

Scrutiny of the draft Environment (Principles and Governance) Bill inquiry

Response from the National Oceanography Centre

The [National Oceanography Centre](#) (NOC) is the UK's centre of excellence for oceanographic sciences, with a remit to provide marine national capability and leadership for big ocean science at a global scale.

The NOC welcomes the Draft Environment Bill (the Bill) and the opportunity to comment.

1. The National Oceanography Centre (NOC) hopes that the importance of the UK's marine environment is fully recognised in the Bill - the UK's marine environment is extremely rich and varied, supporting a wide range of species of national and international importance. It provides vital ecosystem goods and services including provision of food and regulation of the climate. A healthy marine ecosystem is fundamental to supporting sustainable development, thus ensuring wide social and economic benefits.
2. The Bill includes the intention to set up a world-leading, statutory and independent environment body: the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP). It will be important for the OEP to be appropriately resourced, both in terms of financial support and scientific evidence, to manage effectively, issues relating to the marine environment.
3. The Bill intends to establish a clear set of environmental principles. In 2002, Defra published '*Safeguarding our Seas*' (1), a Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Development of our Marine Environment, at the heart of which is the vision for '*clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas*'. To take this vision forward, a number of high level marine objectives were set which were used to underpin development of a Marine Policy Statement (2). The UK provided significant input to the implementation of the European Commission's *Marine Strategy Framework Directive* in the UK, helping to define targets for good environmental status in UK seas. The NOC thus looks forward to a robust Environment Bill that will ensure that the already well-established principles relating to the UK's marine environment are upheld and maintained.
4. The provisions of the Bill need to be mindful of the fact that the marine environment does not respect boundaries – UK territorial waters, that include marine protected areas, may be affected by transboundary factors (e.g. pollution).
5. The NOC is pleased to note that the policy areas covered by environmental improvement plans will include the Overseas Territories, where Her Majesty's Government has responsibility.

References

1. Defra (2002) *Safeguarding our seas*:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69321/pb6187-marine-stewardship-020425.pdf
2. HM Government, Northern Ireland Executive, Scottish Government, Welsh Assembly Government (2011) *UK Marine Policy Statement*:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69322/pb3654-marine-policy-statement-110316.pdf

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