

The Celtic Seas Partnership

Penny Wilson

Abstract

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) was established by the European Commission (EC) to achieve Good Environmental Status (GES) in our seas. If GES is to be achieved, it is vital that people whose livelihoods and well-being depend on the ocean are involved with the implementation of marine policy and management. It is one thing to create legislation but another to get the buy-in and support of all those that will be expected to follow that legislation.

The Celtic Seas Partnership (an EC Life+ funded project led by WWF-UK) developed the concept for a fisheries mediation project as a result of hearing frustrations from around Scotland - from fishermen, communities, eNGOs and government - about the state of relations between various stakeholder groups. There was a sense that relationships, although improved over recent years, were still not as good as they could be and that this was creating a barrier to achieving Good Environmental Status in Scottish seas by 2020.

- Fishermen said they didn't feel they had a voice against powerful eNGO's lobbying in Europe, and that eNGOs campaign to get headlines and don't understand the complexities of the industry - they push for legislation change and then don't have to deal with the consequences. Friction amongst different factions of the fishing industry was also evident.
- eNGOs raised concerns that current fishing practices were not sufficiently controlled and that the state of the marine environment is reaching a point of no return. There was a feeling that fishermen were not that concerned about the long term future of the marine environment and that government was prioritising the economy over environmental protection.
- A senior government minister was feeling frustrated that the fishing industry was 'committing commercial suicide, by being so resistant to change' and felt that progress was hard work.

There were several structural mechanisms in place to try and address the challenges that Scotland was facing, but there was a feeling that these structures were largely technical, with the same people attending and having the same conversations, leading to slow progress.

This presentation will examine this case study in more detail, it will then discuss the mechanisms and methods used by the Celtic Seas Partnership's fisheries mediation to begin building understanding and trust between stakeholders, which would in turn help to enable more constructive dialogue within the existing structures. We will encourage participants to

reflect on how improving relationships between their stakeholders could help them achieve their goals more effectively.