

Orkney Islands Regional Marine Plan Consultation

Frequently Asked Questions

What does a marine planner do?

Marine planners help to manage human activities and protect the marine environment by guiding developments to the right places. This involves developing strategies for the sustainable use of our ocean and coastal resources, assessing the suitability of new developments, managing marine spatial datasets and facilitating a wide range of marine projects.

Our work involves balancing the needs of all the stakeholders in Orkney, such as our commercial industries (e.g. harbour operations, aquaculture, fishing, energy) and local communities alongside government direction and regulations. We do this whilst protecting the health and future of our marine ecosystems.

What is the Orkney Islands Regional Marine Plan?

The Orkney Islands Regional Marine Plan is a policy framework that will help guide developments to the right places, supporting the local economy in a way that is sustainable for both communities and nature. Developments will have to adhere to the policies within the Plan, for example on nature conservation, protecting the water environment, and preventing marine litter and waste, alongside sector specific policies written for industries such as aquaculture and commercial fishing.

The Regional Marine Plan is one of the first of its kind in Scotland and an exciting opportunity for locally written policies to be developed for the marine environment, which are usually written by the Scottish Government.

Will this impact the fishing industry?

The Plan will introduce policies that help protect the interests of our valuable fishing industry. The Plan will not look to manage fishing itself – this is done by the Scottish Government’s Marine Directorate in conjunction with local fishing groups including Orkney Fishing Association (OFA) and the Orkney Regional Inshore Fishing Group (RIFG). We meet with both these groups on a regular basis.



Does the Regional Marine Plan affect our ferry service?

The Regional Marine Plan applies to developments or activities that require a 'Marine Licence' or other permission. Some developments such as new piers and harbours, would require a Marine Licence and would therefore be affected by the Plan.

Activities such as shipping (e.g. ferries and cruises), however, do not require a licence so are not directly managed under policies within the Plan. Whilst the OIC Marine Planning Team are often involved and offer advice on a wide range of topics, these activities are led by another Council department. Ferries, for example, are managed by Orkney Ferries with significant input by OIC Transport.

Are the maps in the Regional Marine Plan available to view online?

Yes! All the maps are within the online version of the Plan, which will also direct you to the source of the data. We have worked closely with the Scottish Government to make sure all our marine data is also available to view on their 'National Marine Plan interactive' (NMPi) website, which means you can now view interactive versions of the data. [NMPi can be found via this link](#)

Will the Regional Marine Plan make it harder or easier to develop in the future?

Whilst the Regional Marine Plan introduces new locally developed policies and data (which is a good thing!) it also brings together a large amount of existing information into one document. The Regional Marine Plan should help to enable and de-risk marine developments by ensuring that they are designed appropriately from an earliest stage, whilst ensuring they are developed and located in suitable locations.

How does this Plan fit in with the Local Development Plan?

The Regional Marine Plan applies to developments below mean high water springs, out to 12 nautical miles. The Local Development Plan applies to developments on land and fish farming.

Both these plans overlap in the intertidal zone. This is intentional to ensure a smooth transition from land to sea, and as a result both plans need to align with each other. This is important as some developments, such as a new pier, would straddle both the marine and terrestrial environment.

It is also worth noting that the Local Development Plan is developed purely by Orkney Islands Council, with input from communities and stakeholders. The Regional Marine Plan, however, is developed by the OIC's Marine Planning Team on behalf of the Scottish



Ministers. The Plan itself is a Scottish Ministers plan, which is why they are required to 'sign off' on the final plan.

The Regional Marine Plan must also be in conformity with the Scottish Government's 'National Marine Plan', which sets the national level policy.

Will my comments on the plan make a difference?

Yes. Every consultation response that we receive will be recorded and responded to. The OIC Marine Planning Team will outline how the Plan has or hasn't been changed in response to comments received and explain the reasons why. This is the main opportunity for marine policies to be reviewed and updated before the Plan is finalised. It may not always be possible to alter the Plan in response to a comment, as many of the policies are influenced by other processes (e.g. conforming with the Scottish Government's National Marine Plan or legislation)

How do I submit a response?

Please use our Consultation Response Form , found on our Regional Marine Plan [consultation webpage](#).

What happens next? And how can I stay updated on the progress of the Plan?

The consultation will close on October 25th 2024, after the 12 week consultation period. The OIC's Marine Planning Team will then review all the comments, amend the Plan accordingly, and put together a document detailing how the comments received have been addressed and what has been changed in the plan. The Regional Marine Plan will then be submitted to the Scottish Government's Marine Directorate for approval, and any final changes, before being considered for endorsement by OIC Elected Members at Committee. At that point, the Plan will need to be considered by Scottish Ministers for their adoption. This process will begin as soon as the consultation closes.

To stay up to date on developments, sign up to our newsletter by dropping us an email on marine.planning@orkney.gov.uk or use our [online sign-up form](#)

Who can I contact if I have any questions?

We are a team of three based in the OIC offices, School Place. Drop us an email at any time on marine.planning@orkney.gov.uk - we'd be happy to answer any questions!

