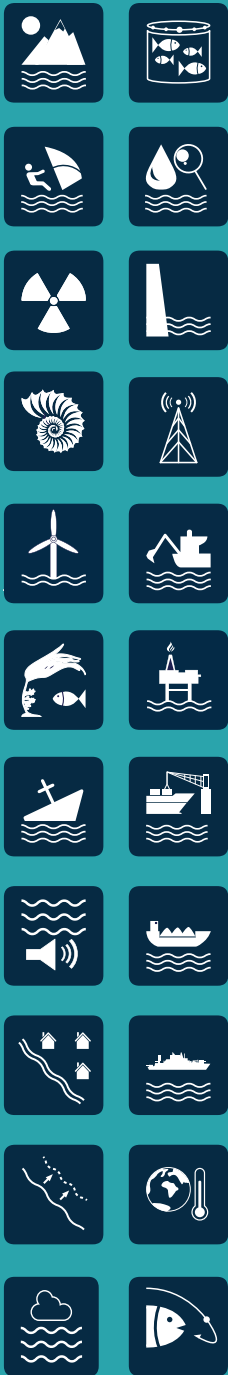


Marine Planning for Welsh Seas



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



An overview of the developing
Welsh National Marine Plan (WNMP)

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Why do we need Marine Planning?

Welsh seas cover approximately 15,000km² and make up 43% of the area of Wales, with over 60% of the population living and working at the coast. The marine environment provides a wealth of benefits supporting the well being of coastal communities and wider society.

These include:

- providing food through fisheries and aquaculture;
- supporting health through recreation and leisure;
- providing a means of transporting goods, as a source of aggregates for housing and other infrastructure and fossil fuels such as gas and oil;
- providing renewable energy sources (wave, tidal, wind) that can help us tackle climate change, and
- a means of conveying cables and in carefully discharging waste.
- underpinning our cultural identity through seascape, and historic environment
- maintaining our biodiversity and providing ecological goods and services.
- supporting the economy through the jobs associated with all of these activities.

Despite the significance of Welsh seas to our lives, up until now we have had no overview of the use we make of them or a clear plan about how we might best benefit from them in the future. This is why we are developing the Welsh National Marine Plan (WNMP).

In contrast, land planning systems, which have developed since the 20th Century, guide developments through a hierarchy of high level structural plans through to more detailed planning at local level.

In particular, planning should allow us to:

- Ensure multiple benefits from the marine environment – understanding opportunities for co- location of activities and uses of the marine environment so that we can maximise “win- wins”.
- Optimise opportunities for the sustainable exploitation of all sectors, particularly those with substantial room for growth including coastal tourism, aquaculture and renewable energy.
- Take practical opportunities to secure ecosystem recovery to support resilience whilst enabling the sustainable exploitation of natural resources within limits.
- Focus more on providing benefits to society, but particularly for coastal communities, from the marine environment.



The Marine Planning process

Welsh Ministers are the planning authority for Wales and, following publication of the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011)(MPS), are preparing a plan for Welsh seas covering both inshore and offshore regions.

Marine planning is a process. This will be the first ever marine plan for our seas and represents the start of an ongoing, cyclical planning process. In developing the WNMP we have taken account of a wide range of requirements and relevant considerations including those set out in the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009) (MCAA) and the UK Marine Policy Statement.

In developing the draft WNMP, amongst other activities, we have:

- Applied the Ecosystem Approach to help ensure the plan policies will contribute to Sustainable Development.
- Applied the ways of working set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- Focussed on delivering across Wales' well-being goals.
- Embedded the principles of the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources set out in the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

All of these requirements and processes have key roles to play in contributing to sustainable development.

Of particular importance to effective planning is the involvement of stakeholders. Close partnership working and engagement with all interests at all stages is key to developing an effective marine plan for Wales.

To help understand what stakeholders want from marine planning, a series of informal semi-structured interviews were undertaken with members of the Marine Planning Stakeholder Reference Group (MPSRG) and wider marine interests in Wales. The findings are being used to guide our approach.

<http://gov.wales/docs/drah/publications/170531-marine-planning-benefits-en.pdf>

Marine planning has been taken forward using the best available evidence. Evidence was collated and shared in draft through a 'Strategic Scoping Exercise' and then published as the Wales Marine Evidence Report¹. This report was used to inform development of the plan and the supporting Sustainability Appraisal. A marine portal has been developed to show all marine activities on an interactive map²; We are keeping this evidence up to date as planning continues to develop.

Welsh National Marine Planning Process



The Welsh National Marine Plan (WNMP)

The WNMP sets out Welsh Government's policy for the next 20 years for the sustainable development of the Welsh marine planning area for both the inshore and offshore regions. It will set out our ambitions for the future use of our marine natural resources and how various users of our seas should interact and consider each others activities and future plans.

By setting out our marine planning policy, Welsh Government are ensuring that we use our seas sustainably and support "blue growth". This will be achieved by clarifying how proposals should be developed, identifying areas of sea where they may be most appropriately sited and by ensuring that there is early and positive engagement between different sea users. In doing so, we can better facilitate the multiple use of marine space and the sustainable management of marine natural resources.

¹ <http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/marineandfisheries/marineplanning/?lang=en>

² <http://le.gov.wales/apps/marineportal/>

How does the WNMP relate to wider UK Seas?

The plan has been developed in conformity with the UK MPS which helps ensure a common approach to planning across the UK whilst allowing plans to recognise and address Welsh specific differences, issues and priorities.

Similar marine plans are under development in England, Scotland, N Ireland and Eire, in some cases on a regional basis.

As an integrated policy document, the WNMP has been developed with input from across Government, including from UK Government departments with responsibility for certain marine functions. Because the WNMP contains policy relating to non-devolved functions, it is being progressed with the agreement of the Secretary of State.

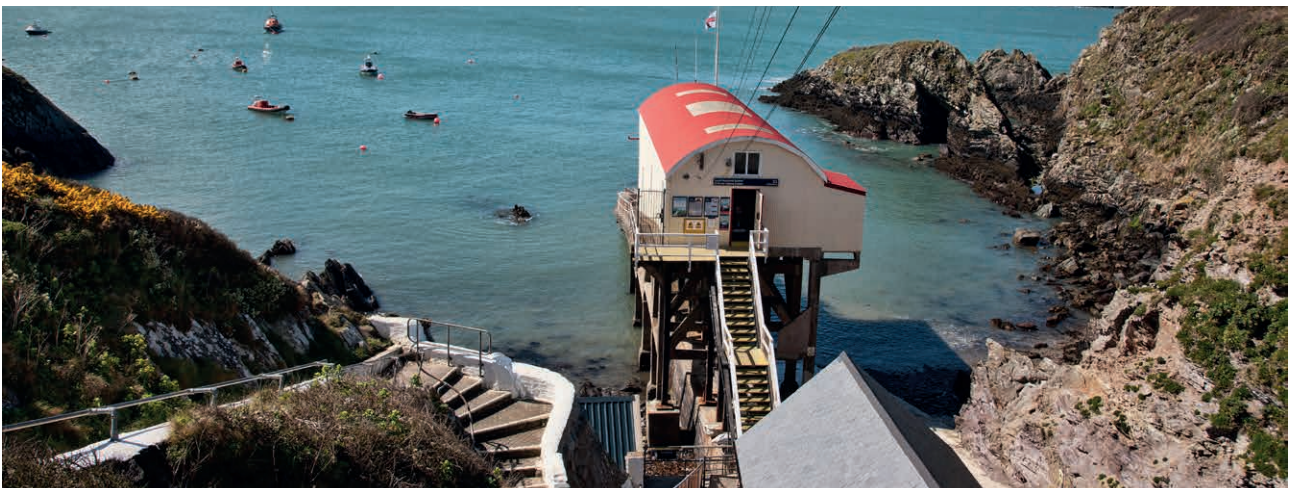
We propose that the WNMP provides both high level strategic planning / policy guidance and local level specificity. Unlike land planning, this will all be contained within one plan rather than a hierarchy of plans.

What will it set out?

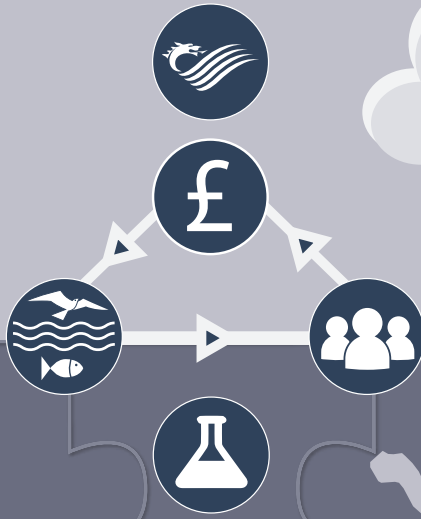
The plan sets out who should use it and how.

Once adopted, the WNMP, along with the MPS constitute 'relevant planning documents' and public authorities should take authorisation or enforcement decisions or other decisions with the potential to affect the marine area in accordance with these documents (unless relevant considerations indicate otherwise).

The policies will support the sustainable development of our seas, identifying future opportunities for growth and sustainability considerations that will guide new developments and related decisions.



Supporting Blue Growth by Guiding Future Opportunities



What?

Why?

When?

How?

Where?

Who?

The plan sets out a clear vision and supporting plan objectives. These frame and guide the development of detailed planning policy.

Welsh seas are clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse:

- Through an ecosystem approach, our seas are healthy and resilient and support a sustainable and thriving economy.
- Through access to and enjoyment of the marine environment, health and well-being are improving.
- Through Blue Growth more jobs and wealth are being created and is helping coastal communities become more resilient, prosperous and equitable with a vibrant culture.
- Through the responsible deployment of low carbon technologies, the Welsh marine area is making a strong contribution to energy security and climate change emissions targets.

Our vision is being achieved through an integrated, evidenced and plan-led approach that respects established uses and interests whilst identifying potential benefits from new opportunities, recognising the importance of ecosystem resilience, the value of biodiversity and the imperative to adapt to climate change.

The WNMP includes policy in relation to a wide range of general considerations (which are set out as a series of **General Policies** in the plan) and cover topics including: nature conservation, water quality, sustainable use, seascapes, coastal communities and economic growth, cumulative impacts, heritage etc.



Achieving a sustainable marine economy



Promoting good governance



Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society



Using sound science responsibly



Living within environmental limits

These General Policies are organised under the themes of the shared UK High Level Marine Objectives, and are numbered to facilitate their use, for example:

Example of Draft Plan General Policy

ENV_02: Marine Protected Areas

Proposals should demonstrate how they:

- avoid adverse impacts on individual Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and the coherence of the network as a whole;
- have regard to the measures to manage MPAs; and
- avoid adverse impacts on non-marine designated sites.

They will be used to guide proposals as they come forward and any related consent or authorisation decisions taken by public authorities. General policies will be applied to all development decisions, although not all will be relevant in every case

The WNMP will also contain **sector objectives** and **sector policies** for the 11 different sectors that operate in the marine area.

Sector Policies are set out for the diverse types of activity that occur in our seas, including:



Sector Policies may include **'supporting'** and / or **'safeguarding'** policies to help ensure each sector can develop in a sustainable way.

A sector specific **supporting policy** encourages, over the term of the plan, the sustainable growth of that sector. This may be general support, or where appropriate to do so, within particular areas of sea where the conditions are considered to support good potential for future activities. These areas are identified on maps as Strategic Resource Areas (SRAs) that have promising natural resources needed by a sector (e.g. tidal energy, wave energy, space for shipping access, sand for construction etc)); and are within wider resource areas of relevance to that sector.



Example of Draft Plan Sector Supporting Policy

AGG_01: Aggregates (supporting)

Proposals for aggregate extraction in Strategic Resource Areas are encouraged within any permitted tonnage limits that may be defined for that area.

Relevant public authorities should, in liaison with the sector and other interested parties, collaborate to understand opportunities for the sustainable use of:

- aggregate Strategic Resource Areas; and
- wider marine aggregate natural resources;

in order to support the sustainable growth of the aggregate sector through marine planning.

Sector specific **safeguarding policies** seek to protect established / authorised activities or already well developed proposals from adverse impacts by others sector activities. Safeguarding policies may also protect areas of future potential (SRAs), ensuring that other sector activities don't needlessly sterilise or prevent the resource from being used in the future.

Safeguarding policies will encourage, support and promote sector to sector engagement and mutual consideration at an early stage of project design and will help facilitate the optimal use of marine space and resources and avoid unnecessary conflict, for example:

Example of Draft Plan Sector Safeguarding Policy

AGG_02: Aggregates (safeguarding)

Proposals potentially affecting areas where a marine licence and production agreement for aggregate extraction has been granted or formally applied for should not be authorised unless compatibility with the existing, authorised or proposed aggregate activity can be satisfactorily demonstrated or there are exceptional circumstances. Compatibility should be achieved, in order of preference, through:

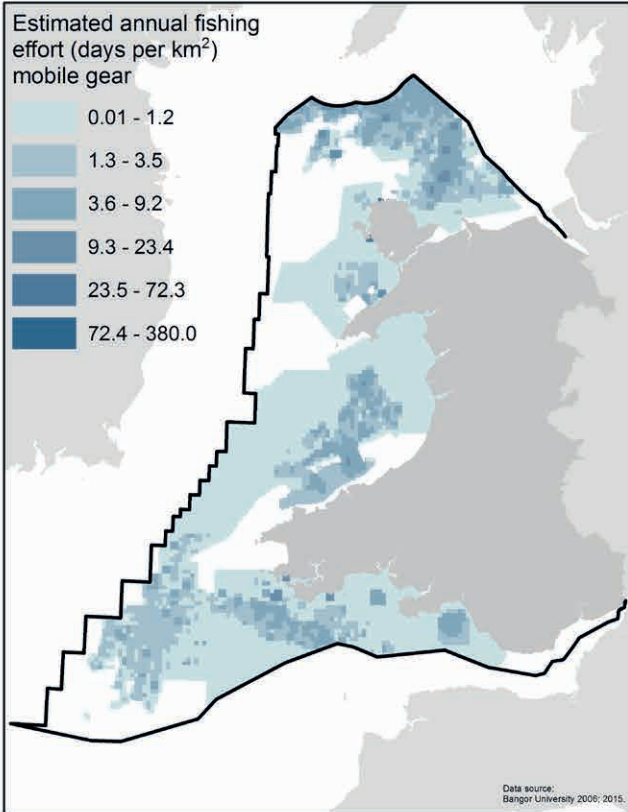
- a) avoiding adverse impacts on those activities; and/or
- b) minimising impacts where they cannot be avoided; and/or
- c) mitigating impacts where they cannot be minimised.

If adequate compatibility cannot be achieved, proposals should present a clear and convincing justification for proceeding.

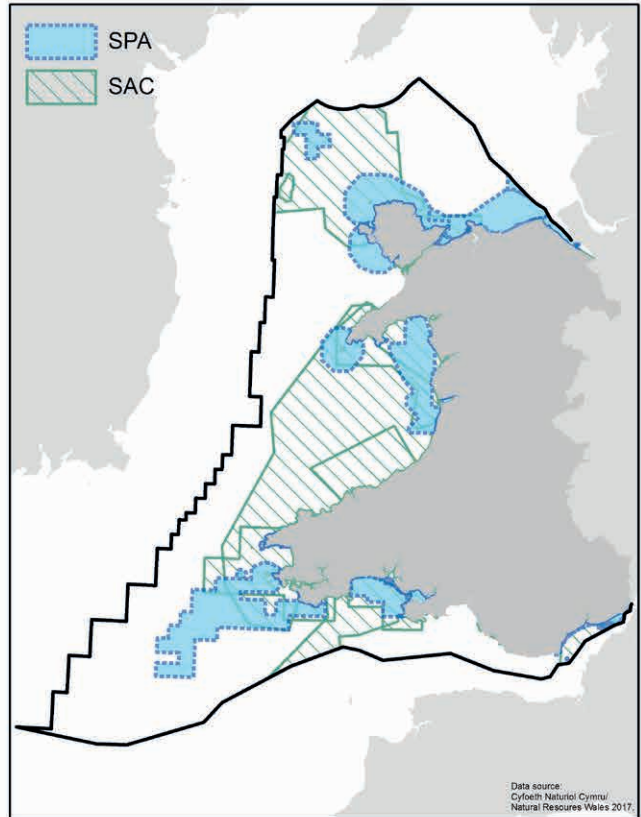
Sector policies provide a steer for future business investment by helping to highlight opportunities for future resource use and how to take into account the interests of other sectors. They will steer decision making and evidence collection by public authorities alongside the General Policies.

Sector SRAs would not guarantee consent for a particular activity within the area nor do they preclude sector activities outside of the area; they act as a planning guide only and will be applied in conjunction with other plan policies and other relevant considerations.

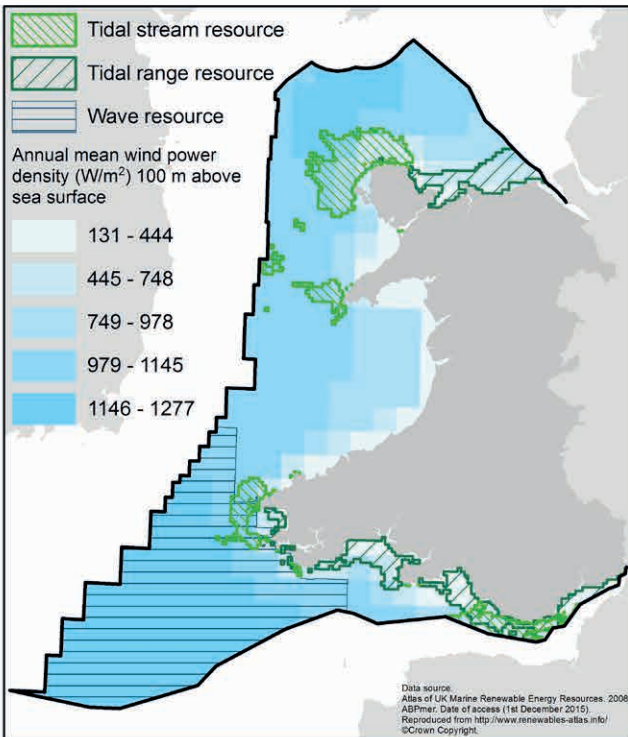
As our understanding and knowledge of the marine area develops SRAs and the related policy approach may be refined as marine planning develops.



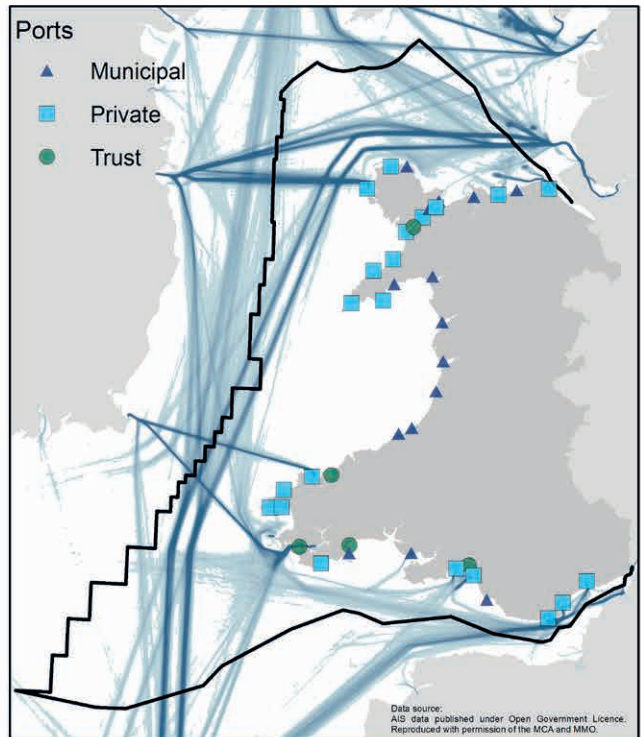
Fisheries



Conservation



Renewable energy



Shipping

Next steps

We will consult on the draft WNMP for a period of 16 weeks and consider responses received; reporting on how we have considered them in any re-draft of the WNMP. At the same time we will consider whether to conduct an independent investigation on the proposals in the draft and any representations received or on any other relevant matters.

We will then finalise, publish and adopt the plan with the agreement of the Secretary of State, at which point it will have effect and must be applied as set out in the MCAA.

As we progress to adopting the plan we will work with public authorities and key stakeholders to support and guide them in transitioning to a plan-led approach to marine decision making. We recognise that applying a new policy framework will take time and the WNMP will evolve through successive iterations as we learn through experience.

Post plan adoption

Once adopted a key focus will be on implementation of the plan to ensure that it is practical and proportionate in use and supports the sustainable development our seas.

MCAA requires that plan policies are kept under review as to the effects and the effectiveness of the policies in meeting plan objectives and be periodically reported upon and reviewed as appropriate.

To support the practical application of plan policies we will publish the plan and relevant information on the Welsh Government website and maintain a spatial evidence base via the marine planning portal. The latter will also display plan policies and link to other marine plans and relevant evidence. We will work with plan-users to test and apply the plan policies to demonstrate how they can inform project design and decision-making; with stakeholders to develop plan policy monitoring and reporting and to develop implementation guidance. We will work with land planners to further strengthen understanding of land-sea interactions and opportunities to join up delivery including across country borders, and keep under review a role for regional planning in plan implementation.

We will take forward advice from NRW on supporting risk based approach and develop, collate and make evidence available to support decision-making, in particular to develop and refine evidence on Strategic Resource Areas identified in the plan and on marine ecosystems in the Severn and Dee estuaries and will maintain and refresh our evidence base to inform our understanding.

This document provides a short summary of the approach that has been taken in developing the draft WNMP – these are set out more formally in Schedule 6 of MCAA.

It supports those wanting to understand what the draft WNMP includes and acts as an easy access guide to the plan and wider planning process.

The draft WNMP will be subject to formal consultation and any aspect of the draft WNMP is subject to change based upon feedback from stakeholders and developing Government policy.