



Sea Bed User and Developer Group¹, Marine Conservation Society, RSPB, The Wildlife Trusts and WWF Joint Statement on Marine Conservation - November 2015

We continue to support the Marine & Coastal Access Act 2009 and its provisions for marine conservation and its goal to achieve sustainable development of our seas. Our organisations are working closely with Government to ensure:-

- ▶ the designation of a well managed and ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) around the UK
- ▶ that this network includes Tranche 3 of Marine Conservation Zones in English and Secretary of State waters
- ▶ the recognition that marine industries participating in UDG play a major role in economic growth and the sustainable management of marine resources

An ecologically coherent network of MPAs is essential not only to stem the continuing decline in marine habitats and species, but also to provide more certainty for marine industries as we plan and invest in new developments.

We are committed to working together to look for synergies between the delivery of these marine objectives and solutions throughout project development, the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment process and looking for genuine 'win-wins' wherever possible. To enable this, however, we believe that Government must act to ensure that:-

- ▶ there is sufficient baseline information about MPAs so that management measures can be clearly defined
- ▶ a fully representative, well managed and ecologically coherent network of UK MPAs, is designated as soon as possible
- ▶ sites have clear conservation objectives and advice on operations, so that there is consistent advice on potentially damaging operations.
- ▶ there is an increased acceptance that industry can, and does, develop and apply good practices which should be used as appropriate
- ▶ there is a recognition that effective site monitoring and enforcement are essential and can inform the evidence base used in licensing

As part of the Government's economic plans for eliminating the deficit by 2019/20, the Government has announced that Defra and the Defra agencies will be subject to 15% day-to-day cuts over a four year period. We believe that this process of eliminating the deficit can be assisted by supporting sustainable economic growth while retaining and enhancing

¹The Sea Bed User and Developer Group is an informal grouping of industry sectors whose participants have a common interest in sustainable development within the UK's marine environment. The Group is funded by The Crown Estate to align seabed user groups across the UK to work positively with Government to prepare shared understanding and approaches to marine management. Organisations involved include sectors whose members require marine licenses for construction and operation include British Ports Association, United Kingdom Major Ports Association, British Marine Aggregates Producers Association, British Marine Federation, Oil & Gas UK, Renewable Energy Association, Renewable UK, Subsea Cables UK and Carbon Capture and Storage Association.

measures to protect the marine environment. Should any review of the Defra agencies occur in the near future, we think that the outcome must ensure that marine regulation and management continue to be resourced to service stakeholders and restore our seas whilst also remaining cost-effective and proportionate. In addition, any change should provide a new impetus for sustainable economic growth alongside nature's recovery, linking the species and habitats approach to a strong sense of place and a prosperous future. However, for this to happen, the following caveats apply:

1. Spending cuts and rationalisation. While rationalisation could lead to significant savings in back room services, we still need front line services to regulate and manage our seas. Our regulatory frameworks have already been significantly streamlined as a result of a number of reviews and remaining regulation is essential to ensure the value of natural capital is realised and our resources at sea are managed sustainably. Proportionate and balanced regulation also gives industry certainty and therefore encourages growth.
2. Rationalisation cannot further erode existing experience and expertise. The Defra family have already suffered many cuts which have led to an erosion of nature and marine planning expertise at a local and national level. It is essential that any further review of these services does not result in the loss of remaining experience and expertise, or of independent scientific advice. Industry in particular needs to know that when it plans development, the government and/or regulatory authorities are able to act quickly and effectively while understanding the regulatory framework that exists.
3. Existing and new organisation(s) need to show strong leadership, effective management and clarity of purpose to encourage, support and deliver a restored natural environment, while assisting in the delivery of sustainable economic growth through effective and efficient regulation. Given the Government's commitments to inter alia the 25 year plan for nature's recovery and completing an ecologically coherent and well managed network of marine protected areas, against a background of major infrastructure plans, any new organisation(s) will need to help ensure that the value of the natural environment is embedded and understood across all Whitehall departments.
4. Industry and conservation organisations have worked closely with Government and Government agencies to produce better and more cost effective approaches to regulation. This work should continue and resources made available within organisations to ensure that it does.

Marine industry and conservation groups continue to work together, sharing the same objective; to achieve a sustainable marine economy and to restore and protect the marine environment through a well managed and ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas. While it remains for the Government to determine exactly how to achieve this, we believe that this objective must be clearly built in to the Government's marine management mechanisms.