

Lesley Griffiths AM
Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs

12 March 2019

Dear Lesley

Marine Protected Area management in Wales

As you know, in August 2017, the Committee published its report, *Turning the tide? Report of the inquiry into the Welsh Government's approach to Marine Protected Area management.*

Since our report, there have been a number of developments within this policy area, including the Welsh Government's Marine Protected Area Network Management Framework for Wales 2018-2023 and Action Plan for Wales 2018-19. More recently, you have reported to the Assembly on Marine Protected Areas in accordance with the requirements of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.

The Committee has agreed that now would be an appropriate time to undertake follow-up work on Marine Protected Area ('MPA') management. In order to inform this work, we would like an update from you on progress made in taking forward the recommendations in our 2017 report. As part of your response, we would like you to address the specific questions attached in **Annexe 1** to this letter.

We would also like an update from you on progress in delivering each of the 21 actions in the MPA Network Management Action Plan 2018-19. If the



timescales for delivery of actions have not been met, please include an explanation along with any subsequent revisions to these timescales.

Finally, it would be helpful if you could confirm whether the Welsh Government will be in a position to formally adopt the Welsh National Marine Plan ('the Plan') later this spring, with a view to finalising and implementing the Plan in early summer, in accordance with your published timeline.

I should be grateful if you would respond by **12 April** at the latest.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Hedges". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Mike Hedges AM

Chair of Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee



1. Can you provide an update on the outcome of the Welsh Government's work to develop a consistent and evidence based approach to monitoring and surveillance of sites (due to conclude summer 2018)? How have the outcomes of this work shaped the Welsh Government's approach to site monitoring?
2. Since the publication of the Committee's report in August 2017, what progress has been made in identifying and addressing any gaps in the creation of an ecologically coherent network of MPAs in Welsh waters? Have any new MPAs been identified or designated to address the gaps highlighted by the 2014 assessment undertaken by JNCC and NRW? What timescales are you working towards for completion of this work?
3. NRW has developed a number of indicative site level feature condition reports, with a high proportion of site features found to be in unfavourable or unknown condition. What actions are being taken by the Welsh Government as a result of this assessment? What progress has been made towards developing a permanent, sustainable, site-level feature condition reporting process that can be undertaken on a regular basis?
4. Please could you provide details on any work Welsh Government is currently undertaking to assess the need for MPA designation for highly mobile species?
5. What work have you undertaken, since the publication of the Committee's report, to assess the impact of Brexit on Welsh MPAs? Please include details of any preparatory work to mitigate any risks you may have identified.
6. What specific action have you taken to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to maintain marine environmental protections post-Brexit?
7. What progress has been made between the UK Government and Devolved Administrations in agreeing a mechanism to continue the management of cross-border marine areas, post-Brexit?



8. What arrangements will be in place post-Brexit to assess and subsequently report on Welsh MPA site condition and status, beyond the six yearly reporting requirement in the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009?
9. What discussions have you had with the UK Government about funding arrangements for marine management activities post-Brexit? What was the outcome of discussions?
10. Can you provide details of any MPA work that is currently financed by EU funds, such as the European Marine and Fisheries Fund and LIFE-Nature, which would be at risk if replacement funding is not made available post-Brexit?
11. Can you clarify whether additional funding has been made available for MPA work following the extension of the Welsh Ministers executive functions for marine conservation to the Welsh off-shore area in April 2018? If so, how much? If not, what are the reasons for this?

