

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig | Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee

Gwaith dilynol ar reoli Ardaloedd Morol Gwarchoddedig yng Nghymru | Follow up work on Marine Protected Area management in Wales

MPA06

Ymateb gan : Dŵr Cymru

Evidence from : Welsh Water

Follow up work on Marine Protected Area management in Wales

The Committee is revisiting its inquiry into the management of Wales' network of Marine Protected Areas, to assess progress since the publication of its influential 2017 report, *"Turning the tide? Report of the inquiry into the Welsh Government's approach to Marine Protected Area management"*.

Dŵr Cymru plays an active role in the protection of the marine environment. To date we have invested over £1 billion on improvements to coastal waters alone, with the major benefits that this has brought to Wales' bathing water quality in particular, but also to the wider marine environment. We continue to work with our regulators to agree where we should make further improvements in the years ahead, whilst always being mindful of the need to ensure that our bills are affordable for our customers.

To improve our evidence base, we have invested in the development of new marine models to assess the impacts of our operations on the marine environment. As well as identifying our own impacts, the modelling has highlighted the continuing impact that diffuse pollution, particularly from agriculture, is having on much of the Welsh coastal marine environment.

Your Committee's current review will look at the work of the Marine Protected Area (MPA) Management Steering Group. Dŵr Cymru is a member and we supported the publication of the Marine Protected Area Network Management Framework for Wales. However, as sectors such as agriculture are not "Management Authorities", they are outside the Framework's direct scope. If Wales' Marine Protected Areas are to achieve favourable condition, it is important that the impacts made by farming, fishing and other sectors are not overlooked.

In the last couple of years the Steering Group has overseen the development of the Action Plan. This includes a number of initiatives funded by the Welsh Government that would otherwise probably not have progressed. Most of them will be delivered by Natural Resources Wales and are generally intended to benefit the MPA network as a whole. We very much welcome these measures.

Dŵr Cymru also supports the case for local groupings focussing on the Marine Protected Areas in a particular location. For many years we have provided modest financial support to all four of the Wales based Relevant Authority Groups (RAGs) and we are represented at many of their meetings. We have seen the written evidence that the Pembrokeshire Marine Special Area of Conservation RAG intends submitting to your inquiry and we would support the thrust of its case.

Tony Harrington
Director of Environment