks are understood and the technologies and operational practices are able to demonstrate no serious harm to the environment, in line with the precautionary principle. The new text states that in light of the above, mineral exploration and mining in Ireland's marine area should be consistent with national policy on mineral exploration and mining.

It is further pointed out in a new text section that no areas of the Irish seabed are currently licenced for mineral exploration or extraction, and neither are there any plans to lease the seabed for these purposes. Further text changes state that it is of paramount importance that any exploration or mining activities should only take place in an environmentally sustainable way. In response to other submissions, the need for any future mining activities to have suitable interactions with the transport sector (both ports and land based facilities) is identified and outlined in supporting text.

In further new text, possible issues around displacement due to future activity is identified, as is the need to consider same in any future proposals. The need for baseline data in this area is mentioned in new supporting text, in the context of environmental impacts on the marine, and the evaluation of both direct and cumulative impacts on the environment. These changes are in response to a variety of public submissions on this topic.

Inclusion of the view of Drogheda Port Company on the NMPF, specifically referring to Mineral Exploration and Mining.

Changes not made

All submissions on this topic have been addressed to some degree by the significant changes to this chapter outlined above.

Ports, Harbours and Shipping

Inclusion of new objective for this section of the NMPF, stating the aim to ensure that the strategic development requirements of Tier 1 and Tier 2 ports and smaller harbours are appropriately addressed in regional and local marine planning policy. This change was as a result of submissions suggesting same.

Change to Policy 3 to add the National Planning Framework and the provisions of TEN-T network to the existing policies that proposals must demonstrate consideration of. The changes to policy 3 were as a result of submission suggestions/recommendations, in addition to engagements with the Department of Transport.

Insertion of new Policy 4, which address proposals within ports limits, beside or in the vicinity of ports, stating that proposals must demonstrate that they have been informed by consultation with the relevant port authority, have carried out a navigational risk assessment, and have consulted with Commissioners of Irish Lights. The changes to policy 4 were as a result of submission suggestions/recommendations, in addition to engagements with the Department of Transport.

Change to Policy 5 to include required compliance assessments associated with authorisations for capital dredging have been incorporated into competent authority decisions. This change was as a result of submissions requesting reference to compliance be inserted in this policy.

There have also been changes to the order of policies in which they appear- these changes were primarily to keep the dredging activity policies grouped together, as suggested by several submissions.

Changes to key references to include EC Guidance on the implementation of the European Union nature legislation in estuaries and coastal zones with particular attention to port development and dredging, Environmental Protection Agency- Licencing- Dumping at Sea permits, Fishery Harbours, and OSPAR 2014-06 Guidelines for the Management of Dredged Material at Sea. These inclusions were in response to submission suggestions, in addition to engagements with the Department of Transport.

Change to supporting text now include updated information post Brexit, where the focus for increased direct connections between Ireland and Europe has been identified due to the impact to the functioning of the United Kingdom landbridge. Port masterplan information on Dublin Port, Port of Cork, Shannon Foynes Port, Waterford Port is also updated to reflect the latest developments. New supporting text also references the National Planning Framework and the international trends in ports and shipping identified in that document. Those changes were informed by individual submissions from a variety of Ports updating the Department on the latest port developments, in addition to engagements with the Department of Transport.

Several submissions also pointed out the role and importance of regional and local ports, and supporting text has been updated to reflect this as follows;

“It is important to recognise that all ports play a role in servicing the Irish economy with regional ports supporting the role of Tier 1 and Tier 2 ports as well their local and regional hinterlands. While ports of national significance are key international gateways, there is potential for other ports to complement those roles and ensure continued sustainable development and growth of our economy at a national as well as regional level.”

Several submissions also referenced regional plans, and the role they can play in port development- the following supporting text has been added to reflect those submissions;

“The Department has received several examples of existing sub-national (or regional) MSP plans during the public submission process. These initiatives will be considered in the context of informing the sub-national marine planning process as it is developed.”

New text on dredging states that identification of dredge disposal sites should be supported by robust feasibility and site selection. The requirement for dredging and disposal to undergo relevant environmental assessments and timeline considerations of same are also inserted in new text in this section, in response to submissions which requested further detail of the type of environmental protections referred to. New supporting text has been added under ‘Issues for Sustainability’ to reference the need for AA of dredging works:

“Dredging and disposal are licensed activities and their environmental impacts are assessed by DHPLG / EPA during licensing procedures. Dredging proposals, including capital dredging, require environmental assessment including Appropriate Assessment (AA) and consideration of the need for such assessments should be considered at the earliest possible stage in considering dredging-related works.”

While on designated disposal areas, new supporting text is added to Key Issues for Marine Planning as follows:

“Designated areas are required to dispose dredged material to ensure that ports subject to silting can be kept operational and maintain their depths, in particular when urgent dredging is require after storm activity. Identification of new dredge disposal sites should be supported by robust feasibility and site selection and should include a review of existing sites in the context of climate adaptation.”

The need to develop facilities to allow ships to connect to the national grid when in port, thus reducing the need for them to produce their own power, is referenced in ‘issues for sustainability’, in response to submissions pointing out that this area was not sufficiently addressed in the draft NMPF.

Submissions also referred to the National Planning Framework and future plans requiring efficiencies of scale. In response, the following has been added to new supporting text;

“The National Planning Framework recognises that “The long-term international trend in ports and shipping is toward increased consolidation of resources in order to achieve optimum efficiencies of scale. This has knock-on effects in terms of vessel size, the depths of water required at ports and the type and scale of port hinterland transport connections.”

Inclusion of new maps of; National-Limits of Harbours and Pilotage Districts; Inset maps of Limits of Harbours and Pilotage Districts showing Dundalk, Drogheda, Dublin, Rosslare, Waterford, Cork, Galway and Shannon Foynes Ports. These changes were as a result of queries and requests expressed in a number of submissions, though space constraints meant that not every individual request for inclusion on maps could be responded to.

Inclusion of the view of Shannon Foynes Port Company on the NMPF, specifically referring to Ports, Harbours and Shipping.

Changes not made

Comment summary; We ask that the NMSP acknowledge the regional disparity in Port infrastructure and include as a National Objective the development of a Tier 2 Port along the coastline of the Northern and Western region of Ireland in the short to medium term. We ask that the NMSP supports further examination of the feasibility for pursuing the designation of Galway Port and Killybegs Port as European Union TEN-T Comprehensive Ports. We ask that the NMPF supports the transition towards Smart Ports, including through the development and utilisation of data and insight-driven technology, sensors and the IoT. We ask the NMPF supports objective to protect, upgrade and expand our key Fisheries Ports of Killybegs, Greencastle and Ross a Mhíl, and to ensure adequate continued investment in facilities to ensure their ongoing success.

Response; These requests were discussed in detail with Department of Transport. Ten-T ports are determined by strict European Union criteria, including tonnage criteria. Ports such as Galway and further north do not meet these criteria at present, although discussions are ongoing with the Commission on the criteria for designation. Shipping routes are mainly determined by proximity to centres of population and markets-building infrastructure will not of itself attract services. This does not discourage development of regional ports.

Comment summary; To meet new Sox and NOx controls, open loop Exhaust gas scrubbing of ship's emissions is now in vogue. In an effort to regulate shipping and bring it up to what is now considered a very low standard of emissions control but continue to burn HFO, open loop scrubbing utilises pumped sea water to cool and spray the exhaust gases thereby scrubbing them of their SOx and NOx constituents, preventing them from becoming airborne by washing them directly into our oceans and harbours. Ban Open Loop Emissions scrubbing in Irish Territorial waters immediately.

Response; Policy and regulation in this area are set at International Maritime Organization (IMO) and European Union level, and are outside the scope of the NMPF.

Comment summary; At Ports, Harbours and Shipping Policy 1 add a new dot point to ensure protection of the local natural environment when building or altering ports and harbours.

Response; Assessment of environmental impact of activities in the maritime area, alongside impact on shipping, is addressed in the marine environment-related sections of the NMPF. Port developments are statutorily obliged to consider these marine environment protections on adoption of the NMPF.

Safety at Sea

Policy 2 has been updated to remove specific reference to ORE so that the under-keel clearance matter is considered in relation to all proposals that might reduce clearance. This change is as a result of submissions pointing out that this policy should apply to all structures and not ORE related structures specifically.

Policy 5 has been reworded as submissions pointed out that previous text in the policy relating to Search And Rescue (SAR) could have been interpreted that a case could be made to cause an adverse impact, which was obviously not the intention of the policy. To clarify this, Safety at Sea Policy 5 has been reworded as follows;

“Proposals must identify their potential impact, if any, on Maritime Emergency Response (Search and Rescue (SAR), Maritime Casualty and Pollution Response) operations. Where a proposal may have a significant impact on these operations it must demonstrate how it will, in order of preference: a) avoid, b) minimise, c) mitigate adverse impacts, or d) if it is not possible to mitigate significant adverse impacts, proposals should set out the reasons for proceeding, **supported by parties responsible for maritime SAR.**”

Changes to key references to include Commissioners of Irish Lights, National Drowning Prevention Policy 2018-2027, National Maritime Oil/HNS Spill Contingency Plan (NMOSCP), National Search and Rescue Plan. These inclusions were as a result of submission comments in addition to engagements with the Department of Transport and other relevant state bodies such as the Commissioners of Irish Lights.

Changes to supporting text include detail on the Irish Coast Guard's role in implementing the National Search and Rescue Plan for all incidents occurring in the maritime domain, in addition to their role in co-ordinating the State's response to major pollution incidents. New additional text also outlines the National Maritime Oil/Hazardous and noxious substances (HNS) Spill Contingency plan (NMOSCP) in detail. An additional paragraph has also been added to include the role of the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU), which is the independent safety regulator for upstream (offshore and onshore) petroleum exploration and extraction activities in Ireland. The CRU's responsibility is to provide effective safety regulatory oversight and reduce the risk and potential consequences of major accidents onshore and offshore to a level that is as low as is reasonably practicable (ALARP).

These changes were in response to submissions stating that further detail on emergency and / or contingency plans and the relevant responsible bodies should be provided in the NMPF, in addition to engagements with the Department of Transport and other relevant state bodies such as the Commissioners of Irish Lights.

Inclusion of the view of Water Safety Ireland on the NMPF, specifically referring to Safety at Sea.

Changes not made

Comment summary; In conflict or emergency the Naval Service should have a Port of refuge with fuelling and repair facilities on hand. It should be a port with 24/7 access. Possibly Sligo or Killary could be developed.

Response; This is an operational issue to be considered by the Naval Service and/or the Departments of Defence and Transport respectively. The NMPF has no role in funding or designation of Naval Service facilities.

Comment summary; The NMPF should also in my view provide for regulations to be enacted to regulate the use of autonomous surface and underwater vessels in Ireland's maritime area, a very topical subject at the IMO, and these type of vessels are being rapidly developed internationally.

Response; This comment was among several discussed with the Department of Transport. This is a regulatory issue and outside the scope of the NMPF. Although the International Maritime Organization is currently carrying out a scoping exercise on same, there is currently no legal regime for testing of autonomous vehicles yet. When regulations are developed, they will be included in future iterations of the NMPF.

Comment summary; The Draft NMPF states that "the greater frequency and severity of extreme weather events caused by climate change is likely to make the challenge of making safety at sea and navigational safety more difficult." The role and function of the Irish Coast Guard requires proper resourcing to ensure the optimum marine search and rescue service under Ireland's role as party to the UN International Maritime Organization Search and Rescue Convention.

Response; The matter of funding of coastguard services is an operational consideration beyond the scope of the NMPF. The Irish Coastguard, rather than the NMPF, is best placed to make decisions in relation to their response to climate change-related conditions.

Seaweed Harvesting

Change to supporting text to include details of registered seaweed harvesting rights, sourced from the Property Registration Authority. This text also includes further detail on how seaweed rights are registered, in addition to the number of rights currently recognised on property folios held by the PRA. This change is included as a result of a number of submissions requesting further detail on the registration of harvesting rights.

Further changes to supporting text outline that no related seaweed harvesting applications have been approved by the Minister since 2014. This is a clarification of sorts, as several submitters seem to be under the impression that harvesting licences are being awarded on a regular basis, which is not the case.

A new text section on 'the future of seaweed harvesting' is inserted in supporting text, outlining ongoing work being carried out by the Marine Institute on behalf of the Government, involving a research project undertaken with funding from the European Union Maritime & Fisheries Fund. The future direction of seaweed harvesting, including the development of specific marine planning policies, will be informed by the outcome of this research project, titled 'A Socioeconomic Study of Seaweed Harvesting in Ireland to Support Marine Spatial Planning'. The details of this project are included in response to submissions correctly pointing out that there were no seaweed policies contained in the NMPF, and also those submissions requesting updates on seaweed policy development.

Inclusion of the view of the Ascophyllum Nodosum Processors Group (ANPG) on the NMPF, specifically referring to Seaweed Harvesting.

Changes not made

Comment summary; We propose that said licence be revoked in order that a more sustainable alternative to exploiting this resource be investigated, with sufficient public engagement, appropriate advertising and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and that no further such licences be issued in the meantime.

Response; The NMPF is a planning framework, and has no function in the issuing or revocation of seaweed harvesting licences. As outlined in text above, no seaweed harvesting licences have been issued by the Minister since 2014.

Comment summary; A rigorous and well-researched seaweed harvesting management plan is required, which implements strict controls on harvesting methods for particular species, and quantities which can be removed. This will require substantial public consultation and participation, in compliance with Article 7 of the Aarhus Convention.

Response; The Department is broadly in agreement with the sentiments expressed in this submission, and will consider them in the context of the research project referred to above. As the project is not scheduled to conclude until later in 2021, no further policy developments could be included in this iteration of the NMPF at the time of publication.

Comment summary; The overwhelming majority of submissions on this topic contained suggestions as to how the licencing, management, data gathering, and environmental management of seaweed harvesting could be improved, and also pointed out the importance of this traditional marine activity to local communities, highlighting positive socio-economic benefits. As policy development work on seaweed harvesting is at an early stage, these submissions will be fully considered by the Department in the context of drafting and implementing a new seaweed regulatory framework in the coming months.

Sport and Recreation

In response to a variety of submissions, some changes to objective 5 in the Sports and Recreation chapter have been made, specifically to recognise the potential environmental impact of increased visitor pressures, the potential of co-existence, and also to enhance the draft NMPF wording around inclusivity access to include ages and backgrounds in addition to abilities. The expanded objective 5 now states;

“Sustainable development of outdoor recreation facilities, promoting access for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities, while encouraging the sharing of facilities where appropriate. The provision of marine recreational facilities should be considered an integral part of plans specific to coastal locations, including urban and suburban coastal development sites, with due consideration given to the environmental sensitivities of each site, such as increased visitor or infrastructural pressures on the environment.”

For the same reasons as outlined above, there is also a change to Sport and Recreation Policy 1, which now recognises the need to understand the carrying capacity of the receiving environment. The new policy wording now states:

“Proposals that promote sustainable development of water-based sports and marine recreation, while enhancing community health, wellbeing and quality of life, should be supported, provided that due consideration is given to environmental carrying capacities and tourism pressures sensitivities of each site, such as increased visitor or infrastructural pressures on the environment.”

In response to submissions outlining the need to recognise potential negative environmental impacts, Policy 2 text has been amended to include consideration of adverse environmental impacts on the natural environment.

Change to key references to include Get Ireland Swimming and Leave No Trace Impact Report 2019. These new key references were inserted as a result of suggestions put forward by public submissions.

Sea Angling has been added to the (non-exhaustive) list of sport, leisure and tourist activities as a response to multiple submissions requesting same. The Department would point out that due to space constraints, this list was never intended to capture each and every tourism and marine leisure activity, but received so many requests to include Sea Angling in the final NMPF that we were obliged to rectify this inadvertent omission.

Change to supporting text to include extra information on marine-based coastal tourism activities, such as blueways and public beaches. These changes were as a direct response to submissions suggesting the inclusion of same. Related to the changes to objectives and policies above, which were brought about by submissions commenting on environmental aspects, new supporting text also states that plans should undertake appropriate environmental assessment where required under the Habitats Directive, in order to avoid in-combination environmental effects. New text relating to issues for sustainability outlines an overview from the monitoring of natural habitats and species, and the subsequent challenges that arise in protecting the environment from the adverse impacts of human leisure activities. New text section on Climate Change also acknowledges that our Tourism industry is likely to be affected by the impacts of Climate Change, thus requiring that appropriate mitigation and adaptation strategies are adopted in order to maintain sustainable development.

Some submissions also pointed out that Tourism is somewhat unique in being primarily influenced by seasonality, and that the NMPF should reflect this. In response, under 'Issues for Sustainability', the following is added to the supporting text to address these points:

"In assessing sport and recreation related proposals, the variability of impacts arising from the seasonality of use related to tourism and recreation activity combined with the seasonality of functions / movements of habitats and species should be considered."

Additional supporting text has also been added to 'Issues for Sustainability' to address mitigation of adverse impacts, such as the provision of additional public facilities, litter bins, restroom facilities, washing facilities etc. These suggestions were all taken from a combination of public submissions on Sport and Recreation.

Inclusion of new Map of Sport and Recreation Trends and Features, displaying Marinas, Blue Flag Beaches, and Intensity of Sailing Activity in 2019. These changes are as a result of multiple suggestions as to tourism trends and marine leisure activities that submitters felt worthy of inclusion in maps. The Department was not able to include each and every individual suggestion, but the new maps do provide a significant expansion of tourism information in comparison to what was available in the draft NMPF.

Inclusion of the view of Foyle Port on the NMPF, specifically referring to Sport and Recreation.

Changes not made

Comment summary; I would like to suggest calling for annual maintenance of the harbour and river bed, with development of the waterside (the river banks and harbour) for leisure activities and tourism. It is also imperative to provide public access to all waterfront areas for leisure and tourism. (specific named location)

Response; Support for specific development proposals are outside remit of NMPF, which is a planning framework.

Comment summary; Recommendation: Any water sports should be licenced with the requirement for adherence to best practice to minimise transmission of invasive species.

Response; The Department is broadly in agreement with this comment, and will further consider it during the implementation phase of the NMPF under the proposed new licencing regime, in which a licencing and monitoring agency (MARA) will be established to examine options such as this helpful and relevant suggestion.

Comment summary; This is another good reason for having rights of way legislation in place. The network of trails that exist but have no legal status need only to be given the sort of right of way status enjoyed in Britain. We strongly agree that development proposals should not interfere with recreational access. However, we must reiterate that in the absence of access-protecting legislation, this will be no more than an aspiration.

Response; Legislation for rights of way and terrestrial access is outside the remit of the NMPF, which is a planning framework.

Comment summary; Risk to Human Life: Lough Foyle is used for recreational purposes including kayaking, boating, swimming and walking – the deployment of trestles along the complete shoreline poses a huge risk to health and safety as there are no indicative markings to indicate the presence of same below the waterline.

Response; This is a matter for the relevant local authority, in this case, Donegal County Council.

Telecommunications

Inclusion of new objective that states the aim of ensuring our island communities can avail of the opportunities brought about by high speed communications networks. This was inserted due to updated Government policy in Telecommunications, in addition to public submissions from those in island communities who were of the opinion that this issue should be prioritised.

Change made to Policy 3 regarding the bundling of cables- several energy industry submissions pointed out that this co-existence may not be achievable or desirable in some cases, referencing the need (in some cases) to access cables separately for repair and maintenance purposes. This has been addressed in Policy 3, with the amended text now stating that

“Proposals should specify if separate access to cables for the purposes of repair and maintenance is required”

Several submissions also pointed out the importance of, and reliance on, digital connectivity in the contexts of the Covid-19 pandemic, the location of multiple data centres in Ireland and the United Kingdom’s departure from the European Union. As a result, changes to supporting text have been made to outline the importance of digital connectivity in the context of Dublin currently being Europe’s largest data centre market. New supporting text also identifies an area for potential future development, that being an increase in direct telecommunications capacity between Ireland and Europe, which has come into focus recently as a consideration of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union.

In response to submissions on the importance of site selection from an environmental point of view, the following update is added to the supporting text on ‘Interactions with Other Sectors’ with regard to planning new cable routes:

“... reflecting robust route selection for telecommunication cables to avoid or minimise impacts on marine ecology and other marine users. Such route selection assessment, including landfall sites, should continue to be applied.”

Inclusion of the view of Facebook Ireland on the NMPF, specifically referring to Telecommunications.

Changes not made;

Comment summary; Given the importance of submarine cables to Ireland, they should be considered critical national infrastructure.

Response; While the Department is not necessarily in disagreement with this comment, the designation of critical national infrastructure is outside the remit of the NMPF.

Comment summary; Ultimately we would like to see a shortening of approval times for licences and permits associated with major international Telecommunications projects, achieved within the framework of the NMPF.

Response; Licencing and permit approval is outside the remit of the NMPF. However, the Government does recognise that the existing consent regime is in need of substantial reform, and has committed to significant reforms in the near future, the relevant ones here being the commencement of the Maritime Area Planning Act and the establishment of MARA, the Marine Area Regulatory Authority. These reforms, once implemented, will address the speed of licencing approvals and permits as suggested in the comment above (and other similar comments received).

Tourism

Inclusion of new objective to support the coordination and promotion of all-island tourism activities through cooperation with relevant tourism bodies. This was in response to submission suggestions recommending alignment with the National Planning Framework in this regard.

Change to Policy 3 to include consideration of potential adverse impacts on the environment as a requirement for tourism proposals. This change is as a result of submissions outlining environmental concerns and the need to consider the environmental impacts of tourism development proposals.

Related to those submissions, another change to key references has been made to include the Sustainable Tourism Working Group Report.

Updated table on ‘Overseas Tourists Engaging in Angling and Water Based Activities’ to include 2019 (latest available) data. This change is an update to include latest available data and not as a direct result of any particular submission.

Similarly, changes to supporting text, specifically referencing Fáilte Ireland survey data, have been updated to include latest available data from the 2019 survey. In response to submissions pointing out that Climate change was not sufficiently addressed in this section of the NMPF, a new paragraph has been inserted to address the issue of Climate Change and the potential effects of same on the Irish Tourism industry, again stressing the importance of mitigation and adaptation strategies being put in place to ensure resilience to Climate Change.

Submissions also pointed out that Blue Flag and Green Coast beaches were not mentioned in the draft NMPF. In response, the following has been added to supporting text;

“Green Coast and Blue Flag beaches guarantee excellent water quality, beach safety and have effective and appropriate management to ensure the protection of the natural environment.”

Reference to initiatives such as BIM's 'Taste the Atlantic' have also been included in supporting text in response to submissions from various Aquaculture representatives who pointed out the synergies between these strategies and Ireland's tourist offering.

Other submissions pointed out further issues for sustainability in relation to expanded growth potentially being at the expense of biodiversity loss. In response, this issue of growth and biodiversity loss is addressed in supporting text under 'Issues for Sustainability' which identifies existing policies/strategies that deal with this matter:

"Tourism policy, through the 2019-2021 Tourism Action Plan, also seeks to improve sustainability in the sector by achieving a greater dispersal of visitors in the country together with an extension in the tourism season. Achieving these aims can help tourism to grow in a way that avoids social and environmental problems."

The need to protect and restore is also recognised in supporting text under 'Issues for Other Sectors':

"Given that tourism trades on Ireland's reputation as a clean/green destination, the maintenance of the marine environment is important for the sector."

Inclusion of the view of the Irish Tourism Industry Confederation on the NMPF, specifically referring to Tourism.

Changes not made

Comment summary; The Draft plan does not sufficiently acknowledge that the impacts of travel to a destination must be addressed in addition to impacts at the destination itself. This has particular relevance for tourism in Ireland's coastal areas, which draw substantial numbers of visitors from around the world.

Response; While the Department is not necessarily in disagreement with this comment, the issue of travel to destinations and the environmental impact of same is outside the remit of the NMPF, being a far broader issue than marine planning specifically.

Comment summary; The global aviation industry, which relies on a range of direct and indirect subsidies, is pursuing the continued increase in global aviation and lobbied to be excluded from the Paris Agreement. A misleading expectation is being created on new lower carbon technologies, which would take decades to supplant the operating lifespan of the current generation of planes in service and continued production.

Response; The NMPF has no role or function in the governance of national or global aviation. The Department lacks the expertise to provide informed comment or response on the operating lifespan of aircraft.

Comment summary; Recommendation: Include a targeted, timetabled policy for the completion of a full Irish coastal walking route.

Response; While the Department is not necessarily in disagreement with this suggestion, this proposal is outside the remit of the NMPF, which is a planning framework.

Comment summary; Recommendation: A new Tourism Planning Policy must be drafted and included in NMPF, to ensure the vital national Tourism Objective above re 'maintenance of natural marine and coastal areas' is given proper consideration by Planning Authorities.

Response; Insertion of such a policy could result in too narrow a definition and result in unintended barriers to other developments, including for example, proposed developments necessary for the security of Ireland's energy supply, or the operational capacity of the Defence Organisation or the operation of Search and Rescue services. The maintenance of natural marine and coastal areas is of paramount importance and stated in the NMPF tourism objectives. This Department will continue to engage with other relevant Government Departments in relation to marine tourism during the implementation stages of the NMPF. In the event that specific marine tourism objectives and policies are developed as a result of this engagement, these policies and objectives will be included in future iterations of the NMPF.

Comment summary; Is it deliberate that it is only in this section that the Planning Policies seek to address the negative impact of proposals on the existing community, stated in Tourism Policy 2? Is it considered that negative impacts on communities from any of the other planning areas discussed in the document are not worthy of consideration?

Response; NMPF planning policies generally seek to avoid, minimise and mitigate adverse impacts, whether that is impacts on the environment, or on heritage assets, or the local community. This approach is consistent throughout the NMPF and no discrepancy is present in this section.

Wastewater Treatment and Disposal

Inclusion of new objective, which states the aim of supporting coastal communities and sustainable development through the provision of resilient water services. This change was added as a result of submissions requesting that support for the provision of improved water services to coastal communities be highlighted in the NMPF.

Change to Policy 1 to include provision that proposals will be supported provided they fully meet the relevant environmental safeguards contained within the authorisation processes. This change is in response to a number of submissions highlighting that the policy should contain reference to environmental aspects.

Change to Policy 2 to state that; where possible, proposals that may affect Irish Water activities or plans, should engage with Irish Water at the earliest available opportunity. This change was as a result of submissions pointing out that early engagement with Irish Water in relation to proposals would be beneficial.

Change to Key references to include the National Planning Framework; Water Services Policy Statement 2018-2025; Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive; also provided are updates to the latest EPA Reports on Bathing Water and Urban Waste Water, containing the latest available data. These changes are primarily as a result of Department engagements with Water stakeholders such as the Water services division of DHLGH, the EPA and Irish Water.

Changes to supporting text outline that the number of areas in Ireland that ceased discharging untreated waste water into the environment has increased to 16 since 2014. New supporting text also identifies the linkage between Waste Water Treatment and the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP), stating that work has commenced on the third cycle of the RBMP, which will detail plans from 2021-2027. Reference is also made to the Water Framework Directive in relation to the RBMP. These changes are in response to submissions that were of the opinion the links between the WFD, Waste Water Treatment and the RMPB were not emphasised enough in the draft NMPF.

The latest EPA report on Bathing Water Quality (2019) shows that waste water discharges contributed to poor bathing water quality at 3 beaches in 2019, which is a decrease of 2 since the previous EPA report referred to in the draft NMPF, which identified 5 beaches. Supporting text and tables have been updated to reflect this. Irish water has since completed further assessments of Irish Shellfish waters since the publication of the draft NMPF, and revised text provides updated figures on the remaining assessments to be carried out.

New supporting text also references National Planning Objective 60 of the National Planning Framework, advising that plans or proposals for wastewater treatment should account for and accommodate population growth. This change is related to the changes outlined above, where submissions pointed out the gap in links between terrestrial and marine waste water treatment.

Inclusion of the view of Irish Water on the NMPF, specifically referring to Waste Water Treatment and Disposal.

Changes not made

Comment summary; Stricter guidelines and licenses for the commissioning of sewage treatment plants on the Wicklow coastline. All Sewage Treatment plants should be using technology such as (AGS Aerobic Granular Sludge (AGS) technology) or similar advanced treatment systems to treat the water to an acceptable quality for reuse rather than the alternative which is to pump chemicals and waste water into our marine environment.

Response; While the Department is not necessarily in any disagreement with this comment, the NMPF has no function in funding or commissioning Waste Water treatment plants. It is also outside the remit of the NMPF to set guidelines for WWT plant construction or provide advice for the types of technology to be utilised in WWT plants.

Comment summary; Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Policy 3 - Public education campaign to 'Keep Ireland Beautiful'. Such a campaign needs to have a whole of government approach and needs central co-ordination, across all levels of government.

Response; This is a worthwhile suggestion and will be considered during the implementation stages of the NMPF.

Comment summary; We note that adequate funding in and resources be made available to ensure tertiary treatment must continue to be rolled out for all coastal Wastewater Treatment plants (WWTP) - specifically WWTP's adjacent to bays and harbours where shellfish production is carried out to sustain food safety, rural jobs and enterprise and compliance with the European Union Water Framework Directive (formerly European Union Shellfish Waters Directive).

Response; While the Department is in broad agreement with this comment, funding is not in the remit of the NMPF.

Implementation and Monitoring

The majority of submissions in this section related to suggestions as to what should, or could be monitored under the NMPF. Submissions also highlighted gaps in existing monitoring and enforcement, and other submissions pointed out issues with timeliness in granting of approvals or licences. These submissions will be considered by the relevant Departments, State agencies and bodies during the implementation phase of the NMPF and the establishment of the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority. There is little doubt that a substantial number of suggestions will be implemented to varying degrees, but at the time of NMPF publication, the Department was not in a position to specify these, nor identify the order in which these changes may occur.

This chapter does not contain objectives or policies, and mainly serves to outline the next steps in the implementation of the NMPF, in addition to the broader context of the next steps in Marine Spatial Planning. Changes to text in this chapter primarily focus on a new section detailing the State's intended approach to monitoring the implementation of the NMPF. This new section outlines the frequency of NMPF reviews, the Departments and State Bodies responsible for same, the continued involvement of marine stakeholders in this aspect of the process, and how environmental monitoring will be integrated into plan implementation.

Inclusion of the view of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage on the NMPF, specifically referring to Implementation and Monitoring.

Appendices

Change to Appendix C to include details of draft NMPF public consultation events in tabular form. Updated text includes a short summary of both the Baseline and Draft NMPF consultation events, which are outlined in greater detail in sections 12-14 of this document.

Appendix D has been substantially changed to reflect what were then the latest developments in the Maritime Area Planning Bill process (since publication of the NMPF, the Bill has been enacted, and is now the Maritime Area Planning Act), with particular reference to Designated Marine Area Plans (DMAP). In keeping with the enhancement of environmental protections throughout the NMPF, Appendix D also outlines that public participation will be a key element in the development of a DMAP. As part of any plan or proposal, the proposer will be obliged to include a Public Participation Plan – the details of which will be published along with the proposal itself – again this will be legislated for under the MAP Bill. The DMAP process will include multiple opportunities for public participation and consultation, in compliance with the Aarhus Convention, and will include statutory environmental assessments (such as SEA and AA).

Change to Appendix F to include the aim of developing a digital tool to assist in accessing the NMPF- this will be made available at www.marineplan.ie in due course.

Action 1 of Appendix F aims to specifically address ORE and the approach to zoning: Develop a statutory marine planning guideline on Offshore Renewable Energy development, to include: details of visualisation assessments, the approach to zoning, and identification of best available evidence to support assessments as well as known evidence gaps.

Action 2 in Appendix F commits to the development of development Management Guidelines; with reference to evidence and data gaps; A matter to be addressed in these guidelines is improvement of transparency and identification of how development management processes can be used to identify and contribute to addressing evidence gaps, furthering our understanding of the maritime area and reducing duplication of effort in evidence gathering.

Development of guidelines will include identifying where in marine decisions environmental considerations (including assessments and of cumulative impacts) need to be identified and addressed as well as identifying relevant codes of practice, guidance etc. such as in relation to management of non-native species.

Action 3 in Appendix F commits to continued development of maps of mobile species as follows: “Continued development of maps setting out best available knowledge in relation to the distribution of highly mobile and migratory species.”

Routing data would be advantageous and will be covered in development management guidelines; this will be addressed by Action 4 in Appendix F:

‘Seek to develop map of telecoms cables in Irish waters to including engagement with neighbouring states to support consideration of telecoms assets.’

Glossary

This has been updated and revised where necessary. In response to several public submissions, definitions of 'Significant Adverse Impacts' and 'Public Benefits' have been added to the glossary.

Appendix A: Stakeholder Advisory Group Membership

Pillar	Sector	Organisation
Public Sector	Competent Authority	Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage
	Planning	An Bord Pleanála
	Energy – Renewables	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)
	Marine Research and Innovation	Marine Institute
	Food	Bord Bia
	Local Government	County and City Management Association (CCMA)
	Local Government	Association of Irish Local Government (AILG)
	Irish Lights	Commissioner of Irish Lights
Economic	Business/Employers	IBEC
	Ports/Shipping	Irish Ports Association
	Marine Leisure / Marina Operators	Irish Marine Federation
	Energy – Petroleum	Irish Offshore Operators Association
	Energy – Renewables	Marine Renewables Industry Association
	Energy – Renewables	National Offshore Wind Association of Ireland
	Energy – Renewables	Wind Energy Ireland
	Fisheries – Inshore	National Inshore Fisheries Forum
	Fisheries – Sea Fishing	Irish Fish Producers Organisation
	Fisheries – Sea Fishing	Killybegs Fishermen’s Organisation
	Fisheries – Sea Fishing	Irish South and West Fish Producers Organisation
	Fisheries – Sea Fishing	Irish South and East Fish Producers Organisation
	Aquaculture	IFA Aquaculture Section
	Tourism	Irish Tourism Industry Confederation
	Adventure Tourism	Adventure Tourism
	Seaweed Harvesting	Coiste Chearta Cladaí Chonamara
	Seaweed Processing	Ascophyllum Nodosum Processors Group
Islands	Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann/Irish Islands Federation	
Social	Sustainable Development	National Economic and Social Council
	Sports	Federation of Irish Sport
	Higher Education	Socio-economic Marine Research Unit (SEMURU), NUI Galway
	Higher Education	Centre for Marine and Renewable Energy, University College Cork
	Higher Education	Technological University Dublin
	Higher Education	BRYDEN Centre, LYIT
Environmental	Irish Environmental Network	Irish Environmental Network
		Coastwatch
		An Taisce
		Irish Whale and Dolphin Group
		SWAN Ireland
		Birdwatch Ireland

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