

Orkney Marine Planning Update

Summer 2025

Introduction

The last few months have been particularly busy for the Marine Planning team. The completion of the public consultation on the Orkney Islands Regional Marine Plan last Autumn marked a major milestone and allowed the next phase of the plan development to begin.

Alongside the Regional Marine Plan work, there have continued to be many marine developments coming through the licensing and planning system, many of which are major developments, as well as growing involvement in several other new and ongoing exciting projects.

All of this is detailed below, but first we would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who either came along to our in-person consultation events, tuned in to online sessions, or emailed with questions and comments. We had hundreds of conversations throughout the consultation, and understanding the values and aspirations of you, our community, is essential in our roles as Marine Planners. Your feedback is essential in helping to shape the Regional Marine Plan and the future of our marine region.



Pupils in Sanday visit a consultation drop-in session

Orkney Islands Regional Marine Plan Update

Since the Regional Marine Plan Consultation closed on October 25th last year, the Marine Planning team has carefully considered every comment received on the Plan and the six supporting assessments (of which there were over 1000). Thank you to everyone that engaged with and responded to the consultation. The stakeholder feedback received has been invaluable and is helping us modify and refine the Plan to ensure it is fit for purpose.

At this stage, we are preparing a Consultation and Modifications Report that details our extensive consultation and engagement through 2023-24, which will include a summary of the issues raised and the modifications made to the Plan.

To consider potential costs and benefits to businesses that could result from the Plan, we carried out a Business and Regulatory Impact Assessment (BRIA). Thanks to those businesses that participated in our interviews to inform this assessment. The BRIA has helped us to develop appropriate policy provisions with due consideration to any resulting costs for businesses.



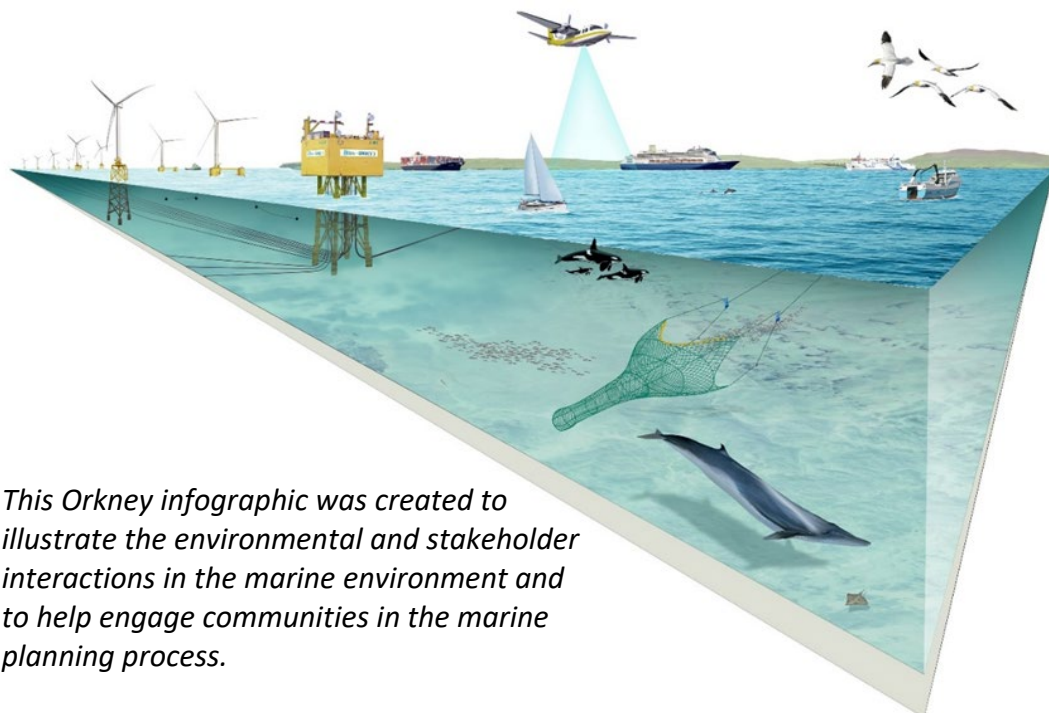
*Marine planning and management workshop,
Stronsay Community School*

As we are preparing the Plan on behalf of the Scottish Ministers, the next step was to submit the Consultation and Modifications Report, modified Plan and updated supporting assessments to the Marine Directorate of the Scottish Government in early April.

When we've received feedback from the Marine Directorate and fully modified the Plan, we will then finalise our Consultation and Modifications Report which will be published when completed.

Next steps

The onward process will include liaising with Orkney Marine Planning Advisory Group and seeking Orkney Islands Council endorsement of the final Plan, prior to submission of the Plan for approval and adoption by the Scottish Ministers. We anticipate this will be completed in the Winter 2025/2026.



This Orkney infographic was created to illustrate the environmental and stakeholder interactions in the marine environment and to help engage communities in the marine planning process.

National Marine Planning Forum and Regional Marine Planning Forum

The Marine Planning team attended the Scottish Government's National Marine Planning Forum to provide feedback on the early stages of National Marine Plan 2. At the first Regional Marine Planning Forum, Orkney Marine Planners met in person with the other Scottish Marine Planning Partnerships and the Local Coastal Partnerships where we discussed current projects and directions of travel. The first workshop in November was followed by the second Regional Marine Planning Forum in March online. Within both these forums the Marine Planning Partnerships and Local Coastal Partnerships discussed key opportunities and challenges, areas of collaboration, and the scope of regional marine planning and its role in the national context.

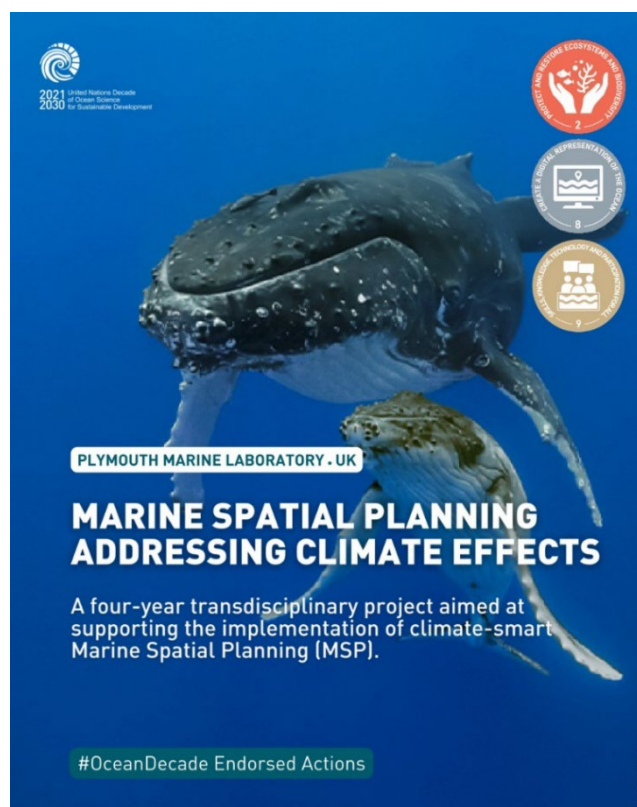
Coastal Change Adaptation Plan

In Spring 2025, Orkney Islands Council commenced the preparation of a Coastal Change Adaptation Plan (CCAP) for Orkney to identify and evaluate specific areas that are susceptible to coastal flooding and erosion, both currently and into the future. The plan making process will identify options for actions to maintain the resilience of coastal areas in the short and long term and trigger points will be proposed for each of the options identified. This CCAP will serve as a vital tool to support adaptive decision making in partnership with local communities.

Marine Spatial Planning Addressing Climate Effects (MSPACE) Project

The Orkney Islands Regional Marine Plan is a case study within the [MSPACE](#) programme. MSPACE is designed to drive forward the implementation of climate-smart marine spatial planning in the UK.

It utilises state of the art analyses of climate change impact modelling projections to consider how climate change will affect the conservation, fisheries and aquaculture sectors. The models enable the identification of climate change hotspots for these sectors, where climate pressures drive an ecosystem into a new state beyond its natural variability, and refugia areas that exhibit long term resilience to climate change. When completed in December 2025, the MSPACE programme will include recommendations for climate-smart marine spatial planning in Orkney.



MSPACE recently became a UN OceanDecade Endorsed Action. Congratulations to the MSPACE team!

Marine consent applications

A significant part of a OIC Marine Planner's job is responding to planning applications, and marine licence applications as a statutory consultee, for developments and activities affecting the Orkney Islands marine region.

Since the last newsletter, we've responded to a significant number of planning and marine licence applications, with several nationally significant developments now within the system. This includes EIA scoping consultations for the Stromar, Caledonia and the Havbredey offshore windfarms. A previous application we responded to, the [West of Orkney Windfarm](#), has recently made headlines as the first development from the ScotWind leasing round to receive consent, including a Section 36 Electricity Act consent, marine licences, and planning permission for onshore infrastructure.

The OIC Marine Planning team has also reviewed marine licence applications for new wave and tidal devices, plans to lift and preserve historic artefacts on the seabed, plans to improve the Brough of Birsay Causeway and much more. This is alongside reviewing expansion plans for multiple aquaculture sites around Orkney, which the team are assessing alongside our land use planning colleagues.

Draft updated Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy Consultation

Currently ongoing is the Scottish Government consultation on the draft updated Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy. This consultation is open to everybody and can be accessed on the [Scottish Government's website](#)

Visit to EMEC site Billia Croo

The OIC Marine Planners had the pleasure of being invited for a tour of the Billia Croo substation and wave & tidal test site, to see how the operation worked in practice. We were given the background and history of the site and the devices that had been tested there over the years before being shown inside the substation to see how the devices connect to the grid. Grid connection is an important step in testing the commercial scalability of wave and tidal devices. Many thanks to Neil Kermode and Abi Mclean for the invite and tour.



Danny and Emily were given a tour of the Billia Croo test site before the EMEC BRIA interview

Royal Garden Party

In recognition of their contributions to marine planning in Scotland, the OIC Marine Planning team (which at the time included Shona Turnbull) were invited by the Scottish Government's Marine Directorate to attend the Royal Garden Party at Holyrood Palace.

The team were delighted to receive this acknowledgement and look forward to an exciting future for marine planning in Orkney, working with our partners, stakeholders and communities to implement our marine plan and deliver future projects.



Shona, Danny, and James at the Royal Garden Party, Holyrood Palace

Contact us

If you have any queries, please contact us on the email address below.

Email Address: Marine.planning@orkney.gov.uk

Website: <https://www.orkney.gov.uk/Service-Directory/D/marine-planning.htm>

As always, please feel free to pass this newsletter on to anybody who might be interested.

OIC Marine Planning Team

