Climate Smart Marine Spatial Planning in the UK Overseas Territories

CONSULTATIONS SUMMARY

Overview

The Marine Climate Change Impacts Partnership (MCCIP) Climate Smart Marine Spatial Planning (CSMSP) Project has engaged widely with representatives from the UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs) to ensure its relevance to marine planning and climate action in the territories. Building on the contacts, and insights, gained from the MCCIP assessment of climate change impacts in the UKOTs, the project has explored how CSMSP could help the UKOTs future-proof their large and varied marine spaces (by directly supporting emerging marine spatial planning processes, or using its climate-design principles for other marine management approaches).

An initial survey showed many UKOT respondents were already using climate information in their work, including for marine management and planning. Examples included climate change policies and action plans, habitat and species vulnerability mapping, climate smart fisheries, reef management (e.g. bleaching events) and as part of national climate change risk assessments. The potential use of climate information for safeguarding marine resources, supporting mitigation (blue carbon), community engagement, as well as for marine spatial planning was widely recognised, noting potential barriers from resource availability and specialist knowledge, access to data and tools, and varied levels of engagement with climate change issues across stakeholder groups. Overall, there was a clear interest in exploring CSMSP principles for the UKOTs.

An overview workshop to introduce CSMSP and highlight its potential relevance to the UKOTs, was followed by an-in depth UKOT CSMSP capability workshop. Over 100 participants from across the UKOTs and relevant UK organisations (e.g. government agencies and NGOs) provided 400 individual responses on CSMSP enablers and blockers in the UKOTs, including governance mechanisms (e.g. climate change policies and plans), marine sector and public engagement, availability of marine use maps, and existing marine planning activities.

The capability workshop outputs are summarised here to highlight key findings for this critical project activity and to help inform future UKOT activities on climate smart marine planning.

More information, including structure of the workshop events and consultation materials and responses is available on request. If interested, please send an email to: office@mccip.org.uk.

Use of consultation findings

These consultation activities provided the context for the CSMSP Roadmap, ensuring that it was informed by, and framed around, the UKOTs. These activities were also instructive in identifying TCI and Anguilla as case studies. These UKOTs were then involved in focus group sessions to explore how climate smart principles might usefully inform their Marine Spatial Planning processes, and this was summarised in the Case studies in TCI and Anguilla output.

Capability workshop

The CSMSP capability workshop was framed around the following issues, all of which need addressing to move along the pathway to climate-smart marine spatial planning. Responses from around 100 participants, and additional written responses provided after, are summarised in Figure 1 below.

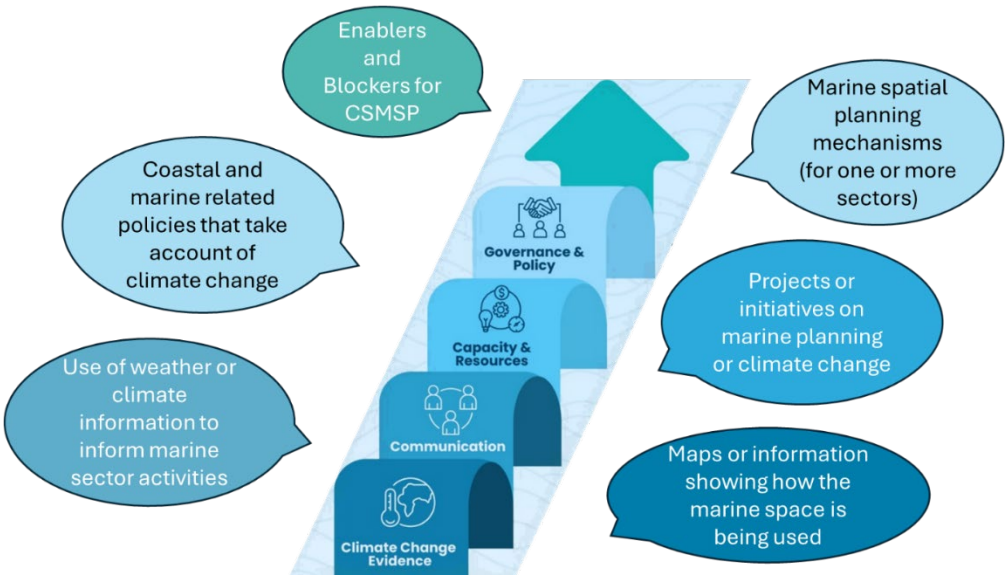

Figure 1. Enablers and blockers for CSMSP in the UKOTs.

Key enablers (across territories):

- **Data availability and use**: Availability and collection of climate data from both in situ and remote sources, with a need for increased frequency and standardized methods to ensure data quality and its use for a range of purposes.
- **Collaboration and support (for evidence-based decision making)**: Effective collaboration among researchers, government, and third-sector organizations is crucial for providing evidence to support decision making, with additional support from international programmes and use of local knowledge essential.
- **Institutional capacity and political will**: Institutional capacity, political will, and continuity in people and policy are vital for successful implementation, alongside the need for legislative frameworks and the potential for consistent funding linked to national priorities such as the blue economy and food security.
- **Engaged societal actors:** Using local knowledge and participation and providing platforms for stakeholders to share and access relevant data.

UKOT-specific responses also highlighted emerging MSP processes and climate policies, support from external programmes (e.g. for data collection), collaborative working and data sharing, and some data being readily accessible in user-friendly formats as a key enabler (e.g. through web portals for individual territories).

Potential blockers (across territories):

- **Resource constraints**: Funding, staff capacity, and specialist knowledge are significant challenges impacting marine environmental initiatives across the UKOTs.
- **Coordination and collaboration**: Difficulty in collaboration among different agencies and departments, as well as lack of integration and data sharing, hinder effective environmental planning. A lack of co-ordination could lead to duplication of effort. A lack of co-design could hinder meaningful engagement.
- **Political and socio-economic factors**: Political agendas, local resistance to change, and competing priorities between conservation and economic development complicate policy-making and implementation. The political status of UKOTs can also contribute to blockages.
- **Data gaps and accessibility**: Lack of requisite data and data not in a readily accessible and usable form and communicating uncertainty in model outputs to policy makers.

UKOT-specific responses highlighted similar issues, including resources (both financial and human) and a lack of specialist skills, political will, legislative landscape, data availability and competing sectoral interests as blockers.

Use of weather or climate information to inform marine sector activities in the UKOT(s)

In general, a wide range of examples were provided, although many were focussed on short-term activities. These including emergency planning and response (including for search and rescue and pollution incidents) to extreme weather effects such as hurricanes, as well as for port and shipping activities (including safety at sea fishing), drawing on information from resources such as Copernicus, the European Union's Earth Observation Programme, and the US National Hurricane Centre. From a longer-term perspective, hazard risk to coastal infrastructure and marine renewable energy testing conditions were noted, including through use of EIAs. Projects specifically related to changing productivity of harvested marine species were also mentioned.

In some of the UKOTs, climate data is being used to inform climate action plans and policies, development of coastal management plans and urban and maritime planning, including consideration of sea level rise and storm surge impacts. Use of climate data in the design of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) design and habitat restoration objectives is also mentioned. Heatwave data is being used for reef observations, including bleaching events, and the wider vulnerability of marine species and habitats to climate risks are starting to be explored in some UKOTs, albeit based on limited data.

Coastal and marine related policies that take account of climate change

At a general level, examples provided included planning policies for coastal development, local development plans, MPA research and monitoring plans, fisheries guidelines (including seasonal limits) and wider regional marine management protocols (e.g. Caribbean).

At the UKOT specific level, climate change policies and marine management legislation are highlighted, including marine management plans, MPAs (including fisheries and monitoring obligations), marine parks, and the development of marine spatial plans in some UKOTs. Other examples include regulations to reduce local threats to reef communities (helping build

resilience to climate change) and to protect turtle nesting sites. At the coast, specific policies around coastal setback are in place for some UKOTs.

Single, or multi-sector, marine spatial planning mechanisms

Marine management plans, marine managed areas and multi-zone MPAs are highlighted. As noted earlier, MSP processes are being developed in some UKOTs, and stakeholder engagement is underway, but the legal frameworks aren't in place yet to implement MSP.

Work on marine ecosystem and climate vulnerability, as well as condition indicators, are highlighted in a small number of cases to inform marine planning.

Marine planning or climate change initiatives or projects relevant to this project

A range of information, either directly related to climate change, or that could be repurposed to provide relevant evidence is highlighted. External programmes such as blue belt, and funding mechanisms including Darwin place include specific project activities on MSP in some UKOTs. Marine habitat mapping activities can provide useful data, and climate research activities are ongoing, including work on biological responses to climate stressors and climate resilience in fisheries, and wider studies on climate risks to marine species.

Spatial maps, or other information, showing how the marine space is being used

Most UKOTs have some information on fishing vessel activities through VMS data, and there is spatial information on the current status of MPAs. Habitat maps, and data on use of the marine space is either available or being developed in some UKOTs, some of which are collated and available is user friendly formats, others are held by government departments and other organisations and may be more disparate.