

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?



Lesley Griffiths AC/AM
Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd, Ynni a Materion Gwledig
Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Our ref MA-P-LG-1135-19

Mike Hedges AM
Chair
Climate Change, Environment & Rural Affairs Committee

17 April 2019

Dear Mike

Thank you for your letter of 12 March, regarding Marine Protected Area management in Wales.

In your letter you ask for an update on the Welsh Government's progress in taking forward the 12 recommendations in the Committee's report "Turning the tide? Report on the inquiry into the Welsh Government's approach to Marine Protected Area management". You also ask a further 11 questions on matters relating to MPA management, some of which build on the Committee's recommendations.

You also request an update on delivery of each of the 21 actions in the MPA Network Management Action Plan for 2018-2019. My department is currently working with the MPA Management Steering Group and other marine interests, including the Wales Marine Advisory and Action Group, to produce an MPA Network Management Annual Report for 2018-2019. The Annual Report will provide progress on delivery of each of the 21 actions, and information on other MPA management actions being carried out across Wales. The Annual Report is due to be published in summer 2019, and I will ensure the Committee receives a copy once it is available. In the meantime I have provided an interim update on each of the 21 actions in the 2018-2019 Action Plan.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

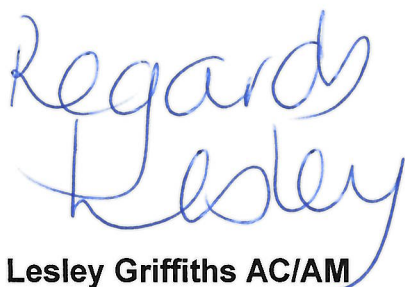
We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Regarding adoption of the Welsh National Marine Plan (WNMP), I am committed to progressing marine planning for Wales, and an important step will be adoption of the WNMP. I wrote to the Committee on 13 June 2018 setting out the Welsh Government's response to the Committee's recommendations following your consideration on the draft WNMP. Since then my department has worked closely with a wide range of stakeholders as well as Welsh and UK marine policy officials to finalise the text of the plan and develop our approach to supporting plan implementation. This work has included:

- Extensive meetings and workshops exploring plan policy in relation to blue growth, Strategic Resource Areas, marine sector supporting policy, Sustainable Management of Marine Natural Resources and the Wellbeing of future generations, socio-economic related decision making, restructuring the WNMP to support accessibility for users and cross border considerations;
- Establishing a task and finish group to consider WNMP tidal lagoon policy options and finalisation of the WNMP Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment;
- Establishing a public authorities group to consider implementation proposals and to advise on decision making to support plan implementation;
- Developing case studies to help share good practice in plan implementation;
- Engaging with the Marine Management Organisation and wider stakeholders on cross border considerations; and
- Developing proposals for a monitoring and reporting framework.

Whilst significant progress has been made, Brexit work has been prioritised across my portfolio and this will unavoidably result in some changes to milestones of other work including marine planning. Further, as the plan contains reference to retained functions, adoption requires agreement from the UK Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. It is currently unclear how Brexit may impact this timescale.

A progress update on each of the recommendations is set out in Annex 1 to this letter. My response to the 11 additional questions is set out in Annex 2 to this letter. Finally, an interim progress update for the 21 actions in the 2018-2019 Action Plan is set out in Annex 3 to this letter.



Lesley Griffiths AC/AM

Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd, Ynni a Materion Gwledig
Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs

UPDATE ON PROGRESS AGAINST THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that for Wales to realise the benefits of its MPAs, sites must be managed effectively. The Welsh Government must provide leadership on this matter by developing, as a matter of urgency, an MPA strategy and ensuring that all management authorities, including the Welsh Government, are actively engaged in MPA management and fulfilling their duties and responsibilities.

The Welsh Government accepted this recommendation.

In September 2018 the Welsh Government published the MPA Network Management Framework 2018-2023 and MPA Network Management Action Plan 2018-2019. Both documents were produced by the MPA Management Steering Group, which is made up of the main management authorities operating in Wales.

The MPA Network Management Framework 2018-2023 sets out, for the first time in one place, the structure for improving the management and condition of the network of MPAs in Wales for the next 5 years. The Framework recognises that effective management of MPAs maximises the contribution the MPA network can make to the health and resilience of marine ecosystems and sustainable marine industries. It also provides a focus for all Management Authorities for maintaining and improving management of the network.

The MPA Network Management Action Plan 2018-2019 sits alongside the Framework and details the actions identified by the MPA Management Steering Group as a priority to further improve management, and hence condition, of the network of MPAs in Wales. The MPA Management Steering Group is keeping progress in delivering the actions under review. It has also agreed to publish an Annual Report which will provide details of how delivery of each action has progressed over the previous 12 months.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that MPAs cannot be managed effectively without the appropriate level of resources, including funding and staffing. The Welsh Government must:

- **ensure it has sufficient staffing to deliver its marine conservation responsibilities;**
- **bring forward proposals for funding an area-based approach, with each management area having a dedicated officer; and**
- **ensure that Natural Resources Wales has sufficient resources to undertake its responsibilities for MPA management and improvements to the condition of the Wales Natura 2000 Network.**

The Welsh Government accepted this recommendation in principle.

Staff within the Welsh Government's Marine and Fisheries Division continue to be involved in sustainable marine management, as outlined in my original response. However, it must be recognised the need to prioritise work to exit the EU and no deal planning in particular has impacted staffing resources across my portfolio and this is no exception.

The view of the MPA Management Steering Group has not changed regarding area-based approaches to management. Many management authorities already work collaboratively through Relevant Authority Groups to deliver their statutory responsibilities and to share best practice. To assist management authorities in delivering their shared responsibilities we have provided £130,000 to support delivery of the MPA Network Management Action Plan for Wales 2018-2019. The Action Plan for 2019-2020 is currently under development, and we will look at opportunities to provide financial support for delivery of the actions within it, where needed.

I continue to meet regularly with the Chair and Chief Executive of Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to discuss any areas of concern.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government must increase public awareness of MPAs and improve its engagement with stakeholders and the public. It must also operate in a more transparent and efficient way, publishing information about the activities of the 22 specialist groups it leads and ensuring stakeholders are fully engaged in the development of the MPA strategy.

The Welsh Government accepted this recommendation.

Since the Committee published its report in August 2017 we have significantly increased our stakeholder engagement activity.

As part of our ongoing drive to increase transparency we regularly publish notes from the following group meetings on our website:

- Wales Marine Action and Advisory Group;
- Wales Marine Fisheries Advisory Group ;
- MPA Management Steering Group; and
- Marine Planning Stakeholder Reference Group.

We also publish a Marine Planning newsletter, which currently has 980 subscribers.

Comments were invited from the Wales Marine Action and Advisory Group (WMAAG) when developing the MPA Network Management Framework for Wales 2018-2023 and MPA Network Management Action Plan for Wales 2018-2019. However, we recognise this is an emerging process and we are always open to suggestions on how we can improve our engagement and secure greater input from marine interests. We will discuss how best to achieve this at the next WMAAG meeting in May.

Following publication of the Framework and Action Plan I wrote again to Management Authorities, drawing attention to both documents and reminding them of their statutory responsibilities for MPA management.

As part of our work preparing for EU exit we provide stakeholders with a regular newsletter on Fisheries and Brexit. This ensures stakeholders in the fishing industry are updated on developments, any new processes which are in place and signposts where to get additional help. To date we have published eight newsletters. These have been well received, and to date we have over 600 subscribers.

In addition to the groups we convene, my officials attend many stakeholder convened groups and meetings to ensure we are engaging directly with our stakeholders.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government should develop an enforcement strategy, based on risks, which addresses all pressures on MPAs - including water quality; litter; recreational pressures; fisheries and unregulated marine resource gathering - and should move quickly to implement management measures in MPAs where there are known risks.

The Welsh Government accepted this recommendation in principle.

Since the Committee published its report we have concluded 36 enforcement cases. These cases were brought for a variety of reasons ranging from fishing in closed areas, misreporting of catches and failure to submit sales notes. Of these cases, 29 were successfully prosecuted in court while the remainder received advisory letters or official warnings. At the time of writing we are investigating a further 14 alleged offences.

To strengthen our enforcement capability we have recently taken delivery of three new bespoke Fishery Patrol Vessels, which will enable us to better patrol the 32,000km² of water in the Welsh Zone. To support this increased capacity we have undertaken recruitment of seven new vessel crew members to deliver a greater number of days at sea. This is reflected in the fact that during the first three months of 2019 alone the vessels have already undertaken 33 patrols, in comparison to the 10 carried out during the whole of 2018. Our new crew are undertaking essential training at present, and are on target to become warranted MEOs.

The MPA Network Management Action Plan for Wales 2018-2019 contains actions which address the pressures highlighted in this recommendation.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the availability of data, evidence and research is central to MPA policy development and management. The Welsh Government should establish a Wales marine science partnership to bring together industry, academia and stakeholders. The Welsh Government must

also ensure it has in place effective data and research for MPA management, including monitoring and surveillance.

The Welsh Government accepted this recommendation in principle.

Our Marine Evidence Strategy, which is being developed in conjunction with NRW, is due for publication in Summer 2019. It will:

- provide a framework to support the collection of marine evidence for developing, implementing and evaluating marine policies and programmes;
- support wider engagement and understanding around the risks and opportunities in Welsh seas;
- define high level, strategic marine evidence priorities for Wales - initially those of the Welsh Government and NRW - and guide the implementation, monitoring and review of actions to meet those priorities;
- improve collaboration and co-ordination of scientific knowledge, resources and communication; and
- help align and develop Wales' marine evidence capacity and promote innovation.

We are also developing a Fisheries Evidence Plan with colleagues in Cefas, which will produce a baseline of current evidence and outline priorities for 2019-20 onwards.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that when designating MPAs in the future, the Welsh Government should set out the resources necessary for the associated management, monitoring, surveillance and enforcement that site(s) will require and how such resources will be provided.

The Welsh Government accepted this recommendation. The Welsh Government will continue to take this approach when identifying and designating any new MPAs.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government should define its understanding of an Ecologically Coherent Network of MPAs in Welsh waters and work with stakeholders to address gaps in the network.

The Welsh Government accepted this recommendation.

Our understanding of an ecologically coherent network of MPAs is set out in the recently-published Report on Marine Protected Areas in Wales (2013-2018). An update on progress in completing the MPA network is given in the response to Question 4.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that a cornerstone of MPA management is recourse and access to justice. The Welsh Government must ensure that

future arrangements in are in line with the Aarhus Convention and not prohibitively expensive for applicants.

The Welsh Government accepted this recommendation.

We launched our consultation on Environmental Principles and Governance post EU Exit on 18 March. It will run until 9 June. The consultation seeks views on what can constitute a coherent and effective governance framework for Wales which:

- reflects our devolution settlement;
- aligns with our existing legislative framework; and
- complements existing governance mechanisms.

As this is a complex issue which requires careful consideration, the consultation asks a number of questions to enable a conversation with stakeholders on the key elements and functions required to provide a coherent and effective governance framework. This will also need to be considered in terms of our current devolution settlement.

The three pillars of the Aarhus Convention (Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice) will form a part of our discussions with stakeholders. Public participation has already been captured in both the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act and the Environment (Wales) Act.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government must assess the likely impact of exiting the European Union on Welsh MPAs, including whether designation and management can be harmonised, and commit to no loss of protection under future arrangements. It must also seek agreement with the UK Government about how marine environmental protections will be managed coherently in cross-border marine areas.

The Welsh Government accepted this recommendation. Further information is provided in the responses to Questions 6 and 7.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government should ensure that reporting of Welsh MPA site condition and status currently required under European legislation is undertaken regularly after the UK exits the European Union, with reports published and provided to management authorities in a timely manner.

The Welsh Government accepted this recommendation in principle. Further information is provided in the response to Question 8.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government should work with the UK Government to ensure Wales' fisheries resources and the interests of the Welsh fleet are fully protected in Brexit negotiations. Future Welsh fisheries management arrangements should take into account the Wales National Marine Plan and a Welsh MPA strategy.

The Welsh Government accepted this recommendation.

We are in detailed discussions around fisheries management, quota sharing and access rights to UK and EU waters with the UK Government, the Scottish Government and the administration in Northern Ireland, in preparation for more detailed coastal state negotiations when we exit the EU.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government must explain how it intends to address the potential shortfall in funding for MPA work that is currently met by EU funds, such as the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and LIFE-Nature.

The Welsh Government rejected this recommendation, and our position remains as set out in my original response. It is for the UK Government to explain how it is going to replace any shortfalls in funding following our exit from the EU.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

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?

We continue to work closely with NRW, JNCC and other science and policy experts to develop an integrated, cost-effective programme of monitoring for biodiversity. Once established it will provide the evidence to assess and detect trends in the health and biological diversity of our seas and underpin the sustainable management of our natural resources. This monitoring will cover the full spectrum of our marine ecosystems, both within and outside our MPAs, and will be coordinated across all four countries of the UK.

This is a significantly complex area and work to complete the programme is ongoing across the UK. In the meantime, NRW and JNCC continue to provide monitoring on behalf of the Welsh Government.

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?

I remain committed to Wales completing its contribution towards an ecologically coherent network of MPAs in UK waters, which supports a wider network in the north-east Atlantic.

The 2016 network assessment concluded that MPAs in Wales are already making a significant contribution towards ecological coherence. It also identified a number of gaps in the Welsh contribution which I intend to address with the identification of Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs), using powers under the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009).

Earlier this month my officials met with stakeholders through a new Task and Finish Group to discuss developing an agreed approach to identifying MCZs in Welsh waters. Once the approach has been developed and agreed my officials will work with the Task and Finish Group to identify potential MCZs considered suitable to address the gaps.

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?

NRW's indicative site level feature condition reports found that 45% of all marine features are in favourable condition, 45% are in unfavourable condition and further evidence is needed before a judgement can be made for the remaining features. The key pressures identified by the reports are water quality, pollution, unregulated activities and invasive non-native species. My officials have worked with the MPA Management Steering Group to identify a number of actions within the 2018-2019 Action Plan which focus on these issues. Some actions are of an investigatory nature designed to improve our understanding of the issues and inform where management measures may be required to improve feature condition. This is important because the marine environment is dynamic with often hard to predict and slow response times, so we need to ensure we target resources at the most relevant actions.

The action to develop a consistent and evidence-based approach to monitoring and surveillance of sites, as outlined in the response to Question 1, will provide us with a improved evidence base and further our understanding of site condition.

The project to develop a permanent, sustainable, site-level feature condition reporting process is on track to deliver recommendations in early 2022. A more detailed update on progress will be provided in the Annual Report for 2018-2019.

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?

Our existing suite of MPAs already includes a number of protected areas for the conservation of highly mobile species including birds, bottlenose dolphin, grey seals and the recently designated Special Areas of Conservation for harbour porpoise.

The work currently underway to identify MCZs is focusing, in the first instance, on delivering the results of the 2016 network assessment, which considered the role of habitats and species of limited mobility within the network. The next phase of MCZ work will consider whether there is a need for further spatial protection for highly mobile species, such as seabirds and cetaceans. This is currently under discussion by the Task and Finish Group referred to in the answer to Question 2.

Spatial protection is known to benefit highly mobile species for key life stages where clear and persistent areas of importance can be identified. The ecology of highly mobile species can mean that their conservation is sometimes better delivered through management measures taken at a whole sea scale.

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.

As a Government we have been clear and consistent in our message that following EU exit there should be no regression in our environmental standards.

The EU Birds and Habitats Directives play a vital part in helping us meet our international biodiversity obligations and in providing safeguards for our most

important habitats, our rarest species and for migratory birds. We are not about to change or alter in any way those protections and safeguards. We will be retaining Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), and they will continue to be identified, designated and managed in line with the criteria and requirements of the Birds and Habitats Directives.

To ensure there will be no gap in relation to EU environmental standards currently in place, we have over the last six months delivered the most extensive programme of legislation ever undertaken by the Welsh Government to ensure the continuation of existing protections. In a no deal scenario this will mean existing environmental standards continue to apply from the day we exit the EU. My officials have worked with the other UK administrations to identify and deliver the necessary legislative amendments to ensure continued operability of the UK legislation following EU exit. The legislative work ensures there is no change in the protection of natural habitats, species and birds, including our European Marine Sites, upon exit from EU.

Following EU exit our SACs and SPAs will no longer contribute to the EU Natura 2000 network. It is important, however, to ensure we continue to manage and adapt this network of European sites across the UK. This will be achieved through the national site network which will be made up of existing sites in the UK together with any SACs and SPAs designated after EU exit.

Our network of MPAs will continue to form part of the UK's contribution to the Bern Convention's Emerald Network. The UK wrote to the secretariat of the Bern Convention in November 2018 to confirm this.

The network also contributes to an ecologically coherent network of MPAs in the north east Atlantic. All MPAs, whether UK-designated European marine sites or national sites designated under the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009), comprise the UK contribution to the OSPAR network of MPAs.

6. What specific action have you taken to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to maintain marine environmental protections post-Brexit?

The Withdrawal Act, if commenced, will transfer the European Acquis into UK law. As set out in the response to Question 5, a large scale legislative programme has been undertaken across the UK to ensure this retained EU legislation is operable following EU exit. We have also been introducing Statutory Instruments to ensure our domestic transposing legislation remains operable. This will ensure there is no weakening of our environmental standards as we exit the EU.

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?

Existing management arrangements will continue to apply for management of cross-border marine areas following EU exit.

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?

Following exit from the EU, in line with current requirements the Welsh Government will report on its implementation of measures to achieve the objectives of the Birds and Habitats Directives. The reporting requirements are intended to make sure that, at a minimum, they reflect those set out in Article 17 of the Habitats Directive and Article 12 of the Birds Directive. The reports will be published to ensure transparency and scrutiny of our environmental performance.

The EU reporting requirements in the Habitats and Birds Directives are the means by which the UK currently also meets the reporting obligations as a contracting party to the Bern Convention. Following EU exit we will report every six years on the conservation status of species and habitats listed under the Bern Convention. In the main these are the same species and habitats as those listed in the Habitats and the Birds Directives.

We will also continue to have reporting requirements as contracting parties to the OSPAR Commission, and to ASCOBANS.

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?

I meet regularly with my counterparts across the UK to discuss the EU negotiations and domestic preparedness at the devolved nations quadrilateral.

I expect the UK Government to honour its commitment to guarantee all of the EU funding programmes in full once we exit the EU. This includes meeting the costs of administering the programmes and the use of an appropriate exchange rate. In terms of all funding arrangements after we exit the EU, I am clear that Wales must not receive a penny less as a result of exiting the EU.

The UK Government has guaranteed that, in a no deal scenario, LIFE projects currently supported by EU funding will continue to be funded by HM Treasury for the lifetime of the projects. If a deal is struck, then they will continue to be funded by the EU for the lifetime of the projects. HM Treasury are considering options to replace LIFE funding in the longer term following our exit from the EU. My officials are pressing HM Treasury to make this funding available to the Welsh Government.

My officials continue to play a full role in the discussions of the UK EMFF Senior Steering Group. This Group recently discussed vulnerabilities in the event of a no deal scenario, and proposals for the administration of the additional funding for the

fishing industry announced by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs last December.

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?

I have increased the Marine and Fisheries budget to support our extended functions in the offshore marine area. There is an additional allocation of £600,000 for the 2019-2020 financial year. Elements of this extra funding will support the identification and designation of new protected areas in the deeper offshore marine region, as needed, to complete our contribution towards a well-managed ecologically coherent network of MPAs.

INTERIM PROGRESS UPDATE ON DELIVERY OF THE MPA NETWORK MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN 2018-2019

ACTION	DETAIL	LEAD MANAGEMENT AUTHORITIES	UPDATE
1	Develop an approach to undertaking improved and periodic MPA condition assessments.	NRW	This action is ongoing and on track for completion. Work to develop the approach started in October 2018 following award of an EMFF grant.
2	Deliver MPA management through regulatory consenting processes.	All management authorities	This action is ongoing due to the statutory nature of the processes underpinning this action.
3	Improve accessibility of marine monitoring data.	NRW	<p>This action is ongoing. Monitoring data from 2015, 2016 and 2017 for subtidal SAC sediment features across Welsh waters has been quality assured. This data is now available for use in environmental change analysis and reporting. The habitats covered are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2015: 5 coastal lagoons, 3 estuaries, 1 bay. • 2016: 5 coastal lagoons, 6 sand banks, 8 bays, 1 bay investigation • 2017: 5 coastal lagoons, 8 bays, 1 sand bank <p>Funding provided by the Welsh Government for delivery of this action will be carried over to the 2019-2020 financial year to allow the action to be completed This will cover Water Framework Directive sediments and subtidal reef data.</p>
4	Further develop and deliver a risk based monitoring programme across the MPA network.	NRW, JNCC & Welsh Government (WG)	This action is ongoing with an indicative timeframe for completion by the 2020-2021 financial year.

5	Develop an approach for refining conservation objectives for all MPAs in Wales while continuing to publish guidance for new sites as necessary.	NRW & JNCC	This action is ongoing and on track for completion. Conservation objectives for the Northern Cardigan Bay SPA and the three Welsh cross-border harbour porpoise SACs have been published. A review and comparison of NRW conservation objectives in comparison to that produced by other SNCBs has been completed, as has scenario testing of different approaches for conservation objectives in the HRA process.
6	Develop a UK Dolphin and Harbour Porpoise Conservation Strategy.	JNCC, NRW and WG	This action is ongoing. Development work on the Strategy is taking longer than planned. We anticipate a consultation on the Strategy will be held later this year.
7	Undertake analysis of outstanding monitoring data samples to inform site condition assessments.	NRW	This action is ongoing. 12 years of monitoring data for an area within Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau SAC has been prepared, analysed and reported on. Further work will be carried out during 2019-2020 to prepare, analyse and report on monitoring data for other large and complex marine habitats.
8	Assess and where necessary manage the impact of commercial fishing activities on MPAs.	WG & NRW	This action is ongoing and is on track for completion. Management proposals are being developed for the activities assessed as having the most potential to affect site features. The remaining NRW assessments are being progressed in batches with similar priority, features and gear types. As part of the ongoing project, 56 mammal assessments will be published on both WG and NRW websites in autumn this year. All other assessments will be progressed over the next two years.
9	Operate a risk-based approach to fisheries enforcement.	WG	This action is ongoing. Our enforcement model has led to a number of successful prosecutions in 2018-2019. More detail will be available in the Annual Report.
10	MPA Network Condition Improvement Project.	NRW	This action is ongoing. The first stage of the project, to collate all data linked to the SSSIs within the MPA network, is complete. Pressures and threats that are (or could) significantly affect the condition of the features have been identified. Further gap analysis work is needed.

11	Improve maps of the extent and distribution of Annex 1 marine habitats.	NRW	This action is ongoing. Maps are revised and updated as new data becomes available.
12	Deliver phase 2 of the unregulated activities project, focussed on the priority activities.	NRW	Phase 2 of the project is complete. The outcomes of this phase will inform delivery of Phase 3. This action therefore is ongoing.
13	Deliver the priority actions within the Marine Litter Action Plan where they provide benefit to the network of MPAs in Wales	The Clean Seas Partnership: WG, NRW, DCWW, MHPA, LAs and Relevant Authority Group (RAG) officers	This action is ongoing. We are awaiting updates from all of the action leads; further information will be available in the Annual Report.
14	Collate and analyse evidence to inform reporting requirements which meet national and international obligations, including under Section 124 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009) and to OSPAR on effective management of MPAs.	WG, NRW & JNCC	This action is complete. The UK report on the assessment of management effectiveness was co-ordinated by the JNCC and submitted to the OSPAR commission on 28 September 2018. The report under Section 124 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009) was laid before the National Assembly for Wales on 21 January 2019.
15	Explore how outcomes from diffuse and atmospheric pollution at Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau, Pembrokeshire Marine and Severn Estuary SACs can be applied across the network.	NRW & Relevant Authority Groups (RAGS)	This action is ongoing and on track for completion. The MPA Management Steering Group will review interim results from these site-level projects in January 2020.
16	Sustainable Management of Marine Natural Resources Project.	WG & NRW	This action is ongoing and on track for completion.
17	Develop a biosecurity plan for marine invasive non-native species (INNS), learning from existing projects.	NRW & Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau Relevant Authority Group officer	This action is ongoing. The preparatory work, which received funding from the Welsh Government, was completed in March 2019. The two subsequent phases of the work will be supported by EMFF, and are scheduled for completion in March 2022.

18	Develop consistent and proportionate guidance to improve casework guidance and to support implementation of the Welsh National Marine Plan.	NRW & JNCC	<p>This action is ongoing.</p> <p>Guidance has been developed to assist applicants in preparing the information require for environmental assessments, on the application of the new regulations that govern Environmental Impact Assessments and guidance which further clarifies the marine licensing application process.</p> <p>An EMFF-funded project is being carried out to better facilitate access to information about MPAs in the context of Strategic Resource Areas for aquaculture and wave and tidal stream development.</p>
19	Address coastal squeeze impacts on MPAs.	NRW & WG	This action is ongoing. A review to understand the nature and scale of coastal squeeze on MPA coastal habitat features is due to be completed shortly. Habitat creation work has been taken forward at Carmarthen Bay and Estuaries SAC.
20	Maintain links between the Network Action Plan and local agreed actions, where they exists, and support exploration of funding opportunities.	Relevant Authority Groups	This action is ongoing. Further information on site-level projects will be available in the Annual Report.
21	Integrate sustainable management of the MPA network with the Area Statement process.	NRW, management authorities and all other relevant stakeholders	This action is ongoing and on track for completion. Area Statements are due for publication in March 2020.