



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Marine Planning Stakeholder Reference Group meeting: 20 June 2024

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Contents

Attendees

1. Welcome

2. Update on marine planning

3. Optimisation and marine planning

4. Update on the Whole of Seabed programme

5. Marine Conservation Society update on marine planning for nature report

6. Any other business and next meeting.

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Attendees

Eluned Jones (Chair, Welsh Government), Elen King & Megan Nicholas (Welsh Government), Adrian Judd (Cefas), Helen Bloomfield, Karen Perrow & Lee Murray (NRW), Tristian Bromley & Emma Harrison (The Crown Estate), Noemi Donigiewicz (Seafish), Helen Croxson & Nick Salter (Maritime and Coastguard Agency), Rowena Haines (RSPB), Jim Evans (Welsh Fishermans Association), Ben Smith (Wildlife Trust Wales), Emma Thorpe & Olivia Ross (Joint Nature Conservation Committee), Jay Sheppard & Tom Hill (Marine Energy Wales), Jonathan Monk (Milford Haven Port Authority), Dr Julian Whitewright (Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales)

1. Welcome

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

2. Update on marine planning

Eluned introduced Paper 1: Current and developing marine planning documents and tools.

Eluned highlighted the recently closed consultation on **potential Strategic Resource Areas** and thanked everyone who responded. Welsh Government is currently considering responses received and will publish a Summary of Responses in due course.

Eluned thanked members who offered case studies for inclusion in forthcoming

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guidance on Welsh National Marine Plan (WNMP) policy ENV_01 (resilience marine ecosystems). She also noted that Welsh Government is starting to look at how we could support implementation of WNMP policy ENV_07 (fish habitats and species).

Elen King noted that the next statutory three-year report on the effectiveness of the WNMP is due in November 2025 and that we're keen to speak to stakeholders to hear their views.

3. Optimisation and marine planning

Eluned introduced and provided a short overview of: Paper 2: Discussion Paper – Optimisation and Marine Planning.

Eluned explained that the paper builds on discussions from the March meeting of the MPSRG about how we can continue to develop the marine planning framework in the context of increasing spatial demands on our marine area. She highlighted that Huw Irranca-Davies MS, the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change & Rural Affairs, has agreed to commission an independent review of marine planning approaches to inform thinking on these issues. Paper 2 gives an overview of the anticipated scope for the review. Paper 2 also aims to support a wider discussion with MPSRG members on potential key evidence needs for developing greater spatial specificity within the marine planning framework.

MPSRG members engaged in an open discussion on Paper 2.

Key points raised included:

- Members asked about timescales for progressing work on the various issues outlined in Paper 2. Eluned noted that Welsh Government hopes to

commence the independent review during the autumn. Eluned also highlighted Welsh Ministers' commitment to working through the framework established by the Welsh National Marine Plan (WNMP) to incrementally develop increased spatial understanding and clarity. She highlighted recent work, including the mapping of proposed Strategic Resource Areas and associated resource mapping, as examples of this.

- Members emphasised the importance of understanding opportunities for co-existence, citing co-existence as a key approach to optimise value and use of marine space.
- Members discussed the significance of mapping key fisheries areas and iVMS data.

4. Update on the Whole of Seabed programme

Tristan Bromley, The Crown Estate (TCE), updated on the Whole of Seabed (WoS) programme.

Tristan provided some background to the WoS programme and discussed the spatial analysis and mapping methodologies being used. He gave an overview of progress to date, noting that first versions of spatial analyses have been completed for specific sectors, including nature (which addresses aspects of its recovery, protection and enhancement). He noted regular engagement with Welsh Government is taking place, and highlighted potential for WoS to feed into Welsh Government's work to provide greater spatial clarity and optimise benefit through the marine planning framework (see item 3 above). Tristan noted that stakeholder engagement is commencing on the spatial analyses completed to date through WoS, alongside continued iteration of the underpinning evidence base. He emphasised that WoS is an iterative programme, which is flexible to change.

MPSRG members thanked Tristan for his presentation and noted the following

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points:

- Members noted that sight of WoS mapping outputs will be key, for example in understanding the potential scope of future marine renewable energy development and associated cabling, and how this is considered within wider marine planning work. Both Tristan and Eluned confirmed that Welsh Government and TCE are engaging closely on WoS work and mapping outputs.
- Members discussed the use of a hexagon grid for WoS spatial analysis.
- Members welcomed the collaborative approach being taken by Welsh Government and TCE, noting opportunities for developing shared understanding of marine space usage and constraints and opportunities for future use.

5. Marine Conservation Society update on marine planning for nature report

Chloe Wenman, Marine Conservation Society (MCS) was unable to attend the meeting due to illness. Eluned relayed a written update provided by Chloe. The MCS is procuring a piece of work to produce a technical report, containing recommendations on marine planning approaches to best protect, recover, restore and enhance the marine environment, and support the delivery of environmental commitments and targets. MCS's aim is for this work to complement and feed into the independent review of marine planning approaches being progressed by Welsh Government.

6. Any other business and next meeting.

There was no other business.

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Eluned noted that the next meeting will be held in the early autumn (date to be confirmed).

Meeting end.

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