

REGIONAL CONFERENCE 29.06.11

Integrating Marine and Terrestrial Planning Imperial Hotel, Great Yarmouth

Jointly facilitated by the RTPI and North Sea Marine Cluster, the conference was held against the backdrop of the Scroby Sands offshore wind farm along Great Yarmouth's seafront. Delegates from both planning spheres were welcomed by President **Richard Summers** who opened the day's proceedings by reassuring delegates of the RTPI's stance on criticism aimed at the profession from politicians. He stated that though the Government is within its rights to pass judgement on the planning system, he maintained the RTPI's commitment to help but stated under no circumstances should the profession be blamed.

Russell Gadbury, senior planner from the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) then outlined the purpose behind Marine Planning and its role supporting the delivery of the UK government's Marine Policy Statements (MPS). It was clear that both marine and terrestrial planning disciplines are carved out of similar relationships with DEFRA, DCLG, MoD and DECC, and are comparable in policy output and productivity i.e. plan making, monitoring and the spatial interpretation of supporting evidence bases. However, Russell reiterated the infancy of marine planning and the importance of continuing to build relationships across sectors and stakeholders and strengthen ties with the terrestrial planning system.

The second presentation was by **Jim Claydon**, planning consultant and past RTPI President who evaluated the common ground between terrestrial and marine planning policy. Jim emphasised that whilst key marine and coastal policy exists within regional and local strategies, only a few plans have been adopted and the proposed revocation of the RSS is likely to dilute this pool of regulation further. Emerging National Planning Policy is likely to eventually fill these gaps. However, its delay may lead to a vacuum in coastal and marine policy for some time.

In response, some local planning authorities are beginning to 'road test' new innovative approaches, including Coastal Change Pathfinders (CCP), pioneering marine projects (C-Scope), whereas in Cornwall, planners are 'putting all their ducks' in a row before marine planning comes along, letting everyone know what they want out of the marine plan and how a marine plan will play into their strategic planning.

This was followed by **Peter Warner**, Head of Planning and Business Services at Great Yarmouth Borough Council, who gave an overview of the changing marine and terrestrial planning interfaces. Using interesting examples from Great Yarmouth, Peter described the marine interface as being formerly limited to the Port and Local Authority, though as a result of cross-related marine and terrestrial planning jurisdictions (marine boundary – high water mark, terrestrial boundary – low water mark), the interface is part of the 'join' between the two planning spheres and requires an integrated approach.

Inevitably, such new integration creates new issues and a steep learning curve, particularly as marine planning may add, to what others have perceived, as an additional layer of bureaucracy to an already over-regulated system. Developers involved within the marine sector want to navigate a gentle course; free from reams of planning red tape where a negotiating party of 6 or 7 organisations would not be unusual, and less attractive at encouraging inward investment.

Robert Upton, Deputy Chair of the IPC provided an update on the legislative relationship between marine planning and the Planning Act 2008, drawing upon the Government's intentions to lay before Parliament National Policy Statements on Energy and Ports in 2011.

He mentioned that the IPC and MMO are developing a working relationship, centred on off-shore wind turbine developments which come under Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects. Having both land and sea components, as power generated generally involves a large substation on land the link between marine, terrestrial and infrastructure planning is tangible, yet the potential trans-boundary effects due to their scale and location may impact upon nearby Continental planning too.

Jed Griffiths was the chair for the second half of the day, which focussed more upon the beneficiaries of the marine environment. The first presentation of the afternoon was delivered by **Richard Hill** from the UK Cable Protection Committee (UKCPC) who principally explained the need for marine plans to remain flexible due to the multi-faceted nature of the marine environment.

In respect of sea-bed cabling, the expansion of communications will be required to meet increasing demand and new technologies, and will need new planned space for growth. However, as the problem lies within the unpredictability of the sector, there is a substantial need for openness between those who are expanding and those who need to plan for the expansion.

Forewind representative **Kim Gault-Clark** provided an insight into offshore wind development delivery, explaining that the marine environment is heavily constrained both environmentally and economically which influences appropriate area selection. A clear dialogue with other marine users and evidence gathered from the Strategic Environmental Assessment process is critical in mediating a sustainable area within the marine environment, but also important in providing valuable information to the MMO when configuring marine plans.

She concluded that such open relationships between all parties should be sustained so information is shared and bureaucratic hurdles are reduced.

The final presentation of the day was delivered by **John Bowles** from Porta Planning LLP who gave a fascinating insight into the marine planning interface in the ports of Felixstowe and Harwich. He noted that as dynamic drivers of the regional economy and areas of future change, their strategic direction, previously upheld by the RSS could end up becoming rudderless. However, he added that if economic priorities set by LEPs are incorporated into Marine Plans, some strategic economic direction should be provided during the current uncertain climate.

This presentation was followed by a panel discussion centred on the day's topics, facilitated by Jed Griffiths. Following this debate, delegates were asked to feedback from their groups the three main issues relevant to the terrestrial and marine interface.

The suggestions included: the alignment of funding and infrastructure (both marine and terrestrial) to fully integrate planning spheres; continued communication between all sectors involved; a hierarchy or protocol explaining the interactions between marine and terrestrial planning; understanding their compatibility and being realistic as to what can actually be achieved – especially at a time when terrestrial planning is being dismantled and marine planning is being established; and lastly, understanding and applying good terrestrial planning practice whilst learning from, and correcting, past mistakes.

Kim Balls