



MARINE CONSERVATION ZONE PROJECT, WALES NEWSLETTER 1

This newsletter provides the latest information on the Marine Conservation Zone Project, Wales and how stakeholders will be involved. It will be a regular feature, providing up to date project news.

If you have any queries, please e-mail the Welsh Assembly Government Marine Team: marine@wales.gsi.gov.uk.

First some background....

The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 gives Welsh Ministers new powers to better protect and manage the marine environment to help Wales contribute to achieving the vision of clean seas, that support vibrant economies and healthy functioning ecosystems that are biologically diverse, productive and resilient, while being sensitively used and responsibly managed. The High Level Marine Objectives¹ for the UK marine area set out the first step towards achieving this vision.

The powers include:

- a new system of marine planning that will encompass all key marine activities and will for the first time consolidate and explain the policies relating to the marine area, both inshore and offshore. The marine planning system will guide and direct decision makers and sea users towards a more sustainable use of the sea; ensuring a strong link between policy and individual developments and activities. The UK Marine Policy Statement² will be the first part of the new system of marine planning being introduced around the UK. The Statement will set out the policy framework for our seas at a UK level and provide the context for developing Marine Plans, which will provide more detailed policy and spatial guidance at a country or regional level. Wales will be responsible for developing a marine plan or plans for the Welsh inshore and offshore area and the Welsh Assembly Government intends to consult later this year on options for spatial planning in Welsh waters;
- a new marine licensing system that consolidates and modernises the existing consenting regimes which regulate marine activities and developments – the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 and the

¹ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/consmanagement/marinefisheries/marinepolicy/highlevelobjectives/?lang=en>.

² <http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/environmentandcountryside/premarinepolicy/?lang=en>.

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Coast Protection Act 1949. The aim is to remove the complexity and overlap which has developed over the years and enable a more streamlined, transparent and effective consenting process in Wales. The intention is to introduce the new system from April 2011. The Welsh Assembly Government has consulted on the general principles that should underpin the new system and will be consulting on detailed regulations later this year; and

- a new mechanism for conserving marine flora or fauna, habitats or types of habitat or features of geological or geomorphological interest through the designation of Marine Conservation Zones – which will be a new type of Marine Protected Area. These sites together with existing management tools will contribute towards enhancing biodiversity and so promoting healthy functioning and resilient marine ecosystems. ***This newsletter focuses on how Wales intends to use this new mechanism.***

MARINE CONSERVATION ZONES IN WALES

The Welsh Assembly Government's consultation paper 'Protecting Welsh Seas - A draft strategy for marine protected areas in Wales' (September 2009)³ included the proposed approach to using the new Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) mechanism. Wales already has a significant number of existing Marine Protected Areas but, in order to have an ecologically coherent network, giving a high level of protection to a small number of ecologically important sites is desirable in order to promote healthy functioning and resilient marine ecosystems. The approach is therefore to use the MCZ mechanism to designate some sites with high levels of protection. The plan is to be in a position to identify sites for designation by 2012.

The consultation responses are being considered and will be summarised and put on the Welsh Assembly Government website, together with a final version of the strategy later this year.

Unlike European designated sites, the process for identifying and designating MCZs may take into account social and economic considerations.

Our intention is to take into account social and economic considerations in order to ensure that sites are, as far as possible, chosen to maximise ecological, social and economic benefits while minimising any conflicts with the different uses of the sea.

How the MCZ Project, Wales will Work

The Welsh Assembly Government has established a Steering Group and a Technical Advisory Group and has asked the Wales Coastal & Maritime Partnership to establish a Stakeholder and Citizen Engagement Group.

The Steering Group provides the overall direction for the project, ensuring it delivers the aims and objectives to the required milestones. The Steering Group will make the final decisions and recommendations required throughout the process, for example on the final site selection criteria and methodology. Membership of this

³ <http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/environmentandcountryside/premarinepolicy/?lang=en>.

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Group is drawn from a senior strategic level within the Assembly Government and from those public bodies that have a direct role in relation to designation and advice on nature conservation and socio-economic matters in Wales; the Countryside Council for Wales, the Environment Agency and the Welsh Local Government Association.

The Technical Advisory Group is the operational arm of the project providing the technical and specialist advice (ecological and socio-economic) to the process. This includes such things as the development of site selection guidance, data collection and data analysis to inform site selection and options for potential sites based on the guidance and data. Membership of this Group is drawn from technical experts across the Welsh Assembly Government, the Countryside Council for Wales, the Environment Agency, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, the Centre for Environment, Fish and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS), Seafish, the Crown Estate and academia.

The Stakeholder and Citizen Engagement Group comes under the auspices of the Wales Coastal and Maritime Partnership. Its main role is to advise the Steering Group on how best to engage key stakeholders and the citizens of Wales, to help raise general awareness and to act as a channel to feed views to and from key stakeholders into the project. The Group's role is not to make recommendations itself on the suitability of potential sites but to make sure, as far as possible, that the views of all key stakeholders are fed into the process and so inform decisions. Membership of this Group spans both industry and environmental interests and members have been chosen by their ability to cascade to wider networks.

Because of these membership networks, the Group should capture a wide range of stakeholders in Wales and beyond. However it is inevitable that there will be some gaps and therefore the Welsh Assembly Government will engage directly with some stakeholders.

Engagement Timetable

We are committed to ensuring that stakeholder interests are represented throughout and that the sites that emerge for formal consultation will already have been informed by and take into account a wide range of stakeholder views. We therefore plan to have comprehensive informal and pre-consultation engagement as a key element of the process before consulting formally on proposed sites. Formal consultation is not expected until late 2011.

We plan a staged approach to engagement, initially focusing on raising awareness of the aims and objectives of the project and the arrangements for managing the process in Wales. As more detail emerges - for example selection guidance, initial draft site options - we will move to more interactive engagement with individual sectors, such as holding public meetings and workshop events.

An outline engagement timetable for 2010 – 2011 can be found overleaf.

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OUTLINE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT TIMETABLE 2010-2011

WHAT	WHEN	WHO
<p>Inform stakeholders about the MCZ Project Wales and the stakeholder engagement process, using the Wales Coastal and Maritime Partnership (WCMP) and the Stakeholder & Citizen Engagement Group (SCEG) networks, and other networks where appropriate.</p> <p>Issue Newsletter 1.</p>	<p>Mid March 2010</p>	<p>WCMP Officer SCEG Members WAG</p>
<p>Engage with stakeholders on site selection guidance, using the WCMP and SCEG networks, and other networks where appropriate.</p> <p>Inform stakeholders of site selection guidance.</p> <p>Provide feedback to the Technical Advisory Group and Steering Group on any comments received from stakeholders.</p>	<p>June 2010</p> <p>Sept 2010</p>	<p>SCEG Members WAG</p>
<p>Engage with stakeholders on initial draft options for sites, using the WCMP and SCEG networks, and other networks where appropriate.</p> <p>Inform stakeholders of options and seek feedback. To include series of regional meetings and workshops.</p> <p>Provide feedback to the Technical Advisory Group and Steering Group on key stakeholder messages.</p> <p><i>This engagement phase will be iterative as options become refined as a result of stakeholder feedback. Stakeholders will have the chance to comment at each stage.</i></p>	<p>Summer 2010 – April 2011</p> <p>Summer 2010 - February 2011</p> <p>Ongoing from Summer 2010- March 2011</p>	<p>SCEG Members WAG</p>