



Dear Climate Change Environment and Infrastructure Committee,

We are facing a climate and nature crisis – to tackle this we need to act now to drive down emissions and protect the natural habitats that store carbon on land *and in the sea*.

More than two thirds of the UK, and nearly half of Wales is under the sea (i.e the seabed!), yet the UK Government’s “carbon accounting” stops on land, creating a substantial blind spot around the carbon absorption and storage capacity of our seas.

A set of pioneering reports published last week, reveals the vast amount of carbon stored in Welsh and wider UK marine habitats and the critical importance of protecting our seas for tackling these crises.

Reports can be found here: <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/blue-carbon>

The Wildlife Trusts, WWF & the RSPB are calling for better protection for Wales’s most valuable and vulnerable blue carbon stores, including:

- Introduce a more strategic and spatial approach to marine planning
- Minimise the impacts of fishing and offshore developments on blue carbon stores
- Take account of blue carbon in the identification, designation and management of protected areas - including the completion of the MCZ network
- Welsh Government fulfil its Programme for Government Commitment and Biodiversity Deep Dive recommendation to establish a scheme to protect and restore seagrass and saltmarsh across Wales.

The *Blue Carbon Mapping Project*, by the Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS) on behalf of WWF, The Wildlife Trusts and the RSPB, is the first time a country has provided a comprehensive estimate of the carbon captured and stored in its seas, including within Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). It reveals that UK seas, primarily our offshore muds and sediments, capture and store up to 2-3 times more carbon per year than all of UK's forests.

The report identifies the most valuable blue carbon stores in the Irish Seas and Welsh Coast region, based on the best available data, and reinforces calls to improve protections of Welsh seas. It reveals an estimated 15.7 million tonnes of organic carbon are stored in Welsh marine habitats, with almost 94% stored in seabed sediments. The report analyses just the

top 10cm of the seabed and, with some sediments extending tens of metres deep, the total carbon storage will be far greater.

We would be happy to arrange an opportunity to discuss this report and implications for Wales in more detail – please reach out, if that is of interest.

Kind regards,

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