

**Seabed User & Developer Group and Wildlife and Countryside Link  
Joint Statement on the draft Marine Bill  
June 2008**

This is a joint statement on the draft Marine Bill and is supported by the following organisations:

- **Seabed User & Developer Group<sup>1</sup>:**
  - Associated British Ports
  - British Ports Association
  - British Marine Aggregate Producers Association
  - British Marine Federation
  - British Wind Energy Association
  - Oil & Gas UK
  - Renewable Energy Association
  - The Crown Estate
  - United Kingdom Cable Protection Committee
  
- **Wildlife and Countryside Link<sup>2</sup>:**
  - Marine Conservation Society
  - Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
  - The National Trust
  - The Wildlife Trusts
  - Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society
  - Wildfowl and Wetland Trust
  - WWF - UK

1. We broadly support the Marine Bill and its provisions for nature conservation and sustainable development. We recognise the benefits that should arise from Marine Planning and the intention to establish a network of Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ).
  
2. We feel strongly that the Marine Bill must have clear policy objectives for the whole spectrum of marine use, including conservation and sustainable economic objectives, which apply to all aspects of the Bill. These will help ensure multiple use of the marine environment is managed in a robust, transparent and consistent manner.

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<sup>1</sup> The Seabed User & Developer Group is an informal grouping of industry sectors whose participants have a common interest in sustainable development within the UK's marine environment.

<sup>2</sup> Wildlife and Countryside Link is a coalition of the UK's major voluntary organisations concerned with the conservation, enjoyment and protection of wildlife, the countryside and the marine environment. Taken together, our members have the support of over 8 million people in the UK.

3. We will continue to work together to look for solutions through scoping, EIA production, changes to projects, mitigation measures and effective consultation to ensure more genuine 'win-wins'. However, both parties realise that where genuine 'win-wins' are not possible then tough decisions will have to be taken. A strategic overview, clear policy objectives, a planned approach and adequate data will ensure that such decisions are based on best available information and that the reasons for making them are transparent and understood.
4. We agree that voluntary approaches do not always work; creating uncertainty in environmental protection and in planning & development and therefore welcome recognition of the need for planning and enforcement measures.
5. We support enforcement mechanisms for the protection of MCZs to be enshrined in the Marine Bill and believe that Government must ensure that sufficient resources are made available to ensure that site monitoring and enforcement is effective in practice. Clarity over site conservation objectives, what constitutes an offence and what activities and actions are permitted within a site is essential for all marine users, including enforcers.
6. There is a common view that we need greater understanding of the data gaps that exist, but we also agree that there is a considerable volume of existing data. While there is a fundamental requirement for Government to make a long term commitment to enhance our baseline understanding of the marine environment, we do not always need to wait for all the data to be available in order to make informed decisions. 'Paralysis by analysis' will not help environmental protection or developers. Equally there needs to be vigilance that data is used responsibly, i.e. that 'cherry-picking' or misuse of data does not occur to support one point of view. Clarification on who pays for information as well as a commitment from that body to carry out the necessary data collection and analysis work is required.
7. We believe that there are issues related to devolution that raise jointly shared concerns:-
  - Will separate administrations have differing objectives?
  - Will each administration have sufficient resources to do the work efficiently and effectively?
  - Will cross border differences lead to differing standards of protection or enforcement, particularly in the case of regional UK seas for example the Bristol Channel and Irish Sea?
  - Will political decisions outweigh logical or practical approaches to coherent and co-ordinated management of the entire UK seas?
  - Will the different devolved administrations require the same levels of evidence and methodologies for data gathering?
  - Will the devolved administrations work to similar timetables for issuing consents?