

ACCESS NEWSLETTER

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JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE DRAFT MARINE BILL ESTABLISHED - CALL FOR EVIDENCE

An announcement has been made that a Joint Committee, chaired by Lord Greenway, has been set up to undertake pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft Marine Bill that was published on 3 April. The Committee, made up of members from both Houses, comprises 11 MPs and 11 peers. The scrutiny of the draft Bill by the Joint Committee is separate to the scrutiny already announced by the EFRA Committee – see details in Issue 31 of the Access newsletter.

The Committee will take oral and written evidence on the draft Marine Bill, and make recommendations in a report to Government by 22 July 2008. The Committee would like to invite written submissions to assist it in its scrutiny of the draft Bill.

Submissions, which should be original and not copies of papers written for the Government consultation or any other inquiry, must be received by **Monday 16th June**. However, owing to the short timetable the Committee is working to, papers received by the *beginning of June* are most likely to influence the work of the Committee.

Submissions can be posted to: The Committee, Scrutiny Unit, House of Commons, 7 Millbank, London, SW1P 3JA, or emailed to: draftmarinebill@parliament.uk

ORAL EVIDENCE

The Committee expects to start taking oral evidence in June. The programme of such evidence sessions will be announced soon. It will be available, together with the written and oral evidence received, on the website: http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/jcdmb.cfm

ISSUES TO BE SCRUTINISED BY THE JOINT COMMITTEE

The issues that the Joint Committee will examine include:

- The challenge of assessing whether the legislative framework for marine spatial planning set out is fit for purpose in the absence of the government setting out what the objectives for the planning system are (the Marine Policy Statement).
- How well the regulatory framework proposed will operate, given the wide range of responsibilities involved.
- The proposed powers, structure and regulatory role of the Marine Management Organisation.
- How well the provisions of the Bill will fit with the aims and policies of the devolved assemblies.
- Will the system proposed be sufficient to meet the requirements of the forthcoming European Marine Strategy Directive and achieve 'good environmental status' as defined under the Directive.

- Whether the proposed Marine Spatial Plans will be based on adequate scientific data and provide certainty about where activities and developments will be permitted in a given time frame.
- Whether improvements to the management and enforcement of inshore marine fisheries can deliver required conservation and sustainable development objectives.
- Should there be a statutory requirement on a UK body to ensure that the network of Marine Conservation Zones is created?
- Is there sufficient biological data to identify a potential network of Marine Conservation Zones, especially in offshore areas, and what data will be required to measure their effectiveness? What proportion should be highly protected?
- Should socio-economic criteria as well as scientific criteria be used in identifying areas to be Marine Conservation Zones? What lessons on the designation of protected areas can be learned from existing SACs and Marine Nature Reserves?
- Will the Government's 3GW renewable energy target create a demand for marine sites that have potential as conservation areas?
- The suitability of including regulatory issues concerning inland waters within the Marine Bill.
- The appropriateness of the measures contained in the draft Bill aimed at creating an English coastal route.