

## SECTION 7: MARINE ENVIRONMENT

### INTRODUCTION

- 7.1 The shores and seas surrounding Jersey are an essential part of the character and quality of the Island. The seascape helps to define the Island's special identity.
- 7.2 The seas, the inter-tidal beaches, flats and reefs and the offshore reefs and islands are of scientific, cultural, economic, visual and recreational importance. Those marine sites of particular value are shown in Figure 7.1.
- 7.3 Jersey's marine environment falls at the convergence of two biogeographic marine regions which, together with the exceptional tidal range, provides for a wide range of habitats and marine species, particularly in the littoral zone which is the area between the tides. The extent and character of the reefs and inter-tidal flats are exceptional in Europe, placing these resources in a category of international importance. In addition, Jersey lies on two migratory flyways and the shorelines are internationally important for overwintering waterfowl.
- 7.4 The abundant and diverse marine life supports shell and wet fishing industries and shell fish farming has also grown to a position of some importance.
- 7.5 The exceptional marine environment of Jersey is an area of intense activity where complex interactions between physical, biological, social and economic systems are constantly taking place. This has given rise to a number of issues and threats including:
- large scale land reclamation, diminishing species diversity and altering coastal processes;
  - pollution and contamination by nutrient enrichment from sewage effluent, fertiliser run-off and leachates from landfill sites;
  - offshore aggregate extraction;
  - coastal defence construction, maintenance or managed retreat;
  - over-fishing, general pressures on fish and their food supply and impacts on non-target species;
  - shoreline construction such as marinas;
  - human disturbance on remote reefs and islets; and
  - large scale pollution from a shipping incident.
- In addition to these locally generated issues there is the potential, long-term threat of rising sea levels and changing species distribution due to global warming.
- 7.6 The 1987 Island Plan began to address the problems of planning in a marine environment, notably by providing facilities for the fishing industry in the harbour and safeguarding of sites for potential shellfish cultivation.



Special Marine Sites **Figure 7.1**

- 7.7 A Marine Protection Zone has been established which extends from Mean High Water (MHW) to the territorial limits. This sets a presumption against development in the zone with the exception of fish farming and is aimed at maintaining and enhancing the seascape of Jersey.

- 7.8 The Planning and Environment Committee has been charged with preparing a Coastal Zone Management Strategy. One part of this has been the designation of the south-east coast as a Ramsar wetland of international importance. It has also been suggested by the '*Jersey Island Plan Review: Countryside Character Appraisal*' that the outlying inter-tidal reefs, Les Écréhous and Le Plateau des Minquiers, are given this degree of protection.
- 7.9 The Planning and Environment Committee and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries are working with local stakeholders to develop this integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy. Some of the key aspects are:
- providing an input into an Island-wide sea defence strategy;
  - providing advice on marine environmental issues;
  - monitoring coastal environmental impacts;
  - managing surveys of marine ecological habitats; and
  - leading education on marine and management issues.
- 7.10 The Planning and Environment Committee has also prepared an Island-wide Biodiversity Strategy and, through coastal zone management including the further designation of selected marine sites, aims to protect both marine habitats and species.
- 7.11 Furthermore, the Countryside Character Appraisal (referred to in Section Five) extended its scope to include inter-tidal character areas and the offshore reefs and islands. The appraisal evaluates these environments as being of great value and, in part, of *international* importance. It can truly be claimed that the area exposed at low tide is Jersey's last wilderness. These environments should be given absolute protection from development and managed for conservation.

#### **Relationship to the Vision and Objectives**

- 7.12 The Vision for Jersey (Section Three) states that 'Jersey...will be an island...which has a high quality environment, which is safe and secure, protected from pollution, and where the wildlife, landscape and physical resources are sustained not compromised'.
- 7.13 The new Island Plan translates the vision into a series of seventeen objectives. Of particular relevance to the marine environment is to:
- manage natural resources wisely to avoid depletion and irreversible damage;
  - protect the character of the coast and countryside; and
  - protect and promote biodiversity and maintain and enhance the Island's ecosystems.

## **Approach**

- 7.14 As with the holistic, resource-based approach to the management of the countryside discussed in Section Five, the marine environment needs to be considered in the same manner with an understanding of the interdependence between all aspects. For the long-term sustainable use of the marine environment comprehensive stewardship of the seas and shores and policies which support 'wise use' are required. This needs to embrace biodiversity, fishing, leisure use, navigation and the seascape around Jersey.
- 7.15 As a basis for policy-making the following objectives for the marine environment have been identified, which are to:
- safeguard and enhance marine habitats and biological diversity;
  - protect and enhance the seascape;
  - control and minimise water pollution;
  - protect both stocks and marine environments for sustainable fishing and fish farming;
  - safeguard the marine environment from all development except that which is essential for fishing and navigation;
  - promote sustainable recreation and tourism; and
  - manage the shoreline, coastal defences and coastal zone in an environmentally responsible manner.
- 7.16 Where the shoreline is urban in character these objectives should be pursued in tandem with those of the built environment (Section Six).

## **POLICIES AND PROPOSALS**

### **Marine Protection Zone**

- 7.17 The long term, wise use of marine resources is essential in the management of Jersey's unique, fragile and economically important shores and coastal waters. This was foreseen in the designation of a Marine Protection Zone. This is an overarching designation and forms the basis for the safeguarding and sustainable use of the Island's marine resources.
- 7.18 The Countryside Character Appraisal included in its scope the inter-tidal character areas around the Island and the offshore reefs and islets. The appraisal concluded that these are so important that they must be given the highest level of protection against development and that they should be managed for conservation.
- 7.19 Development in the Marine Protection Zone including, for example marinas, land reclamation, tipping or dredging for aggregates, will not normally be permitted. Where appropriate, the Planning and Environment Committee will require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to be carried out for significant development in the Marine Protection Zone in order to fully determine the potential impacts of development proposals.

- 7.20 For clarity, where offshore reefs and islets lie above Mean High Water (i.e. they are not inter-tidal areas) they are designated as part of the Zone of Outstanding Character and Policy C4 will apply. For development proposals in all inter-tidal marine areas, Policy M1 will apply.

**POLICY M1 – MARINE PROTECTION ZONE**

**The sustainable use of the Island’s marine environment will be ensured by the Marine Protection Zone extending from Mean High Water to the territorial limits, as designated on the Island and Town Proposals Maps.**

**Within this zone there is a presumption against all developments except those which are essential for navigation, access to water, fishing and fish farming and coastal defence.**

**Where permitted, development should not materially harm the amenities, character or ecological balance of the area because of its construction disturbance, siting, scale, form, appearance, materials, noise or emissions.**

**Coastal Zone Management Strategy**

- 7.21 The Coastal Zone includes the terrestrial parts of the Island having a direct influence on the shores, the inter-tidal areas and the waters out to the limits of the Marine Protection Zone.
- 7.22 The need for an integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy has been recognised by the Planning and Environment Committee in order to realise fully the purposes of the Marine Protection Zone. This has been initiated in the St Ouen’s Bay Planning Framework and in the Ramsar designation of the south-east coast. A management strategy would address the issues of archaeology, marine ecology, recreation, fishing and other economic interests and, with the participation of local stakeholders, formulate an integrated plan and programme to achieve its objectives.

**POLICY M2 – COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

**The Planning and Environment Committee will support the development of an integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy. The strategy will be comprehensive, developed with local stakeholders, and will form the basis for all coastal planning and actions.**

**Marine Biodiversity**

- 7.23 The States is committed to sustaining the Island’s marine environment through the Convention on Biological Diversity framed at the Earth Summit in 1992.

- 7.24 The Environmental Services Unit has, as a consequence, a Biodiversity Strategy that includes the marine environment. The Strategy sits alongside the new Island Plan but is also integrated with it through the shared aim for the wise use of marine resources. Issues include pollution, pressures on fish stocks, dredging/ sand extraction impacts and coastal defences.

**POLICY M3 – MARINE BIODIVERSITY**

**The Planning and Environment Committee will strongly support the aims and implementation of the Biodiversity Strategy in all marine areas.**

**Shoreline Management**

- 7.25 Jersey has 25 kilometres of sea walls and promenades exposed to some of the highest tides in the world – up to twelve metres. A combination of tide and severe weather can test the walls that keep the sea at bay around the Island.
- 7.26 A Shoreline Management Plan that would review the approach to coastal defence and its sustainability, including the option of managed retreat, would be the appropriate way forward. This is the responsibility of the Public Services Committee but, owing to the environmental implications of a Shoreline Management Plan, the Planning and Environment Committee would also take an active rôle in its development.

**POLICY M4 – SHORELINE MANAGEMENT**

**The Planning and Environment Committee will assist the Public Services Committee in developing a comprehensive Shoreline Management Plan in order to ensure that future coastal and flood management is planned and designed with a full appreciation of its environmental implications as well as the operational and cost considerations.**

**Fishing and Fish Farming**

- 7.27 Fishing for shellfish, wet fish and fish farming are important economic activities which need safeguarding and supporting. The protective policies stated above, aimed at sustaining marine biodiversity, will assist in ensuring the health of fish stocks and the conservation of their nursery grounds and feeding areas. It is also important that the industry is assisted in terms of its land based needs such as access, servicing and cold storage.

#### **POLICY M5 – FISHING AND FISH FARMING**

The Planning and Environment Committee will endeavour to safeguard the marine and land resources forming the basis of the fishing and fish farming industries through policies for marine conservation and control of development. Proposals to provide facilities and infrastructure which are essential for the fishing and fish farming industries will normally be supported, provided that the development:

- (i) will not unreasonably affect the character and amenity of the area;
- (ii) will not have an unacceptable visual impact;
- (iii) will not have an unacceptable impact on a Site of Special Interest or Building of Local Importance;
- (iv) makes use of existing buildings where possible;
- (v) is appropriate in scale, form, massing, density and design to the site and its context;
- (vi) will not have an unreasonable impact on public health, safety and the environment by virtue of noise, light, odour, fumes or waste production;
- (vii) will not lead to unacceptable problems of traffic generation, safety or parking; and
- (viii) is in accordance with other principles and policies of the Plan.

Proposals which do not satisfy these criteria will not normally be permitted.

#### **Marine Sites of Special Interest**

- 7.28 Several of the inter-tidal areas have been recognised as being of national and international importance for their cultural, scientific and visual characteristics and require a special degree of protection and/or type of management.
- 7.29 The south-east coast, including bays and inter-tidal reefs, is an internationally important marine area already confirmed as a Ramsar site. A Ramsar site is a wetland of international importance especially as a waterfowl habitat, designated under international convention. Waterfowl are defined as birds ecologically dependent on wetlands. The Ramsar site extends from La Collette around the coast to Gorey Pier and in a south-easterly direction.
- 7.30 The Ramsar site could be promoted as a part of a potential Jersey Marine Reserve with appropriate interpretation. Similarly, Les Écréhous and Le Plateau des Minquiers have been identified as potential Ramsar sites or as part of a Marine Park (see Figure 7.1).
- 7.31 The St Ouen's Bay Planning Framework considers that this part of the marine environment is of sufficient value to merit future protection. Scientific information is required to confirm this.

- 7.32 In view of the above, areas of the marine environment that are of exceptional merit and distinction should be given protection by designation as Sites of Special Interest. Policy M6 should be read in conjunction with Policy G11.

**POLICY M6 – MARINE SITES OF SPECIAL INTEREST**

**The Planning and Environment Committee will safeguard and help manage the most valuable marine environments by designating them as Sites of Special Interest.**

**Development proposals affecting these environments will be considered under the provisions of Policy G11.**

**Those sites of international importance for waterfowl will be notified for designation as Ramsar sites. The Planning and Environment Committee will consider the designation of these special areas as a Jersey Marine National Park to highlight their importance and the need for sustainable management.**

**The Planning and Environment Committee will consult with other Committees, agencies and stakeholders in the course of designating Marine Sites of Special Interest.**