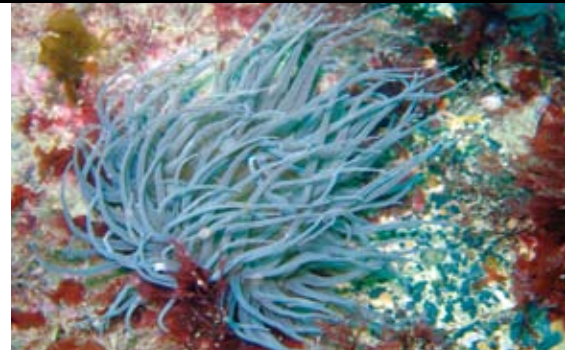


LIVING SEAS:
JOIN US IN PROTECTING WELSH SEAS



Protecting **Wildlife** for the Future

Welsh Seas

Lying where warm waters from the south meet cool nutrient rich currents from the north, the sea around Wales is special in many ways.

The Welsh territorial sea almost doubles the size of Wales. Covering 15,000km², it is home to a vast array of habitats and species, supporting internationally important populations of species including Manx shearwaters, Atlantic grey seals, and bottlenose dolphins. The marine environment is our life support system; releasing oxygen for us to breathe and regulating our climate. It also provides us with many everyday resources, including oil and gas for energy, seafood, sand and gravel to construct roads and buildings, and the opportunity to transport goods around the world.

However, our marine environment is in trouble - for centuries we have taken its riches for granted. Fragile habitats have been destroyed, fish stocks have collapsed and species such as the common skate are on the brink of extinction.

Thankfully it's not too late to turn this situation around. Our seas and sea life have a remarkable capacity to recover, and if we act now, Living Seas are within our grasp. Living Seas is The Wildlife Trusts' vision for the future of our seas. We urgently need your help to bring back the UK's Living Seas, where marine life thrives from the depths of the ocean to the coastal shallows. The Wildlife Trusts believe it is possible to achieve Living Seas around the UK within 20 years – a single generation – but only if opportunities are seized now to make radical changes over the next five years.

Wildlife Trusts Wales and the six individual Wildlife Trusts in Wales work in partnership to bring about our common aim of achieving Living Seas in Welsh waters. This is being realised through advancing our knowledge, influencing decision making and inspiring people about the richness of our marine environment.

Basking Shark



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Bottom right © Cat Lucas/MANWWT

© JP Trenque



Puffin

© Andy Pearson



Sea Grass

© Andy Pearson

What is a Marine Protected Area?

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are sites in which certain human activities are restricted. They are a tried and tested means of safeguarding important marine habitats and wildlife.

For over a decade, The Wildlife Trusts have campaigned with other environmental organisations in the UK for new laws to provide better protection for marine habitats and wildlife. As a result, the ground-breaking Marine and Coastal Access Act was introduced in November 2009, providing UK Governments with the tools needed to revolutionise the management of our marine environment. Wildlife Trusts Wales are calling for the Marine Act to be swiftly and effectively implemented in Wales, and the opportunities provided by the Act seized to ensure real benefits for biodiversity.

One of the most important and exciting aspects of the Marine Act is the creation of a network of MPAs throughout UK seas. MPAs protect the wildlife within their boundaries and allow nature to recover and thrive. In many cases, they can also have an influence beyond their boundaries, as burgeoning wildlife populations spill out into the surrounding sea. Carefully designed and well-managed networks of MPAs can boost the health of the marine environment as a whole, helping it recover from past impacts and enabling it to sustain current pressures. MPAs are the heart of marine nature conservation and essential for the sustainable management of the UK's marine area. That is why The Wildlife Trusts regard MPAs as the bedrock of Living Seas.



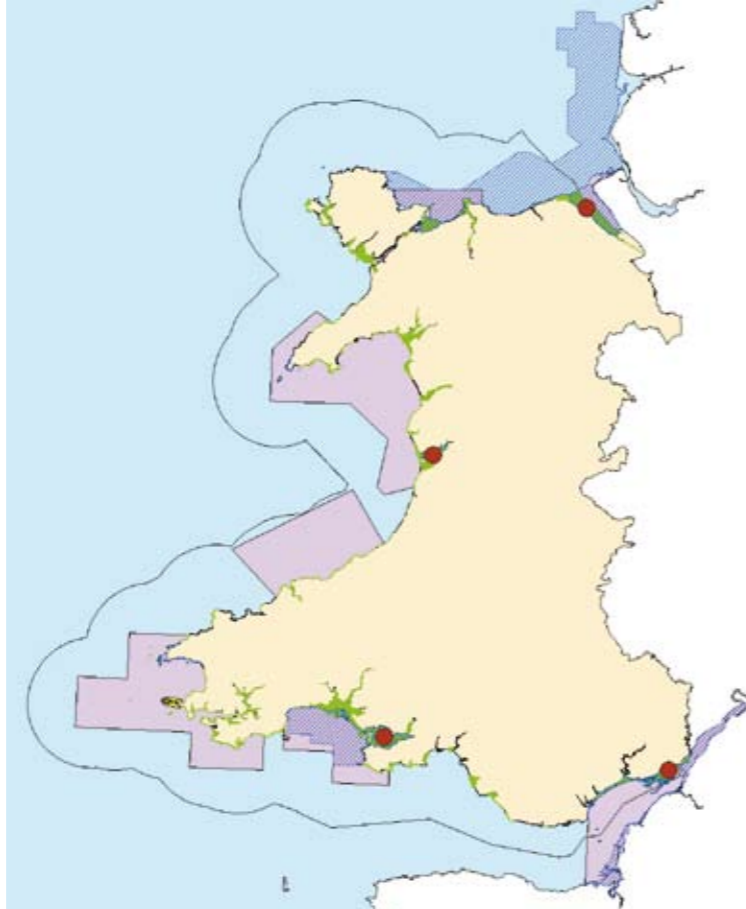
'Bernard the Gurnard'

The Wildlife Trusts Petition Fish campaign aims to put pressure on UK, Scottish and Welsh Governments to create more MPAs. You can show your support for MPAs in Wales by signing the petition online at www.wildlifetrusts.org/petitionfish or text 'FISH' with your name and postcode to **60777***.

*Texts will be charged at your standard network rate. You will be given the chance to opt out of further communications or you can email your mobile number, name and postcode to optout@wildlifetrusts.org

Current Marine Protected Areas in Wales

-  Special Area of Conservation
-  Special Protection Area
-  Ramsar Site (Boundaries not shown)
-  Site of Special Scientific Interest
-  Marine Conservation Zone
Marine Nature Reserve
-  Welsh Territorial Sea 12nm limit



16/08/2011



Graddfa/ Scale : 1:1300000
Mapiau sylfafn yr AŌ a atgynhychwyd trwy ganiatâd Llyfrfa Eî Mawrthidi. © Hawffraint y Goron.
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Although MPAs cover over 36% of Welsh territorial waters, marine biodiversity continues to decline and damaging activities still take place within MPA boundaries.

Several different types of MPAs currently exist around the Welsh coast, which include:

European Marine Sites:

Protected under European legislation, these sites include Special Protection Areas (SPA) which are protected for bird species, and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) which are designated for other habitats and species. It is these European Marine Sites which make up the majority of our current MPA network in Wales; we currently have 11 SACs and 10 SPAs with marine interests.

RAMSAR Sites:

Designated to protect wetland habitats, there are currently 4 Ramsar sites in Wales that incorporate coastal areas adjacent to wetlands.

SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest):

Set up to protect the best examples of the UK's plants, wildlife and geological features, these sites are mainly on land, but do include some coastal areas.

Although not necessarily statutory designations, the Wildlife Trusts have **28 nature reserves** on the coast of Wales, which all help to protect coastal ecosystems. These sites cover a variety of habitats, from tidal estuaries and mudflats, to cliffs and islands, supporting an abundance of wildlife.



Bottlenose dolphins

Despite the present coverage of MPAs around Wales, marine biodiversity continues to decline. Without adequate management, MPAs are simply lines on a map, providing little contribution to the protection of our sea life for the future. This is currently evident within Welsh SACs, where inadequate management and enforcement has resulted in the unfavourable condition of 50% of features, with prospects unlikely to improve in the short term. To turn this situation around, the role MPAs will play in protecting our seas for the future must be recognised. Adequate resources must be made available to ensure that all Welsh MPAs can be effectively managed, enforced and monitored.

Marine Conservation Zones

The Marine Act presents Welsh Government with the opportunity to introduce new MPAs to protect nationally important features. However, current proposals suggest only a low number of sites of a small size will be created.

Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) are new sites introduced under the Marine and Coastal Access Act which aim to protect nationally important habitats and wildlife. In Wales, the Welsh Government has opted to only introduce a small number of highly protected Marine Conservation Zones - within these sites no extraction of resources nor deposition will be allowed and all other damaging or disturbing activities will be banned. There are currently no other designated marine sites that offer this high level of protection in Wales. Due to be designated in 2013, these sites are intended to complement existing MPAs, creating a series of marine wildlife havens around Wales.

In order to decide where new highly protected MCZs should be located, ecological, social and economic criteria will be applied to Welsh inshore waters. There will be several public consultations throughout the designation process, offering members of the public and stakeholders the opportunity to share their views on the sites being considered.

Hermit crab

© Polly Whyte

Ecologically Coherent Network

The implementation of MPAs differs considerably in design, timescale and process in different parts of the UK

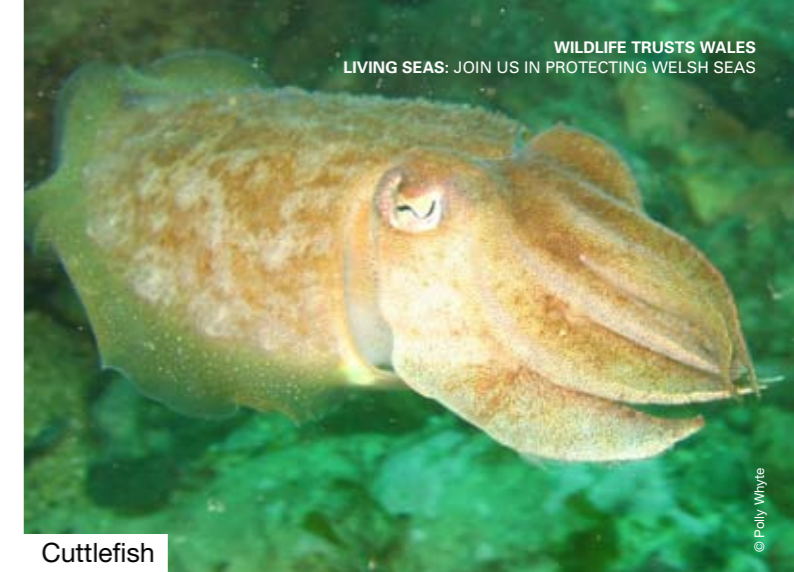
MPAs in Welsh waters not only need to complement each other, but must also contribute to a UK wide ecologically coherent network of MPAs. If well-designed and well-managed, a network of MPAs has the potential to meet objectives far beyond those of isolated MPAs, and will be crucial if we are to achieve Living Seas around the UK. Consequently, projects are also taking place in both England and Scotland to introduce new MPAs that will contribute to the UK network and the Northern Ireland Assembly is considering the introduction of new legislation which, it is hoped, will provide for MPA designation in its waters.

Although it is the responsibility of Welsh Government to introduce MCZs into the Welsh inshore area, the Welsh offshore area is covered by two of the Regional MCZ Projects. The Irish Sea Conservation Zones project has recommended MCZs to the north and west, and Finding Sanctuary to the south. Wildlife Trust representatives have been engaged in both of these stakeholder led projects throughout the site selection process. It is expected that MCZs will be designated in the Welsh offshore area in 2012.

Protecting Welsh sea life

The opportunities provided by the Marine Act give a once in a lifetime chance to revolutionise the way we manage our marine environment and protect our seas for the future.

However, the small number of expected MCZs in Welsh waters will not achieve Living Seas on their own. Instead, we will need to look to existing MPAs to help deliver real wildlife benefits. The improved management of existing sites will be crucial if we are to improve ecosystem resilience and allow wildlife and habitats to recover and thrive again.



Cuttlefish

© Polly Whyte

The Wildlife Trusts in Wales are calling for...

- Improved management, enforcement and monitoring of existing MPAs in Welsh territorial waters;
- The introduction of new MCZs in the best possible locations for the protection of nationally important features;
- The selection process for new MCZs to be primarily focused on ecological criteria;
- MCZs to be considered in relation to the wider ecologically coherent network of MPAs around the UK;
- Adequate resourcing of the management of all MPAs;
- All Welsh MPAs to be 'well managed' with the introduction of appropriate site specific management measures.

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LIVING SEAS: JOIN US IN PROTECTING WELSH SEAS

Lessons learnt from existing highly protected MPAs

- Lundy Island

Creating highly protected MPAs is not a new concept. Pioneered in New Zealand over 30 years ago, the benefits of protecting both species that have been overfished and habitats susceptible to disturbance through No Take Zones have been realised the world over. However, closer to home we have been slow to act. We currently only have two No Take Zones in the UK, located at Lundy Island off the Devon coastline, and Lamlash Bay in Scotland. Providing refuges within which marine wildlife is free from the impacts of damaging activities, allows habitat and species to recover from past impacts and provides protection from future harm.

Lundy Island off the north coast of Devon was initially established as a voluntary marine reserve in the 1970's, and was designated a Marine Nature Reserve in 1986 to manage the rich communities of marine wildlife found around the island. However, despite its designations, concern remained that the more sensitive and heavily exploited species were still not adequately protected, particularly from commercial and recreational fishing activities.

In 2003 a small area off the east coast of Lundy became the UK's first No Take Zone, supported by local fishermen who hoped to see increased catch outside of the area. Since the No Take Zone was created, scientists have monitored lobster numbers within the reserve and surrounding areas. By 2007, legal sized lobsters within the No Take Zone were 5 times more abundant and 9% bigger, and evidence of spillover of small lobsters was recorded in surrounding areas. In 2010, Lundy became the UK's first Marine Conservation Zone.



Grey seal

© Eleanor Stone



Lobster

© Simon Parker



Skomer Island

© J. Brown



Manx Shearwater

© Sam Bryn & MANNWT



Pink sea fan

© Chris Wood

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LIVING SEAS: JOIN US IN PROTECTING WELSH SEAS

Protecting Wales' richest marine sites - Skomer Island

Looking beneath the waves around the Welsh coastline, several sites stand out as some of the richest, home to the best examples of our nationally important marine features.

The sea surrounding Skomer Island off the southwest coast of Wales is often considered to be one of Wales' richest marine sites. The area has long been recognised as special due to the array of habitats present, from tidal swept rapids to sheltered bays that are home to seagrass beds and pink sea fans estimated to be over 100 years old. The area is teeming with life, supporting a diverse range of species, including over 240 species of seaweed, the inquisitive Atlantic grey seal, and internationally important populations of seabirds. Managed by the Countryside Council for Wales, Skomer's marine environment has benefited from Marine Nature Reserve status since 1990, and more recently inclusion within the Pembrokeshire Special Area of Conservation. In addition, Skomer Island itself is a National Nature Reserve, managed by the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales.

Despite existing designations, marine wildlife in the waters around the Island is still not fully protected. It is thought that up to 85% of the reserve is actively fished, and although bottom trawling and dredging is prohibited, the intensity of pressure on the site remains substantial. Without a sufficient reference site that is free from disturbance, it is not possible to determine the level of impact current activities are having on the fragile species found around the island, such as the pink seafan or ross coral.

By affording the water surrounding Skomer Island Marine Conservation Zone status, and if backed up with sufficient resources to enable effective management of the site, it would be possible to ensure that nationally important habitats and species are protected for the future. As the only Marine Nature Reserve in Welsh waters, Skomer is associated with invaluable long term scientific research and expertise, making it well placed to support a MCZ, as well as potentially providing a key reference site for the network of MPAs around Wales.

Get involved

You can add your voice to The Wildlife Trusts Petition Fish campaign showing your support for Marine Protected Areas in Wales and around the UK, by signing a scale at your local Wildlife Trust centre or reserve, or by signing online at:

www.wildlifetrusts.org/petitionfish

Wildlife Trusts Wales will be running campaigns in Wales over the coming months to coincide with Welsh Government consultations on the MCZ process. You can find out more information about how you can get involved by visiting:

www.wildlifetrustswales.org

Contact your local Wildlife Trust for information about events and how to get involved in your area:

Brecknock Wildlife Trust – 01874 625708
www.brecknockwildlifetrust.org.uk



Gwent Wildlife Trust – 01600 740600
www.gwentwildlife.org



Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust – 01938 555654
www.montwt.co.uk



North Wales Wildlife Trust – 01248 351541
www.northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk



Radnorshire Wildlife Trust – 01597 823298
www.rwtwales.org



Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales - 01656 724100
www.welshwildlife.org



Wildlife Trusts Wales works with several other environmental organisations in Wales through Wales Environment Link, to lobby Welsh Government about marine management. For more information on the WEL campaign, visit:

www.waleslinkmarine.org.uk

The two regional MCZ projects that border the Welsh inshore area include Finding Sanctuary www.finding-sanctuary.org and the Irish Sea Conservation Zone Project www.irishseaconservation.org

For information on the various MPA projects that the Wildlife Trusts are involved with around the Irish Sea visit:

www.irishsea.org

