



# BURREN SUB AQUA CLUB

**Submission in response to National Marine Planning Framework Baseline Report**

**Dec 14/2018**

**Dear Mr. Nugent, Dempsey and Marine Spatial Planning team,**

**I've read with interest the baseline report on the National Marine Planning Framework as well as attending the session in the Town Hall in Galway. It's a very informative document and contains many data points on the variety of topics affected by marine activities.**

**The key problem with this process is indicated on pages 3 and 4 and also on (the very useful) Annex A.**

**Pages 3 and 4 contain a foreword by the Minister responsible for this process. He is the Minister for Housing and Urban Development.**

**When the Taoiseach recently appeared on the Late Late Show, the first questions were to do with the housing crisis. He also answered questions to do with health and Brexit. There was no discussion on environmental issues – let alone marine spatial planning.**

**If the housing minister is responsible for the national marine planning framework and if there is a housing crisis, it is reasonable to assume that this crisis will get most attention.**

**Annex A contains over 30 public bodies with marine responsibilities. Eight government departments are involved. When everybody is responsible, is anybody responsible?**

**There have been encouraging actions, of which the baseline report is one. And there is some recognition of the many state bodies involved with the marine, e.g. the setting up of the Marine Coordination Group (MCG). The baseline report talks about monthly meetings of the MCG. However higher priorities for many of the members has mean that meetings occur either bi-monthly or even quarterly.**

**From the July 2017 meeting of the MCG, it was expected that the Maritime Area and Foreshore Bill would "be included in the A list of the Government's legislative programme in the autumn." In the November 2017 meeting, Philip Hamel of the Taoiseach's Dept stressed the importance of the Bill being published in the first half**

of 2018. It's now December 2018 and we find no mention of it in the Oireachtas this year. We can hope that its fate will not be the same as the The Maritime Area and Foreshore (Amendment) Bill 2013.

The delay in introducing the Maritime Area and Foreshore Bill is delaying the introduction of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in Ireland. While Ireland claims jurisdiction over almost 500,000 km<sup>2</sup> of sea, it does not yet contain a single designated MPA.

Minister English has stated (May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018) that an expert advisory group to identify a network of MPAs would be “set up in the near future”. There is no evidence that this has yet happened.

One further example: try clicking on [www.msp.gov.ie](http://www.msp.gov.ie). “Alongside the stakeholder engagement processes outlined below, we will put in place arrangements for public consultation through interactive web based arrangements, including the establishment of a dedicated website” [Towards a Marine Spatial Plan for Ireland 2017].

In summary, there is little evidence that there is political will to implement the good work of your team. It appears that marine matters are not a key priority for any of the Departments.

In 1985, the then leader of the opposition recognized the need for Department of the Marine and such a department was created in 1989. If the government is serious about implementing the Marine Spatial Plan, one solution would be to create (or recreate) a Department of the Marine which could take back the responsibilities which you've listed in Annex A.

Kind regards

Tadhg O'Brien  
Burren Sub Aqua Club