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Deputy Hilary Jeune
Chair, Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel

BY EMAIL

12 September 2024

RE: Marine Spatial Plan Review

Thank you for your letter following on from the briefing on the 4th September 2024. Please find the points addressed below.

Please can you confirm that research will start next summer in relation to the areas which have been excluded from the currently drawn Marine Protected Areas but marked for further research?

In line with ongoing habitat mapping work, research into these areas began in Summer 2024, and will continue into Spring/Summer 2025. Drop camera surveys will be carried out on a 500x500m grid across the research areas. This work feeds into the Marine Resources workstream to gather seabed footage to help ground truth the 2022 modelled habitat map. Should the MPA proposal be accepted, drop cameras in the research areas will be prioritised going forward and should be completed in Spring 2025. The data analysis will be carried out in Spring and Summer 2025 once all of the drop cameras are complete. Once the drop camera's videos have been assessed, this will indicate distribution of sensitive habitat. If results from the drop cameras do not show clear distribution, or if there is uncertainty as to the condition of the habitat, in particular maerl, this will be followed up with towed video or grab sampling to understand the composition of the maerl (live vs dead maerl nodules and infaunal species).

Please could you also confirm the timeline for this research and the presentation of findings to you?

Depending on weather conditions and boat operations, Marine Resources would hope to have all of the data collected by October 2025. The subsequent analysis of this data will take place over Winter 2025/26. Reporting to follow in early to mid 2026.

What tool or analysis will you then use to determine the importance or otherwise of the habitats in the areas in question, how this will be weighed against other factors and whether you expect to announce your decision on inclusion or otherwise before the end of this term of office?

The first step is to define the boundary of sensitive habitat. Where habitat such as maerl is concerned, there are several factors to take into account: the density of maerl, the proportion of live to dead maerl, the type of maerl (branching or nodular), and the infaunal species composition. In other areas it will be the consideration of sensitive or reef associated species (soft corals etc.), or of nesting/spawning habitat, such as nesting areas for bream. These will be considered

alongside the economic importance of the areas to fisheries. If the report on the research is finished by early 2026, it may be possible to make a decision about the inclusion of the research areas in the MPA network by the end of this term of office.

What evidence was used to include large areas to the MPAs to the South-West and North West of the Island?

These primarily came out of straightening the boundary lines and using reference points to make navigating the MPA easier for fishers, this recommendation was put forward by the mobile gear fishing sector. These areas are, for the most part, shallow productive habitat but also now includes small areas of deep-water (25-35m) habitat. This is cited in the scientific literature as being an important component of a successful MPA (for promoting biodiversity).

What consideration was given to using straight lines closer to the original proposed MPA such as the revised MPA boundary to the east of the Anquettes?

The area east of the Anquettes was removed from the MPA proposal (and changed to a research area) was because of the economic evidence put forward by the mobile fishing industry during the consultation period.

What ecological and associated evidence such as carbon potential has been identified within these areas?

The key identified MPA drivers in terms of ecological evidence are outlined in the evidence base reports that underpin the MSP. These drivers include, but are not limited to, OSPAR recognised habitats, productive shallow water habitats, and blue carbon systems. The reports include the Ecosystem Services Report, Habitat Sensitivity report and Sensitive species report. Further, the Blue carbon stocks in Jersey's waters were modelled and reported on in the Blue Carbon report (2022). This identifies areas of carbon accumulation but also the potential sources of this carbon. The Marine Protected Area Assessment report pulls all of this information together, along with the Maritime Activity Assessment to determine the priority areas for inclusion with the MPA network.

Please could you inform the Panel whether there was a stakeholder engagement plan, and how and where the process and points of contact for participation in the development of the plan were set out for stakeholders?

Stakeholder engagement was set out early on in the MSP process in conjunction with the MSP authors, Fiona Fyfe and Associates. The sectors to be consulted were decided on and contacts were sought to ensure all key stakeholders were represented at the workshops. The dates for these workshops were planned for late afternoons (typically 3-5pm) and shared ahead of time to give attendees time to fit this into their schedules. Stakeholder workshop details were published online and the public given the opportunity to register for the various sessions. For stakeholders that could not attend these meetings, separate individual meetings were set up to allow them to contribute to the MSP draft. All stakeholders also had a second opportunity to comment on the MSP during the public consultation phase in late 2023 and early 2024.

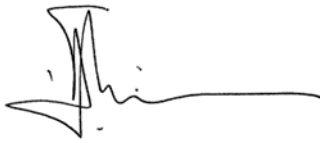
Please could you describe how inter-sectoral spatial analysis was conducted for sectors other than fisheries, and how the stakeholder-derived spatial data was used to inform the Marine Spatial Plan?

All stakeholder sectors were asked to contribute in the same way during the workshops – by drawing on maps and linking their comments to spatial areas. This was used to highlight priority

areas for certain sectors/topics (e.g. wildlife hotspots vs recreation hotspots). These could then be visually assessed to understand where the main conflict areas were. The priorities in the plan evolved over time as more evidence and comments were put forward, particularly during the public consultation phase. Some priorities are more developed than others based on the evidence that is currently available. For sectors such as recreational fishing, it became clear through the stakeholder and public consultation phases that this sector is not well enough understood to make clear recommendations. Where this was the case, the priority is to gather information (primarily spatial information) relating to the sector or topic in question.

Please do let me know if the Panel require any further briefings.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Luce', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Deputy Steve Luce
Minister for the Environment