



Marine and Coastal Access Bill Newsletter

Issue 9

5th December 2008

The Marine and Coastal Access Bill was announced in the Queen's Speech at the opening of the new Parliamentary session on 3 December 2008.

Following the Queen's Speech, the Bill was introduced in the House of Lords on 4th December and published on 5 December. Lord Hunt of Kings Heath, Minister for Sustainable Development and Energy Innovation and Deputy

Leader of the House of Lords, will lead on the Bill in the House of Lords and Huw Irranca-Davies MP, Minister for the Natural and Marine Environment, Wildlife and Rural Affairs, will lead in the House of Commons.



In our last newsletter (September 2008) we explained how we planned to develop the draft Marine Bill, published in April, in response to Parliamentary pre-legislative scrutiny and the public consultation. The Bill introduced to Parliament, and now known as the Marine and Coastal Access Bill, delivers on the commitments we made.

What has changed in the last few months?

The UK Government and the Devolved Administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have reached agreement on a UK-wide approach to marine planning. This agreement follows discussions in the Joint Ministerial Committee and the further negotiations it put in place.

As part of the agreement, more functions will be devolved to Scottish and Welsh ministers. Marine planning and Marine Conservation Zone powers will be devolved for the offshore area adjacent to Scotland. In addition, the Bill will provide for the creation of a Welsh zone for fisheries and ensure that the National Assembly for Wales has the competence to legislate for the establishment of a route around the Welsh coast and for public access to land at or near the coast for recreational purposes.

Taken together, these agreements and new powers have enabled us to develop a UK Marine and Coastal Access Bill which will deliver real benefits across the UK, with the full support of the three Devolved Administrations.

What happens next?

The Bill is scheduled for a 2nd reading debate in the House of Lords on 15th December. Some aspects of the Bill may also be discussed in the Queen's Speech debate on 10th December, which Lord Hunt of Kings Heath will close.

After the 2nd reading debate, the Bill will enter Committee stage and be debated and possibly amended. When the Committee stage ends the Bill will be reported to the House, and again amendments may be made before the Bill receives a third reading. After the third reading, the Bill will leave the House of Lords and a similar process will be repeated in the House of Commons. Once both Houses agree to the content of the Bill, it may proceed to Royal Assent. We can't be certain of the timings for these phases but if Royal Assent is to be achieved, it would need to be before the end of the current session of Parliament in autumn 2009.



How can you stay involved?

- You could listen to the debates on the Bill which will be broadcast – or why not visit the public gallery to hear the debates in person?
- You could write to your local MP and join in any discussions on the Bill through national or local interest groups.
- You can email questions to the Bill team at: MarineBillTeam@defra.gsi.gov.uk or write to the Marine Bill Team, Defra, Area 2C, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR.

The widespread public support for the Bill has helped get it this far but there is still a long way to go.



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Where can you get more information?

You can check the progress of the Bill at:

www.parliament.uk/business/bills_and_legislation.cfm

We'll be keeping our website up to date with details of our current and planned policy work to make sure that everyone with an interest in the Bill has access to the most up-to-date information including the text of the Bill and the revised Impact Assessment.

See: www.defra.gov.uk/marine/legislation/index.htm

We've recently published guidance on licensing – see *Managing our marine resources – licensing under the Marine Bill* at:

www.defra.gov.uk/marine/pdf/legislation/marine-licensing.pdf

You can also read about *Protecting our marine environment through the Marine Bill* at www.defra.gov.uk/marine/pdf/legislation/protect-marine-env-leaflet.pdf

We'll be publishing more guidance on other parts of the Bill over the next few months.

Issue 10 of our Marine and Coastal Access Bill Newsletter will come out early in the New Year.



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