



Llyr Gruffydd MS
Chair, Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

21 October 2024

Dear Llyr

Marine Conservation Zones

On the 14 October, we received a letter from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, sent to the stakeholders of the Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) Task and Finish Group, regarding a further delay to marine designations in Wales.

We note that the matter of slow designation of marine protected sites was raised with the Deputy First Minister at the recent (16 October) Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure (CCEI) Committee evidence session on halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030. As a result, we thought this delay will be of interest to the Committee, especially given the report published in November 2019 by the then CCERA Committee – [The Welsh Government's progress on Marine Protected Area Management](#).

Pencadlys RSPB Cymru
Castlebridge 3,
5-19 Heol Ddwyreiniol y
Bontfaen, Caerdydd
CF11 9AB

**RSPB Cymru Wales
Headquarters**
Castlebridge 3,
5-19 Cowbridge Road
East, Cardiff
CF11 9AB

Ebost/Email:
cymru@rspb.org.uk
RSPB Cymru
@RSPBCymru
@rspbcymru
rspb.org.uk



Mae'r RSPB yn rhan o BirdLife International, rhwydwaith o gyrrff angerddol, sy'n cydweithio i achub byd natur ledled y byd.

The RSPB is part of BirdLife International, a network of passionate organisations, working together to save nature across the world.

We have subsequently written to the Deputy First Minister, to express our great concern that a consultation will not be forthcoming until after the next Senedd Election in 2026, whilst noting Welsh Government's efforts to avoid further delays to the MCZ designation process. This is a significant delay and calls into question Welsh Government's ability to meet "30x30" targets for Welsh seas.

The identification and management of Marine Conservation Zones is an essential component to ensure the Welsh Government meets its duty to form an ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas as well as its commitments under the Biodiversity Deep Dive into achieving 30x30.

This ongoing delay to the completion of the Marine Protected Area network in Wales is in stark contrast to the rapid pace at which future marine development mapping and proposals are progressing, as well as ambitions for the rapid roll out of offshore renewables. We have highlighted to the Deputy First Minister that it is vital that all current options for MCZ site proposals are considered as part of this process. And we are seeking an assurance from him that the work of The Crown Estate to identify future offshore wind development areas will take into account the areas being considered for potential MCZ proposals by the Welsh Government.

The Welsh Government has previously committed to evaluating the need for further designations for mobile species, including seabirds, once the current MCZ process is complete. We have reiterated the urgency for this. Seabirds globally are declining faster than any other bird group. In Wales, a recent review of breeding seabirds, undertaken by the RSPB on behalf of Natural Resources Wales, the British Trust for Ornithology, and the Welsh Ornithological Society, saw Gannets added to the Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern Wales (BoCCW) for the first time. In parallel, publication of a seabird update to the Birds of Conservation Concern UK report saw five new species of seabird, including Arctic Tern and Great Black-backed Gull, added to the UK Red List. Given the delay to the current MCZ process, we are seeking a commitment from the Welsh Government to undertaking this work now, by commissioning an

Pencadlys RSPB Cymru
Castlebridge 3,
5-19 Heol Ddwyreiniol y
Bontfaen, Caerdydd
CF11 9AB

**RSPB Cymru Wales
Headquarters**
Castlebridge 3,
5-19 Cowbridge Road
East, Cardiff
CF11 9AB

Ebost/Email:
cymru@rspb.org.uk
📍 RSPB Cymru
📧 @RSPBCymru
🌐 rspbcymru
rspb.org.uk



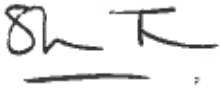
Mae'r RSPB yn rhan o BirdLife International, rhwydwaith o gyrrff angerddol, sy'n cydweithio i achub byd natur ledled y byd.

The RSPB is part of BirdLife International, a network of passionate organisations, working together to save nature across the world.

evaluation of the sufficiency of the current MPA network as a whole for seabirds, complementing current work to develop a Welsh Seabird Conservation Strategy. The findings of this would yield vital information for both conservation and marine planning. This review should consider all protected sites for seabirds (including Special Protection Areas (SPAs)). The first phase of MCZ proposals to be consulted on following the next Senedd Election should include site option proposals that seek to address the findings of this evaluation where appropriate and outline plans to address any further gaps identified.

We urge that the CCEI Committee give this matter full consideration, and we look forward to receiving their response.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Sharon Thompson
Head of Policy and Advocacy

Pencadlys RSPB Cymru
Castlebridge 3,
5-19 Heol Ddwyreiniol y
Bontfaen, Caerdydd
CF11 9AB

**RSPB Cymru Wales
Headquarters**
Castlebridge 3,
5-19 Cowbridge Road
East, Cardiff
CF11 9AB

Ebost/Email:
cymru@rspb.org.uk
RSPB Cymru
@RSPBCymru
rspbcymru
rspb.org.uk



Mae'r RSPB yn rhan o BirdLife International, rhwydwaith o gyrff angerddol, sy'n cydweithio i achub byd natur ledled y byd.

The RSPB is part of BirdLife International, a network of passionate organisations, working together to save nature across the world.