

Marine Planning Stakeholder Reference Group (MPSRG)

10 December 2019



Attendees

John Hamer, Eluned Jones & Rebecca Rees (Welsh Government), **Adrian Judd & Rachel Mulholland** (Cefas), **Mark Russell** (Mineral Producers Association), **Kirsty Lindenbaum, Lucie Skates, Harriet Robinson, Karen Perrow & Helen Bloomfield** (NRW), **Pete Barham** (SUDG), **David Jones** (Marine Energy Wales), **Clare Reed** (Wales Environment Link), **Michael Igoe** (Chamber of Shipping), **Mike Butterfield & Phil Horton** (RYA), **Abby Haines** (MMO), **Jillian Whyte** (JNCC), **Rosie Kelly & Michelle Moore** (Crown Estate).

1. The first Welsh National Marine Plan (WNMP) was published and adopted on 12 November 2019 by the Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs. Focus has now moved to supporting Relevant Public Authorities (RPA) and others implement the Plan. Implementation Guidance is being produced and will be published in due course. The group were supportive of publication without consultation if appropriate.
2. Following WNMP adoption a webinar was held with the Marine Planning Decision Maker's Group (MPDMG) to discuss plan implementation. Engagement with RPAs was reported to be going well and various RPA bilateral meetings were planned throughout December and into 2020.
3. Attendees asked how Welsh Government would ensure the plan was being applied in practice and how this would be assessed. The more formal aspect of understanding plan implementation effectiveness will be through the monitoring and reporting cycle. Welsh Government expected progress with plan implementation to develop over time. The importance of a regulator clearly setting out their expectations to applicants at an early stage was highlighted. A WNMP Monitoring and Reporting Framework will be published in the New Year and a sub group of the MPDMG is inputting to this work. Welsh Government has let a contract to develop indicators based on the framework. Welsh Government are also looking at relevant baseline data and is progressing a contract related to the value of Welsh seas.
4. Welsh Government are progressing work to support plan implementation through a spatial approach and have convened sectoral Expert panels to inform thinking on Strategic Resource Area (SRA) identification. In the first instance the focus is on Aggregates, Aquaculture, Tidal Stream Energy and Wave Energy resources and considering the merits of a case for proceeding with SRA identification.
5. Work with the expert panels will conclude in early 2020 and MPSRG's role will be to oversee the work and provide a 'sense check' before advice is provided to the Minister for consideration. There was an open invitation for members to join the Expert panels. If a decision is taken to develop SRAs, a Marine Planning Notice would be progressed, as set out in the WNMP.

6. In parallel to the SRA considerations, work is being undertaken to update the marine planning evidence base in terms of understanding sector specific opportunities and constraints. The work is being progressed through an EMFF project led by ABPMer alongside related work being undertaken by CEFAS. Multi-beam survey outputs from the ABPMer study were presented to the group. NRW are holding workshops for early 2020 to feed into the developing constraints analysis and mapping work.
7. The Crown Estate (TCE) gave a presentation on their Round 4 leasing, for offshore wind. TCE leasing activities covered the seabed of England, Wales and Northern Ireland out to 12 nautical miles and the next phase (Invitation to tender) would start in 2020, where projects would come forward.
8. There was an update on the recently established Consenting Strategic Advisory Group (CSAG) for marine renewable development which is being supported by Welsh Government. The focus of the group is to encourage a collaborative and strategic approach to marine renewable consenting. The group has considered recommendations from the recent ORJIP review commissioned by WG on *supporting good practice in consenting for tidal stream and wave technologies in Wales*. The report findings were noted to be similar to work previously developed by Marine Energy Wales. The focus now is on development of an action plan to support meaningful progress in this area.
9. There was also an update from Natural Resources Wales on Area Statements which are due for publication in March 2020.
10. Members provided feedback on progress to date and were positive and supportive of the final WNMP and considered they felt fully involved in how it had developed. Members commented that “after five years’ worth of work there was a good compromise between stakeholders” and “a lot of people contributed successfully to this group and can continue to provide meaningful contribution”. A positive feature of the process was noted as being iterative and organic in nature.

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