

[Making the Most of Marine](#)

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A debate on 22 March 2017 calls on “the Welsh Government to bring forward an ambitious Marine Plan to support the sustainable development of the blue economy and to make it a central plank of its new economic strategy”. This blog post looks briefly at the development of a Marine Plan for Wales, and considers the potential of the blue economy for Wales.

Marine Planning

The [Welsh Government’s Welsh National Marine Plan \(WNMP\)](#) is due to be consulted on in mid-2017. It will cover Wales’ inshore and offshore areas –which almost double the size of Wales. This will be the first plan of its kind in Wales to focus on Welsh seas, and importantly to articulate how they can support the well-being of current and future generations. A WNMP will introduce an integrated cross-sectoral plan-led approach to decision-making, and will inform regulatory systems such as marine licensing.

Marine planning activity in Wales is guided by the [Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009](#) and the [UK Marine Policy Statement](#),

signed by all devolved administrations and the UK Government in March 2011.

Underpinning this is a [commitment to five High Level Marine Objectives and a vision](#) for clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas.

Other marine planning authorities, such as the [Marine Management Organisation](#), are working to develop marine plans in English areas, such as the south west and north west, that border Welsh waters in the Severn and Dee estuaries. [Scotland published its national marine plan in 2015](#) and is working with marine planning partnerships to plan regionally.



A Blue (or Green) Economy

The Welsh Government considers green growth in Wales to be:

about fostering economic growth, development and social equity while ensuring that our natural assets can continue to provide the resources and environmental services where our well-being is concerned.

In a Welsh context green growth, therefore, includes the marine and coastal environment.

The [New Economics Foundation's New Blue Deal](#) sets a vision for revitalising coastal communities and protecting natural resources. It aims to balance the economic and social needs of communities with those of our marine environment, to ensure they return to prosperity.

According to the [European Commission](#), the blue economy is worth roughly 5.4 million jobs and generates a Gross Value Added of almost €500 billion a year across Europe. The Commission's "[Action Plan for a Maritime Strategy in the Atlantic Area](#)" has a strong focus on the 'blue economy' and sets maritime priorities for 2013–2020, covering aspects such as marine renewables, fisheries and aquaculture, research and investment.

An Inquiry into the Potential of the Maritime Economy in Wales was undertaken in the Fourth Assembly by the Enterprise and Business Committee ([final report February 2016 \(PDF 952 KB\)](#)). The Committee heard from a range of stakeholders, including Irish Government on their approach to marine planning. [Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth – An Integrated Marine Plan for Ireland \(PDF 2.05 MB\)](#), published in 2012, places a strong focus on promoting the maritime economy and includes targets such as, increasing the turnover from the ocean economy to exceed €6.4 billion by 2020. One of the Committee's main findings was that the Welsh Government should:

ensure that the Wales Marine Plan provides a comprehensive and overarching framework for the sustainable development of Wales' marine resources and coastal communities. It should contain objectives and measurable targets – including for economic performance – and be implemented through a 'whole government' approach, modelled on the Irish Integrated Marine Plan.



A range of marine industries in Wales seek to maximise the contribution that Welsh seas can make to sustainable development. The [Wales Seafood Strategy \(PDF 56 KB\)](#) is an industry owned and led strategy, published by [Seafish](#), which seeks a 30% increase in fisheries and aquaculture production by 2025 and a 10% increase in employment in the same timeframe. Other sectors, such as [marine renewables](#), could see Wales playing a global leading role in marine energy. At present in Wales there are two wave and tidal stream Demonstration Zones, seabed agreements for three wave and tidal stream projects and companies such as Tidal Lagoon Power planning significant tidal lagoon energy projects in Wales, including Tidal Lagoon Swansea Bay.

Work by the [Celtic Seas Partnership](#) (an EU LIFE + funded project led by WWF) found that the Celtic Sea provides jobs for 400,000 people, making an annual contribution to the economy of approximately £15 billion. Its work on future trends over the next twenty years found that these waters will get busier, creating competition for space and challenges to ensure we live within environmental limits. The Welsh Government is committed to implementing an ecosystem-based approach to the management of the marine environment. For example, the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) requires the achievement of Good Environmental Status (GES) by 2020 in Welsh seas. The [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) also requires the Welsh Government to manage Welsh seas for future generations.

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