



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Six Year Report on Progress with Marine Plans in Wales for the period 2015-2021

November 2021

Introduction

Under Section 50 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MCAA), the Welsh Ministers are the marine plan authority for the Welsh inshore and offshore regions.

This document fulfils a reporting requirement set out in section 61(1)(c) of the MCAA. It sets out the six-year report on progress with marine plans for the regions in which the Welsh Ministers are the marine plan authority.

Welsh National Marine Plan

The Welsh National Marine Plan (WNMP), the first marine plan adopted under the MCAA for the Welsh inshore and Welsh offshore regions, was adopted and published on 12 November 2019. Its preparation and approval complied with the statutory requirements set out in Schedule 6 to the MCAA.

The WNMP area consists of around 32,000 km² of sea, with 2,120 km of coastline. The WNMP covers both the Welsh inshore region (from mean high water spring tides out to 12 nautical miles) and the Welsh offshore region (beyond 12 nautical miles) in a single document. A map of the WNMP area can be found at Figure 1.

The WNMP provides a framework of general cross-cutting policies and sector specific policies, which collectively support the sustainable development of Welsh seas. It was developed in-line with the UK Marine Policy Statement 2011 (MPS), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WFGA) and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. It is supported by non-statutory guidance, providing information to guide the practical application of WNMP policy and help ensure its effective and consistent implementation.

The Welsh Ministers have initiated work to map potential Strategic Resource Areas (SRAs) to identify and apply the WNMP's safeguarding policy to key areas of resource. The WNMP makes provision for the introduction of SRAs, which will, through activating WNMP policy SAF_02, safeguard important areas of resource with potential to support future sustainable use.

Intentions for amendment

The Welsh Ministers have no current intention to amend the WNMP. Consideration will be given to the need for amendment based upon the findings of monitoring of the Plan's implementation and effectiveness.

The WNMP will be reviewed and reported upon as required by the MCAA. Specifically, in accordance with section 61(1)(b) of the MCAA, the first report on the effectiveness of the WNMP, including the Plan's contribution to meeting the High Level Marine Objectives (HLMOs) in the MPS, progress being made towards securing Plan objectives and the effects and effectiveness of Plan policies, will be laid before Senedd Cymru/the Welsh Parliament within three years of Plan adoption.

Intentions for the preparation and adoption of any further marine plans

The Welsh Ministers have no current intention to prepare or adopt any further marine plans.

Background

The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MCAA) provides the legislative basis for marine planning across the UK, makes provision for a UK Marine Policy Statement (the MPS, published 2011) to ensure coherence across UK marine plans and requires the preparation, adoption and publication of marine plans for marine plan regions where the MPS is in place.

The MCAA places a range of requirements upon a marine plan authority, which, for Wales's inshore and offshore areas, is the Welsh Ministers. The MCAA sets out the process by which a plan is prepared and adopted, what matters a plan should address and how it should conform with the MPS and be compatible with certain other marine plans and Planning Act plans for areas related to the marine plan area. Section 61(1)(c) of the MCAA requires each marine plan authority to prepare and lay before the appropriate legislature, which for the Welsh Ministers is Senedd Cymru/the Welsh Parliament, a report setting out progress on the relevant marine plans, including detail of:

- any marine plans the authority has prepared and adopted;
- the authority's intentions for their amendment; and
- its intentions for the preparation and adoption of any further marine plans.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WFGA) and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 together provide a legislative framework for managing Wales' natural resources and to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.

The WFGA requires the Welsh Ministers to apply the Sustainable Development principle in delivering their functions and to act in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The WFGA sets out seven well-being goals and five ways of working, which guided the development of the WNMP. The WNMP has been developed to guide the marine contribution towards the achievement of the well-being goals, setting policies which seek to protect the marine environment and its resources, recognise the benefits to society that the environment and its resources provide and promote the sustainable use and development of those resources.

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 focuses on building resilience into our ecosystems and recognising the benefits they provide. It requires public authorities to promote the resilience of ecosystems and to maintain and enhance biodiversity. The principles of sustainable management of natural resources (SMNR), as set out within the Act, provide a statutory focus for implementing the ecosystem approach through the WNMP.

Figure 1: Welsh National Marine Plan (WNMP) area

