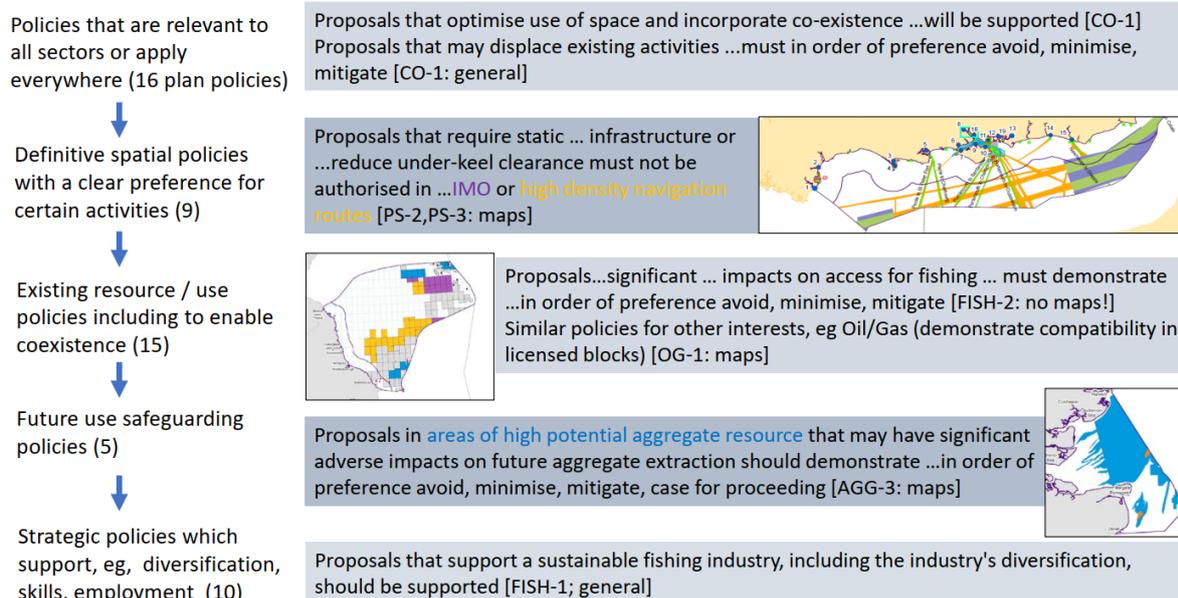


Spatial squeeze is a current and rapidly growing issue. The competition for maritime space includes: oil and gas (exploration, production, and decommissioning); marine renewables; subsea cables; marine protected areas/conservation sites; aquaculture; marine tourism/recreation; maritime traffic; dredging and mineral extraction. More renewable energy is clearly vital in the fight against climate change but as the tensions and trade-offs between energy, fisheries, aquaculture, and nature conservation grow, a fair and equitable plan for co-existence has to be the goal. This [Fisheries Management and Innovation Group](#) bite-size meeting examined spatial squeeze in UK waters, the encroachment on fishing grounds for the fleet and the potential for massive displacement, as well as look at where the fishing industry fits into the decision-making process.

Marine planning: overview and challenges. Dr Paul Gilliland, Head of Marine Planning, Marine Management Organisation.

- Paul explained the why, what, who and where of marine planning. Marine planning makes sure the right activities happen in the right place, at the right time and in the right way, in the marine area placing sustainable development at the centre of all decisions. There needs to be an integrated and balanced approach across all interests which integrates planning for the future. This is a public process with regular and active stakeholder engagement.
- This all comes under the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009) which provides the legislative basis. The Marine Policy Statement (MPS) is the UK framework. Marine Plans translate the MPS into detailed policy/spatial guidance. Defra SoS is the planning authority, the MMO are delegated to prepare plans, and all decision-makers take account of the plans.

Applying the marine plans to decisions



Discussion

- **Q. Why does it seem that what the Crown Estate can get as income takes priority over everything else.**
A. Crown Estate have their remit (they do have to realise their revenue) but they also have to demonstrate good stewardship.

Links for further information

- [Marine planning in England](#)
- [Evidence projects register](#)
- [Explore marine plans](#)

Fishing on a postage stamp in Dutch waters. Pim Visser, Advisor to Dutch Fisheries Organization's.



Pim explained how the Dutch fishing fleet is organised and how it operates. A fisher's livelihood was at stake, and this needed a change of attitude. There was a change of approach in 2018 over the North Sea.

- Spatial planning using the North Sea N2000 Example. One European Union with six member states (and devolution means three more). Fishing is never subject to planning - fishing is not farming at sea but hunting.
- How to continue on the square inch? Policymakers must make clear choices. We need to bridge the knowledge gap and recognise that displacement is real! The fisherman is a stakeholder whose livelihood is at stake. This will have huge impact for individual fishermen who are the natural underdogs. We need an attitude change with all parties. We ended with the North Sea Agreement which included a long-term ToR for the spatial planning process. This saved fishing grounds with MPA's capped at 15% until 2030.

Panel discussion

- Dr Paul Gilliland, Head of Marine Planning, Marine Management Organisation.
- Pim Visser, Fisheries Advisor, North Holland.
- Sheila Keith, Executive Officer, Shetland Fishermen's Association.
- Mike Cohen, Deputy Chief Executive, National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations.
- Dr Emma V. Sheehan, Associate Professor of Marine Ecology, University of Plymouth.
- Audrey Jones, Team Leader – Fisheries co-location and evidence, Offshore Wind Enabling Actions Programme, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

Question 1

According to UNESCO, Marine Spatial Planning is “not an end in itself but a practical way to create and establish a more rational use of marine space and the interactions among its uses, to balance demands for development with the need to protect the environment, and to deliver social and economic outcomes in an open and planned way.” What progress has been made to balance these demands and needs?

- Progress has been made. We do now have Marine Plans. But we are balancing need versus demand on competing space – the difficulty is that we still have a slightly piecemeal approach. There are different uses of the sea. There might even be different approaches in different areas - opportunist approaches. We need to be a broader conversation. There are perhaps too many chefs.
- The Scottish National Marine Plans has been well communicated, as have the marine plans around Shetland. Seafood is very important to the Scottish economy. The application of the policy and interpretation is the issue. We need to ensure existing operators are supported. The onus is on the developer to show they are not being disproportionate to fishing but we are not really seeing proper evidence of that. It is not balancing the demands and needs of fishing; it is more a shift to other uses. Pressure of bottom down rush – it is an unbalanced playing field.

- Through monitoring MPAs can see benefits of spatial management tools for fisheries. There is progress in legislation and management for an ecosystem-based approach.
- We want to recognise a collective voice. The Marine Spatial Plans are out there but we do need to make sure they reflect the needs of all users of the marine environment. There is a programme across government – evidence collection phase at the moment. We need more strategic use of the space to ensure co-existence. Make it as collegiate as possible.
- Reality is fishermen will have to give up sea space. Can we do anything to make sure that fishers don't feel disadvantaged? We should be aiming for an integrated approach. It is possible fishers will have to give up space. Need engagement before formal consultation. We need to be clear how fishers want to be involved. We really need everyone at the table for meaningful conversation. This is dependent on where you are, the scale and how this will change through time. Have to look at the context for all users of the marine space. We need to work together.
- In Dutch waters what is the current situation? There was always support for fishers before but that does not seem to be necessarily the case now. Fishers however need to recognise the reality of competing demands on the marine environment. Meeting at the Advisory Council meetings provided the way forward. A new equilibrium needs to be found. This is a changing situation.
- Things are changing – balance between competing sea users. Now we are talking about prioritisation between nature recovery, offshore wind, and fishing – what has to give? Is the fishing sector economically weak? Are we a minor player? We don't have ownership rights over the sea. Antidote to that is food security. We don't have a food chain if we don't have people catching fish. We need to look at the whole supply chain. We are an important part of food security. A new equilibrium

Question 2

We are seeing some negativity in the chat box about what fishers can do and whether they have any chance of influencing the debate. To enable fishing to flourish alongside such interests as aquaculture, offshore wind, and conservation areas, how can the UK deliver a fair and equitable marine planning regime on co-existence? Is it possible?

- Have to recognise that not all industries can co-exist, and we need to recognise that. This needs to be determined on a case-by-case basis. Overall aim is to minimise displacement. We need good underlying data and evidence to support decisions. We need to make sure we are fully aware of which industries can co-exist. Adaptation is going to be crucial.
- The onus should be on how other industries can flourish alongside the fishing industry, not the other way around. There is plenty of fishing data showing who is fishing where and where the productive areas are. We also need to make the small family fishing businesses are not disadvantaged.
- To deliver greater equity we need to give the fishing sector an equal voice. Fishing is seen as a 'soft' constraint. Need to take a better view of fishing grounds and protect them accordingly. Co-existence should not mean what can the fishing sector continue doing if we do this. iVMS could be a means to provide essential data. We need to start from the same space.
- From an MPA perspective a zoning approach could be useful. MPAs have a legal status and are mapped. Fishing is the soft constraint. If we are able to agree for certain fisheries (which are stable and don't vary from year to year) and a constant, then a spatial planner can do a lot with this. You can choose to make a soft constraint a hard constraint. That would make the 'map'. This would not be applicable for all fisheries. There is scope for defining areas.

Question 3

What would the pros / cons be of a voluntary versus regulated approach to co-existence in an increasingly busy marine environment?

- Co-existence is more common at sea than it is on land. There are also arrangements to share an area. We can look at co-existence case studies because this is happening in certain areas. However, this tends to be in small areas. For larger spaces you will need a more strategic view. If you get this wrong then fishing is likely to be disadvantaged. Co-existence is not simple – it has to be economically viable. Have to enable those conversations.
- In Dutch waters they are attempting voluntary agreements inshore. However, there is not always agreement and then the parties involved want Government to make it compulsory.
- Struggling to see how a voluntary agreement could work in practice. Government needs to respond to planning applications. No actual stop, look, review process has been produced. We are now engaging with large multi-national companies so there is no level playing field and legislation is required to support the small players.
- In Lyme Bay they have tried to exclude fishing practices from certain areas. There are some voluntary agreements. It can almost work within that community, but there are now calls for enforceable regulatory approach.
- Could depend on the scale and geographic location. For larger areas we need a more strategic evidence-based approach. We need to adhere with the co-existence clauses within the Marine Plans. It is not easy.

Government has its national priorities. Is fishing one of those national priorities and is this all about defining what we mean by co-existence? Takeaways from today are:

- The fisheries sector is engaged and want to understand how to better engage in this debate.
- There is a willingness to try and identify areas. There could be some quick wins.
- Co-existence is really important, but it is different to prioritisation. We can learn from others in different countries, but we always need to put these learnings into context.