

# Sustainable marine management in Isle of Man waters

## Introduction

For those who don't know my 30-mile long Celtic Island Nation, the Isle of Man is an internally self-governing British Crown Dependency, not part of the United Kingdom but relying on it for international relations, and not part of the European Union, but able to trade freely with it.

We have the oldest continuous parliament in the world, a population of 86,000, our Government is required to deliver a balanced budget each year and we are best known for the spectacular TT motorbike races ... and yes, believe it or not the Isle of Man is the fifth most likely country in the world to put someone into space!

## IoM Territorial Seas

Protecting marine biodiversity is a challenge shared by the UK, its Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. The challenge is perhaps moving from Garrett Hardin's "Tragedy of the Commons" the free-for-all of the past, to shared ownership of the marine environment and a shared interest in its health and diversity.

Marine protection was recognised by the Environmental Audit Committee as a key theme. I intend to explain how the Isle of Man has faced this challenge and is actively trying to implement sustainable marine management.

Over 87%, nearly 4,000 sq. km, of the Isle of Man's territory is sea. Our Territorial Waters extend to 12 miles (or the median line where<sup>1</sup> the UK is closer) and are administered by the Isle of Man Government. The UK has, at Government's request, extended biodiversity and marine agreements to the Island, most importantly the Convention on Biological Diversity and OSPAR (annex V).

Our waters contain internationally-important species and habitats, such as basking sharks, maerl and eel grass beds, horse mussel reef and Manx shearwaters. Several of the species are given protection by our 1990 Wildlife Act. Historically the main impact on marine habitats in our Territorial Sea has been from the king and queen scallop fisheries, but offshore renewables and hydrocarbon extraction are on the horizon (very literally in places).

## Manx Marine Plan

The Isle of Man Government is currently drawing up a marine planning system and seeking potential developers for a round of offshore wind generation within the Territorial Sea. To assist with both the marine planning and fisheries management

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<sup>1</sup> The total sea area is 3998 km<sup>2</sup> (87.1%), terrestrial is 572 km<sup>2</sup> (12.5%), intertidal is 17km<sup>2</sup> (0.4%).

we need to understand the distribution of important biodiversity and habitats, as well as investing in fundamental monitoring of water quality, nutrients and plankton. The state of our knowledge is set out in the Manx Marine Environmental Assessment, which will inform the Manx Marine Plan.

We need research, monitoring and mapping to be able to ensure that our fisheries and seabed use is sustainable. We use our own fisheries protection vessel, our government laboratory and staff, universities, electronic and remote monitoring, as well as public sightings schemes to gather data to provide the sound science base that we need. We hold fisheries science seminars with the local skippers where researchers exchange information and views with fishermen and we work closely with the local Fish Producers' Organisation. But we also recognise that there is still much to do and understand.

### Isle of Man Fisheries

Over the past ten years our fishing industry has changed from one which was subsidized, poorly regulated and of low value, to one that is not subsidized, increasingly profitable and efficient, innovative and embracing the need for habitat conservation to deliver more sustainable and productive fisheries.

This considerable change has been achieved through good science, several years of gentle persuasion, and education of the people who make their living from fishing. Advances in technology make it much easier for us to police our fisheries but we are largely wasting our time trying to do so if our local fishing communities haven't bought in to the policies we're trying to enforce. In my experience, this applies to all laws we make – forcing people to comply with laws they don't see the need for, usually requires extensive policing and rarely ends well for the politicians who made the law.

So it is my view and experience that robust science, comprehensive education and good advocacy allows fishermen to understand that healthier marine ecosystems lead to more reliable profit, making it much easier to enforce sustainable fisheries policies.

### Biodiversity Strategy

Our draft Biodiversity Strategy (which is about to go to Tynwald, the oldest parliament in the world) reflects the Aichi target for marine conservation, and is part of our commitment to the Convention on Biological Diversity. We say....**By 2020 at least 10% of our marine ecosystem will be conserved through effectively managed, ecologically representative and well-connected protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures.**

Currently 3% of our sea is protected in Marine Protected Areas, either under our Wildlife Act 1990 or under the Fisheries Act 2012. We have also adopted the habitat restoration target of 15% of degraded areas.

## MPAs

The most recently protected area, Baie ny Carrickey in the south of Mann, involves fisheries sector separation. This helps protect the interests of crab and lobster potters who have less impact, and the sensitive reef habitats, which potters use, from damage by the scallop and queenie fishermen's mobile gear. The protected area also had the support of local residents and divers who expressed concern about the closeness of mobile gear to the coast.

The Ramsey Bay Marine Nature Reserve (94.4 km<sup>2</sup>) is zoned for multiple uses and was in part put forward by the fishermen themselves. This followed a community-wide consultation exercise about where the first Marine Nature Reserve should be. The protected habitats in Ramsey Bay include maerl, eel grass and horse mussel reef. Half the reserve is a fisheries management zone, in which the seabed is licenced to the scallop fishermen who effectively own the shellfish.

They work with my department to sustainably manage and harvest the scallops, and for the first time in 4 years they have conservatively fished an area of about 4% of the total FMZ, with excellent results. This system benefits both the fishery and the biodiversity, although the zones allow for some kind of fishing in almost every area. This has enabled the recovery of a depleted fishery by the introduction of a co-management arrangement, and the overall improvement of non-fishery species and habitats. We hope that this will be a model to use more extensively in the future.

## Scallops

In addition, all vessels fishing Manx waters are restricted by legislation on where, when and what sized shellfish they can catch. Coupled with survey data and stock assessment, these components are fundamental if we are to progress towards sustainable scallop production.

Manx Queen Scallops have been certified by the Marine Stewardship Council as sustainable, recognising that improved management has already been implemented. However, we understand that maintaining this standard requires considerable investment, targeted research and continued close collaboration between all stakeholders to meet the conditions of certification and ultimately realise the benefits.

While there is some evidence that this type of certification provides a better price, it also gives better market share and acceptance. This will become increasingly important as some supermarkets have a policy of only buying MSC produce. Most importantly however, senior representatives of the fishing industry have recognised that the MSC label gives much greater assurance to our industry that fishermen and processors have a sustainable living.

So how are marine protected areas and fisheries management enforced? My fisheries enforcement team see prosecution ultimately as failure as the ethos we have tried to instil across our marine environment is 'do the right things for the right reasons!' We do have a fisheries protection vessel, the FPV Barrule, for enforcement at sea but we also have satellite tracking (or Vessel Monitoring System) for remote monitoring of vessels and activity, including automated notification of vessels entering closed areas.

Under Manx legislation it is obligatory for all vessels using mobile fishing gear in our waters to have VMS. This enables enforcement but also provides a science tool. It shows where the most intense fishing is being carried out, and how that relates to habitats and species of conservation importance, thereby enabling better spatial management.

## QMB

Since 2010 there has been a Queen Scallop Management Board, an advisory board to the Department and the first such organisation for this species, which is largely unregulated elsewhere. Whilst we view this as a good starting point, we also recognise that the stock we rely on is not confined to our Territorial Sea, and so a pan-Irish Sea approach to its management is essential for future long term sustainability.

The QMB has recently been expanded to include representatives of the other major fishers of this stock, and we aim to work together for better management. It is absolutely clear to me that if fishermen have an informed role in marine management then better self-regulation follows.

This year is likely to be the most challenging the QMB, and indeed the Queenie fishery has faced for a decade as despite introducing a wide range of MSC approved conservation measures in recent years our stock assessment for queenies this year is bleak. Reasons for this bleak assessment include a developing scientific understanding of the fishery, a developing understanding from the industry on how far the scientific advice can be pushed, but one of the most significant factors is that if you go just an inch outside of the IoM territorial sea you enter the queen scallop equivalent of the wild west. It is quite frustrating to note the disillusionment of our local fishermen, who have led the field in introducing conservation measures in our

seas, when the significant element of queen scallop recruitment in our waters, which came from seas controlled by the four UK fisheries authorities, has effectively disappeared.

There are two important messages I'm trying to deliver here. Firstly, well regulated fisheries which, while not full blown MPAs, can have a significant positive impact on the marine environment. Secondly, and sadly, if your neighbours choose to ignore all thoughts of sustainability and pursue a purely short-term commercial agenda, your efforts will be severely undermined.

Interestingly when the UK legislation on MPAs was being introduced recently one of your members described the IoM as a hole in the middle of the Irish Sea. Through bitter experience we might reasonably suggest that the hole surrounds our territorial waters.

#### Sierra Leone

We have been sharing our philosophy and experience with the Government of Sierra Leone, through my joint roles as Fisheries Minister and Chair of our International Development Committee. Two years ago the IoM donated a fisheries protection vessel and we are now helping to introduce VMS to that country. We know that enforcement to prevent illegal fishing and to regulate legal fishing is challenging both locally and particularly in remote marine areas. It is particularly pleasing that our partnership work with the SL Government and World Bank has in a relatively short time had a dramatic impact on SL fisheries.

#### Conclusion

I believe the key to sustainable fisheries is involvement of the community, particularly the fishing industry. However, this needs to be combined with sound science and a means of bringing industry and scientists together. This presents a considerable challenge in some Overseas Territories and a partnership approach with the UK Departments, NGOs and institutions is essential. I am pleased that one of my officers has played a key role in starting to make available the expertise of the members of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management to the UKOTs.

#### Questions

Thank you for inviting me to contribute to this important event. I would be happy to answer questions about our fisheries and our assistance to Sierra Leone.