



The joint management of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a trans-boundary European Marine Site – UK

1. Policy Objective & Theme

- ADAPTATION TO RISK: Preventing and managing natural hazards and technological (human-made) hazards
- SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES: Preserving coastal environment (its functioning and integrity) to share space
- SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: Balancing economic, social, cultural development whilst enhancing environment

2. Key Approaches

- Integration
- Participation
- Knowledge-based
- Ecosystems based approach
- Socio-economic

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

This case shows the integration of the management of two of the region's internationally important designated areas, the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Berwickshire and North Northumberland Coast European Marine Site (EMS). Previously these two adjacent areas were managed separately; however increased awareness of the importance of managing land and sea in a consistent and integrated way has led to the production of this initiative. It is believed to be the first of its kind in the UK.

4. Overview of the case

A joint management plan has been drawn up that will integrate the management of two, adjacent conservation areas which had previously been managed separately.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) were created by the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949), given a new impetus by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. A European Marine Site (EMS) is any Special Area of Conservation (SAC - Habitats Directive) or Special Protection Areas (SPA - Birds Directive) that incorporates a marine area, part of the Natura 2000 Network. The primary purpose of these designations is to conserve and enhance the beauty and special features of the natural environment. The Northumberland Coast AONB was designated in 1958 and covers an area of 138 km² along 64 km of coastline from Berwick to the Coquet estuary in north east England. It varies between 50 m - 2.5km in width and is best known for its sandy beaches, rolling dunes, high rocky cliffs and isolated islands. The Berwickshire & North Northumberland Coast EMS is a SAC which borders Scotland and England encompassing 635 km² of shore and sea extending along 115 km of coastline. The two areas have long been managed separately.

However, the close ecological relationship between the two areas has called for an equally close working relationship in their management. The success of this collaboration in recent years has led to a vision of a more formalised collaboration. With both AONB and EMS management documents due for review, the opportunity has been taken to realise this ambition with the

production of an integrated management plan.

b) Objectives

The aim of the management plan is to conserve and enhance the landscape and seascape of the AONB and to ensure the favourable condition of the site features of the EMS.

6. Implementation of the ICZM Approach (i.e. management, tools, resources)

a) Management

Northumberland County Council has the statutory duty to conserve and enhance the AONB. The AONB partnership, comprising organisations from central and local government, parish councils, the community and the voluntary and private sector, supported by several staff, manages, develops, coordinates and encourages projects and actions which help to fulfil the AONB purpose. The EMS Management Group, comprising all the competent and relevant authorities for the site along with other interested organisations, is supported by a Steering Group and the EMS Project Officer. There is also an Advisory Group that contributes specialist knowledge.

b) ICZM tools

Previously, the competent and relevant bodies produced and adopted separate plans for the AONB (published 2004) and EMS (published 2001). This has effectively meant that a single, geographical and ecological area has had separate management plans drawn up for the AONB and the EMS on the one hand, and by Scottish and English authorities on the other. However, it has been realised that management needs to ensure that both the single, distinct identity of this coastal area and the local variations of land and seascape character are conserved and enhanced as a unity. Therefore, the responsible staff of AONB and EMS have collaborated for a number of years on a voluntary basis. Since both management plans are due for review, it was decided to try and achieve a more formal working relationship through the development of a jointly produced management plan that would integrate activities through an agreed plan of Action. Therefore an integrated plan was developed following consultation with the AONB Partnership, the EMS Management Group and wider stakeholders. It was informed by the previous plans and the success of their implementation. A concurrent Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), as required under the SEA Directive, and an Appropriate Assessment, under the Habitats Regulations, have also been undertaken. The results of these assessments will be incorporated into the final plan which will be signed off by the competent and relevant authorities and partners in September 2009.

This plan incorporates policies that are intended to direct and influence the subsequent formulation of policy by local authorities (and other public bodies) in all relevant areas of activity that impact on the AONB, including development management, local transport and conservation. There are four broad management policies that apply to all themes and the entire plan across land and sea viz. ICZM including the ecosystem approach and constructive observation for cultural heritage, partnership working, climate change mitigation and sustainable development. The plan also includes many other statutory and non-statutory plans and strategies at the national, regional and local level relating to principles such as stakeholder engagement. Consideration has also been given to issues such as biodiversity, economic development, land and sea planning and tourism. An Action plan will guide implementation and form the basis of an annual work programme which will identify the necessary level of resources, the various organisations responsible for implementation and the role of the AONB and EMS staff teams. It will also set annual targets. This five-year plan (2009 to 2014) will be reviewed in 2013 with a view to publishing the next five-year plan in April 2014. Full, public consultation will be undertaken throughout the review and development of the next plan. As with this plan, the next plan will also undergo a Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment before adoption.

The plan is not an end in itself. Monitoring is required in order to identify whether or not the plan is achieving the purposes of the respective designations. This monitoring will take two forms: monitoring performance to establish how well the partnership is progressing in delivering the plan's policies and actions; and monitoring condition to establish whether the special features of the AONB and qualifying features of the EMS are improving or deteriorating.

7. Cost and resources

Whilst no figures are available, the AONB and EMS benefit from funding from UK and Scottish Government agencies for core team support and work on the ground. Maintaining an AONB and EMS staff team is necessary to ensure that this coordination of effort takes place and that appropriate partnerships are developed. The AONB staff team is currently supported by Natural England, through a three year commitment, and local government funding according to a Memorandum of Agreement.

8. Effectiveness (i.e. were the foreseen goals/objectives of the work reached?)

Planning is integrated across the AONB and EMS and there is meaningful regional input to marine planning. Management of the whole coastal zone protects the coastal landscape and seascape. New and modified existing development is sensitively located, scaled, designed and landscaped and distinctions between settlements, and between settlements and open countryside are preserved. The effects of “coastal squeeze” on land use as a result of climate change are managed effectively and equitably. Community members are involved in projects to conserve, enhance, understand and enjoy the AONB and EMS. The rural economy is broad-based with ongoing investment in business development of land- and sea-based, traditional and visitor industries and sustainably produced local products. Farming helps conserve and enhance features of the landscape including traditional buildings and field boundaries, hedgerow trees and a patchwork of mixed arable and grazing habitats. Harbours are lively and active. Access to local services, training, education and employment is improved with good transport links backed up by widely available information. Vulnerable species and habitats under pressure in the past are now well managed and their range has increased. Ecosystems are allowed to function freely and adapt to climate change. Sea, land, rivers, streams and air meet, or exceed, legislative standards. Information on the natural and cultural heritage is widely and readily available without impacting on the landscape or seascape. The area has sufficient accessible infrastructure for visitors and residents to enjoy the area.

9. Success and Fail factors

Issues, aims and policies have been developed from the equivalent provisions in the previous AONB and EMS management plans modified through feedback received during the stakeholder consultation process. With regard to the EMS, the policies in the plan are not statutory but the plan is the method by which the relevant and competent authorities have chosen to fulfil their statutory duties with respect to the Habitats Directive.

10. Unforeseen outcomes

None as yet.

11. Prepared by

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12. Verified by

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13. Sources

- Northumberland Coast AONB & Berwickshire and North Northumberland Coast EMS Management plan 2009-2014 (2008) Northumberland Coast AONB Partnership
- www.northumberlandcoastaonb.org
- www.xbordercurrents.com



Northumberland coast AONB (6.24 MB) 

14. Relevance for cross-border management of transitional waters

The Coquet River estuary forms a semi-enclosed tidal transitional water body. The study is relevant for cross-border management of TW since the joint management encompasses the estuary and adjacent coastal and nearshore areas that stretch across the boundary of England and Scotland.