

Annex O Quality Assurance Processes

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O.1 This Annex describes the quality assurance processes that have been employed by the regional MCZ projects in the production of the IA material. They are separated in to the quality assurance provided through the review process, by the copy editors and the regional MCZ project teams, and the quality assurance of final drafts provided by the regional MCZ project boards and Defra.

1 Quality assurance provided through the review process

O.2 The regional MCZ projects submitted draft material for the IA for review by Defra on the following dates, as set out in the MCZ project delivery guidance: July and November 2010 and March 2011 (material was not submitted in June 2011). Development of material for the IA during this period was heavily constrained and largely limited to description of activities in the baseline (the situation in the absence of MCZs). This was because of delays in the provision of advice on the mitigation of impacts by JNCC and Natural England and in the regional MCZ projects' development of site recommendations.

O.3 The regional MCZ projects sent outline approaches for assessing impacts on each sector to Defra for comment when they reached suitable stages of development. For each document, they kept a log of feedback that recorded whether and if so how feedback had been addressed. Over the summer and autumn of 2011, the regional MCZ projects invited bodies that represent operators in the following sectors to provide feedback on proposed assumptions for use in the assessment of costs to their sector in the IA: aggregate extraction, cables, carbon capture and storage, oil and gas-related activities, renewable energy. The bodies were also asked to provide estimates of costs of impacts of rMCZs on operators within their sector.

O.4 Assessment of costs and benefits of sites was carried out by the regional MCZ projects and further review was provided of IA material (as set out in paper for the MCZ Board meeting on 7.11.11) beyond the time covered by the process in the project delivery guidance. The following organisations were given the opportunity to review draft material for the IA, which was delivered in three batches submitted in November 2011 and January and February 2012: Defra, other government departments and agencies with relevant interests (at the invitation of Defra), JNCC, Natural England, the regional MCZ projects' stakeholder groups (the hubs in the case of Net Gain), and the regional MCZ projects' named consultative stakeholders. Subsequently, Defra, JNCC, Natural England were given the opportunity to check that essential feedback had been addressed when revised material for the IA was submitted by the regional MCZ projects in March

and April 2012. Important outstanding feedback was addressed by the regional MCZ projects and they submitted the IA material for a final review by Defra, JNCC and Natural England in June 2012. Further details of the review provided by JNCC and Natural England staff are provided in Annex 3.

O.5 In a further revision to the approach set out in the project delivery guidance, Defra contracted two leading environmental economists (Prof. Kerry Turner (University of East Anglia) and Prof. Nick Hanley (University of Stirling)) to externally peer review the approaches used for assessing impacts and samples of the assessments. They reviewed material submitted in November 2011, and January and February 2012. Prof. Kerry Turner also reviewed the approach adopted and samples of material for the assessment of benefits submitted in May. This peer review has informed Defra's assessments of the standard of material for the IA.

O.6 Each of the regional MCZ projects recorded all feedback received on the IA material since November 2011 in a log. This records the decision made by the project about whether and if so how to revise the IA material in response to feedback. It records the reason why feedback is not addressed where that is the case.

2 Quality assurance provided by the copy editors

O.7 Accuracy Matters (which was contracted as a copy editor) revised the IA material to address the majority of typos and inconsistencies in style and formatting within the limited time available.

3 Quality assurance provided by the regional MCZ project teams

O.8 Members of the regional MCZ project teams have reviewed IA material that was produced by one project but that concerns all project areas (including Annex H which sets out the approach adopted for the assessment). The spreadsheets that each economist has produced have been checked by staff from another project. The project managers for Balanced Seas and Net Gain have continued to check their project's submissions of IA material. Previously, whilst they were still in post, project managers for Finding Sanctuary and Irish Seas Conservation Zones checked IA material that their projects submitted. The economists have checked that that data extracted by GIS experts provides reasonable estimates before employing it in their analyses. The regional MCZ project economists and economist's assistants checked their own work to the extent that they are able to do so. The revisions suggested by the copy editors were checked by the regional MCZ projects.

4 Quality assurance of final drafts provided by the chairs of the regional MCZ projects' boards and Defra

O.9 The chair of the board for each regional MCZ projects has provided JNCC and Natural England with assurance that the IA material produced by their project satisfies the standards required to meet Defra economists' expectations (letter sent on 27.6.12). Defra has also advised JNCC and Natural England that the materials meet its expectations, recognising that a request to provide additional information on the benefits of rMCZs will be completed following publication on the 19 July 2012.