

An advisory Council to the
Department of the Environment

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Prof. Gabriel Cooney BA MA PhD
Chairman

Via email

8th July 2010

Marine Team
Planning and Natural Resources Division
Department of the Environment
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Calvert House
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Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on *A Northern Ireland Marine Bill- Policy Proposals – Consultation Document*.

The Historic Monuments Council welcomes the proposed new framework for Northern Ireland's seas based on a new system of marine planning balancing conservation, energy and other resource needs, streamlining of marine licensing and improved processes for marine nature conservation. As a statutory advisory council to the Department of the Environment the Council notes and welcomes the establishment of the DOE as the Marine Plan Authority for Northern Ireland (Paragraphs 2.16 and 2.17).

However, Council has to express in the strongest terms its disappointment and puzzlement that the consultation paper makes NO reference to cultural heritage. This is despite the fact that particularly in inshore waters, but more broadly across the marine zone, there is a very important physical heritage of past human activity. In turn it is that historic heritage and human/nature interaction that has created the current environmental character of the marine zone. This lack of reference to cultural heritage in the paper is particularly frustrating given the establishment of the DOE as the Marine Plan Authority and the fact that the Built Heritage Directorate of NIEA, an agency within the Department of the Environment has built up relevant expertise and comprehensive baseline data on the richness and diversity of Northern Ireland's marine zone and its importance as a social, economic and environmental asset.

Given the lack of reference to cultural heritage in the consultation paper there seems to be little point in Council responding to the consultation questions. The Historic Monuments Council would however have to point out that the lack of reference to or recognition of the cultural heritage of the marine zone and its importance undermines many of the basic premises of the paper. For example, how can the proposed system of marine planning ensure the sustainable use of Northern Ireland's seas when there is no recognition of the potential impact of the proposals on the cultural heritage of the marine zone? Furthermore in Section 5 (p. 63 ff) where the Northern Ireland Marine Bill is considered, the statement in relation to costs that marine planning, licensing and nature conservation will 'not lead to any adverse effect on the environment' cannot be seen as having any validity given the lack of recognition or assessment of the character of the cultural heritage of the marine zone or how it could be impacted on by the proposals.

Council is confident that the Marine Team is aware of the statutory responsibility of the Department of the Environment for heritage protection, specifically under the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (NI) Order 1995. Planning Policy Statement 6 Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage sets out the Department's planning policies for the protection of archaeological remains and features of the built heritage and advises on the treatment of these issues in development plans.

In this context the Historic Monuments Council wishes to make the following recommendations:

- The Historic Monuments Council would very strongly recommend that the Marine Team should consult with their colleagues in the Built Heritage Directorate of the NIEA, the competent authority for the identification and protection of cultural heritage in the marine zone, to ensure that in the preparation of the Northern Ireland Marine Bill there will detailed consideration of and measures to protect that cultural heritage.
- The Historic Monuments Council understands that an Interdepartmental Marine Working Group has been established to consider relevant issues such as the UK Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, the UK Marine Strategy Regulations 2010 and the proposed Northern Ireland Marine Bill. As a statutory advisory council to the Department of the Environment the Historic Monuments Council would strongly recommend, if it is not already the case, that the Built Heritage Directorate, NIEA should be represented on this group.

As chairperson of the Historic Monuments Council I would appreciate a formal reply from the Marine Team, PNRD, Department of the Environment providing a response to these recommendations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gabriel Cooney', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Professor Gabriel Cooney
Chair

cc Michael Coulter (Director), John O'Keeffe, Brian Williams (Assistant Directors), Built Heritage Directorate, NIEA