

# Scottish Sustainable Marine Environment Initiative

## Sound of Mull Pilot Project



## Project Brief

November 2007

Marine and Coastal Development Unit  
Argyll & Bute Council  
Lorn House, Oban  
Argyll PA34 4AR  
Tel: 01631 567978/567974



## **1 Background to the Scottish Sustainable Marine Environment Initiative**

- The Scottish Sustainable Marine Environment Initiative (SSMEI) was initially established by the Scottish Executive in November 2002.
- The initiative comprises 4 marine management projects: the Clyde, the Berwickshire Coast, Shetland and the Sound of Mull.
- These projects will develop, trial and evaluate different approaches to the sustainable management of marine resources in Scotland. The aim is to produce and implement marine management plans for each of the areas, with spatial planning an integral part of the Clyde, Sound of Mull and Shetland pilots. Each project differs in terms of area size and approach. Once the pilots are completed the Scottish Executive intends to evaluate each pilot and to produce recommendations that will help shape future national policy on marine and coastal management and spatial planning.
- The Sound of Mull Pilot is funded by the Scottish Executive, SNH, The Crown Estate, The Whelk Leader+ Programme and in-kind contributions from Argyll & Bute Council and Highland Council.
- The SSMEI Sound of Mull project will run for 3 years from 11<sup>th</sup> June 2007 until 10<sup>th</sup> June 2010. Extra funding opportunities will be investigated to continue the project if this is felt to be beneficial.

## **2 Sound of Mull Project Area**

The project area covers the marine and tidal areas up to mean high water springs between Ardmore Point, Isle of Mull and Auliston Point, Morvern in the north and Duart Point, Isle of Mull and Rubha an Ridire, Morvern in the south (Figure 1). The project area also includes Loch Aline. It is intended that all activities that can have an influence on the marine and coastal area will be discussed and incorporated into a marine spatial plan.

The Sound of Mull was chosen as a pilot for several reasons:

- The area is cross local authority/regulatory boundary (Argyll & Bute on the Isle of Mull coast and Highland on the Morvern coast). It is hoped that this can provide lessons for the future in marine planning across regulatory/authority boundaries.
- The area supports both island and remote mainland communities.
- The size makes it particularly suitable for localised stakeholder involvement.
- Whilst there are community organisations and initiatives ongoing on both sides, there are none that are specifically geared towards marine management and link the two sides of the Sound of Mull.



Figure 1. Area covered by the SSMEI Sound of Mull pilot.

### 3 Aim and Objectives of the Sound of Mull Pilot

#### 3.1 Aim

The overall aim of the project is to develop and deliver more integrated and sustainable management of the marine and coastal areas of the Sound of Mull through the preparation and implementation of a marine spatial plan.

#### 3.2 Objectives

*Establish a Sound of Mull Working Group that includes stakeholders and regulators who have an interest in the marine and coastal environment of the Sound of Mull.*

- It will help steer the project and development of the plan and be a key element in its implementation.
- It will offer potential for co-management between stakeholders and regulators and improvements in information exchange.
- The establishment of a working group from scratch is unique to this SSMEI pilot and it is hoped that this approach will produce a sustainable plan which is reflective of the social and economic development needs of the marine and coastal stakeholders.
- *Sound of Mull Liaison Network:* in addition to the working group, a wider network of contacts will be established through publicity and meetings. This list of contact and community meetings will be used to keep interested parties informed of the project.

The wider community will be able to feed into the process through a suitable

representative on the working group, at community meetings and/or by contacting the project officers.

*Develop, produce and implement a Sound of Mull marine spatial plan.*

The plan will provide a statement of how the working group wish to see the Sound of Mull's marine environment used, maintained and/or improved in the future along with a set of recommendations/policies that will help to achieve this. The plan will have a map based element which will sit alongside recommendations/policies that will:

- Help to address any current and potential future interactions between interests
- Identify development opportunities
- Provide suggestions for managing space and allocating it rationally between competing interests e.g. areas where assets need safeguarding, areas appropriate for development for various activities, improvements to local management agreements to allow interests to coexist
- Provide a reference against which proposals for development or activities can be judged

The development of the plan will be in conjunction with the working group using information from meetings, the location of activities and features of interest, existing informal and formal management practices, sectoral interactions, environmental capacity and socio-economic profiles developed throughout the project through small studies, as described below.

After the plan is approved the final stage will be to implement the recommendations of the plan and investigate how useable and effective it is.

*Assess sectoral interactions and formal and informal management practices*

A report will be produced that includes:

- Current and potential future interactions including areas where these occur and suggested solutions
- Assessment of formal and informal management practices that are currently employed by the users of the Sound of Mull. To include codes of conduct, sectors involved and level of adhesion to practices.
- Recommendations on improvements to management practices and new opportunities.

*Environmental capacity study*

The environmental capacity study could comprise of the following components:

- Landscape seascape capacity study: visual capacity of the environment to accommodate further aquaculture, coastal infrastructure (marinas, piers etc.) and mooring development without negatively affecting landscape/seascape quality and experience.
- Map of the area indicating habitats of economic importance, scientific or educational value and those sensitive to disturbance.
- Assessment by marine sectors of their own capacity to develop based on environmental constraints.

This will be discussed further by the working group.

*Develop socio-economic profiles for each sector operating in the Sound of Mull.*

Marine areas of importance for all sectors will be identified and mapped allowing marine areas of economic importance to be identified which can be incorporated into planning for the area. Profiles will also include estimates of the income generated by sectors and their spend in the local communities operating in the Sound of Mull.

*Develop a central information source*

- Bring together existing and new data to build a comprehensive and accessible database of information in relation to the marine environment of the area
- Will be made available through the project's website for all stakeholders and regulators to use to improve awareness and decision-making.

#### **4 Project delivery**

- Two project officers have been employed to work on the project and will be housed in the Marine and Coastal Development Unit of Argyll & Bute Council, Lorn House, Oban. Sarah Benfield will be employed full-time on the project for the full 3 years and Gordon Turnbull will be employed for the first year of the project on a part-time basis. Extra funding opportunities will be investigated to continue the project if this is felt to be beneficial.
- It is anticipated that the first two years of the project will be spent collecting information, developing and producing the plan with stakeholders and the third year will look at implementing recommendations from the plan and assessing its effectiveness and usability