Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

MPA Network Management Grant Scheme

Photograph: View of Porthllindaen Llŷn Peninsula

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Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg hefyd / This document is also available in Welsh
Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg / We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh

Key Messages

- The MPA Network Management Grant Scheme is open to applications from all Welsh Management Authorities, interested organisations and third sector organisations who meet the eligibility criteria set out in this guidance document.
- Applicants should explore other sources of funding prior to submitting an application through this scheme.
- The scheme covers revenue projects which **must** deliver benefits, enhancements or improved understanding to the management of the Welsh Marine Protected Area (MPA) network.
- The grant provides up to 100% support towards successful revenue projects whose application meets the criteria set out in this guidance document.
- The maximum grant award per application is £40,000. Typically, grant awards from this scheme are between £20-30,000.
- Applications seeking funding greater than £40,000 will be considered, however they will have to demonstrate value for money.
- **All applications must cover the following financial year only.**
- Applications will be invited in a 'call for actions' window which will occur once a year. The timing will be dictated by the MPA Network Management Steering Group.
- Successful applications will be included as an 'action' within the annual MPA Network Management Action Plan and will be expected to provide an update for the subsequent Annual Report.
- The application form has been developed by the MPA Network Management Steering Group and is aligned with the criteria set out in the MPA Network Management Framework 2018-2023.
- An annual workshop will be held to offer guidance and support for interested applicants.
- Annex 1 at the end of this guidance provides the individual scoring guidance for each criterion.
- Annex 2 at the end of this guidance provides a link to the latest MPA Network Management Annual Report and case studies of previous projects, to offer support for interested applicants.

Photograph: View of Skomer Island

Section A: Introduction

This guidance document explains the MPA Network Management Grant Scheme and the types of projects that may qualify for grant support.

MPA Network Management Grant Scheme

The MPA Network Management Grant Scheme is open to applications from all Welsh Management Authorities, interested organisations and third sector organisations.

The scheme covers revenue projects which must deliver benefits, enhancements or improved understanding to the management of the Welsh Marine Protected Area (MPA) network. Applications for MPAs outside of Wales will not be considered.

Grant funding is available for interested parties outlined above which can satisfy 5 criteria set out below:

- Improve MPA management **or** improved understanding.
- Spatial extent is network level.
- Consistent with a minimum of **one** management principle.
- Is technically feasible.
- Demonstrates value for money.

Applications for grant will **only** be considered for projects which span the following financial year only. Proposed actions which span multiple years can be accepted, however, there is no guarantee of funding for subsequent years.

Suggested examples of projects

An annex is included within this guidance note which outlines previous projects, whose completed summaries are provided in the annual MPA Network Management Annual Report. Case studies have also been developed for identified projects where best practice can be shared.

Applications need to demonstrate how they would improve overall management of the MPA network in Wales, however, consideration is given to pilot projects where there is potential to upscale to network level.

Applications will be considered that are of benefit either across the MPA network, or those focussed on protected features such as seabirds or marine habitats

Consideration should also be given to how applications could improve the condition of MPAs through improved management which could support achievement of Good Environmental Status.

Funding will not be available for

- Single items of capital expenditure or items. However, items can be considered if they support a revenue (research) project, e.g. scientific equipment to support survey work.
- Applications for grant cannot solely support the cost of a FTE member of staff.
- Actions which are already part funded by another source, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the two sources of funding would cover two separate projects and outcomes.

For any capital items included in the application the controlling business or authority would be responsible for any permits, licences, subsequent ongoing costs and maintenance.

Section B: MPA Network Management Grant Scheme – Eligibility

You are eligible if

You are a Welsh Management Authority (such as an advisory body or local authority), third sector organisation or another interested organisation. The MPA Network Management Grant Scheme does not use an online platform to manage the grant process, therefore prior registration for any such application is not required.

Welsh Government encourages joint collaborative bids from multiple organisations and would be happy to facilitate this through our annual workshops.

Marine Licences, planning consents, building regulations, Environmental Consents and Licences

If an applicant proposes to install or use capital items which in effect require licences and/or agreement they are advised to consult with the relevant licensing authority, Natural Resources Wales (NRW), their Local Authority (LA) or other agency as consent may be required to carry out some work.

Applicants must obtain any necessary planning consent and abide by any other relevant statutory requirements. Applicants also need to check their proposals do not break any byelaws, obstruct rights of way, affect oil or gas pipelines etc, and must avoid damaging the environment or causing pollution.

Welsh Government understands that, in some instances, applicants are unable to have these in place when making an application, therefore in this instance applications will be accepted prior to necessary agreements. However, these agreements will be required to be detailed within the application and will be required to be obtained before the project begins. A failure to have the necessary licences and or agreements in place by the agreed dates within the application will result in a withdrawal of grant award.

The payment of any grant will not be made until the original licence and/or agreement approval documents have been received and approved by the Welsh Government.

Section C: Management Principles and Criteria

The MPA Network Management Grant Scheme requires applicants to satisfy at least one of the five management principles and each of the five criteria below.

Those applications which satisfy only one management principle will not be treated less favourably than applications which satisfy multiple outcomes as only the highest scoring management principle is considered.

For the purposes of this guidance document, proposed applications are referred to as ‘actions’. These actions must align to the management principles and objectives set out below. Successful actions will be included within the Welsh Government annual MPA Network Management Action Plan and the following years Annual Report.

Photograph: A grey seal pup

Management Principles

Box 1: MPA Management Principles

MP1 Strategic Planning: Management should be guided by strategic planning processes at both a sectoral and all-Wales level. It supports sustainable use of the MPA network in ways which conserve and enhance, and contributes to resilient marine ecosystems, wellbeing and delivery of sustainable management of natural resources.

Does the potential action have a significant Wales wide planning aspect contributing to resilient marine ecosystems, wellbeing and delivery of sustainable management of natural resources?

MP2 Regulation, development consenting and assessment processes: Regulatory processes and consenting decisions are delivered consistently and proportionately across the network, and proactively consider and support the maintenance or enhancement (where possible/appropriate) of the condition of relevant sites and features across the network.

Does the potential action relate to the regulation, development consenting or assessment processes for MPAs in Wales?

MP3 Management advice and guidance: Decision making and management operations is supported by clear and consistent advice and guidance on MPAs including their conservation objectives.

Does the potential action relate to the production of guidance to improve the management of our MPAs?

MP4 Understanding the condition of, and pressures and threats on, sites and their features to inform management: Management is informed by formal assessment and reporting on the condition of features, sites and the network and the associated pressures. Assessment and reporting is informed by a prioritised evidence programme (including monitoring) which improves our understanding of the relationship between pressures and threats and condition.

Does the potential action improve our understanding of the pressures on and/or threats to our MPAs?

MP5 Wider management: Management activities across the network are prioritised towards those that have the potential for greatest improvement on condition and security of management. Common management challenges are addressed collectively across the network.

Does the potential action improve the management and therefore the condition of the network of MPAs in Wales?

Photograph: A seagrass habitat

Criteria

1. What is the ability of the action to deliver improvements in condition, or to improve our understanding of pressure/threats or their management
   a. What is the ability of the action to deliver improvements in condition, or to improve our understanding of pressure/threats or their management.
   b. What is the ability of the action to improve our understanding of pressure/threats or their management.
2. What is the spatial extent of the action
3. Is the action consistent with the MPA Management Principles.
4. What is the feasibility of the action.
5. How does implementing the action represent value for money.

Maximum Grant Rate and Maximum Grant Threshold

The grant amount is solely domestically funded by Welsh Government and the total amount will vary each financial year.

The maximum grant award is £40,000 per application. Applications seeking funding greater than £40,000 will be considered, however they will have to demonstrate value for money

Multiple applications for varying projects can be submitted by the same applicant within the same application window or 'call for actions'.

The maximum grant rate is 100% regardless of the size of organisation applying. However, match-funding by the applicant can be considered.

Section D: Applying for MPA Network Management Grant Scheme – The Application Process

The application process will consist of an invitation to submit an application during a specified period known as a 'call for actions' which normally occurs in quarter 4 of a calendar year.

The call for actions window will normally last for 8 weeks and a virtual workshop will be held during this to offer applicants advice and guidance.

The application

The call for actions will be announced through key Welsh Government and external stakeholder networks, with the application and guidance as part of the package.

If you have not received an application you can contact: **MarineEcosystemsAndBiodiversity@gov.wales**

The application consists of 5 objectives with which applicants will need to satisfy to be considered for a potential grant.

Criteria 1 – What is the ability of the action to deliver improvements in condition, or to improve our understanding of pressure/threats or their management

This criterion has been divided into two parts. Any potential action will only be assessed against one of these criteria (i.e. only 1a or 1b):

- A project which addresses one or more of the pressures or threats acting on one or more of the features of our MPA network, then you need to assess your project under criterion 1a.
- A project which demonstrates the need to gain a better understanding of a specific pressure or threat then the action will be assessed against 1b. The 1b criterion will also be used if the potential action involves needing to better understand or trial a specific management approach.

Applications which attempt to address both criteria will not be considered.

Both criteria can be used for pressures or threats, these are defined as follows:

- Pressure: something that currently has an adverse impact on one or more features.

- Threat: something that is currently not a pressure but is considered likely to become a pressure in the near future unless action is taken.

Criterion 1a. What is the ability of the action to deliver improvements to, or maintenance of, feature condition?

This criterion relates to actions that will result in improvements to, or maintenance of, the condition of features of the MPA network, usually by managing pressures/threats to the feature. The action could also be linked to management of activities affecting feature condition, or the restoration of a feature.

Elements to consider: Be clear about which pressures the potential action is targeting, which features are impacted by the pressure, and how the features are impacted by the pressure. Explain precisely how the potential action will ameliorate the pressure targeted. If possible, clarify who will be involved, and what their roles will be.

Example actions that would be considered under 1a:

- An action to develop a network wide strategy to manage pressures on a feature e.g. UK Dolphin and Harbour Porpoise Conservation Strategy.
- An action to reduce nutrient inputs affecting a coastal feature as a pilot project.
- An action to reduce the impact of boat disturbance (e.g. code of conduct) on a whole feature.

Criterion 1b. What is the ability of the action to improve our understanding of pressure/threats or their management?

This criterion is related to actions that will result in improving our understanding of the pressures or threats to the MPA network or improving our understanding of the different management measures that could be used to address these pressures or threats.

Elements to consider: It is important to be clear about what gap in understanding the potential action is trying to fill. Consider why it is a gap and how the potential action will fill it. If considering a new management approach (either to investigate or trial) be clear about exactly what the management measure is and the outcomes that will be achieved and if possible where the approach has been used successfully elsewhere.

Example actions that would need to be considered under 1b:

- An investigation into the impact of coastal squeeze on the MPA network features.
- An investigation into the impact of marine litter on our MPA features; or
- Trialling a new management approach to bait digging on a site (if it is also something that could be rolled out to other sites).

Criterion 2. What is the spatial extent of the action?

This criterion is focused on what area of the network the potential action covers. The scores will be allocated based on the scale of the impact of the action on the MPA network. This is a network action plan, therefore, the larger the area of the network covered or the greater the number of features (or a large proportion of the feature across the network) involved the higher the score. A potential action can be given a threshold score of (2) if the action could be considered a demonstration project at a local scale which could be rolled out or implemented in other areas of the network.

Elements to consider: It is important to be clear what sites and/or features the action will benefit. If the action is a demonstration project, it is important to highlight other sites that would benefit in the longer term and, if possible, how the project could be rolled out across the network.

Criterion 3: Is the action consistent with the MPA Management Principles?

This criterion is focused on how well the potential action meets one or more of the five MPA network management principles. The potential action can be scored against any or all of the MPA management principles in Box 1. A potential action may not be relevant for all management principles, and there is no need to try and make an action fit all criteria. Guidance for potential action owners is provided in italics under each management principle.

If an action scores negatively against any management principle, it should not be taken any further through the prioritisation process until these issues are addressed.

Criterion 4. What is the feasibility of the action?

This criterion relates to the ability of the potential action owner to carry out the action. It is important under this criterion to consider how exactly the action will be carried out and if the methods proposed have been used successfully elsewhere.

Elements to consider: It is important to consider the technical feasibility of your project including the practical, logistical and technical abilities (including skills and expertise) needed to undertake the action. Consider appropriateness of the methodology for the site or context.

Criterion 5. How does implementing the action represent value for money?

Your response to this criterion **will not be** scored, but you must consider in your answer how proportionate the cost is, both to the size of the project and to the benefits it will deliver. Although there is no scoring associated with this criterion, it is still important to be clear how the cost of the project was developed and how the outcomes of the project will benefit the MPA network.

Elements to consider: It is important to consider the benefits of your project in relation to the cost of the project. Focus on the outcomes of the project. Please include the direct costs, as well as other resources necessary to achieve the action. The expected outcomes of the project should be linked to improvements in condition or understanding of features of the network.

Conditions of grant

There is no guarantee that an offer of grant will be approved. The appraisal process will take a maximum of 60 working days from receipt of your application. Supporting documents submitted as part of the application will not be considered.

If the appraisal of your proposed application and documents is successful, you will be offered a MPA Network Management Grant Scheme Contract via your nominated Welsh Government official. You will need to accept this offer of Contract with an appropriate person within your organisation signing and completing the contract to Welsh Government.

You must not start work until you have accepted your contract or had written approval to do so. If you do start work without consent, the Welsh Government may reject the work started or terminate the contract and recover payments made.

Your contract commencement date will be 1 April of the specified year and will terminate on 31 March of the following year.

If you decide to withdraw or decline the offer of grant prior to Welsh Government issuing a contract, please inform your nominated Welsh Government official to discuss.

You should be aware that, if successful, Welsh Government reserve the right to publish the name of your business or company, the amount of grant you were awarded and a summary of your project.

Section E: Payment of Grant

Payment schedules will be agreed with the applicant and Welsh Government and can consist of either a single payment or interim claims. The payment schedule will be included within the contract and invitations to claim will be sent 30 days before the claim date.

Applicants will need to submit their invoice and pre-agreed evidence to support the claim to the named Welsh Government official in the contract award letter.

Payment will be made by electronic transfer to your bank account and you will need to liaise with the named Welsh Government official to ensure your organisation is correctly registered with Welsh Government.

All outstanding invoices must be issued to your named Welsh Government official by 17 March of the award year to ensure payment by 31 March.

You must ensure all evaluation criteria have been met including the submission of supporting documents to your named Welsh Government official in order for the claim to be authorised.

Section F: Monitoring of Projects

It is a requirement that the progress of your project is monitored and its success evaluated following completion. You will be asked to provide regular updates on its progress and, following completion, a final report on its performance, when the project will be evaluated against the criteria and targets set out in the approved application.

If the project should fail to meet these targets and on the basis of progress actually made, would not have qualified for grant aid under the scheme, action may be taken to recover the grant paid or payment withheld.

Evaluation criteria will be discussed with you and your named Welsh Government official and will set out in your contract. The evaluation criteria outlines what needs to be demonstrated to ensure progression and payment of grant.

End of MPA Network Management Grant Scheme

All claims must be submitted to the Welsh Government by no later than 17 March of the specified year. All project activity must be completed by 31 March for accounts and records to be audited and claims to be prepared and submitted by this date.

Section G: Appeals Procedure

If an application is rejected, the reasons for rejection will be clearly outlined. We will be prepared to discuss any modifications which might be needed to make the project acceptable.

Section H: Privacy Notice – Welsh Government grants

The Welsh Government will be data controller for any personal data you provide in relation to your grant application or request for grant funding. The information will be processed as part of our public task (i.e. exercising our official authority to undertake the core role and functions of the Welsh Government) and will help us assess your eligibility for funding. Before we provide grant funding to you, we undertake checks for the purposes of preventing fraud and money laundering, and to verify your identity. These checks require us to process personal data about you to third party fraud prevention agencies. If we, or a fraud prevention agency, determine that you pose a fraud or money laundering risk, we may refuse to provide the grant funding you applied for, or we may stop providing existing grant funding to you. A record of any fraud or money laundering risk will be retained by the fraud prevention agencies, and may result in others refusing to provide services, financing or employment to you.

We will keep personal information contained in files in line with our retention policy. If successful in your application then your personal data will be kept for 10 years from the conclusion of any aid award. If you are unsuccessful your details will be kept for one year after the date you provided them.

Annex 1

Criterion 1a – What is the ability of the action to deliver improvements to, or maintenance of, feature condition: Scoring table

Explanation	Score
The action is not targeted at a pressure or threat with a link to feature condition.	0
Threat*: The action will manage one or more of the suspected threats that could affect the condition of the MPA network features.	1
Pressure: The action will manage one or more of the known pressures affecting the condition of the features of the MPA network. **Threat:** The action will manage one or more of the threats that could affect the condition of the features of the MPA network.	2
Pressure: The action will manage one or more of the known pressures significantly affecting the condition of the features of the MPA network, using a proven approach. **Threat:** The action will manage one or more of the threats that could significantly affect the condition of the features of the MPA network using a proven approach.	3

* There is no score of 1 for pressures as to be prioritised for the action plan the pressure should be already known.

Criterion 1b – What is the ability of the action to improve our understanding of pressure/threats or their management: Scoring table

Explanation	Score
The action will not improve our understanding of a. pressures or threats; or b. the management measures needed to address them.	0
Threat: The action will partially improve our understanding of a. one of the threats which could affect the condition of the MPA network features; or b. the management measures needed to address this threat.	1
Pressure: The action will increase our understanding of a. one or more of the pressures and how they are affecting the condition of the features of the MPA network; or b. the management measures needed to manage those pressures. **Threat:** The action will improve our understanding of a. one or more of the threats that could affect the condition of the features of the MPA network; or b. the management measures needed to manage those threats.	2 (threshold score)
Pressure: The action will significantly increase our understanding of a. one or more of the pressures and how they are affecting the condition of the features of the MPA network; or b. the management measures needed to manage those pressures. **Threat:** The action will significantly improve our understanding of a. one or more of the threats that could significantly affect the condition of the features of the MPA network; or b. the management measures needed to manage those threats.	3

Criterion 2 – What is the spatial extent of the action: Scoring table

Explanation	Score
The action is on a single site only and has no wider application across the network*.	0
The action is for a small number of sites or a small proportion of the network.	1
The action is for: • multiple sites, or • a large proportion of the MPA network, or • a large proportion of a feature across the network. A score of two can also be awarded if the action is a demonstration project# with strong potential to be delivered across the network after a local pilot stage.	2 (threshold score)
The action is for the network (e.g. whole feature and/or pressure wide).	3

*These actions should be prioritised though local action plans where they exist, or through the NRW Actions Database.

#To achieve the threshold score, a demonstration project must address an issue that is of concern across the network, but be suitable to be carried out at a single site level to prove the approach.

Criterion 3 – Is the action consistent with the MPA Management Principles: Scoring table

Explanation	Score
The action has inconsistencies with the management principle.	-3
The action is not relevant to the management principle.	0
The action is partially consistent with the management principle.	1
The action is consistent with the management principle	2*
The action is consistent with the management principle and will also bring about a positive change in ways of working.	3

* Threshold score – the potential action needs to score a 2 against at least one management principle

Criterion 4 – What is the feasibility of the action: Scoring table

Explanation	Score
The action is not technically feasible, even if resources were available.	0
The technical feasibility of the action is currently unproven/there are issues with the appropriateness of the methodology	1
There are no significant issues with technical feasibility/appropriateness of the methodology	2
Technical feasibility is proven	3

Annex 2

Marine Protected Area Network Management – Action Plan for Wales: 2022-2023