

**AYRSHIRE JOINT STRUCTURE PLAN AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE  
4 JUNE 2004**

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**Developing a Strategic Framework for Scotland's Marine Environment**

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PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To comment on the Scottish Executive's consultation paper on Developing a Strategic Framework for Scotland's Marine Environment.

BACKGROUND

- 2 The Scottish Executive is seeking views on the scope and content of a strategic planning framework for Scotland's marine environment. The consultation paper sets out some of the background to the ecological, economic and social importance of the marine environment and the pressures on it and seeks to identify how best to deliver sustainable development of marine resources.
- 3 Scotland's marine and coastal waters support a diverse range of wildlife and habitats and provide food, recreation, energy, minerals, and transportation routes. Increasing pressure from these activities together with other man made and natural processes, can create significant impacts on the marine environment. A debate about how best to address those pressures and meet EU and international obligations is underway at EU, UK and Scottish levels. The Executive's current consultation is now looking to take this debate forward.
- 4 The consultation period closes on 30 July 2004, with a view to producing a draft strategic framework to be circulated for comment before the end of December 2004.

MARINE PLANNING FRAMEWORK

- 5 Rather than providing a draft of the intended strategic framework, the consultation document sets out the background to why such a document is needed and seeks views on its scope, content and objectives.
- 6 In particular it sets out and seeks views on:
  - A strategic vision for the marine environment;

- Options of establishing a national coastline park and/or marine national parks; and
  - Current marine and coastal development consents legislation for which the Scottish Executive has devolved responsibility.
- 7 There is currently no ‘planning system’ for the marine environment comparable to the National Planning Framework or Development Plans for the terrestrial environment. There is no marine act or single piece of legislation to protect the marine environment and no system to mediate conflicting pressures involving all stakeholders. Existing regulatory controls and management systems applicable in the marine environment have been developed in an ad hoc, sectoral fashion largely independent of each other, which has led to confusion.
- 8 The Scottish Executive recognise the need to bring greater clarity to how current initiatives, regulation and management in the marine environment interrelate; what principal policy objectives they serve; and what strategic issues are not being addressed.
- 9 The intention is that the strategic framework will embrace, rather than supersede, existing regulatory regimes and build on current initiatives such as the Scottish Coastal Forum.
- 10 Discussion of how the marine environment can be sustainably managed will form a contribution to the wider ongoing debate at the UK, EU and international level.

### THE AYRSHIRE CONTEXT

- 11 Ayrshire is subject to many of the same problems and opportunities created by processes of natural and manmade change as in other areas. These include climate change, development of marine renewable and other energy, pressures on biodiversity, industrial production, commercial fisheries, mineral exploitation, navigation, coastal communities, waste disposal, tourism and recreation.
- 12 The lack of any single system to bring transparency, accountability and coordination to planning and development of the marine environment and coastal zone is something which has been of concern in Ayrshire for some time.
- 13 The consultation raises 14 questions. Of these, 4 questions are now being drawn to the attention of the Committee:
- Should a system of marine spatial planning be established in Scottish waters? What would the key elements be? How would marine spatial planning work in practice?
  - Should an ecosystem approach to the marine environment be Scotland wide , regional or local?

- What should be the role and form for marine national parks and or national coastline parks?
  - Are any specific improvements necessary to the four marine and coastal consent regimes for which the Executive has devolved responsibility.
- 14 The new National Planning Framework provides a focus for discussion on how integrated spatial planning can be used to promote sustainable development on land. Para 97 promises that the spatial aspects of a strategy for protecting and enhancing Scotland's coast will be reflected in future revisions of the national planning framework.

## CONCLUSION

- 15 The economy of Ayrshire is heavily dependent on and potentially will be increasingly dependent on the marine and coastal environment for its long term future. It is therefore vital that the marine and coastal resources of Ayrshire are:
- Protected and enhanced;
  - Sustainably managed and developed;
  - Mediated between competing uses; and
  - Planned and managed accountably and transparently
- 16 The marine and coastal environment is coming under increased pressure from conflicting interests and without a coherent strategic planning, regulatory and management system in place, it is extremely difficult to prioritise or coordinate the needs of different sectors or to make decisions to guide long term investment and other decisions. It is therefore essential and urgent that there is much better coordination and integration of strategic planning, regulation and management of the marine environment and resources together with the coastal zone and terrestrial environments, to ensure sustainable outcomes across jurisdictional and artificial boundaries.
- 17 The confusing plethora of legislation, overlapping competencies and multiplicity of spatial jurisdictions extending from the 'high water mark' to the 200 mile UK fisheries limit may be capable of being 'embraced' and set within a more coherent and interrelated strategic framework, as the consultation states, but such a conclusion may be premature. Consideration should be given to a new streamlined legislative framework which would provide backing to the types of work emerging through ICZM and by bodies like the Firth Forums.
- 18 The terrestrial planning system offers a practical track record in the successful airing, mediation and resolution between conflicting economic, social and environmental pressures in a planned and regulated, democratically accountable format. Despite some adjustment this has stood the test of time for almost 60 years. Recent developments in spatial planning; national planning frameworks and delivery mechanisms such as Structure Plan Joint Committees offer the potential to fit plan making structures to the

larger geographical areas needed to cover meaningful environmental areas eg. estuaries. Some of these lessons would appear to be worthy of consideration and could be transferable or extendable to include coastal/marine matters.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- 19 The Committee agree to the contents of this report and:
- (a) sends the comments to the Scottish Executive as the views of the Joint Committee; and
  - (b) advises the three Ayrshire Councils of these views in any preparation of their own comments.

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