

## **A SEA CHANGE**

### **Submission by RYA Northern Ireland on Marine Bill White Paper**

#### **General**

The RYANI is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee which aims to promote, develop, protect and co-ordinate boating in all its forms throughout Northern Ireland in accordance with the policies of the RYA.

RYANI supports the general direction of the proposals in the White Paper to enhance the quality of our seas. We believe that the three pillars of sustainable development – social, economic and environmental – must underpin the proposed legislation. We also wish to highlight the importance of sailing and boating to the Government's overall health objectives and to the marine industry and tourism.

We believe that Northern Ireland should be included within the scope of the legislation because a decision to opt out, even if the intention was to introduce equivalent legislation in the Assembly at a later date, would lead to damaging delay.

#### **Planning in the Marine Area.**

RYANI agrees with the concept of statutory marine spatial planning with the proviso that the public right to navigation must be recognised and observed in any such plans.

For a variety of reasons, recreation and tourism facilities are less well developed in Northern Ireland than in many areas of the UK and the statutory marine plans should seek to remedy this in a broadly sustainable fashion.

It is important that any areas designated under the new plans are based on sound scientific evidence and that any restrictions are site specific especially where local plans are concerned.

RYANI would expect to be consulted on all marine planning issues.

#### **Improving marine nature conservation**

The boating public has a genuine interest in protecting and enhancing the marine environment and it is important that effective education initiatives are put in place to ensure that sailors and boaters can make informed choices and play their rightful part in marine conservation.

The Green Blue\* project has produced important evidence to show the negligible adverse impact of sailing and boating on the marine environment. Thus it is essential that the level of new statutory protection is in line with risk and that voluntary partnerships and codes of conduct are employed wherever possible rather than imposing unnecessary regulation as a first resort.

## **Marine Management Organisation**

While Government will continue to decide marine policy, the White Paper proposes that a new Marine Management Organisation should be responsible for delivery functions. Currently most of these are matters which are devolved to the Northern Ireland administration.

RYANI considers that there should be separate arrangements for MMO functions in Northern Ireland because

- These functions are already devolved rather than reserved matters;
- If a UK-wide MMO is set up as an NDPB or something similar, Northern Ireland interests could not be sufficiently articulated at board level with the likely appointment of just one person from here;
- The 300 to 350 staff mentioned in the Paper (mostly from existing organisations) would not have the necessary knowledge or expertise on Northern Ireland issues.

While recommending appropriate local arrangements for a NIMMO, we clearly recognise the need for close co-ordination between devolved administrations and the UK as a whole. It will be particularly important to work closely with the Republic of Ireland on Irish Sea issues generally and especially where there are shared boundaries to ensure effective cross border implementation.

RYANI would wish to be consulted on the shape and structure of a future MMO for Northern Ireland.

\* The Green Blue is an environmental awareness initiative by the British Marine Federation and the Royal Yachting Association working towards sustainable boating – see [www.thegreenblue.org.uk](http://www.thegreenblue.org.uk).