

Cross Party Group for Biodiversity

Wednesday 26th November 2014, 12.15 - 1.30pm

Conference Room 24, Tŷ Hywel

Attendees

Llyr Huws Gruffydd AM (LG)	CPG Chair
Graham Rees (GR)	Welsh Government, speaker
Dr Iwan Ball (IB)	Wales Environment Link, speaker
Janet Finch-Saunders AM	Assembly Member
Russell George AM	Assembly Member
Alun Ffred Jones AM	Assembly Member
Scott Fryer	WEL / WTW
Clare Reed	WEL / MCS
Gareth Cunningham (GC)	WEL / RSPB
Raoul Bhambral	WEL
Nia Seaton	MRS
Katy Orford	MRS
Alex Philips	Researcher (William Powell AM)
Nick Wall	Researcher (Mick Antoniw AM)
Jim Evans (JE)	WFA
Lucy Taylor	Severn Estuary Partnership
Colin Davies	Calen Films
Dan Crook	CSP
Trevor Jones	Bangor Mussel Producers Ltd

1. Welcome from the Chair, Llyr Gruffydd AM

LG welcomed members to the meeting and explained the focus of the meeting was to be on marine issues.

The meeting began with a short visual film of some of the wonderful wildlife living in Welsh waters.

2. Wales Environment Link – an introduction

IB gave a short introduction to the network and how it works.

Wales Environment Link (WEL) is a network of environmental, countryside and heritage Non-Governmental Organisations in Wales, most of whom have an all-Wales remit. WEL is officially designated the intermediary body between the government and the environmental NGO sector in Wales. Its vision is to increase the effectiveness of the environmental sector in its ability to protect and improve the environment through facilitating and articulating the voice of the sector. WEL consists of 33 members who represent 36,249 volunteers and 283,201 members and supporters.

The Marine Working Group is made up of five member organisations, the Marine Conservation Society, RSPB, WDC, Wildlife Trusts Wales and WWF. Together they run the marine campaign focusing on advocacy, co-production and public awareness.

Welsh seas cover an area of 15,000km², with 60% of the Welsh population living and working along the coast. The economic activity associated with Welsh seas is estimated at £2.1bn of GVA.

The marine campaign is focused on three key areas of marine policy. These are Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).

The key issues for WEL in MPAs are the completion of an ecologically coherent network of protected sites to include Marine Conservation Zones, the effective management of protected sites. WEL are advocating the need for improved protection for mobile species and the need for greater awareness and appreciation of marine biodiversity.

WEL are asking for MSP to apply an Ecosystem-based Approach, in addition to being based on effective evidence. WEL would also like MSP to support sustainable development, be spatially prescriptive and for the plan to fully integrate with other Welsh Government policies.

WEL's main focus for MSFD is to ensure Welsh waters achieve Good Environmental Status (GES) by 2020 and that there is an effective programme of measures in place to achieve GES. WEL are also advocating for increased engagement with stakeholders, regional collaboration and the need to address evidence gaps and strengthen the evidence base.

More information can be found on the marine campaign in WEL marine [policy briefings](#).

3. Government programmes

GR gave a presentation outlining the various Government programmes that are underway and how they all fit together. He assured the group that stakeholder engagement is a key part throughout this process.

The presentation focussed on two current projects – the introduction of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and Marine Protected Areas – and opened by showing how these projects are set in context with other current marine-related projects to form the Marine Transition Programme.

The purpose of the European Commission's Marine Strategy Framework Directive is to contribute toward achieving Good Environmental Status for our seas by 2020. This approach has been designed to measure the health and effectiveness of the marine ecosystem.

Good Environmental Status means:

- Ecologically diverse and dynamic seas that are clean, healthy and productive
- Use is at a sustainable level
- Fully functioning and resilient ecosystem.
- Biodiversity decline is prevented, biodiversity is in balance and protected.
- Hydro-morphological, physical and chemical state supports the above.

- No pollution effects.

The Directive requires member states to establish monitoring programmes and measures across eleven different descriptors of the marine environment. The monitoring programmes have already been consulted upon and were reported to the European Commission in October 2014. The Programme of Measures are currently being worked up and will be consulted upon in early 2015. The Programme of Measures are to be established by 2016. A review of the status of the seas will take place in 2018. Member States are required to review their approach to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive every six years.

There are a number of measures that are already in place – for example the network of Marine Protected Areas.

There are currently 128 Marine Protected Areas in Wales. A well-managed network of Marine Protected Areas is one of the contributions to the programme of measures to help achieve Good Environmental Status by 2020.

Welsh Government has already announced extensions to three Special Protection Areas for birds. In addition, Welsh Government are reviewing how the Marine Protected Areas are managed and are looking at the regulation 35 conservation advice for each area protected under the Habitats Directive to seek to provide greater clarity for marine users. Welsh Government are contributing to a UK-level marine protected area network assessment and are considering additional offshore Special Protection Areas.

GR also recommended members view two YouTube clips also showing Welsh Government Animations on [Marine Planning](#) and [Marine Protected Areas](#).

www.Wales.gov.uk/marine

www.Wales.gov.uk/fisheries

4. Business support

The group then viewed another short video clip, with interviews from a range of business, recreation, fishing industries – all of them highlighting the need for healthy, productive seas. Those interviewed were:

Alison Hargrave, Special Area of Conservation Officer
Professor Michael Kaiser, School of Ocean Sciences, Bangor University
James Wilson, Mussel Farmer, Deepdock Ltd.
Gareth Reynolds, General Manager, Dale Sailing
David Jones, Project Manager, Marine Energy Pembrokeshire

<http://youtu.be/R8JS9AqzTAY>

5. Discussion

LG noted the budgetary restrictions and that the Natural Resources portfolio was hardest hit by the recent budget and asked about the implications of this on marine. GR said that it was important to look at the priorities and to work more closely with stakeholders.

JE asked if there was a formal timeline for the coproduction and co-management plans. GR said they were gathering information and will then look at the priorities to achieve this. JE noted that the day-to-day functions were a challenge in themselves, given the resources available and the work that needs doing.

LG noted the busy legislative period we are in, with the Well-being of Future Generations and Planning Bills underway, and with the Environment Bill coming next year. GR assured us that the Government is developing a narrative to explain to people how these Bills fit together.

GC suggested various funding pots available – European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and European Regional Development Fund.

GR stated that working with other Members States across Europe will also provide opportunities. We would need to be clear in communicating what needs to be done. He is not convinced that the evidence base is good enough, using marine litter as an example.

GC highlighted that education is a key factor for issues such as marine litter. CR echoed IB's earlier point that the indicators and evidence we have is good enough for work to begin now and improvements in monitoring can be made later.

GR informed us that the key problem as seen from the ground, is the misunderstandings around hpMCZs which make it difficult for people to appreciate the other elements of marine work. The messaging and the transition is therefore very important.

IB thanked all and closed the meeting.