

EAC Underwater Cultural Heritage Working Group (EAC UCH WG) Progress Report to the EAC Board 2017

The UCH WG keeps in touch mainly by email and the members of the UCH WG have continued to correspond and to exchange information on developments in their respective countries and to monitor initiatives at EU level. Some members of the WG have also met informally at various international conferences connected with underwater cultural heritage.

As reported last year the Green Paper on ***Marine knowledge 2020 From Seabed Mapping to Ocean Forecasting*** has led to a number of initiatives promoting blue growth. Initiatives such as this are important for ensuring that underwater cultural heritage is taken into consideration by government agencies and departments when dealing with the wide range of developments that are currently taking place aimed at exploiting the marine area for both industry, fishing and tourism.

The **2014 Directive on Maritime Spatial Planning** (MSP) in member states requires EU Countries to draw up spatial plans for their waters, with the aim of better coordinating the various activities that take place at sea. It is proposed that in 2017 the members of the working group will provide an update to the EAC board on developments in this area for their respective countries.

As stated in the website for the Marine Spatial planning directive

"Maritime (or marine) spatial plans are the marine parallels to land-use plans, in that they regulate the uses and activities allowed within a specific geographic area, except that they apply to areas at sea, rather than on land. Under the new directive, EU states are required to transpose the new rules into their national laws by 2016, and draw up national maritime spatial plans by 2021."

In the press release announcing the adoption of the new legislation, the European Commission also wrote:

"In coastal and maritime areas, many activities compete for the same space and resources: fishing grounds, aquaculture farms, marine protected areas exist alongside maritime infrastructures such as cables, pipelines, shipping lanes and oil, gas and wind installations. The new Directive will help avoid potential conflicts between such diverse uses and create a stable environment attractive to investors, thereby contributing to sustainable growth."

It is important for the UCH WG members to liaise with each other on this initiative so that there is a level of consistency in the spatial plans drawn up for each country

It was noted last year that the proposed parallel directive on integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) has run into certain legal obstacles which have caused a delay in its implementation. **Where Now?**

The UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage .

Over 50 countries have ratified the Convention on the Protection of UCH. Many countries that have not ratified are using the rules in the annex and the manual as examples of best practice in dealing with the investigation of underwater cultural heritage sites.

A problem facing many countries is one of reduced or stretched resources in the face of unprecedented growth in development in the marine environment. The effect of Climate change is having an impact on the seabed and coastal zone as a result of increased storm

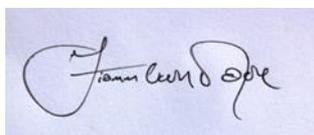
activity and in Ireland, for example, this was especially evident in the storms that uncovered a wealth of material from the Spanish Armada wreck site at Streedagh on the West Coast in 2015 and a number of newly exposed wrecks and other archaeological features in the intertidal zone around the coast. There is a growing threat to protected wreck sites from salvage vessels and treasure hunters and this is an area that is difficult to regulate or police without a certain level of international cooperation, which the UCH WG can facilitate through the contacts already established over the years the working group has been in existence.

While the EAC UCH WG continues to provide a forum for communication between colleagues across Europe on a range of topics where there is need for discussion on the approaches to development impacts and mitigation it remains, however, the view of the UCH WG members that more regular meetings should be held, at least once a year, as there are a number of major initiatives underway across Europe that will have an impact on or need to take account of UCH. Closer contact between the UCH WG members may also facilitate coordinated formal responses through the EAC Board when major policy documents are issued by the EU Commission.

It is proposed here that the UCH WG members will provide updates to the EAC Board in 2017 on the following:

- implementation of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Directive (ECZM)
- The Marine Spatial Planning Directive
- The application of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage
- Recent significant discoveries arising out of development or other impacts on Underwater Cultural Heritage
- The threat to UCH salvors and treasure hunters
- Climate Change: Update on how Countries are responding to the 2015 Paris Climate change agreement requiring each country to devise National Climate Change Adaptation Plans

The UCH WG is also aware of the new rules being brought in in relation to the working groups and in particular the need to set out an agenda with specific objectives and targets to be met within a given time frame and for regular reports to the Board of the EAC. The UCH WG will liaise over the next few weeks with a view to reviewing how we operate, updating the web page and submitting an agenda for the next year to the EAC Board in keeping with the new rules for working groups.



Fionnbarr Moore
Chair EAC UCH WG
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