
Natural Resources Wales - Annual Scrutiny 2015

Response from The Crown Estate

April, 2015

1. Summary

The Crown Estate welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation and is happy to support the annual scrutiny by the Environment and Sustainability Committee into Natural Resources Wales (NRW). We have a positive and close working relationship with NRW; this has been strengthened over the past twelve months and is evidenced by our shared Memorandum of Understanding. The Crown Estate is committed to collaborative working with NRW and other stakeholders within Wales.

2. Introduction

The statements contained in this response are in the context of The Crown Estate's interests and responsibilities in Wales. The Crown Estate can bring to bear a high level of knowledge and expertise on issues relating to the management of the foreshore, the territorial seabed and continental shelf, and we are committed to working with the UK and Devolved Governments and all stakeholders on issues that affect these areas. Our Welsh portfolio is diverse; in addition to our marine estate, our rural estate includes substantial areas of common land, agricultural holdings and a range of mineral interests. Our marine portfolio takes in around half of the foreshore and the seabed, where we undertake a key role in enabling developers to realise the potential for renewable energy, particularly through offshore wind farms and marine renewable energy installations. In managing the Welsh assets we aim to work in partnership with government and local communities for mutual benefit. We have good working relationships with the Welsh Government, the National Assembly for Wales, local councils, NRW, communities and our own customers.

3. Comments

We welcome NRW's approach to working with us and the efficient manner in which it delivers its statutory functions. Below are some examples of our working relationship:

- We recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with NRW in which both parties have committed to work in partnership to ensure that the natural resources of Wales are sustainably managed.
- We have regular meetings at and senior staff level to ensure our working practices are complementary and to determine where we can work more closely to assist in the delivery of our separate statutory functions.
- Since the marine licensing function of the Welsh Government moved to NRW, we have developed a good working relationship with the marine licensing team and have regular liaison. We believe the team works well with the resource they have, but as with many operational units across the UK, they have high workloads to manage.

- The NRW website has useful pages on marine licensing with easy to navigate areas that enable applicants and other interested parties to find out more about licence applications that have been received and their stage in determination.
- We continue to have fortnightly teleconferences with the Welsh Government and NRW to discuss the development of the marine planning process.
- We are a member of the Welsh Government's Marine Strategic Advisory group, of which NRW play an active role.
- NRW are active participants in many offshore renewable energy groups that The Crown Estate facilitates and their input and advice is expertly provided; this includes the Offshore Statutory Nature Conservation Authorities Group, amongst others.
- The NRW Marine Licensing Team is actively involved in the development of the Offshore Renewables Joint Industry Programme for Ocean Energy (a programme convened by The Crown Estate, Marine Scotland and Welsh Government) to address some of the sectors' principal consent risks early on and strategically.
- We are working with the NRW Marine Consents Team on the development of a cross-UK regulator workshop focussing on the consenting of the wave and tidal demonstration zones. This will involve developing a consistent approach and learning lessons from consenting of other test sites around the UK.
- We have a long established close working relationship with NRW's advisory function which was transferred across from the Countryside Council for Wales, with regular liaison and meetings. Such meetings provide an opportunity for open and transparent discussion of our respective organisations' activities and priorities and collaborative working.
- We have agreed to work together to identify any areas of adjacent land ownership that would benefit from a joined-up management approach.
- We have an open and transparent working arrangement to share new and existing data sources, where licensing arrangements allow.

4. Conclusion

We trust that you will find these comments constructive. We would be very willing to provide additional information on any of the points we have raised above and be very pleased to discuss these matters with you further. We are ready to engage in further discussions on these and other relevant points. All of this response may be put into the public domain and there is no part of it that should be treated as confidential.

5. Contact:

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