



# Orkney Marine Planning Update

June 2019

Development and Marine Planning

## Introduction

Since our last update in October 2018 things have moved on at quite a pace, with lots of marine planning related projects happening in and around our waters. Some of these are being undertaken by the Council's Development and Marine Planning team, whilst some projects are being led by other stakeholders. These projects will all help ensure that sustainable development, environmental protection and local community involvement lie at the heart of successful sustainable use and enjoyment of our spectacular marine environment, based on robust knowledge and data. Below is a quick summary of the key projects currently underway and how you can find out more.

## Orkney Islands Marine Planning Partnership

The Council aims to take a lead role in the future Orkney Islands Marine Planning Partnership, supported by an Advisory Group of stakeholders representing local economic, environmental, community and recreational interests. Since the last update in October, we've continued to liaise with stakeholders to develop the governance arrangements for the partnership including positive discussions regarding membership of the Advisory Group. A diverse range of interests have been involved including fisheries, aquaculture, renewable energy, ports and harbours, diving, marine tourism and environmental protection. Significant support for a locally driven marine planning process has been highlighted with much enthusiasm to participate in future marine planning in Orkney.

We now anticipate that Marine Scotland will issue a Ministerial Direction to delegate regional marine planning functions to the Council formally establishing the Orkney Islands Marine Planning Partnership. Notice of 28 days will be given by Scottish Ministers of their intention to issue this Direction and stakeholders will have the opportunity to make representations on the draft Direction to Marine Scotland.

## Orkney Marine Environment Project

Following our successful bid for European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) funding for the Marine Environmental Planner post, we are delighted to introduce our successful candidate, Shona Turnbull. She's come from just over the firth in Thurso, where she previously worked on the Pilot Pentland Firth and Orkney Waters Marine Spatial Plan and a range of coastal planning issues at the Highland Council.

She will be preparing the State of the Environment Report, which will involve delivering a detail appraisal about the current condition of our marine environment out to 12 nautical miles. It will look at key sectors and issues affecting the marine environment, including physical, economic and environmental factors. Whilst some data may be relatively easy to gather, for some important topics, it is much harder to get up-to-date local information. To address this, we will be holding a series of workshops and stakeholder meetings to help ensure we build an accurate picture of the current state of affairs. The project will not seek, at this point, to undertake any new research; that will be for the subsequent phases of the regional marine planning process. At this early stage, we are looking at what the key topics to assess should be and what data are available; if you would like to help by completing

either a community or business questionnaire at this early stage, please contact Shona or else we look forward to seeing you at one of our events.

## Orkney Blue Carbon Audit

Marine Scotland has commissioned the International Centre of Island Technology (ICIT) Heriot Watt University to deliver a Quantified Audit of Blue Carbon Resources in Orkney. The ICIT team is being supported by specialists from Aquatera, St Andrews University, Scottish Alliance for Marine Science, Glasgow University and the Scottish Blue Carbon Forum.

The importance of the blue carbon resources within Scottish inshore waters is becoming increasingly apparent, mainly due to the results of the ongoing research programme largely funded by Marine Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage. At present there is no comprehensive accounting, anywhere in the world, as far as we understand, of the extent and sequestration / storage capacity of blue carbon resources in one specific area. Studies have generally focused on one habitat type, in isolation, whereas this study proposes to take the next step of combining all the known habitats into a single quantified collection in a defined location, in this case in Orkney.

Orkney has a wealth of varying Blue Carbon habitats, some of which are well documented. However, many of the habitat boundaries are less clear. Some habitats include; Kelp forests, Maerl beds, Horse Mussel beds, Flame Shell beds, Seagrass meadows, Brittlestar beds and Bryozoan thickets. The research aims to identify and assemble relevant data and information on the distribution and extent of blue carbon habitats in Orkney, assessing quality, quantity, scale and nature of data availability and the extent of habitats, including the carbon stores within the habitats.

Environment Secretary Roseanna Cunningham said: "We're going to be the first country in the world to undertake a region-wide blue carbon audit, which will be carried out in the Orkney Islands maritime region."

The blue carbon audit will provide useful data for the current State of the Environment Assessment outlined above and has potential to inform future regional marine planning in Orkney.

## Draft Orkney Harbours Masterplan Phase 1

The Draft Orkney Harbours Masterplan Phase 1 is about to be published by OIC Marine Services as part of a community consultation exercise. The purpose of the Masterplan is to provide a structured framework for the physical development and transformation of Orkney's harbours over a 20-year period. The consultation will run from Monday 10 June until Monday 22 July and all stakeholders and interested parties are invited to comment on the Draft Masterplan which is available at online at <https://www.orkneyharbours.com/>.

## Contact us

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