

CASE STUDY

MarinePlan research project: fostering ecosystem-based Marine Spatial Planning in the Celtic Sea





The Marine Institute was a partner in the EU HORIZON MarinePlan project which ran from 2022 to 2025. The project researched the evidence base for implementing ecosystem-based Marine Spatial Planning through the development of decision support systems.





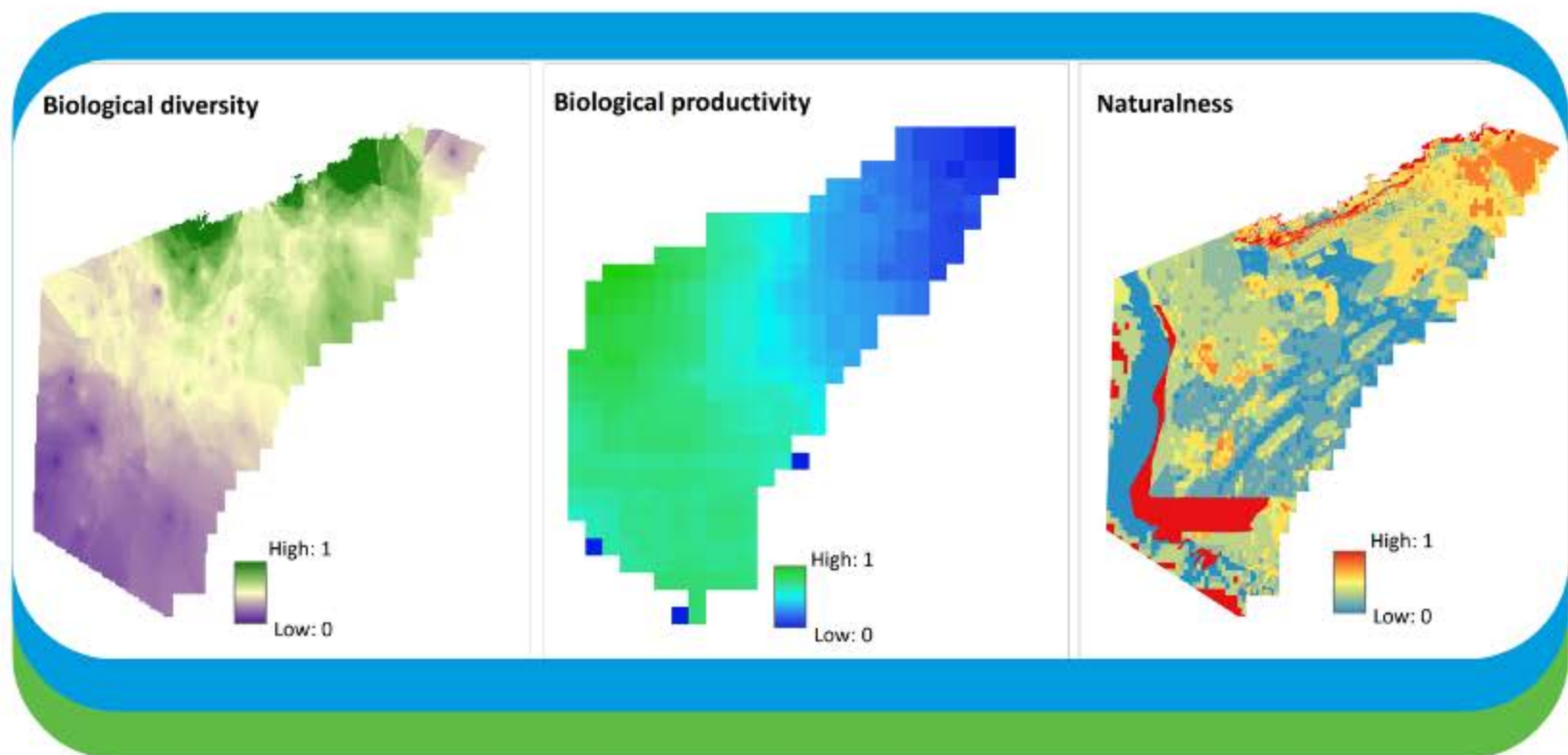
The project brought together 18 international partners and was applied in eight planning sites, with the Celtic Sea chosen as Ireland's case study.



The Celtic Sea, off Ireland's south coast, supports important fisheries, shipping, aquaculture, and is a priority area for offshore wind development. Yet with less than 3% of the Celtic Sea and less than 10% of Ireland's Exclusive Economic Zone under spatial protection, Ireland lags on its 30x30 biodiversity target (to protect or conserve at least 30% of the planet's land and ocean by 2030).

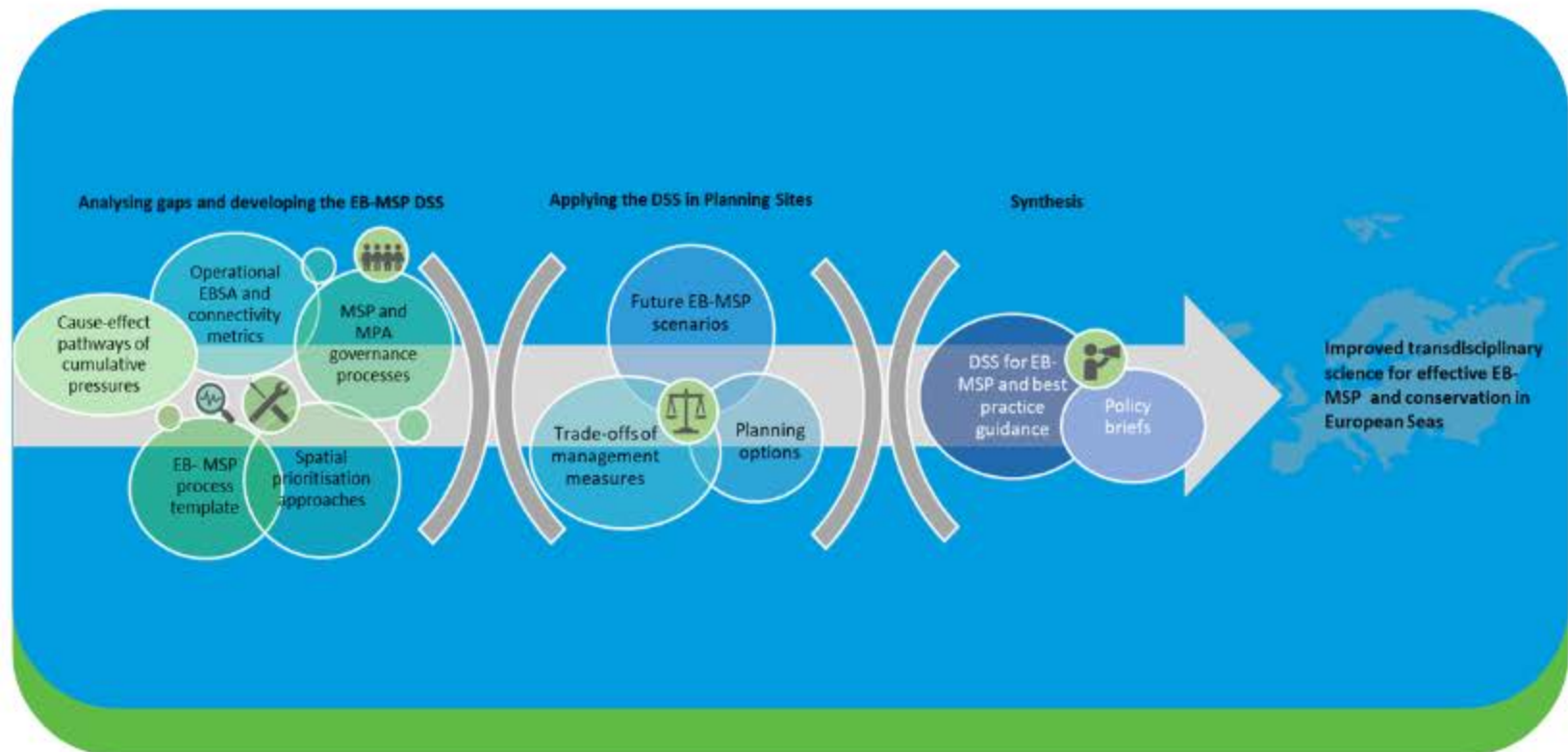
The challenge is clear: how to safeguard biodiversity and ecosystems while allowing sustainable exploitation.





In the Celtic Sea region, the Marine Institute project team applied Ecologically or Biologically Significant marine Areas criteria to identify ecologically important areas, map fishing activities to assess overlaps and conflicts, and integrate these with Offshore Wind Farm proposals to explore trade-offs and synergies for co-benefits in the Celtic Sea.





Several Decision Support Systems and tools were developed and applied with stakeholders during the project, to guide a science-led, inclusive decision-making process.





By combining diverse knowledge from State and non-State groups (e.g. policymakers, managers, eNGOs, researchers), and fostering inclusive dialogue, this project created a transparent platform for evidence-based policy development.





Through MarinePlan, Ireland now has access to robust scientific knowledge, cutting-edge decision support tools, and governance insights to deliver ecosystem-based marine management.





The application of the process to the Celtic Sea shows how evidence-based, stakeholder-driven planning can address Ireland's most pressing marine challenges while providing a model for European best practice.



Want to learn more about
the impact of this project?



Read the Marine Institute's **Annual Impact Report**
to see how marine spatial planning is helping to deliver
ecosystem-based marine management.