

# Science for Environment Policy

## Marine governance across the English Channel lacks integration

**The English Channel** (La Manche) is one of the world's busiest sea areas, and management of it is a challenging task. This study reviews governance across the Channel, finding poor integration between countries, sectors, policies and research. The study also considers management in terms of the ecosystem approach and suggests that linking research between the UK and France could be key to improving marine governance.

**The English Channel** (La Manche) is one of the busiest [marine](#) areas on the planet, teeming with activity from shipping and aquaculture to recreational activities and transport. Using the marine environment for these varied purposes has important implications for the natural resources of the Channel and vulnerable habitats and species. The pressures on the system have become even greater in recent years as the drive for renewable energy has increased.

To sustain the natural environment while still allowing human activities, coherent management is crucial. Yet, current governance of the Channel is far from integrated. It involves a multitude of national policies, as well as EU-wide directives including the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)<sup>1</sup>. The researchers say there is no framework to link these different policies across the Channel and thus no coordination of management activities.

This study built on past investigations of the natural and socioeconomic characteristics of the Channel in order to review its governance. The researchers asked how the Channel's development can be balanced with the needs of the ecosystem. The findings were based on two projects: [Channel Arc Manche Integrated Strategy](#) (CAMIS) and [Promoting Effective Governance of the Channel Ecosystem](#) (PEGASEAS), both funded by the European Union's [INTERREG IVA](#) Programme, which aimed to find solutions to disjointed governance via improved stakeholder engagement.

Within the study, the authors considered the [Convention on Biological Diversity's](#) ecosystem approach framework for the management of natural resources, which is relevant to the issues faced in the English Channel. The researchers compared management of the region to the [12 Malawi Principles](#), which address the why, how and what of ecosystem management and are referred to in recent European Commission environmental legislation.

They assessed whether the principles would be relevant for governance of the English Channel if an ecosystem approach were to be implemented, and whether they are currently delivered in the region.

Although all 12 were found to be relevant, only one was currently being delivered: *The ecosystem approach should involve all relevant sectors of society and scientific disciplines*. Two further principles were being partially delivered: *Conservation of ecosystem structure and functioning, in order to maintain ecosystem services, should be a priority target of the ecosystem approach* and *The ecosystem approach should consider all forms of relevant information, including scientific and indigenous and local knowledge, innovations and practices*. The researchers thus conclude that the majority of these principles are not being met in the Channel, owing to insufficient collaboration between nations.

*Continued on next page.*



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<sup>1</sup> Directive 2008/56/EC of the  
European Parliament and of the  
Council of 17 June 2008  
establishing a framework for  
community action in the field of  
marine environmental policy.  
[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-  
content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:320  
08L0056](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-<br/>content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:320<br/>08L0056).

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*(continued)*

The researchers say that European Commission directives do offer the chance for the coordinated management required by the ecosystem approach. To put this into practice, the researchers suggest that a collaborative approach to governance by the UK and France is required.

Marine management by these two countries differs in approach and implementation, as does research and monitoring. The authors recommend integration between research efforts across the Channel. Funding for research and studies themselves must be focused at the scale of the entire English Channel, and integration between projects must be systematic.



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1 Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32008L0056>.

