



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

MEETING, DOCUMENT

Marine Planning Stakeholder Reference Group meeting: 2 October 2024

Minutes of the Marine Planning Stakeholder Reference Group meeting of 2 October 2024.

First published: 8 November 2024

Last updated: 8 November 2024

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Attendees

Eluned Jones (Chair, Welsh Government), Megan Nicholas and Morgan Commins (Welsh Government), Charlotte Brill (Cefas / Welsh Government), Julian Whitewright (Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales), John Wrottesley (European Subsea Cables Association), Emma Thorpe and Olivia Ross (Joint Nature Conservation Committee), Rowena Haines and Shaun Gaffey (RSPB), Chloe Wenman (Marine Conservation Society), Gareth McIlquham, Natalie Queffurus and Allan Pitt (Arup), Tessa Marshall (Wales Environment Link), Jean-Francois Dulong (Welsh Local Government Association), Nick Salter and Helen Croxson (Maritime and Coastguard Agency), Emma Harrison and Tristan Bromley (The Crown Estate), Penny Nelson (WWF Cymru), Helen Bloomfield & Lucie Skates (Natural Resources Wales), Jim Evans (Welsh Fishermen's Association - Cymdeithas Pysgotwyr Cymru), Claire Stephenson (Associated British Ports), Jennifer Godwin (Seabed User and Developer Group), Stephen Jay (University of Liverpool), Mark Simmonds (British Ports Association).

1. Welcome and introductions

Chair, Welsh Government.

Eluned welcomed new members and guests to the Marine Planning Stakeholder Reference Group (MPSRG) and initiated a round table of introductions.

2. Tribute to Gill Bell

Chloe Wenman, MCS.

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Chloe gave a few words in commemoration of former MPSRG member Gill Bell, who passed away earlier this year. Chloe described Gill as “incredibly kind” and a “fierce champion for the ocean”, always advocating people to “remember marine”. Chloe highlighted that Gill was “determined to see our seas recover”, and that her “legacy continues”.

3. Independent Review of Marine Planning Approaches

Arup.

Eluned gave a brief overview of the Independent Review of Marine Planning Approaches, which will inform considerations on further developing the marine planning framework in Wales to provide greater spatial clarity and direction for development, while protecting and enhancing the marine environment. She introduced Arup, who have been commissioned to deliver the review.

Arup presented some slides on the scope of the independent review and the proposed approach, including a literature review and an outline of the approach to stakeholder engagement. The literature review will consider relevant Welsh legislation and policy frameworks and include a case study analysis of relevant spatial / sectoral considerations and other national and international marine planning systems. This will be complemented by stakeholder engagement, focused on interviews with members of the MPSRG and a wider stakeholder workshop. A second stakeholder workshop will follow early in 2025 to present initial findings. The review is due to report by the end of March 2025.

Eluned invited MPSRG members to comment and / or ask questions. Issues discussed included:

- queries on how the findings of the review will be considered and addressed

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by Welsh Government;

- highlighting that cross-border international cooperation is an important consideration;
- suggestions for stakeholders to engage with and offers of assistance with the literature review.

Eluned invited members to provide consent for their contact details to be shared with Arup for the purposes of this review. Consent was captured via a voting system.

4. Update on Strategic Resource Areas (SRAs)

Eluned Jones, Welsh Government.

Eluned provided a short overview of:

- the aim, nature and intended effect of SRAs, together with the process for their introduction;
- proposed SRAs for Tidal Stream Energy and the recent consultation;
- the key findings and outcomes of this consultation; and
- next steps: Welsh Government aims to finalise and publish a Marine Planning Notice to introduce SRAs for Tidal Stream Energy by the end of 2024, subject to Ministerial agreement, and also plans to consider developing further potential SRAs for other sectors.

Eluned highlighted that the slides presented on SRAs will be circulated to MPSRG members following the meeting.

5. Subsea Cables and Spatial Squeeze

John Wrottesley, European Subsea Cable Association (ESCA).

John presented on Subsea Cables and Spatial Squeeze, including discussing:

- different types of cables (such as telecommunications and power cables), what they do and why they are important;
- subsea cable resilience and associated risks, such as accidental damage;
- the importance of strategic policy with an outward and rounded international view;
- the benefits of cooperation, engagement and good cable awareness e.g., to reduce risk of damage and to enhance potential opportunities for co-existence;
- the role of ESCA e.g., to represent industry as a common voice for seabed asset owners in an increasingly busy and crowded ocean space;
- the historical and evolving relationship between fishing and cables, which is becoming more challenging due to increased competition for space;
- the development of cabling and fisheries co-existence guidelines; trust and honesty are key – coexistence does not have to be about prioritisation; and
- the need to consider other sectors when thinking about coexistence between cabling and fisheries.

MPSRG members then engaged in an open conversation with John on this topic.

6. Update on ENV_01 (resilient marine ecosystems) and ENV_07 (fish species and habitats)

Megan Nicholas, Welsh Government.

Megan gave an update on work to develop guidance on Welsh National Marine Plan (WNMP) policy ENV_01 “Resilient marine ecosystems”, including information on:

- the policy context, aim and intended effect in practice; and
- the development of a Technical Statement to provide further clarity, definitions and a good practice framework to guide and support applicants and decision makers.

Megan then gave a brief overview of work to scope potential guidance on WNMP policy ENV_07 “Fish species and habitats”.

This was followed by a brief discussion on this work.

7. Any other business

All

There was no other business. Eluned thanked members for attending and for engaging in today’s meeting.

Meeting end.

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