



January 2009

Parliamentary Briefing

Marine and Coastal Access Bill Amendment

Mandatory Independent Investigation of all Marine Plans

The organisations listed above are all members of Wildlife and Countryside Link's Marine Task Force¹, which has been campaigning for several years for improvements in marine conservation and better management of the marine area. We have been closely engaged in the Marine & Coastal Access Bill process for a number of years.

Independent Investigation

We welcome the inclusion of the proposal to have an independent investigation of plans (see Schedule 6, paragraph 13), and the improvements made to this paragraph following the Government's response (see paragraph 3.2.24) to the Joint Committee's pre-legislative scrutiny of the Draft Marine Bill. However, we are still of the view that such an investigation should not be discretionary. Rather it should be mandatory as it is the case for the equivalent Examination in Public (EiP) on land. We believe that there are additional benefits to carrying out an independent investigation even where there has been extensive public engagement and consultation.

The EiP of the Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London – the 'London Plan' – is seen as an example of good practice. The EiP process only took 7 weeks to be completed for the UK's largest and busiest metropolitan areas. Therefore, we do not believe that independent investigation of marine plans needs to be an overly bureaucratic process, but should be used to test the soundness of the plan's evidence base and policies.

¹ Wildlife and Countryside Link is a coalition of the UK's major environmental organisations working together for the conservation and protection of wildlife, the countryside and the marine environment.

Annex – Amendments

Marine & Coastal Access Bill House of Lords Committee Stage, January 2009

Mandatory independent investigation of marine plans

Clause	Schedule 6, paragraph 13 Independent investigation
Amendment	Page 235, line 3: leave out “consider appointing” and insert “appoint”