

Wales Review 2024/25



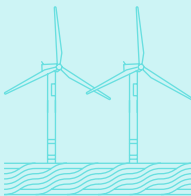
Introduction



“We are working to play our part in fulfilling the Welsh Government’s ambitions to deliver sustainable jobs that address the climate crisis and restore nature while making families better off.”

Rebecca Williams

Cyfarwyddwr y Gwledydd Datganoledig /
Director of Devolved Nations



25 years

of operating at the forefront of offshore wind

£40 million

invested in surveys for new wind farms

£1.1 billion

generated for public spending in 2024/25

Croeso

It is a pleasure to be able to share this report on our activities in Wales this year, which has been prepared at our new Cardiff hub. The Crown Estate was set up to serve the country and we continue to make progress against our ambitious strategy to support decarbonisation and energy security, nature recovery and biodiversity, and inclusive communities and economic growth, while generating financial returns for public spending. Ultimately, our goal is to build a legacy of lasting and shared prosperity.

The passing of the Crown Estate Act 2025 was a significant moment in our history, that secures our ability to deliver on these ambitions over the long term. The new legislation builds on the 1961 Act that created us as an independent and commercial organisation, giving us the ability to borrow and to invest in a broader range of assets. It also increases our maximum number of Commissioners from 8 to 12. Three of the new Commissioners will have an additional responsibility to provide advice on conditions in Wales, Northern Ireland or England, and all are required to consider how our activities contribute to sustainable development in the UK. We welcome this provision, which will help to keep the unique needs and circumstances of Wales at the heart of our decision-making, and we look forward to beginning a recruitment process in the coming year.

Opening the Cardiff hub in the summer was another major milestone, helping us to grow our presence and offer a meeting place for our convening partners and stakeholders, such as the Welsh Government’s Offshore Wind Task and Finish Group.

New beginnings

In August 2024, Eluned Morgan MS was appointed First Minister of Wales and after a period of consultation, outlined the priorities for her Government. Focus areas include boosting education opportunities and creating sustainable jobs that address the climate crisis and restore nature while making families better off. Over the past year, The Crown Estate has played its part, working in collaboration to support this ambition. The green transition presents a raft of opportunities, helping Wales remain at the forefront of renewable energy innovation and conferences like Future Energy Wales and Marine Energy Wales showcased leading businesses that can drive the sector forward.

Our independence, with a position between the public and private sectors, is one of our greatest assets, allowing us to maintain a consistent approach and provide visibility of future leasing areas out to 2050 through our Marine Delivery Routemap, a strategic

delivery plan that sets out potential future uses of the seabed, including energy and industry projects and areas that could be prioritised for nature. Alongside this, we are supplying data to help the Welsh Government deliver its National Marine Plan, which will support sustainable development over time. Our partnerships, in particular with the newly created Great British Energy, will help drive further progress.

However, this is undoubtedly a challenging time for the offshore wind industry, which is facing global challenges such as rising costs and policy shifts – which is why it is more important than ever to ensure the UK and Wales continue to stand out as a stable and secure investment market. This year, we announced our Capacity Increase Programme, which could increase capacity by amending seabed rights for several operational wind farms, including Awel y Môr off the coast of North Wales.

We have also continued to progress plans to put cutting-edge floating offshore wind technology in the Celtic Sea – moving Offshore Wind Leasing Round 5 rapidly through the pre-qualification and ITT (invitation to tender) stages. In June we awarded rights for two projects, with next steps for a third to be announced in September. The selection of Equinor and Gwynt Glas as preferred bidders is a vote of confidence in the UK market that will help to drive the development of a new industrial supply chain around the Celtic Sea.

Our Supply Chain Accelerator completed the first £5 million round of funding for projects with the objective of stimulating the national supply chain for floating offshore wind (see page 11), supporting businesses and education providers to develop opportunities in the sector. The second funding window closed at the end of June and the results will be announced in the coming year.

The next generation

In addition to offshore wind, we are supporting the development of important new technologies like tidal power and carbon capture and storage. Again, these have the potential not only to support national decarbonisation and energy security, but create significant future green growth opportunities, in line with the Government's strategy (see page 10).

This year, we attended careers fairs at Bangor University and Cardiff University, and extended our marine apprenticeship and internship programmes, with a new dedicated North Wales programme in partnership with Menter Môn, M-Sparc and North Wales Wildlife Trust and a Pembrokeshire-based role (see page 7). One of my personal highlights from the year was helping these young people to build their careers and experience in cutting-edge sectors.



Dan Labbad (Chief Executive) and Rebecca Williams of The Crown Estate join Sarah Jones MP (Minister of State for Department for Energy Security and Net Zero), Jo Stevens MP (Secretary of State for Wales), Jack Sargeant MS (Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership) and David Rees MS at ABP Port Talbot.

Responding to the nature crisis is another area where The Crown Estate can contribute and support shared ambitions with the Welsh Government through careful management of land and the seabed. We developed our approach in partnership with the people and organisations who know the land and the marine environment best, and through the year we have been hands-on, listening to partners at restoration projects such as Project Seagrass and speaking to our farming tenants to understand their priorities. We have aligned our Ambition for Nature Recovery to our statutory duty under section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act, refreshing our obligations and sharing more detail on how we are already delivering for nature.

This year, we generated a net revenue profit of £1.1 billion for the public purse, an exceptional result that has been driven by income from Round 4 option fees, which were set at auction in 2021 and reflect market conditions at the time. This income will reduce from next financial year, as our developer customers either begin construction or exit their leases. However, we have been investing significantly in the future of our business – for example by allocating £40 million for pre-consenting surveys for offshore wind farms – and we expect to see steady growth over time.

We are of course aware that some argue The Crown Estate in Wales should be established as a separate organisation. What I hope this report demonstrates is how much more value we can create for people and places in Wales as part of a larger project. In the coming year, our team based here in Cardiff, along with our local agents and managing agents, will continue working to ensure we maximise that value for Wales both for now and for future generations.

Rebecca Williams
Director of Devolved Nations

Who we are

The Crown Estate is an independent business that owns and manages land on behalf of the nation, working to create financial, social and environmental benefits over time.

Our interests in Wales include renewable energy, such as offshore wind and tidal projects. We lease seabed space for oil and gas pipelines, marine aggregates (used in construction) and the subsea cables and interconnectors that help manage electricity supply and carry intercontinental data traffic. We also manage around 65% of the foreshore and tidal riverbed. Inland, we are stewards of over 50,000 acres of common land that is primarily rough pasture, used for grazing.

Established by an Act of Parliament, we operate independently and commercially to grow the value of our portfolio for future generations. The Crown Estate Act 2025 added to our founding legislation, giving us new borrowing and investment powers.

The 2025 Act makes provision for the appointment of a new Board Commissioner with responsibility to provide advice on conditions in Wales, further strengthening our ability to create value for Wales.



How we create value

Our activities are guided by our purpose: **to create lasting and shared prosperity for the nation**

We operate across three business areas



Marine

We manage the seabed and coastline around England, Wales and Northern Ireland to support the national transition to a resilient, sustainable future.



Urban

Our real estate assets range from London's West End to regional retail and leisure destinations and significant mixed-use development opportunities.



Windsor & Rural

We are stewards of more than 200,000 acres of rural land, including the Windsor Estate and Great Park, tenanted farms and Welsh uplands and common land.

Drawing upon our key strengths



Broad ownership, with a **diverse portfolio of national assets**



Independence and opportunity to take a long-term view



Ability to **bring stakeholders together** to tackle challenges

To deliver our strategy

- Net zero and energy security
- Nature recovery and biodiversity
- Inclusive communities and economic growth
- Generating financial returns

For our nation's future

Net zero carbon and energy security

The world as we know it is changing, and the need for energy security and decarbonisation has never been more urgent.

Through our portfolio, we can make a significant contribution by driving up capacity in renewable energy – particularly through offshore wind, which is a major opportunity for the country to build its energy security and reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels.

It is now over a quarter of a century since the UK's first offshore wind turbine was installed; and over two decades since the first major wind farm became operational at North Hoyle, off the coast of North Wales (pictured). Our investment in the sector has facilitated 12GW of annual clean power capacity to date – about 14% of the UK's energy requirements, displacing an estimated 15 million tonnes of CO₂ in the past year alone. There are currently 36 operational wind farms in our Marine portfolio, including three in Wales, and we are working with partners to unlock additional capacity and deliver seabed space to support the UK Government's target to deploy up to 50GW of capacity by 2030.

Announced in May 2025, our Capacity Increase Programme could generate an additional 4.7GW of capacity by amending existing seabed rights to increase the capacity of seven existing offshore wind farms around England and Wales, including Awel y Môr, off the North Wales coast.

We have also progressed Round 5, which stands to put cutting-edge floating offshore wind farms in Welsh waters, concluding the pre-qualification and invitation to tender stages. In June 2025, we awarded seabed rights for two projects to Equinor and Gwynt Glas – a joint venture between EDF Renewables UK and ESB – and a process for a third site to be delivered is underway. The advancement of this technology means turbines can be placed in areas with greater water depths, where the wind is often stronger and more consistent. The westerly winds in the Celtic Sea make it a perfect location for this new innovation.

Floating offshore wind offers a generational opportunity for Wales to be at the forefront of an exciting new global industry, creating opportunities for new jobs and investment. To ensure the benefits are shared, we are working to support skills development and grow UK supply-chain capacity through our Supply Chain Accelerator (see pages 10-11).

Wales is also a key location for tidal energy. To further advance the technology, which is supported by Welsh Government policy and investment, we are investing in the Morlais tidal stream demonstration project. Managed by the social enterprise Menter Môn off the coast of Ynys Môn, Morlais will become the largest grid-connected test site in Europe and has a vital role to play in the development of this new technology. We have committed £2.6 million to the Marine Characterisation Research Project, which is developing technology to reduce the risk of marine mammal strikes.

We also financially contributed to the Severn Estuary Commission that evaluated the potential for tidal range energy in the estuary, exploring the balance between the economic and energy opportunity in a highly sensitive environmental ecosystem. The report was published in March 2025, with a launch event in the Senedd and UK Parliament.

Electricity and the grid

As the economy electrifies, we are working closely with developers, the National Energy System Operator, National Grid (which owns the transmission network in England and Wales), and many other stakeholders on development plans for the electricity network around the coast of Wales and England. This includes leasing



and licensing the electricity interconnectors that balance supply and demand between countries – such as Greenlink, which became operational in January 2025, connecting Wales and Ireland. Our partnership with Great British Energy will further help accelerate the deployment of clean energy infrastructure.

Carbon removals and storage

While helping to build domestic renewable energy supply, we are assessing how our portfolio can support carbon removal actions: investigating the potential of cutting-edge solutions such as biochar and rock weathering, and developing our approach to the ‘blue carbon’ that is captured and stored on the seabed. The UK has some of the world’s best natural resources for storing carbon, giving us an opportunity to lead in carbon capture and storage (CCS) – a new technology that captures CO₂ from hard-to-abate industrial sources, transports and stores it underground. We are driving progress by granting leases for offshore pipeline transportation and storage of CO₂ in the seabed.

In October 2024, we awarded an Agreement for Lease for an innovative project by Eni, a leading developer, that will capture CO₂ from the HyNet industrial cluster in North Wales and the North West of England, transporting it to depleted natural gas reservoirs under the Irish Sea for storage. It will be the UK’s first CCS project to repurpose existing infrastructure, and once operational it could remove up to 10 million tonnes of CO₂ from the atmosphere each year.

As the effects of climate change become apparent, we are broadening the scope of our work beyond the adaptation of our own portfolio to consider our role in building resilience at a local level in collaboration with partners and decision makers. This work will be a significant focus in the years to come.

3

offshore wind farms operating in Welsh waters

10 million tonnes

of CO₂ a year could be stored at the innovative Eni project

£2.6 million

funding allocated to the Morlais tidal power demonstration project



On the ground: Don Harty
Former intern Don gained a permanent job helping us to unlock tidal power

What does your role involve?

I’m an asset advisor in the new energies team, supporting the development of tidal stream, tidal range and other technologies like floating solar power. The UK has an opportunity to be a world leader in tidal, delivering clean, predictable energy and creating jobs in coastal areas.

Tell us about your background

Growing up in Guernsey, my childhood was spent around the sea. I studied marine geography at Cardiff University and wrote my dissertation on marine energy, but struggled to find a job in the field when I graduated, so I applied for a Marine Research Internship at The Crown Estate.

How did the internship help you?

I really enjoyed it. I was able to stay in Pembrokeshire, doing a six-month project looking at how marine energy engagement can create value for people and places. I also supported a report on the potential effects of tidal stream devices on marine mammals, and was delighted to be offered a permanent job as an asset advisor in the new energies team.

Why is your role based in Pembrokeshire?

There’s an important site in the Milford Haven estuary called META (the Marine Energy Test Area), where wave and tidal devices can be tested in real-life conditions before being taken out to a site like Morlais, the grid-connected tidal site in North Wales. When I got the job, it made sense to stay nearby and use the Cardiff office, and it means I’m still close to the sea.

What are your future goals?

I’m really passionate about tidal energy and excited to grow my own career in step with the industry. I see the opportunity that exists in Wales and in island communities like the one I grew up in, and I’d love to see it succeed here and around the world.

Nature recovery and biodiversity

As stewards of rural, coastal and marine environments, we have a responsibility to support biodiversity, restore ecosystems and enhance the natural world for future generations.

In January 2025, we shared more detail on how we will do this in our Nature Ambition for Wales, published as part of our duties under Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. This document sets out goals and measurable targets in line with global targets and the Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP), a national biodiversity strategy and plan for Wales, and was developed in partnership with Welsh stakeholders who know the land and marine space best.

Over a period of several months, we consulted organisations including Natural Resources Wales, WWF Cymru, RSPB Cymru and the Future Generations Commissioner. Their expertise in maintaining and enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem resilience informed our three core goals:

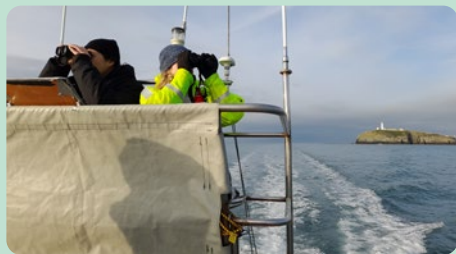
- Deliver increased biodiversity
- Protect and restore freshwater, marine and coastal systems
- Increase social and wellbeing benefits from nature

At the heart of our ambition is a commitment to measurable impact. It is not enough to take well-meaning actions; we need to understand the impact of all our business activity on nature and take decisions that create positive outcomes for nature. To help us do this, we have compiled a biodiversity baseline for our portfolio, and we aim to keep enhancing and developing this data.

As we seek to create a positive impact on the natural habitats and species that thrive in Wales, we are working in partnership with government, businesses, conservation organisations and local communities. For example, building on a successful pilot project run with grazing associations in partnership the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group Cymru, we will be working with commoners with grazier rights, local communities and other stakeholders to develop nature recovery visions and implement nature action plans for selected common lands within our ownership.

Marine internships in North Wales

In 2024 we launched the first North Wales Marine Internship in partnership with North Wales Wildlife Trust, Menter Môn and M-SPARC. Each organisation provided opportunities for two people starting out in their careers to gain experience in marine conservation, renewable energy, marine policy and community engagement.



Working with North Wales Wildlife Trust, The Crown Estate supported the interns to undertake seagrass restoration mapping across Llyn and Ynys Môn, and run community events in Llandudno, Porth Meudwy and Rhoscolyn aimed at ocean rescue objectives. They also contributed to the Marine Characterisation Project with Menter Môn by helping to develop environmental monitoring and mitigation plans to protect marine wildlife.

Through the programme, interns gained a comprehensive overview of potential career opportunities in the marine sector. The initiative also provided a valuable opportunity for cross-sector collaboration and knowledge transfer around marine wildlife.



Supporting seagrass

Seagrass meadows are a vital habitat for seahorses and fish, as well as filtering water and sequestering large amounts of carbon. Given our priorities to support decarbonisation, nature recovery and water quality, The Crown Estate is actively seeking to support seagrass restoration around Wales. This year, we relicensed the UK's first seagrass restoration trial, Project Seagrass at Dale, Pembrokeshire – increasing its scope from two to three hectares. Funded by WWF and Sky Ocean Rescue, the project involves testing different methods of planting, from planting seagrass in hessian bags to deploying underwater robots, and monitoring the results over time. Volunteers from the Crown Estate team took part in a planting session in March and we look forward to seeing Project Seagrass expand its scope and share its learnings.

£50 million

funding for research through OWEC

We are also working with partners to restore and protect species such as oysters and seagrass (see above) that support healthy marine ecosystems. We were fortunate to be invited to attend an Earthshot Prize workshop alongside HRH The Prince of Wales, looking at environmental and economic opportunities around aquaculture, and we have co-convened a working session on the same topic with Wales's Future Generations Commissioner. Together with WWF, we published the 'Future Value of Seaweed Farming in the UK' in October. And we connected with a wide range of stakeholders and contributed to conversations at key events like The Royal Welsh Agricultural Show, Restoring Welsh Rivers Summit and a Welsh Wildlife Trust event.

Funding nature

Enabling nature recovery will require significant funding over the long term. For this reason, we are investing in nature at scale and investigating the potential of natural capital markets, which could provide the sustainable funding sources the country needs. Our contribution includes the Offshore Wind Evidence and Change programme, which is making £50 million funding from The Crown Estate and £12 million in partner contributions to support research to enable the UK's energy transition while ensuring marine and coastal ecosystems thrive.

One OWEC project, known as Frontward, is providing vital insights into ocean fronts (areas where two bodies of water meet) and how they can act as a proxy for biodiversity. The Bangor University-based project is pivotal to understanding mobile species, a notoriously difficult subject to evidence and will help to inform our development decisions and restoration efforts.

While our progress against our new goals is at a relatively early stage, and we expect to iterate our approach, we believe that our framework to understand, design for, partner for and fund nature will yield results over time – supporting both ecological and economic prosperity to create a healthier and more resilient Wales.

Inclusive communities and economic growth

As an independent company set up to serve the country, we seek to ensure that our investments and partnerships in key sectors like renewable energy and science, technology and innovation deliver real benefits for people and places.

The Welsh Government's strategy makes clear that developing a strong skills base will be vital not only to delivering the green transition, but to creating opportunities across the country. The UK Industrial Growth Plan that we developed in partnership with RenewableUK, the Offshore Wind Energy Council and Crown Estate Scotland estimated that the number of jobs in offshore wind alone will rise from 32,000 to 100,000 by 2030.

To support growth in this vital sector and ensure the benefits are shared, we are working with education providers to develop qualifications that support the needs of industry. This includes an established relationship with Pembrokeshire College, which has run a pilot course called Destination Renewables to equip students with the manufacturing and technical skills the sector needs. The college has been awarded funding through our Supply Chain Accelerator (see case study) to potentially expand its provision.

Our activities to engage younger people in Wales with sustainability topics and careers include bringing Minecraft Education into schools, and partnering with the Sea Ranger Service, training Sea Rangers to gather environmental data in the Celtic Sea. We are also providing catalytic funding for small-scale, community-led projects creating value at a local level. One example from this year was a feasibility study exploring a range of skills and social impact projects looking at improving engagement with people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs), hard-to-reach communities and young people across South West Wales.

In addition to our own apprenticeship and internship programmes, developers of the new floating offshore wind farms are committed to ensuring that at least 3.5% of the workforce are apprentices and that 10% of employees aged 19-24 have NEET status. Our wider activities in sectors such as ports and marine aggregates, which provide 35% of the sand and gravel needed for construction in Wales, further support jobs and economic growth. In the coming year we will continue to scale our activities, focusing on how we can deliver social impact at a local, regional and national level.

£5 million

investment in the offshore wind supply chain

100,000

jobs could be created in the sector UK-wide

1.3 million

Minecraft Education world downloads to date

Learning in Welsh with Minecraft

Inspiring young people to engage with sustainability and consider careers in fields like clean energy and conservation is vital to delivering the green transition and to Wales's future economic growth. To help them grow their knowledge and skills, we harnessed the power of Minecraft, the bestselling videogame of all time.

Through our partnership with Microsoft UK, we created the Offshore Wind Power Challenge, a Minecraft Education world. Available in English and Welsh, the challenge invites students aged 7-14 to see if they can power a coastal village by designing and building an offshore wind farm.

We then created lesson plans and teaching materials aligned with the national curriculum. These are available on the Welsh Government's Hwb learning platform, and we have contacted local MPs, MSs and Welsh Ministers to offer further contributions to the new Welsh curriculum. To learn more about the project, view a video at thecrownestate.co.uk/minecraft



A £5 million boost for green growth

We created our £50 million Supply Chain Accelerator in 2023/24 as a way to build capacity among UK businesses – supporting future growth in the offshore wind sector and helping to spread the benefits nationwide. In December 2024, we completed our first funding round, awarding a total of £5 million match-funding to 13 organisations with early-stage projects that could help to build the domestic supply chain for offshore wind.

Projects were evaluated on a number of criteria, one of which was their ability to deliver on the requirements set out in the Celtic Sea Blueprint, from infrastructure and logistics to key skills. The blueprint predicts that if these opportunities are captured, the deployment of floating offshore wind in the waters off South Wales and South West England could deliver a significant economic boost and up to 5,300 jobs.

Successful applicants included Marine Power Systems, a Swansea-based renewable energy company developing cutting-edge offshore wind platforms. Our match-funding will support the company, which is still completing design and demonstration projects, to focus on future



“Offshore wind is bringing great opportunities into Wales, and this funding will help us prepare a highly skilled Welsh workforce.”

Mark Dacey
CEO, NPTC Group of Colleges

manufacturing by completing a feasibility study for a facility at Port Talbot. This will assess the practicalities of basing production at the port, using locally produced steel and shipping platforms out into the Celtic Sea or to projects further afield – helping the business to ensure it can meet demand at a globally competitive price.

“To meet the scale of requirements we think projects will have, existing fabricators have the expertise but not the capacity to meet the scale of requirements needed,” explains Madeline Cowley, project manager at Marine Power Systems. “Our projections suggest the facility could produce up to 30 platforms per year, which will create jobs in fabrication and benefit steel suppliers.”

To ensure families and communities feel the benefits of green growth, NPTC Group of Colleges has been awarded funding to lay the groundwork for a floating offshore wind skills academy in Port Talbot. “Our goal is to ensure that local communities and industries are fully prepared to harness the opportunities presented by the floating offshore wind revolution,” says Mark Dacey, CEO of NPTC Group. Meanwhile, Pembrokeshire College is scoping the possibility of an energy transition skills facility to create pathways for local people into jobs in the sector.

The Accelerator’s second funding round closed at the end of June 2025.

2024/25 reports

Annual Report and Accounts
Adolygiad Cymru
Wales Review
Northern Ireland Review
Sustainability Data Supplement
Environmental Reporting Criteria

Our Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25
and supplementary reports can be downloaded at:
thecrownestate.co.uk/annual-report

Photography credits

Page 3

Rob Norman and ABP

Page 6

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Page 8

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Page 11

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