



The Northern Ireland Marine Taskforce (NIMTF) is a coalition of non-government environmental organisations – it includes RSPB, Ulster Wildlife, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, National Trust, Friends of the Earth, Marine Conservation Society, Live Here, Love Here, Irish Whale and Dolphin Group, Surfers Against Sewage, Shark Trust, Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust and Northern Ireland Environment Link. The NIMTF has the support of approximately 100,000 local people. We are working towards healthy, productive and resilient seas for Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland Marine Task Force response to: [Consultation on the Environmental Compensatory Measures for Offshore Wind in Northern Ireland](#)

Submitted: 19th September 2026

NIMTF thanks DAERA for the opportunity to provide comments on the development of Environmental Compensatory Measures for Offshore Wind in Northern Ireland. NIMTF sits on the Marine Nature Recovery Oversight Group (MNROG), Offshore Renewable Energy Forum (OREF) and the Seabird Conservation Advisory Group (SCAG) and other relevant marine conservation forums to ensure our marine environment is healthy, productive and resilient. We understand the importance of offshore wind and have previously raised environmental concerns in previous responses: Proposed Introduction of Fixed Fees for Providing Screening and Scoping Opinions Under the Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)) Regulations 2007 (as amended) (2026)¹, draft Nature Recovery Strategy (2026)², Climate Action Plan 2023 - 2027 (2025)³, DEFRA's Offshore Wind Environmental Compensatory Measures Reforms (2025)⁴, DEFRA's Marine Licences: Changes to Fees, Exemptions and Self-Service Licences (2025)⁵, Establishment of a Marine Recovery Fund (DEFRA) (2025)⁶. It is therefore welcomed to see guidance being developed for the last resort in all ORE developmental phases: Strategic Compensation. Our answers below aim to support the development and delivery of environmental compensatory measures as a last resort, whilst supporting the NI MPA Network.

1 <https://nimtf.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/screening-scoping-fees-for-marine-works-nimtf-response.pdf>

2 <https://nimtf.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/nature-recovery-strategy-2026-nimtf-response.pdf>

3 <https://nimtf.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/climate-action-plan-2023-2027-nimtf-response.pdf>

4

<https://nimtf.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/offshore-wind-environmental-compensatory-measures-reforms-nimtf-response.pdf>

5 <https://nimtf.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/nimtf-response-marine-licensing-exemptions-defra-2025.pdf>

6 <https://nimtf.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/nimtf-response-to-defra-consultation-on-establishment-of-a-mrf.pdf>

7 https://nimtf.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/sl-nimtf-report-co-location-of-ore-in-the-ni-mpa-network_2026.pdf.pdf

8

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/daera/Marine%20Plan%20for%20NI%20final%2016%2004%2018.PDF>

9 <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/services/marine-mapviewer>

10 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2026/508/made>

Consultation Questions

1. Do you agree with the proposed strategic approach to compensation for offshore wind, including the use of wider compensatory measures where these are supported by evidence, while maintaining existing environmental protections?

NIMTF are in agreement with aligning compensatory measures with those at the UK level but must ensure that any proposed measures **actually deliver for our marine environment**.

If designed and delivered well, we support the establishment of an industry-funded Marine Recovery Fund as an effective way of delivering compensation measures in a more strategic manner, with the aim of both enabling offshore wind expansion and protecting the marine environment and supported species. Done well, the MRF has the potential to improve the delivery of compensation, focussing on areas where the greatest benefits will be felt and at an appropriate scale and pace. We welcome the proposal for expansion of the current library of compensation measures, which should consider ecological coherence and deliver both for the species or habitats affected and the wider ecosystem dependent on these habitats or species.

It is important given that we are dealing with a UK MPA Network that measures should align to protect it in its entirety too. NIMTF are pleased to note that measures being proposed are not intended to lessen the regulations for marine protection; especially given the impacts from arrays and cable corridors which have already been identified as being unavoidable given the limited marine space within NI. This has been identified within our recent report “Proposed Management Measures for Co-Location of Offshore Renewable Energy in the NI MPA Network - Atlantic Region” (2026)⁷ which recommends greater alignment and proper safeguards in place to support our species and habitats. This includes finalising and making publicly available the NI Marine Plan as this will support stakeholders being able to plan appropriately the best location for their OFW proposal. In it’s current state, the finalised NI Marine Plan is not publicly available and what is available is a draft version⁸ and separate Marine MapViewer⁹ thus limiting the opportunities to promote sustainable developments.

NIMTF states that Tier 1 measures followed by Tier 2 have the priority and thus evidence will be required to advance from one Tier to the next and to ensure that developers have satisfied the requirement to establish that a Tier is not feasible before progressing towards the next Tier.

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/619500728fa8f5037d67b678/The_Belfast_Agreement_An_Agreement_Reached_at_the_Multi-Party_Talks_on_Northern_Ireland.pdf

12 <https://www.northsouthministerialcouncil.org/>

13 <https://stateofnature.org.uk/countries/northern-ireland/>

14

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2026-06/Northern%20Ireland%20Seabird%20Conservation%20Strategy%202026-2035.PDF>

15

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-04/Northern%20Ireland%20Blue%20Carbon%20Action%20Plan%202025%20%E2%80%9320230.pdf>

The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Offshore Wind) (Amendment etc.) Regulations 2026¹⁰ in England prioritise Tier 1 with movement to Tier 2 or 3 requiring an reasoned, evidence-based justification. Taking the same approach in NI would ensure that compensation is likely to be delivered close to the impact and will help ensure measures remain in NI waters. There are challenges due to the Northern Ireland Context:

- There is limited space for measures
- Close proximity to international boundaries and the shared waters of Lough Foyle and Carlingford Lough.
- The Good Friday Agreement¹¹ requires the North/South Ministerial Council¹² to facilitate environmental cooperation across the island of Ireland.

ACTION: Recognise the need to align with UK policy - however also recognise transboundary impacts and opportunities in relation to Offshore Wind and agreements for alignment of compensatory measures.

NIMTF notes that all MPA designations except for Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) have been identified for compensation within this framework. ASSIs are similar to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) at the UK level. Whilst we understand that there are overlaps in particular between SPAs and RAMSAR sites with ASSIs, it is odd that these have not been accounted for. They are NI-specific and are likely to have greater interaction with ORE developments through cable landfalls given the limited areas for onshore connectivity.

ACTION: Include ASSI's when identifying potential protected sites for Compensatory Measures.

Northern Ireland is one of the most nature-depleted areas in the world with 12% of assessed species at risk of extinction and 40% of biodiversity in our protected sites not in Favourable status from the State of Nature Report (2023)¹³. The department has been proactive in developing the Seabird Conservation Strategy and Action Plan 2026 - 2035¹⁴, Blue Carbon Action Plan 2025 - 2030¹⁵, MPA Strategy for Northern Ireland's Inshore Region 2025 - 2030¹⁶ and the Elasmobranch Conservation Strategy 2026 - 2035¹⁷, however there is still much work to do to maintain this proactive progress and funding required.

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<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2026-02/MPA%20Strategy%20for%20the%20Northern%20Ireland%20Inshore%20Region%202025-2030.pdf>

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<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2026-09/Elasmobranch%20Conservation%20Strategy%20for%20Northern%20Ireland%202026-2035.pdf>

18 <https://www.ospar.org/work-areas/bdc/marine-protected-areas>

19 <https://www.cbd.int/gbf/targets>

20 <https://moat.cefas.co.uk/summary-of-progress-towards-good-environmental-status/>

21 <https://nimtf.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/nimtf-response-oreap-sea-riaa-consultation.pdf>

Compensatory measures should benefit at the local level rather than being moved elsewhere. NI has an overall designated sea area of 35.5% of both inshore and offshore areas. If the developing guidance is focusing solely on the inshore, which in this scenario it is, then a total of 38% of the inshore area has been designated - however there is still a lack of management plans in place to provide the structure of focusing on what is needed.

This does not provide enough scope for delivering compensation elsewhere in the UK at the expense of the NI MPA Network. Instead of impacting what is already designated and reducing the scope and capacity, we should be ensuring that strategic compensation is established as close to the impacted site as possible to maintain statutory obligations of connectivity, coherence and resilience across the MPA Network, maintaining the work under OSPAR¹⁸.

2. Do you agree with the proposed compensation hierarchy?

NIMTF recognises the tiered system aligns with the regulatory framework in GB. However, Tier 3 would not provide adequate compensation in relation to the outcomes relating to the loss of species and habitats which were designated over a decade ago in most cases under a statutory obligation to the contribution of the UK MPA Network.

NIMTF would explicitly like it to be included for Tiers 2 and 3 that similar features being selected for compensation must already be in 'Unfavourable' condition as part of the Library of Strategic Compensation Measures being developed within Northern Ireland specifically. It should be noted that all prioritisation or selection criteria for Tiers 1 - 3 should be done in conjunction with the MPA Strategy for Northern Ireland's Inshore Region 2025 - 2030¹⁶, the Blue Carbon Action Plan 2025 - 2030¹⁵, the Seabird Conservation Strategy and Action Plan 2026 - 2035¹⁴ and the Elasmobranch Conservation Strategy 2026 - 2035¹⁷ to ensure that efforts target species and habitats which are not meeting statutory obligations such as "Favourable" or "Unfavourable/Recovering" condition. This is important as benefitting protected features which are already in 'Favourable' condition is welcomed, but greater work should be done to address those features which are 'Unfavourable' to enhance progression on meeting the overall statutory national objectives of the UK MPA Network as a whole and the achievement of the statutory objectives of 30by30 at the international level under the Global Biodiversity Framework¹⁹. There will be greater tangible and society benefits from improving a poor status of a feature than merely maintaining another. This would be the same for wider protected area benefits (e.g. Tier 3) where NIMTF would like to see MPAs which have the majority of features in 'Unfavourable' condition be selected for compensation to boost these areas; however we acknowledge that achieving a change in conservation status through Tier 3 will be a greater challenge as there is no guarantee that Tier 3 will be as effective at improving the condition of target species within the MPA Network as Tiers 1 and 2 would achieve. Priority should be given to sites which have full protected features in Unfavourable condition.

²² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/precautionary-principle.html>

²³

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2026-03/Northern%20Ireland%20Environmental%20Principles%20Policy%20Statement%20-%202022%203%2026.PDF>

3. Is the proposed approach to evidencing ecological benefit, proportionality and contribution to the UK Marine Protected Area network sufficiently clear?

NIMTF would like to see greater connection and links to the Blue Carbon Action Plan 2025 - 2030¹⁵ and the MPA Strategy for Northern Ireland's Inshore Region 2025 - 2030¹⁶ to ensure that alignment amongst the actions within these can also be aligned to the contribution to the UK MPA Network as a whole. Additionally, there must be acknowledgement to the UK Marine Strategy²⁰'s 15 indicators to achieve Good Environmental Status and work at earlier stages of the Mitigation Hierarchy should address the development of the 'Anthropogenic Noise' indicator, rather than look to address it within compensation. The use of Acoustic Deterrent Devices should be standard and identified within EIAs for each developing proposal to support established, required thresholds alongside a long-term monitoring programme which supports adaptive management.

NIMTF have acknowledged that whilst it is still unknown whether the "Recommended" or "Refined" Resource Zones will be carried forward, or if a combination of these will be used, which will demonstrate whether some inshore areas will still have the potential for arrays to take place within (see North Channel SAC, lower area) within the development and finalisation of the Offshore Renewable Energy Action Plan's Strategic Environmental Assessment and Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment. For further information, see our response²¹.

4. What additional guidance, examples or evidence requirements would support effective implementation?

On Page 16 and 17, it highlights that "For wider measures in particular (Tier 3) it should be clearly demonstrated how the proposed action will:

- Contribute to recovery or improvement of the UK MPA Network;
- Address relevant environmental pressures; and
- Deliver measurable outcomes over time."

NIMTF would like to ensure that these same principles can be applied to Tier 2 as well as Tier 3 given that Tier 2 aims to explore similar species and/or habitats to the one which is being compensated for, or as close to a similar species. NIMTF would like to ensure that for Tier 2 that proposals should prioritise a similar species which is in "Unfavourable" condition, rather than maintaining "Favourable" condition as this will lead to greater improvement of the UK MPA Network.

On page 17, it states that "Where there is uncertainty, this should be identified and addressed through appropriate measures, such as enhanced monitoring or adaptive management." NIMTF appreciates that uncertainty does still exist for many of these developments and proposals and the impacts on the marine environment, however, given that one of the Environmental Principles relates to the implementation of the "Precautionary Principle²²" which states that where there is uncertainty about the risk of environmental harm, the precautionary principle allows or requires protective measures to be taken without having to wait until the harm materialises. There is a set of factors

shared in every definition of the precautionary principle - existence of danger and scientific uncertainty. As a result, the precautionary principle always deals with potential harm and serves as a tool to bridge uncertain scientific information and a political responsibility. We are pleased to see that these will need to be identified and addressed through the inclusion of “enhanced monitoring” or “adaptive management”, but NIMTF would ask why not both? Monitoring alone has not been found to be an effective management tool in isolation, requiring adaptive management as a result of the monitoring identifying where things are not providing environmentally beneficial outcomes.

5. Does the proposed hierarchy provide sufficient clarity on:

- how to move between tiers; and
- when flexibility, including combining measures across tiers, may be appropriate?

NIMTF appreciates that the Department has set out a requirement that developers **must** move between each Tier and demonstrate that they have evidenced why each Tier cannot work before progressing onwards. **Strategic Compensation** is the last component of the Mitigation Hierarchy and thus developers should be made to demonstrate even before Tier 1 that they have ‘Avoided’, ‘Mitigated’ and ‘Minimised’ where appropriate before moving to Strategic Compensation. Given the updated Environmental Policy Principles Statement (2026)²³, all environmental considerations must be taken into account and this will require all developers to demonstrate adherence to the Mitigation Hierarchy and the Precautionary Principle.

NIMTF welcomes the use of the word ‘package’ when referring to the cumulative Tiers being used as this is a welcome step towards where potential synergies lie - especially between Tiers 1 and 2. Tier 3 should always be used in combination with the previous Tiers to guarantee effectiveness of strategic compensation measures. NIMTF are pleased to see the inclusion of “greater overall ecological benefit to the UK MPA Network” stated for both Tiers 2 and 3, especially as wider ecological benefits have been recognised as potential areas of improvement for the existing MPA Strategy for Northern Ireland’s Inshore Region 2025 - 2030¹⁶ as part of developing MPA Management Plans by 2028/29 under the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP)²⁴.

Regarding moving between Tiers, NIMTF is satisfied that the appropriate criteria for moving between Tiers has been identified, with the above recommendation included that developers will need to demonstrate limited availability. NIMTF would like it to be recognised though that the limiting factor should not be associated simply with the cost of doing the right thing.

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<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2026-01/Environmental%20Improvement%20Plan%20for%20Northern%20Ireland.pdf>

25 <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/council-nature-conservation-and-countryside>

26 <https://www.wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/castle-espie/news/the-brent-are-back>

27 <https://rathlin360.com/nature-and-culture/seabird-centre/>

28 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2022/31/contents/enacted>

29 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/offshore-wind-development-library-of-strategic-compensatory-measures>

The cost of ‘additionality’ of doing more than ‘like for like’ on site recovery costs should not increase the marine licensing costs for a developer so they are not disincentivised from carrying out additional works locally which benefit protected species and habitats. This would also help in encouraging a more wholescale approach to compensatory measures in a similar way to the concepts of biodiversity net gain/marine net gain where it is applied in GB. For further information, please see our response to the Marine Licensing Proposals.

NIMTF would understand that reasonable limitations would include but not be limited to:

- Limited habitat availability
- Limited species availability
- Limited spatial availability

NIMTF would not accept limited resources as a reasonable limitation due to developers being able to pay into the Marine Recovery Fund to discharge their statutory obligations to marine environmental protection to another party - e.g. the MRF Owner.

There is a risk in Northern Ireland, more than in English/UK waters, that it could be easier to use a lower tier, even when a higher tier option is available. This is due to the lack of robustness in the proposals as in England moving between tiers requires the English Regs and approach also requires involvement of the Statutory Nature Conservation Body in moving between tiers to ensure robustness of process and reviewing of evidence. There is no independent environment agency in Northern Ireland to take on this role to the nearest equivalent currently would be the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside (CNCC)²⁵.

6. Do you agree with the proposed approach to:
- additionality;
 - timing of compensation; and
 - flexibility, including overcompensation?

Additionality

NIMTF agrees that **additionality** should be advanced to normal codes of practice. DAERA and the other devolved nations, including the UK Government have a statutory obligation to the UK MPA Network as a whole and ensure that these are protected. The reference to these obligations as “normal practice” are also the statutory obligations which **must be put in place**. For Northern Ireland under the EIP: “By 2028: Develop and **implement** effective NI MPA management and restoration plans, including (i) additional designations to ensure ecologically coherent network, (ii) implementation of management measures. ”.

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<https://www.owic.org.uk/news/the-crown-estate-and-offshore-wind-industry-council-launch-35m-project-to-test-effectiveness-of-strategic-environmental-compensation-measures-around-offshore-wind-developments/>

31 <https://hornseaproject3.co.uk/>

On page 18 it highlights that “If a proposed compensatory measure falls within the scope of normal practice, it may still be considered additional if it can be reasonably expected to accelerate the achievement of a site’s conservation objectives by improving on normal practice.” NIMTF have concerns with this approach as it suggests that something that would ensure achievement of the conservation objectives - which is a statutory requirement for existing MPAs - could be considered additional if it speeds up the process. However, if it can be considered as additional, it could actually be considered as a statutory obligation and included within developing MPA Management Plans for the sites and therefore **would not be classed as additional**. Whilst this would preserve and enhance the respective ecosystem function, NIMTF are not sure if this would be considered additional, even if only the additional environmental benefit is being considered within this scope - ecosystem function from **properly managing MPAs through existing statutory obligations** is not additional - it’s the fundamental basis of the UK MPA Network.

Timing of Compensation

We would support compensatory measures being in place and effective prior to any damage to a protected area/habitat or species. Benefit should come before any harm to a site.

NIMTF understands that some compensation measures will only truly be successful on a seasonal basis - e.g. migratory periods, foraging periods or supporting breeding periods. A perfect example is the migration of around 90% of Brent Geese²⁶, which migrates from Greenland down the east-coast of Northern Ireland towards Carlingford Lough and then down towards the Republic of Ireland. Breeding colonies such as Rathlin Island²⁷, which is the largest breeding colony for Northern Ireland sees flocks of various seabirds over the summer period which will require different timings to those of the Brent Goose. As a result of assessing whether additionality has been considered to be normal practice, that specific timings relating to the area and specific species at the time. It is important that these are scrutinised to ensure that these have been accounted for and whether they have been distinguished between statutory MPA Management, or if they provide additional benefits as outlined above.

Overcompensation

Whilst guidance has not come out on what overcompensation would look like, NIMTF would like to see overcompensation enhanced through additionality where greater benefits can be made as a result of further enhancing the UK MPA Network without compromise that provides greater, societal benefit which has **not** been directly identified through existing MPA Management. **It is vital that any ‘overcompensation’ or additionality does not increase marine licensing fees which would be a disincentive to overcompensate.**

7. Do you agree with the proposed approach to monitoring, uncertainty and adaptive management?

NIMTF would highlight our response to Question 4, where the Environmental Principles Policy Statement for Northern Ireland has been produced and would reference our previous comments regarding the Precautionary Principle. NIMTF are in support of the inclusion of OFW within NI to meet the obligations of the Climate Change (Northern Ireland) Act 2022²⁸ to ensure that there is an energy production mix from offshore renewable energy developments, in particular OFW which is set to make the most contribution.

NIMTF are in support of the use of adaptive management, both as part of the UK MPA Network through statutory measures for existing MPAs and would therefore also welcome the inclusion of adaptive management under the developing OFW Compensatory Measures Guidance. It will always be important to reflect on how effective any choice of action which is taken, to ensure that any management measures are appropriate and still maintain effectiveness.

Funds through the MRF should enable wider monitoring of the marine environment in order to support the adaptive management process providing a greater understanding of the effectiveness of Compensatory measures and the environmental context in which they are being monitored.

Monitoring should also consider the impact not only at site but also at population level as there will be natural shifts, in particular of mobile species due to climate change leading to different densities and the need for climate adaptive decision making.

8. Are the proposed arrangements for approving strategic compensation measures sufficiently clear and transparent? Are the proposed arrangements for approval and assurance of compensatory measures, including the role of the Library of Strategic Compensatory Measures, clear and appropriate?

NIMTF are in support that any measures must be approved by both the DAERA Minister and the Secretary of State, however we also recognise that there needs to be a process in place so that if for any reason there is no functioning government, an approval can be made for example by the DAERA Permanent Secretary with support from CNCC/JNCC. There also needs to be a process if measures are not approved by either party, that a review as to why these measures have not been adopted - should this come to rise and through adaptive management, see these concerns addressed. As previously highlighted, it is welcomed that the route through the different tiers is seen as a “package”, where increased ecological benefit can be gained rather than standalone routes and avenues, as well as the reinforcement of the Environmental Principles Policy Statement for both the Mitigation Hierarchy and the Precautionary Principle.

NIMTF notes that on Page 20 it states “Currently, the library only includes measures relating to benthic habitats and seabirds and if the proposals in this consultation are introduced, the DAERA Minister will consider whether the existing measures in the library may be used in the Northern

Ireland inshore region.” The current list is very short and there is only one active option (for designation of benthic habitat)²⁹. NIMTF have concerns here that if there are existing measures within the current Library of Compensation Measures may not be appropriate that these would get approved without further discussion, given that other eNGOs at the national level have raised concerns with some measures being proposed that do not provide direct benefit to the MPA Network - e.g. removal of marine litter from beaches. Whilst this example is welcomed to help meet Good Environmental Status, this would fall under existing MPA Management Plans for those MPAs and would not then fall under a reasonable compensatory measure as this classifies as **normal practice**.

9. Do you agree that Northern Ireland should utilise the UK Marine Recovery Fund rather than establish a separate Northern Ireland fund?

Yes, it is expected that OFW proposals and developments will intersect with the MPA Network through the use of cable corridors, based on the limited spatial availability within our marine area. As a result, there needs to be a mechanism which is aligned to the rest of the UK that does not undermine the existing MPA Network and promotes both sustainable development and tackles the climate and biodiversity crisis. Utilising the same UK Marine Recovery Fund would ensure that each devolved nation is adhering to standardised guidance which can have slight devolution amendments but are all working towards the same guidelines and guidance. Given that the UK as a whole has obligations to tackling both the twin climate and biodiversity crisis and the links to the UK MPA Network, it makes sense that the approach is also aligned through the Marine Recovery Fund.

It is vital that there should be Northern Ireland representation on the Collaboration on Offshore Wind and Strategic Compensation (COWSC)³⁰ that decides which measures are added to the Library of compensation measures in order to ensure that the fund also works for Northern Ireland.

10. Are there any Northern Ireland-specific considerations that should be reflected in the operation of the Marine Recovery Fund?

NIMTF would urge that strong links be made with the recommendations of the Ulster Wildlife under their Climate Smart MPA Report (2026) which highlights where some MPAs within the inshore region have been identified as climate refugia - where areas remain relatively stable to shifts in climatic variation - and areas of climate hotspots - where areas are subject to drastic changes in climatic variation.

Northern Ireland looks potentially to be the last devolved nation to receive OFW proposals when this guidance comes out, which whilst this puts us on the backfoot to some extent, it also enables the region to take lessons learned appropriately from areas where developments have been placed and strategic compensation has had difficult barriers to overcome - e.g. Hornsea III³¹; whilst other instances where strategic compensation cannot cover the environmental damage - e.g. Berwick Bank³². If **adaptive management** is being planned, then this should also apply to lessons learned from across the UK to contribute to the UK MPA Network and maintain the statutory obligations.

Northern Ireland should also explore the potential of how to work with the Republic of Ireland as species in particular seabirds, marine mammals, elasmobranchs and larval dispersal of benthic species do not recognise jurisdictional boundaries and there are proposed developments which could have transboundary impacts already. We recognise that ROI does not have similar policy proposals in place yet however it should be something that is discussed at the North South Ministerial Council.

11. Are the proposed governance arrangements, including the potential use of a public compensation register, clear and sufficient to support confidence in the system?

Whilst NIMTF welcomes the roles of COWSC in developing and implementing strategic compensatory measures, as we have highlighted in our previous responses to questions around establishing and agreeing strategic compensatory measures for OFW. Again, It is vital that there should be Northern Ireland representation on COWSC that decides which measures are added to the Library of compensation measures in order to ensure that the fund also works for Northern Ireland. Once again, it has been highlighted on Page 23 that “Decisions on which measures are added to the Library ultimately rest with the Defra Minister, or the relevant Devolved Government Minister.”

NIMTF agrees that DAERA is responsible for statutory nature conservation functions and their role amongst the MNROG has accountability to the delivery of marine nature conservation strategies and plans which have been produced by the Department - these would include the MPA Strategy for Northern Ireland’s Inshore Region 2025 - 2030¹⁶, the Blue Carbon Action Plan 2025 - 2030¹⁵, Seabird Conservation Strategy and Action Plan 2026 - 2035¹⁴ and the Elasmobranch Conservation Strategy 2026 - 2035¹⁷. It will be through this forum that assessment of the objectives of the UK MPA Network, or NI’s contribution to objectives identified within the EIP will be progressed.

Public Compensation Register

NIMTF are in agreement that a Public Compensation Register be set up to track which compensatory measures have been used, as well as identify potential prioritisation against species which require greater efforts to bring them into ‘Favourable’ condition.

12. Do you agree with the proposed approach to reviewing the guidance and associated policy framework, and do you have any other comments on the proposals?

NIMTF agrees that the proposed approach of reviewing guidance and associated policy framework should be done - especially as proposals consider the use of adaptive management and enhanced monitoring. NIMTF understands that the typical review process for legislative pieces is 6-years, to align with the existing monitoring and reporting periods, however to ensure effective and adaptive management is in place, there should be a review process around the 3-year mark to assess any potential changes which existing monitoring as identified and where this should be further encouraged or implemented.

NIMTF once again thanks DAERA for the opportunity to provide comment on the development of OFW Compensatory Measures Guidance - given the opportunities here to tackle both the climate and biodiversity crisis.

For further information, please contact the NIMTF Officer, Robert Walsh on robert.walsh@nimtf.org.