



Management of Ireland's international water bodies: Lough Foyle and Carlingford Lough – IE/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
- Knowledge-based
- Ecosystems based approach
- Socio-economic
- Technical

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

How to manage marine environments on a cross-border basis for both conservation and development interests on an ecosystems-basis despite conflicting jurisdictions and political uncertainty. This is achieved through a dedicated management agency with specified legal responsibilities.

4. Overview of the case

Jurisdictional boundaries have never been formally agreed between Ireland's two cross-border bays. Subsequent to the Good Friday Agreement (1998) a number of North-South implementation bodies were established. One of these is the Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission (FCILC). The functions of the FCILC in relation to Loughs Foyle and Carlingford are exercised by the Loughs Agency. The Agency aims to provide sustainable social, economic and environmental benefits through the effective conservation, management, promotion and development of the fisheries and marine resources of the Foyle and Carlingford Areas on a cross-border basis.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

Since partition of the island of Ireland in the 1920s, there have been no agreed international maritime boundaries between either jurisdiction: North or South. The two jurisdictions are geographically separated by two large sea loughs – Lough Foyle in the north-west of the country (separating Co. Donegal and Co. Derry) and Carlingford Lough on the north-east coast (separating Co. Louth and Co. Down). Due to the economic value of the fisheries industry to the Lough Foyle area, that sector was managed by one entity, the Foyle Fisheries Commission, since 1952. In 1998, following the Good Friday Agreement, this regime was broadened to include fisheries in Carlingford Lough and a remit to promote recreation in respect of marine, fishery and aquaculture matters and to develop marine tourism in both areas was secured. The Agency “works to place environmental issues at the heart of international, national and local decision-making”. The Agency has always recognised that in order to achieve sustainable development in the regions surrounding both Loughs it is necessary not only to engage with direct users but also essential to raise awareness of the loughs, their associated rivers and catchments and “to highlight vulnerability of the impacts of 21st century society to those that are unaware of their contribution to the environmental pressures these natural

resources are under”.

b) Objectives

Legally the Loughs Agency is tasked with the following:

- the promotion of development of Lough Foyle and Carlingford Lough for commercial and recreational purposes in respect of marine, fishery and aquaculture matters;
- the management, conservation, protection, improvement and development of the inland fisheries of the Foyle and Carlingford Areas;
- the development and licensing of aquaculture; and
- the development of marine tourism.

The resources that the Agency manage require conservation, protection, management and development and these objectives are achieved through forming working partnerships with those who impact on them. According to the Loughs Agency, these partnerships include those who produce economic benefit from the resources, those who utilise them for recreational purposes and those whose activities impact on the fisheries, the marine resources and their environments despite the fact that this may be outside the existing legal remit of the agency.

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

a) Management

As an Agency of one of the formally established North South Implementation bodies, the Loughs Agency is in a somewhat unique management position given it has a dedicated remit and funds along with stable staff. The Agency's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is appointed by the North South Ministerial Council and has over-arching responsibility for the activities of the Agency. The Agency operates in four separate business areas: aquaculture, conservation and protection, corporate and development with a current approved core staffing level of fifty three (Loughs Agency, 2008). Each area has a corresponding responsible director.

b) ICZM tools

The Agency prides itself on involvement with direct users of the Loughs along with other stakeholders. In 2000, an Advisory Forum was established with new members appointed in 2006. This is comprised of almost 50 representatives from both Lough areas or others who are involved in a stakeholder interest group. Current areas of interest include shellfish, draft netmen, anglers, fishery owners, tourism, Council/Government, Port/Harbour, industry and environmental interest groups. In addition, members are divided up into various Focus Groups that meet approximately six times per year and work on salmon and inland fisheries; environmental topics; marine tourism including water-based leisure; and aquaculture and shell fisheries. In relation to fisheries the Loughs Agency will develop improved management plans with a view to rebuilding fish stocks in certain areas.

The Agency is in the process of implementing key actions identified in the 5 Year Development Plan for Angling Development in the Foyle and Carlingford Areas. This will contribute to stock improvement, infrastructure and product development, marketing and information, accommodation enhancement and training and support across the sector. The Foyle Area fishery is home to one of the most productive Atlantic Salmon systems in the North. In light of this it is necessary at times to enforce technical and commercial restrictions, for example, reducing the number of driftnet licences issued. The Agency's Strategy for the Development of Marine Tourism and Leisure represents a unique opportunity and challenge to plan the development of the two water bodies and their catchment areas as complete entities for marine tourism, without political boundaries. This is driven by a stakeholder approach and continuing consultation and development in partnership with other key agencies in the public sector as well as private sector organisations and interest groups. In developing this strategy, the Loughs Agency is partnered by two cross-border bodies, the East Border Region Committee and the North West Region Cross Border Group who have strategic and funding roles for tourism and economic development in both areas.

7. Cost and resources

The FCILC's sponsoring Departments are the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in the North and the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources in the South. Both Departments fund the Agency on a 50:50 basis.

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

In terms of fisheries management the Loughs Agency, in 2001 the Agency began work on the genetic diversity of the Foyle Salmon Stocks. This research found that there were significant differences in the DNA from salmon from each of the 11 sub-catchments of the Foyle area. This work has now become a benchmark for fisheries managers throughout Ireland and the United Kingdom. Data generated is used by the Agency to support decision-making and this in turn forms the basis for regulatory and management practice.

9. Success and Fail factors

The success of the management regime undoubtedly results from the fact that there is a dedicated agency tasked with very specific management objectives. This Agency has a formal legal mandate with dedicated resources, both financial and personnel. Traditionally marine and coastal management is based on political boundaries where as in this instance both sea loughs are managed as geographic entities transcending standard management structures. In relation to management of the fisheries resource, approaches are sufficiently flexible to adapt to changing environmental conditions and in this way can take the precautionary approach into account.

10. Unforeseen outcomes

A performance review of the last Lough's Agency Corporate Plan (2005-2007) recommended that any future plan should have a greater focus on information and communication. Consequently this has been addressed by two innovative elements. Firstly, the newly formed Foyle and Carlingford Area Advisory Forum (outlined above) and secondly an educational outreach programme known as 'Riverwatch'. Between 2005 and 2007 over 30,000 children took part. Due to the success of the initiative with primary schools, secondary schools and adults are now being actively targeted. Other outreach programmes such as 'Salmon in the Classroom', 'Youth Justice Agency Initiative for young offenders' and 'Our Environmental Monitoring Projects' have presented further opportunities to promote, develop and protect the resources in both Lough areas. The Loughs Agency organises an annual Angling Fair at its Derry City headquarters in March each year. This attracts more than 4,000 visitors. A similar event, the Saltwater Fly and Lure Festival, in Carlingford has growing numbers of participants each year. The Agency has recently completed a Strategic Environmental Assessment on the development of shellfisheries and aquaculture in Lough Foyle. The associated consultations and baseline data generated will be used to finalise an Implementation Plan for these fisheries. This in turn will insure the adoption of an ecosystem-based management approach to aquaculture.

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13. Sources

- Loughs Agency. 2008. Corporate Plan 2008-2010. Published by The Stationary Office, Belfast. ISBN 9780337093753.
- Tourism Development International. 2007. Strategy for the Development of Marine Tourism and Leisure in Lough Foyle and Carlingford Lough Areas. Prepared for The Loughs Agency, East Border Region Committee and North West Region Cross Border Group. March 2007.

-  08.09.157 Loughs Agency Corporate Plan2008-2010 (1.39 MB) 
-  Strategy Marine Tourism & Leisure March 2007 (1.4 MB) 

14. Relevance for cross-border management of transitional waters

Lough Foyle and Carlingford Lough are typical transitional waters that are important for their ecological diversity and socio-economic functions. Transboundary cooperation in reinforcing environmental integrity in both areas has a relatively long and successful record.