

P-04-406 Against Proposed MCZ zones in North Wales – Correspondence from the petitioner to the Committee, 12.09.2013

Dear Petition Committee

I apologise for my English-only response. My initial reaction upon seeing the Minister's statement was a feeling of joy that devolution was bringing politics closer to the people of Wales. This process has been a stressful, long and painful one at times, and I know many local residents who have been fearful of losing their livelihoods. Receiving this news has lessened the burden on many local businesses and individuals who depend on tourism in order to keep their jobs. I am grateful for the opportunity to express the views of local people, and I am grateful to the Welsh Government for listening.

My personal response from the Minister's statement is that having a devolved Government can work in Wales. This whole process proves to me that we, the people of Wales as citizens can have a voice and be heard within policy decisions. The consultation process has now proven to me to be a process that takes account of the responses received and not a token gesture. There is fear when going against lobbyists groups and extremist that numbers can drown the voice and views of the people who live in the areas affected. Having used the methods available, the petition committee as one example, then there is opportunity to show support or indeed opposition to a consultation that do take in account the views of the local people within the areas.

In regards to this particular consultation by submitting my petition, that had a great number of signatures almost 7,000, it has been a great opportunity to prove that petitions demonstrate local views. I have been given the opportunity to comment twice on my petition to the committee, to which I am grateful. Thank you to everyone on the committee for discussing the petition and offering the opportunity for us to submit petitions that do get discussed and get brought to the Minister's attention for a response. I would also like to thank everyone within the Llyn and Ynys Mon that signed the petition and to everyone who worked hard to help me collect all the completed petitions.

I wish the new task group to which one member of Cragen the Vice chair Phil Hollington has a seat every success.

I enclose below a statement that has been prepared by Cragen Llyn a Mon a group that I chair. Cragen Llŷn a Môn is a community group set up to protect the social and natural ecology of the coastal and rural communities of North West Wales. In practice this means the representation of local sustainable industries such as fishing, farming and tourism and the promotion of responsible conservation and sustainable resource use. These factors underpin the rich living heritage of Llŷn and Sir Fôn, where the economy must be resilient if that heritage is to survive. Cragen was formed in direct response to the MCZ consultation.

Statement by Cragen Llŷn a Môn regarding the Minister's Statement on Marine Conservation Zones

Cragen Llŷn a Môn welcomes the Statement by the Minister for Environment and Sustainability concerning Marine Conservation Zones.

In particular, we welcome the new approach that recognises the wide support for marine conservation in Welsh seas, and that the interests of all stakeholders, including conservationists, fishermen and other coastal industries, and local communities and their economies, will be taken into account at an early stage in identifying possible sites. We are happy to note that the previous ten candidate sites have all been withdrawn.

We welcome the news that the new approach will adopt a site-by-site approach, so that management will be based upon those local features that need protection, and that the proposal to designate sites as "Highly Protected", where a wide range of activities would be banned, has been dropped.

It is clear from the Minister's Statement that he does not believe that our waters require additional protection. This was initially stated by the Countryside Council for Wales (now Natural Resources Wales) in their reports on the Menai and Pen Llŷn Special Areas of Conservation. We regard this as recognition that the waters in the North East Menai Strait and around Pen Llŷn are of outstanding conservation value, including a long history of use by local people and visitors who care about them, and that there need be no conflict between human activities and maintaining high levels of biodiversity.

It is important that the new measures to be developed protect all the features that make our waters so special – the mixture of biodiversity, sustainable inshore fishing and the communities that it supports, tourism, and our local heritage. This will require the allocation of sufficient resources, and we will be watching to ensure that this is the case. We welcome recent recognition by organisations such as WWF that "co-management" to protect all these aspects is a vital part of the way forward, and we look forward to learning the full nature of the Welsh Government's proposals in due course.

Cragen Llŷn a Môn stands ready to play a major role in making sure they are a success.

Many thanks

Claire Russell Griffiths