Why multi-use matters

From pilot to practice: enabling multi-use through Maritime Spatial Planning

Erwin Coolen · 24th November 2026



INDUSTRY VOICE · FROM PILOT TO PRACTICE

Why multi-use matters

Three transitions compete for one sea

- **Energy:** offshore wind is scaling up, and every new gigawatt needs a user.
- **Food:** seaweed, shellfish and other marine protein need new space.
- **Nature:** marine ecosystems must be restored and enhanced, not only protected.
- **On land:** space is scarce and the grid is congested. All three transitions wait for the same bottlenecks.

TODAY

Demand sits far from supply and congests the grid.

NOTA RUIMTE · 16 NOV 2026

Bring energy users to the energy producers, onshore at landfall.

ECHT · ONE STEP FURTHER

Do not bring every electron ashore.

Bring suitable energy consumers to offshore production.

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGE

The system is not adaptive

Rules exclude what is not labelled energy, food or nature, even if it enables them.

A non-adaptive system

Area passports and procedures use fixed categories, not changing system needs.

Enablers are excluded

Flexible demand, data, logistics, security and shared infrastructure fall between domains.

Contribution is undervalued

The system assesses the activity label, not the value added to society and nature.

Innovation comes too late

New users must fit after layouts, permits and safety zones are already fixed.

We exclude the enablers, then wonder why the transitions do not scale.

ECHT
— regie in transitie —

MANIFEST FOR MULTI-USE · FOR MSP PLANNERS

Do not exclude. Set requirements.

1. **Allow enabling activities**
   Admit users that demonstrably strengthen energy, food or nature, even when their core activity has another label.

2. **Set adaptive entry requirements**
   Assess safety, spatial efficiency, compatibility, shared infrastructure and future adaptability.

3. **Require societal and ecological value**
   Make public value and nature enhancement conditions for access, operation and renewal.

4. **Design for change from day one**
   Reserve interfaces, space and governance so new users can enter throughout the area lifecycle.

Read the full article
echt.community

START NOW

Designate one North Sea area

where energy demand, production, food and nature are planned as one adaptive system.