

## Moving Offshore with the Marine Bill

The Marine Bill, for which consultation is due to start around the beginning of February 2006, will undoubtedly shape the future of offshore renewables.

The Marine Bill provides both an opportunity and potential threat to renewable energy projects in the marine environment. BWEA caught up with Ben Bradshaw MP, the Minister with responsibility for the Marine Bill's delivery at Defra, to hear his views on the issue.

### 1. What do you see as the prime purpose of the Marine Bill?

To introduce a new framework for the seas, based on marine spatial planning, that balances conservation, energy and resource needs. The Bill will introduce new legislative mechanisms for integrated planning, management and protection of the marine environment. It will provide for a new planning system for the seas, streamlined arrangements for licensing marine activities and improved ability to protect the marine environment and biodiversity. It will create a new framework founded on the principles of sustainable development, good regulation and modern government. We want to see benefits for both the environment and for industry.

### 2. How are you going to ensure this process promotes the development of offshore wind, wave and tidal stream energy?

The marine area offers much potential for renewable energy, however there is increasing competition and demand for marine space from a number of different sectors. Marine planning through the Bill would allow us to strategically manage and balance these activities, and to ensure that our objectives on renewable energy are considered throughout.

The licensing system for marine

developments is currently complex, and administered through a number of different regimes. We hope that new streamlined provisions will help avoid conflicts and reduce the burden on developers. If some of the more time consuming discussion and assessment on the development of offshore energy and its relationship with other marine issues is done at an early planning stage, then it could be possible to improve the speed and quality of processing applications and decision-making for licenses, which may then also reduce the costs to offshore energy developers.

### 3. Discussions around the Bill often highlight the need for what has been called a Marine Management Organisation. What role do you see such a body taking?

That depends very much on the outcome of the consultation that will be launched shortly. A Marine Management Organisation could 'own' the spatial plan, take responsibility for a more comprehensive consenting regime and/or take on responsibility for managing the marine environment.

### 4. With the push by conservation groups for Marine Protected Areas how will you ensure there are sufficient resource areas in the future for vital renewable technologies such as tidal stream energy given that they are presently at such an early stage of development?

We are developing proposals in the Marine Bill for a system of marine planning which will help address the issues of sometimes competing demands for space in the marine area. One of the key advantages of marine planning is that consideration can be given at an early stage to anticipated future needs in the marine area and where resources are available to meet those needs, including those arising from newer, emerging technologies such as tidal stream energy. These needs can then be considered alongside the existing uses of the sea, and current



plans for Marine Protected Areas. The planning process would also allow us to look in more detail at situations where tidal stream energy and other activities could exist in the same locations. This reassurance that their needs are being incorporated into a planning process, would create certainty for developers exploring new technologies, and therefore reduce the commercial risks they face.

### 5. Given the diversity of interests, activities and policies operating in the marine environment how do you see decisions on consents being made accountable to those Government departments responsible for delivering policy objectives?

A new system of marine planning would allow us to develop a clear framework for this diversity of policies in the marine environment, and enable these policies and plans to form a context for decision-making.

It is important to remember that the Marine Bill is a Government project. A number of Government Departments and other authorities currently have jurisdiction over the wide range of licensing regimes that currently operate at sea, and all have been involved throughout the process of developing initial ideas for how the current system might be improved. The forthcoming public consultation will invite more detailed comments

on ways in which government policies and different marine activities might be best addressed through a new, streamlined licensing system.

**6. Finally, an increasing amount of evidence suggests that global climate change is the biggest threat to life in the marine environment. Will the status of renewable energy, as a carbon free source of power, therefore be considered as a priority activity in the development of any Marine Spatial Plan?**

Defra is committed with other departments to working to achieve the Government's renewable energy targets. The offshore wind energy industry is an important partner in this and a key part of the UK response to climate change.

All marine issues, including offshore renewable energy, will need to be considered as part of marine planning, to ensure that plans address our key goals on sustainable development. □

## BWEA's third annual wave and tidal energy conference

8 February 2006  
The Sage, Gateshead



Sponsorship opportunities available [www.bwea.com/marine](http://www.bwea.com/marine)

### **Biography - Ben Bradshaw MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Commons) (Local Environment, Marine and Animal Welfare)**

Ben Bradshaw MP Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Commons) (Local Environment, Marine and Animal Welfare) has responsibility for:

- Local environmental quality
- Air quality and noise
- Waste
- Lead role on planning, regional and local government issues
- Animal Health and Welfare Strategy
- Animal Welfare Bill
- State Veterinary Service, Veterinary Laboratories Agency, Veterinary Medicines Directorate
- Marine issues (incl. Marine Bill and OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic)
- Fisheries
- Departmental Green Minister
- UK spokesperson at Agriculture Council and Chair of Fisheries part of Council during EU Presidency

Ben Bradshaw MP was Minister for Nature Conservation and Fisheries at Defra between June 2003 and May 2005. His previous roles have included Parliamentary Secretary at the Privy Council Office and Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Ben Bradshaw was elected as MP for Exeter on 1 May 1997. Before his election he worked as a journalist, his posts including BBC Radio Devon and finally the BBC's Berlin correspondent. His policy interests include environmental issues, particularly green transport.