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11 July 2012

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES -ENVIRONMENT AND
SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE
INQUIRY INTO COASTAL PROTECTION IN WALES**

Briefing from The Crown Estate:

1. Summary:

- The Crown Estate welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to this inquiry into coastal protection in Wales and hope that we can continue to support the Welsh Government's strategic planning for coastal protection over the coming years.
- The Crown Estate fully supports the Welsh Government's 'National Strategy for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management in Wales' and its holistic approach to risk based decision making for coastal management.
- We recognise the significant scale of flood and erosion risk along Wales' coast and we seek to continue working closely with Welsh Government, Risk Management Authorities and other stakeholders to develop innovative long-term, sustainable solutions with multiple benefits, for flood defence, coastal protection and regeneration.
- We believe the potential for new, innovative and large-scale transformational beach nourishment proposals should be explored between relevant government and public bodies.

2. Context: The Crown Estate remit

The Crown Estate welcomes the publication of this inquiry into coastal protection and is grateful for the opportunity to provide these comments. The statements contained in this written evidence are in the context of The Crown Estate's interests and ownership of almost the entire seabed. This response is

informed by The Crown Estate's extensive experience of managing activities within the marine environment and, within its core remit, of balancing economic activity with stewardship of natural resources for future generations to use and enjoy. We are committed to working with government departments, stakeholders and industry in helping to manage the coastal and marine environment.

Our ownership and responsibility comprises virtually the entire UK seabed out to the 12 nautical mile territorial limit, in addition to the rights to explore and make use of the natural resources of the UK continental shelf, with the exception of oil, coal and gas. We own over half of the foreshore and around half the beds of estuaries and tidal rivers in the United Kingdom. Our role is to commercially and sustainably manage these assets of national importance for the benefit of the nation.

Our expertise includes coastal and marine resource management (e.g. marine aggregate extraction, marine renewable energy installations, seabed infrastructure, aquaculture and new activities such as gas storage and carbon capture and storage) and its interplay with other marine activities such as defence, energy, navigation and marine safety. We have a strong understanding of the needs of a broad range of coastal and sea users, as commercial partners, customers and stakeholders.

The following points take into consideration the questions posed by the Committee with regards to the evidence they will consider:

3. National Strategy for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management in Wales

- The Crown Estate welcomes the progress the Welsh Government is making with its holistic approach to coastal management through the 'National Strategy for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management in Wales'.
- We believe we are in an ideal position to support the Risk Management Authorities in their development of innovation, sustainable, solutions to coastal protection, especially in consideration of wider economic renewal programmes (in relation to associated socio-economic benefits of any infrastructure scheme that is put in place).
- Many have commented that the current coastal management regime is not sustainable in the long term, and the potential for new and innovative long-term transformational proposals should be explored. We are keen to work with the Welsh Government and all stakeholders in helping to realise new ways of delivering policy objectives.
- Paragraph 183 of the Strategy states: "*Measures such as beach nourishment both contribute to the management of coastal risks and increase local amenities. They can even contribute to the economy by increasing tourism.*" We are undertaking a scoping phase on the potential for large-scale transformational beach nourishment schemes in Wales; for such a scheme to be successful it is essential that all relevant authorities are involved in the exploratory and implementation elements.

- We recognise the constraints the existing funding regime has made on the decision making process and progress of strategic and sustainable coastal protection works to date and therefore welcome the measure to develop ‘clearer funding prioritisation methodology.’

4. Shoreline Management Plans

- The National Strategy references Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs) as a source of guidance containing preferred policies for coastal erosion; however, there is no explicit link or emphasis to use (second generation) SMPs as a measure to achieving the objectives set out in the strategy. In order for SMPs to facilitate rather than act as a barrier to the development of coastal protection in Wales, it would be useful to see that there is a clear link and synergy between the Strategy and SMPs at a local level.

5. Coordination and communication

- Many of the measures set out within the National Strategy, to address its key objectives, are to be developed in parallel, primarily led by Welsh Government, but also many of the bodies that make up the Risk Management Authorities. We would like to emphasise the importance of clear communication and engagement across all programmes of coastal and flood protection work. Not only will this allow for the identification of opportunities for strategic innovative solutions but will enable input and involvement from bodies able to facilitate their development (such as The Crown Estate).
- The proposed arrangements for establishing a new Single Body for the management of Wales’ natural resources and recent consultation on ‘Sustaining a Living Wales’ provide a significant opportunity to coordinate the approach to coastal management and should be used to maximise synergies between bodies to deliver the optimum sustainable solutions.

6. 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. Through the Energy & Infrastructure’s Policy, Planning and Consenting team, we are ready to engage in further discussions on these and other points relevant to our ownership or which our expertise may be brought to bear. All of this response may be put into the public domain and there is no part of it that should be treated as confidential.

7. Contact:

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Background Information on The Crown Estate

The diverse portfolio of The Crown Estate comprises marine, rural and urban properties across the whole of the United Kingdom valued in total at £7.6 billion (2012 figures). Under the 1961 Crown Estate Act, The Crown Estate is charged with maintaining and enhancing both the value of the property and the revenue from it consistent with the requirements of good management. We are a commercial organisation guided by our core values of commercialism, integrity and stewardship.

The Crown Estate's entire revenue surplus is paid directly to HM Treasury for the benefit of UK citizens; in 2012 this amounted to just over £240 million.

Our ownership comprises virtually the entire UK seabed out to the 12 nautical mile territorial limit, in addition to the sovereign rights to explore and make use of the natural resources of the UK continental shelf, with the exception of oil, coal and gas. We own over half of the foreshore and around half the beds of estuaries and tidal rivers in the United Kingdom. A wide variety of businesses and organisations conduct economic and conservation activities across the seabed, with an estimated total value of some £587 million providing almost 890,000 jobs.

The Crown Estate manages its marine assets on a commercial basis, guided by the principles of sustainable development and social responsibility. We take a consistent approach to the management of our activities around the UK, whilst retaining flexibility to take local factors into account whenever necessary. The Crown Estate can bring to bear an unparalleled level of knowledge and expertise on issues relating to management of the foreshore, the territorial seabed and continental shelf. We have a strong understanding of the needs of a broad range of sea users, as commercial partners, customers and stakeholders.