# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Managing the Network of Marine Protected Areas**  |
| **DATE**  | **01 August 2019** |
| **BY** | **Lesley Griffiths Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs** |

Today I am announcing the publication of the [Marine Protected Area (MPA) Network Management Action Plan for 2019-2020](https://gov.wales/marine-protected-area-network-management-action-plan-2019-2020). To demonstrate my commitment towards improving Wales’ marine biodiversity, I have approved additional funding for four actions to the sum of £138,500. Management of our network of MPAs is a shared responsibility across a number of management authorities. A well-designed and well-managed network of MPAs, alongside wider marine management measures such as marine planning, is integral to achieving clean healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse seas. It contributes to the resilience and long term sustainability of our seas which is important to our coastal communities, the well-being of the people of Wales and to those who visit our shores.

The Action Plan for 2019-2020 is the result of a considerable amount of work by the MPA Management Steering Group and is the key tool for guiding management authorities to deliver the long-term vision for the management of the MPA network in Wales. It lists 25 priority actions which reflect the breadth of MPA management activity which takes place day in day out across Wales as well as specific interventions and projects.

In preparing the Action Plan the Steering Group has reflected on progress over the last 12 months and has prepared [MPA Network Management Annual Report for 2018-2019](https://gov.wales/marine-protected-area-network-management-annual-report). This has also been published today. The Annual Report details the considerable progress in the delivery of management actions and the breadth of activity relating to:

* improving the evidence base;
* increasing our understanding of pressures on MPA features and the wider marine environment; and
* strengthening decision making processes, strategy development and implementation.

The Annual Report highlights the importance of a number of actions, particularly those relating to planning, consenting and assessment processes, which whilst not always visible, continue to provide vital up-front protection to the network and represent a considerable volume of management work. Importantly, these actions include processes to improve our understanding of condition of sites over time, through monitoring and assessment, recognising it can take a significant amount of time for the result of any activity to be evidenced in a change to feature condition.

In developing the Annual Report the Steering Group received contributions from the European Marine Site Relevant Authority Groups on progress delivering management activities at a local level and through the Wales Marine Advisory and Action Group.

This statement is being issued during recess in order to keep members informed. Should members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Assembly returns I would be happy to do so.