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Marine Conservation Society Submission to the National Assembly for Wales, Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee:

Follow up work on Marine Protected Area management in Wales

April 2019

The Marine Conservation Society (MCS) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Committee's follow up work on Marine Protected Area (MPA) management in Wales. As the UK's leading marine charity, we find ourselves still having to challenge the 'and marine' mentality that persists within government and in parts of the conservation movement. As such, we are grateful for the Committee to find time for this piece of work within its busy work programme.

What has been called 'The Blue Planet 2' effect has demonstrated that the public, when engaged correctly in marine conservation issues can become moved to take action. MCS's annual Great British Beach Clean, for example, in 2018 saw a spike in its volunteer numbers 1,300 volunteers – over 700 more than last year – cleaning nearly double the number beaches than in 2017. Both our membership and volunteers demonstrate that people care about the UK and the Welsh marine environment. Similarly, the Senedd debate on the Committee's MPA 'Turning the Tide' inquiry report in January last year also demonstrated the levels of interest on this important matter across the Chamber.

The revisiting of Turning the Tide inquiry report has come at a useful time for MCS assess the progress made by the Welsh Government in taking forward the recommendations in the Committee's report. Please note: as a member of Wales Environment Link's (WEL) Marine Working Group, MCS has also worked closely with other WEL partners in inputting significantly to the WEL submission to the Committee.

Q1. What progress has been made by the Welsh Government against the recommendations in the Committee's report?

We have included in Appendix 1 a table presenting our detailed consideration of the progress made the Welsh Government against the recommendations, coupled with consideration of the contribution of the MPA Network Management Framework 2018-2023 and 2018-2019 Action Plan. In summary, whilst it has been a hugely positive step to see the development for the first strategy to aid Welsh Management Authorities to better manage the MPA network in Wales, resource limitations and lack of strong Welsh Government leadership, has seen the associated Action Plan not driving the changes that the Committee was seeking.

Q2. Has the management of Welsh seas received sufficient resource and strategic direction?

We fully support all five of the MPA Network Management Framework 2018-2023 objectives (sustainable management of the MPA network; effective leadership; participative and engaged communities; clear



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governance structures; and adaptive management). However, we do feel there is room for improvement across all five areas, with leadership and management being critically important.

It is our view that there is a lack of leadership, ownership and suitable prioritisation from the Welsh Government and the other Welsh Management Authorities. The Welsh Government must lead by example and drive forward better MPA management by all, nationally and locally. This should be addressed as a priority within the MPA Network Management Action Plan 2019-20. Long-term actions are needed that can reverse the degraded condition of the site features. Many of the actions in 2018-19 Action Plan relate to strategic policy, process or data, and whilst useful, they are not resulting in direct site management improvement. Furthermore, the majority of the actions lie with Natural Resources Wales (NRW). We would like to see on the ground solutions to local pressures and threats to site features, delivered by funded local independent site officers. In addition, we would like to see pan-Wales funded actions to improve the status of whole sites and the network.

To address the inconsistency in effort, approach and investment of resource by Management Authorities, we would like to see the 2019-20 Action Plan containing clear actions for all Management Authorities, supported by a duty upon them to undertake their appropriate actions, enforced by the Welsh Government, to achieve greater engagement and accountability.

MCS strongly believe that independent site officers are best placed to facilitate successful local management delivery for example, identifying and taking preventative steps to improve local management, undertaking stakeholder liaison, data gathering and sharing of MPA management activities with others. Numerous submissions to the 2017 MPA inquiry evidenced the benefits of such a delivery model. We, therefore, greatly welcomed the Committee's recommendation to the Welsh Government to bring forward proposals for funding an area-based approach, with each management area having a dedicated officer, and have been disappointed that the MPA Management Steering Group has not implemented this vital investment in long-term MPA management. As we explained in the 2017 inquiry, across Wales, disparity in resource for European Marine Site (EMS) officers is huge, with the employment of EMS officers ranging from full-time posts to ½ day per week. Their current funding is 'piecemeal', external and ad hoc, which has notable ramifications for the scope of conservation measures and long term monitoring, with officers often required to focus on project delivery and reporting deadlines, rather than valuable site management. This reduces their capacity to undertake regular reviews and update their site management schemes and also prevents shared best practice and improvements between sites.

Funding for MPA monitoring is needed in order to effectively establish the health of protected marine habitats and species and to identify where additional management may be necessary. NRW must have the resource to monitor, collect, and publish site-level feature condition assessments to inform effective site management. This information is needed to enable management authorities to improve MPA feature and site conditions. Where data is deficient, a precautionary approach to the management of features and sites should be adopted.

As raised during the Turning the Tide inquiry, we have long been concerned that there has been insufficient budget allocated to implement effective management (mitigating and/or eliminating pressures and threats arising from existing or ongoing activities) of Wales's marine natural resources. MCS would, therefore, like greater transparency of resourcing within the Welsh Government's Marine and Fisheries Division. Transparency would also allow for scrutiny of allocation on budget against return on investment, employment, GDP, as well as social factors such as non-use values. It is still unclear to MCS where the additional £500,000 in the 2018-2019 budget¹ for marine went and where the £150,000 in the 2019-2020 draft budget² will be targeted. Please note with regards to resourcing, the comments in the Wales Environment Link response on this matter.

Q3. How has the condition of Wales' MPA's have changed?

In 2012³, CCW highlighted that 47% of species and 54% of habitat features of Natura 2000 sites were in unfavourable condition. As reported by the Welsh Government in their report to the National Assembly for Wales in January 2019⁴, NRW's 2018 indicative site condition assessments found that for Wales' inshore SACs and SPAs, 45% of features are in unfavourable condition and 9% of features are in unknown condition, due to insufficient information. Clearly, this is not an improving picture and demonstrates failure by the Welsh Government and Management Authorities. The Welsh Government has legal obligations to protect, conserve and ensure no net loss of marine biodiversity under the UK Marine Policy Statement, which must be taken into account under the Marine and Coastal Access Act, 2009.

Clearly this demonstrates that the current approach to management is failing and that the Turning the Tide report should have instigated a shift in traditional thinking over MPA by Welsh Government and interventions put in place to begin recovery and enhancement of species and habitats.

Q4. Last year the Welsh Government's approach to the MPA Network Management was published. This included the 2018-2023 Framework and 2018-2019 Action Plan. Do these:

- a. Address the key issues of effective management of multi-use MPAs?
- b. Support the management of Welsh MPAs to conserve Welsh marine biodiversity?
- c. Take account of lessons learned from current MPA management activity in Wales (including designation, implementation and enforcement)?
- d. Take account of the implications of the UK's decision to leave the European Union?

4a. Address the key issues of effective management of multi-use MPAs?

¹ [CCERA Ministerial scrutiny session 22 November 2017](#)

² [CCERA Ministerial scrutiny session 8 November 2018](#)

³ M. Hatton-Ellis, L. Kay, M. Lewis, K. Lindenbaum, G. Wyn, A. Winterton, A. Bunker, S. Howard, G. Barter, M. Camplin & J. Jones, 2012. MPA Management Report 2: Assessment of current MPA management in Wales. CCW Marine Science Series No: 12/06/03, 78pp, CCW, Bangor.

⁴ Welsh Government, 2019. [Marine & Coastal Access Act 2009: Report to the Assembly on MPAs in Wales.](#)

As the Committee is aware, where a site is designated as an MPA, it is not in fact the whole area that is actually managed. Currently the *modus operandi* to MPA management in Wales is what is known as a 'feature-based approach'. This focuses any management effort on only the specific listed features for designation. This only occurs when there is a proven to be threat to these features through human activity, leading to management measures to be introduced to regulate and reduce these, thus protecting the features. This is counter to the precautionary principle whereby potential threats should be stopped until the appropriate assessment has been undertaken.

By taking a wider spatial approach to MPA management, known as the 'whole-site approach', management considers the need to protect the wider ecosystem, as well as single elements or 'features'. Such an approach benefits both the listed features and other species and habitats within the site, which are integral to the ecosystem. To get the greatest benefit from Welsh MPAs for nature and coastal communities, MCS consider that the Welsh Government should be taking steps to adopting a whole-site approach to MPA management.

4b. Support the management of Welsh MPAs to conserve Welsh marine biodiversity?

MCS is extremely concerned that there has been management inaction by the Welsh Government, that could have resulted in better management of MPAs, namely the Assessing Welsh Fishing Activities (AWFA) project⁵. Whilst gear/feature interactions have identified issues, including high risk purple-rated activities, management actions have not been put in place. In England⁶, the revised approach stopped all potentially damaging activities until Habitat Regulation Assessments could be undertaken, in line with Article 6 of the EU Habitats Directive. In Wales, MCS urgently want to see all damaging activities stopped with appropriate legislation, enforcement and actions put in place to maintain and enhance MPAs in Wales. Welsh Government are in breach of the Habitats Directive by not putting in place measure to stop all potentially damaging activities. At present their plan is to complete all 'orange' medium risk assessments before any interventions are taken, however they should be acting now in response to the 'purple-rated' high risk assessments.

We welcome the Welsh Government's commitment to completing the Welsh contribution towards an ecologically coherent, well-managed network of MPA in the UK⁷. There must be also be focus on the Welsh -level MPA network (as opposed to the UK) and addressing gaps in the Welsh inshore and Welsh offshore, using powers under the Marine and Coastal Access Act, 2009 and Wales Act, 2017. This should be evidenced based and add value to the existing 139 Welsh MPAs. We are concerned that the scope for initial phases of MCZ designation will not greatly benefit Welsh marine biodiversity, with MCZs needed for mobile species and the introduction of areas of the marine environment afforded greater protection.

⁵ <https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/our-projects/marine-projects/assessing-welsh-fishing-activities/?lang=en>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/revised-approach-to-the-management-of-commercial-fisheries-in-european-marine-sites-overarching-policy-and-delivery>

⁷ Welsh Government [written statement May 2017](#)

All of Wales' MPAs are multi-use, there are no highly protected marine reserves, reference areas or No-Take Zones to afford space for biodiversity to recover⁸ and for there to be scientific reference areas⁹. We would like to draw to the attention of the Committee CCW's scientific advice¹⁰ to the Welsh Government regarding a Welsh-level MPA network, that saw the Welsh Government at the time, commit to using its MCZ powers to create sites afforded a high level of protection¹¹. This was deemed a necessary element of taking forward an ecosystem approach in secure the protection and recovery of Welsh marine ecosystems. Whilst we appreciate that the resulting highly-protected MCZ consultation process in 2012 was miscommunicated and mishandled, this should not detract from the initial advice by CCW, as this still stands. The Welsh Government should not shy away from the need to bring forward a small number of these sites and MCS are calling for this. Whilst we have been frustrated at the two-year delay in the establishment of the Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ) Task and Finish stakeholder group, it has just had its inaugural meeting April 9th 2019. This meeting set the scene for how the MCZ process would be delivered, however we were disappointed that the next meeting will not occur until the autumn and that designation is not planned until 2021. As detailed, Welsh Government have had powers and legal duty since 2009, to designate these sites. England will shortly be consulting on their 3rd tranche, whilst Welsh Government have yet to finish their site scoping research.

4c. Take account of lessons learned from current MPA management activity in Wales (including designation, implementation and enforcement)?

MCS consider that the findings of the MPA management evaluation conducted by CCW¹² in 2012 still hold true, namely for the following five areas:

1. A lack of supporting information to underpin site management: Data deficiency was highlighted in the 2015 Wales Marine Evidence Report¹³, the 2016 State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR)¹⁴

⁸ [PISCO, 2011. The Science of Marine Reserves: 2nd Edition Europe.](#)

⁹ According to a [JNCC report in 2010](#), reference areas provide a key opportunity to demonstrate the unimpacted state of a broad range of marine features, in the context of prevailing environmental conditions. For reference areas to be an effective control against which it is possible to assess the effects of pressure, the human activities within them need to be managed so that impacts are minimised at the site.

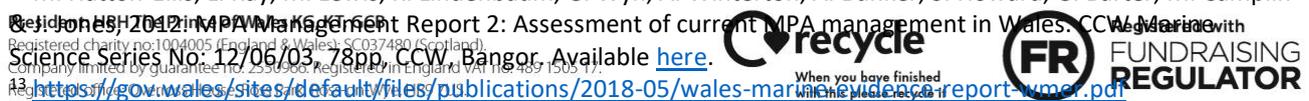
¹⁰ CCW (2008) Delivering a Coherent Marine Protected Area network for Wales: Advice to the Welsh Assembly Government from the Countryside Council for Wales on a process for selecting Highly Protected Marine Reserves, CCW August 2008.

¹¹ Gubbay, S. 2006. Highly Protected Marine Reserves – Evidence of benefits and opportunities for marine biodiversity in Wales. CCW Science Report. Report No: 762.

¹² M. Hatton-Ellis, L. Kay, M. Lewis, K. Lindenbaum, G. Wyn, A. Winterton, A. Bunker, S. Howard, G. Barter, M. Camplin & J. Jones, 2012. MPA Management Report 2: Assessment of current MPA management in Wales. CCW Marine Science Series No: 12/06/03. 78pp. CCW Bangor. Available [here](#).

¹³ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-05/wales-marine-evidence-report-umer.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://naturalresources.wales/evidence-and-data/research-and-reports/the-state-of-natural-resources-report-assessment-of-the-sustainable-management-of-natural-resources/?lang=en>



- and the 2016 JNCC report¹⁵, with this being an ongoing barrier to assessing ecological trends and the effectiveness of management interventions;
2. Site management processes and partnerships: including the lack of locally based site officers and gaps in communication;
 3. The lack of awareness and understanding from stakeholders: of note, public engagement is a substantive work area for EMS officers where they are in place;
 4. Legislative and policy framework: including the need for a better understanding of how biodiversity policy is compatible with wider policy drivers; and
 5. Resources.

It is concerning to MCS that all 5 areas have not been adequately addressed since the 2012 recommendations by CCW.

4d. Take account of the implications of the UK's decision to leave the European Union?

MCS continue to seek assurances from the Welsh Government that EU funds currently supporting marine conservation in Wales will be like-for-like replaced and clarity on how any shortfall will be addressed as a matter of urgency.

We would like to draw attention to the Ministers' answer dated 8th March to a written question from Andrew R.T. Davies¹⁶. It demonstrates the huge amount of amount of EU funding provided for projects related to marine biodiversity conservation and MPA management:

Source	EU Funding	Welsh Government Funding
European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (2007 -2013)	£1,686,774.29	£562,258.10
LIFE Programme (2012 -2015)	£500,000	£500,000
European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (2014 -)	£551,179.50	£147,500
LIFE Programme (2018 -)	£2,983,250	£1,016,750

¹⁵ Carr, H., Wright, H., Cornthwaite, A. and Davies, J. (2016). Assessing the contribution of Welsh MPAs towards an ecologically coherent MPA network in 2016. Joint Nature Conservation Committee. Available [here](#).

¹⁶ [WAQ77920](#)

Do you have any other comments or issues you wish to raise that have not been covered by the specific questions?

We are anticipating a UK Government consultation on the Marine Strategy Regulations, due April / early May 2019. We understand from our colleagues in the eNGO community that the consultation will show that the UK has not reached its 2020 target of Good Environmental Status (GES). This is despite statements on the contrary to the Committee from the then Cabinet Secretary during the Turning Tide inquiry¹⁷. MCS noted a recent question on this by John Griffiths, AM to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Rural Affairs¹⁸. The EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive as the environmental pillar is vitally important, and for the UK to fail to meet its own GES target, is disappointing. It highlights that wider Welsh and UK policy that MPAs sit within, for example, the Nature Recovery Action Plan, is not doing enough to conserve the marine environment, thus putting even greater emphasis on the need for Welsh MPAs to be well managed and not merely marine paper parks.

Yours sincerely,



Gill Bell, Head of Conservation (Wales), Marine Conservation Society

¹⁷ Paragraphs 99-101, Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee [Turning the tide? Report of the inquiry into the Welsh Government's approach to Marine Protected Area management](#).

¹⁸ [The Record](#), Plenary, Questions to the Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs, 27th March 2019.

Appendix 1: Table setting out consideration of the progress made the Welsh Government against the Committee’s recommendations, coupled with consideration of the contribution of the MPA Network Management Framework 2018-2023 and 2018-2019 Action Plan, along with suggested next steps.

<p>CCERA 2017 Turning the Tide Committee report recommendation</p>	<p>Welsh Government response</p>	<p>Do either the MPA Network Management Framework for Wales or Action Plan for Wales address the Committee’s recommendations?</p>	<p>MCS’ level of concern</p> <p>Significant concerns; concerned; & watching brief (as of April 2019).</p>	<p>Next steps</p>
	<p>MCS’ view of their response</p>			
<p>Recommendation 1</p> <p>For Wales to realise the benefits of its MPAs, sites must be managed effectively. The Welsh Government must provide leadership on this matter</p>	<p>Accept</p> <p>Implemented in part</p>	<p>Action 3; Action 10.</p>	<p>Concerned.</p> <p>If Welsh MPAs were being managed effectively, they should be meeting their management objectives e.g. Favourable Conservation Status – which as of 2018, for</p>	<p>There needs to be more meaningful engagement and action by all Management Authorities in the implementation of the Action Plan.</p> <p>The MPA Network Management</p>

<p>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.</p>			<p>all inshore SACs and SPAs, 45% were not and 9% of features are in unknown condition.</p> <p>Whilst the publishing of the Framework and Action Plan represent positive steps, it is questionable if they are leading to change on the ground.</p> <p>MCS, nor WMAAG, had no input into the MPA Network Management Framework. Similarly, MCS has not been able to input into either 2018-19 or 2019-20 Action Plans.</p>	<p>Framework for Wales has 'effective leadership' as one of its five objectives. There needs to be stronger steer for Management Authorities to deliver sustainable management of the MPA network.</p> <p>Stakeholders should have the ability to support and influence the development of the Action Plans. A better engagement mechanism for NGO input.</p> <p>We are awaiting the first progress report of 2018-2019 Action Plan.</p> <p>We are concerned that the Action 5 may lead to gaps in protection for marine biodiversity.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>MPAs cannot be managed effectively without the appropriate level of</p>	<p>Accept in Principle</p> <hr/> <p>Implemented in Part</p>	<p>None of the actions in the Action Plan directly relate to this recommendation.</p>	<p>Significant concerns.</p> <p>Whilst Welsh Government's Marine Biodiversity Branch has seen additional resources this</p>	<p>The protection and conservation of the marine environment must not be put on hold whilst other 'more pressing matters' are seen to by the Welsh Government, for</p>

<p>resources, including funding and staffing.</p> <p>The Welsh Government must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 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. 			<p>has been strained by Brexit preparedness.</p> <p>Area-Based Approach: local independent site officers, or ‘boots on the ground’ are vital to MPA management, for example, to drive management and support delivery of priority actions.</p> <p>NRW budgets increasingly under pressure. We concerned over NRW’s capacity to monitor and manage MPAs, and how/whether this has changed over time and how increased responsibilities in the Welsh offshore area may add further strain.</p>	<p>example, Brexit and ‘day one readiness’.</p> <p>The MPA Management Steering Group should identify funding options to bring forward funding for an Area-Based Approach. Wales only has 1 full-time & 4 part-time European Marine Site Officers. Fully implemented and regularly reviewed management schemes are essential.</p> <p>NRW must have sufficient resource to monitor, collect, and publish site-level feature condition assessments to inform effective site management.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3</p>	<p>Accept</p>		<p>Concerned.</p>	

<p>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 specialist groups it leads and ensuring stakeholders are fully engaged in the development of the MPA strategy.</p>	<p>Implemented in part</p>	<p>None of the actions directly relate to this recommendation.</p>	<p>MCS would question if the 2018 Year of the Sea activities raised awareness of Wales' MPAs and the benefits of a well-managed MPA network.</p> <p>We welcome that improvements have been made to date for including minutes of meetings of WG stakeholder groups on the WG website: minutes now exist for many of the groups, including the marine planning SRG, WMFAG and WMAAG. Disappointingly, the quality of the minutes shared by varies greatly. In particular, the minutes of the MPA Management Steering Group (a closed group for management authorities) only include very high level actions and no information why decisions were made and on what evidence.</p>	<p>Welsh Government marine stakeholder fora must operate in a transparent way to enable meaningful engagement.</p> <p>All agendas, presentations and papers should be provided in a timely fashion in advance, to allow stakeholders to disseminate and collate feedback prior to the meeting from their relevant groups. This would allow the meetings to have full and meaningful discussions around the subject areas rather than as presently happens, stakeholder are presented to followed by a question and answer session. As the information is sprung on the attendees this does not allow sufficient time to assimilate all the implications and raise concerns in situ & best represent the wider network of groups.</p> <p>Following meetings attendees and stakeholder group members should be presented with draft final copies of work and allowed to suggest amendments, not presented with final signed-off versions. Decision pathways should be explained in a way</p>
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				that is transparent to all stakeholders.
<p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>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.</p>	Accept in Principle	Action 9; Action 10; Action 12	<p>Significant concerns.</p> <p>Investments by the Welsh Government into fisheries patrol vessels are welcomed. However, there needs to be a greater focus on enforcement of unregulated marine resource and recreational pressures.</p> <p>Welsh Government need to take a holistic ecosystem based approach to ensure that land based activities are not negatively affect the Favourable Conservation Status of MPA features.</p> <p>Whilst we await the completion of Assessing Welsh Fishing Activities project (AWFA), known 'purple'</p>	<p>Action 9 should be implemented and the Welsh Government should take action to halt all potentially damaging activities occurring in European Marine Sites.</p> <p>As an example of tackling challenging enforcement issues, the implementation of actions to improve water quality by the Welsh Government, following its nitrate vulnerable zones consultation. Further ambitious enforcement strategies should be brought in for all of Wales' land and sea areas.</p> <p>It is not yet clear how the Committee's wider recommendation has been followed through, particularly with regard to enforcement of unregulated marine resource and recreational pressures, and we would welcome any clarity</p>
	Implemented in part			

			assessed (damaging activities) are occurring in European Marine Sites, possibly in breach of the Habitats Regulations.	the Committee can seek on this as it relates to Action 12.
<p>Recommendation 5</p> <p>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.</p>	Accept in Principle	Action 1; Action 3; Action 11; Action 14;	<p>Significant concerns.</p> <p>The 2018 indicative MPA feature indicative condition assessments by NRW demonstrate low confidence in much of the data that informs the condition of habitats and species that are protected in Welsh seas. These assessments and advice from NRW is vital for Management Authorities' understanding management efficacy.</p> <p>We are concerned about use of site 'indicative condition assessments', which although are a useful starting point, they are not the legal site assessments required for Article 17 reporting, which is a requirement of the Habitats Directive.</p>	<p>The Marine Evidence Strategy should address marine biodiversity evidence gaps that are hindering conservation efforts. However, this should not have a focus on fisheries management but rather on marine management overall, with fisheries as one of the activities.</p> <p>NRW must have sufficient resource to monitor, collect, and publish site-level feature condition assessments to inform effective site management.</p> <p>The Welsh Government should explore the benefits of creating Wales marine science partnership. Such a partnership has the potential to support the identification of new funding</p>
	Not implemented	Action 16		

			<p>We are also concerned about the move at NRW to report at a site-level rather than a feature-level. Feature-level reporting should also be available.</p> <p>Staff have been recruited into the Welsh Government's Marine and Fisheries Division to develop a Marine Evidence Strategy.</p> <p>The Welsh Government has not created a Wales marine science partnership as recommended, with a good local example being the Milford Haven Waterway Environment Group.</p>	<p>steams for MPA monitoring and targeting research where it is most needed.</p> <p>The 'Lle portal' should continue to be invested in once the Wales National Marine Plan has been adopted, in order to remain up to date and provide public access to data. Where confidentially allows, commercial data should be placed on the portal to improves its overall accuracy.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6</p> <p>When designating MPAs in the future, the Welsh Government should set out the resources necessary for the associated management, monitoring, surveillance and enforcement that</p>	Accept	Action 5	<p>Watching Brief.</p> <p>There has been a 2-year delay in the creation of an MCZ Task and Finish Group. Given that this responsibility fell to Welsh Minister in 2009, this delay demonstrates the lack of prioritisation and resourcing given to the marine</p>	<p>The first meeting of the MCZ Task and Finish Group was held early April 2019, with phase 1 MCZ sites expected be designated 2021.</p> <p>Welsh Government must accelerate the timetable for MCZs and provide resources to enable this.</p>
	Implemented in part			

site(s) will require and how such resources will be provided.			environment. By way of contrast, England are on their 3 rd tranche of MCZ identification, designation and management.	
Recommendation 7 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.	Accept	None of the actions directly relate to this recommendation.	Watching Brief. JNCC published in 2016 the 'Assessing the contribution of Welsh MPAs towards an ecologically coherent MPA network in 2016' report. WEL subsequently wrote to the Welsh Government highlighting our concerns over the criteria applied by JNCC to identify gaps.	We would like to see the forthcoming MCZ process focused on evidence-based decision making. We are concerned that mobile species and sites for greater protection, are not being included in the first round of MCZs for designation 2021, due to political reasons.
	Implemented in part			
Recommendation 8 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	Accept	None of the actions directly relate to this recommendation.	Watching Brief. At a recent WEL meeting with Lesley Griffiths she indicated that the next quadrilateral meeting of UK Environment ministers, that she would be raise environmental governance as an agenda item for discussion.	We are awaiting the outcome of the Welsh Government consultation on Environmental Principles and Governance. However, financial commitment to a new independent watchdog is essential at this stage, as is an agreement to a set of codes which will ensure the new body is independent and has the
	Not implemented			

<p>prohibitively expensive for applicants.</p>				<p>necessary expertise and legal powers to do the job.</p> <p>We would like to see the Welsh Government commit to a free, fair and accessible complaints procedure once the UK exists the European Union.</p>
<p>Recommendation 9</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Accept</p> <hr/> <p>Implemented in part</p>	<p>None of the actions directly relate to this recommendation.</p>	<p>Watching Brief.</p> <p>Assurances regarding no loss of protection have been put on record, for example, the Ministers' response to written question from Janet Finch-Saunders relating to European Marine Sites (WAQ77304).</p>	<p>The Assembly must ensure that the true value of a functioning ecosystem is not undermined by short term economic considerations and UK/Welsh policy ambitions.</p> <p>We would like to see evidence of cross-border MPA management activity by the Welsh Government and a commitment to ensuring post Brexit that there will be coherent cross-border marine management.</p>

<p>Recommendation 10</p> <p>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.</p>	Accept in Principle	Action 4; Action 7; Action 14	<p>Watching Brief.</p> <p>Welsh Government reported to the National Assembly for Wales, under Part 5 Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, January 2019.</p> <p>NRW published indicative site condition assessments in January 2018.</p>	<p>We would like to see commitment from Welsh Government that an independent environmental watchdog would place requirements on the Welsh Government for regular SAC and SPA site reporting.</p> <p>We would be concerned to see a reduction in monitoring and management by NRW, both at feature and site level and an increase solely on reporting.</p>
	Implemented in part			
<p>Recommendation 11</p> <p>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</p>	Accept	None of the actions directly relate to this recommendation	<p>Significantly concerned.</p> <p>The Welsh Government's Brexit Seas and Coast Group has failed to adequately consider wider marine management measures, such as MPA management and focused on fisheries in isolation.</p> <p>MCS and Wales Environment Link has on numerous occasions raised concerns to officials that draft versions of</p>	<p>A Welsh Fisheries Bill is needed to set out how Welsh fish and shellfish resources will be managed sustainably to allow for recovery and enhancement of fish stocks.</p> <p>We await the publication of the Welsh Government consultation 'Brexit and our Seas'.</p> <p>There needs to be a shift from marine and fisheries management to integrated marine management – fisheries</p>
	Implemented in part			

<p>National Marine Plan and a Welsh MPA strategy.</p>			<p>the Welsh Government 'Brexit and our seas' consultation had not taken an integrated approach to Welsh marine management, again focusing on fisheries in isolation. Have been assured the consultation, due imminently, has been amended to reflect our concerns.</p> <p>The UK Fisheries Bill, as drafted, do not have legal targets for MSY or sustainability. The Bill may be subject to positive amendments.</p>	<p>are just one of many activities within Welsh waters which all need to be managed collectively via an ecosystems approach.</p> <p>This shift would echo the significant changes which have taken place with regard to terrestrial management whereby there has been a move from 'agriculture' to 'land management'.</p>
<p>Recommendation 12</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Reject</p> <hr/> <p>Not implemented</p>	<p>None of the actions directly relate to this recommendation.</p>	<p>Concerned.</p> <p>There have been no public assurances from the Welsh Government that EU funds currently supporting marine conservation in Wales will be like-for-like replaced.</p> <p>In a response to a written question (WAQ77920) from Andrew RT Davies AM, the</p>	<p>Welsh Ministers must identify how a potential shortfall from European funding to support Welsh MPA will be addressed as a matter of urgency.</p>

			<p>Minister set out the amount of European Union funding provided for projects related to marine biodiversity conservation and MPA management over the last 10 years equates to £5.72 million. This has been accompanied by £2.22 million funding from the Welsh Government.</p>	
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