

Northern Ireland

Highlights 2021/22

For the year ended 31 March 2022

For the period from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022

Our purpose is to create lasting and shared prosperity for the nation, and our values guide the way we do business, including our engagement with stakeholders. Engaging with our network of partners, from our customers through to the communities we serve, in a meaningful way, is fundamental to delivering our strategy.

Our responsibilities in Northern Ireland include the seabed out to 12 nautical miles and the rights to the resources on the continental shelf, such as natural resources and offshore energy, but excluding fossil fuels. Our interests include renewable energy, telecommunications, power cables and pipelines. We also manage around 65 per cent of the Northern Irish foreshore and tidal riverbed, and as such, support a wide variety of activity including in aquaculture: oyster, mussel and seaweed cultivation, as well as coastal interests including commercial ports, recreational harbours, marinas, jetties, wharfs and slipways.

We manage the rights to deposits of gold and silver, known as Mines Royal. There is one Mines Royal lease in place in Northern Ireland, along with a further thirteen Mines Royal option agreements with five companies.

Working in partnership

Our approach to asset management in Northern Ireland is grounded in a partnership approach which sees us collaborate with a diverse range of organisations to share knowledge, data and expertise. This includes the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), the Department for the Economy (DfE), industry and a wide range of partners.

The Offshore Wind Evidence and Change programme launched in December 2020 with a charter signed up to by 27 organisations in total. It is a pioneering programme led by us in partnership with the UK Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy and Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs. The programme gathers data and evidence to drive forward the sustainable and coordinated expansion of offshore wind to help meet the UK's commitments to low carbon energy transition whilst supporting clean, healthy, productive and biologically diverse seas.

To provide oversight and direction we have established a programme steering group which includes for Northern Ireland, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and the Department for the Economy. Members provide their expertise and resources to identify, support and deliver strategic research and data projects. The Crown Estate has committed a £50 million 'kick-starter' investment to fund and deliver a five year programme. Over the period, these research and data projects will provide essential insights to help the sector better understand and address cumulative environmental impacts and interactions with other industries and activities, both around the coast and offshore.

We continue our work to help enable the Northern Ireland Executive's aim of achieving net zero carbon and affordable energy under the Energy Strategy for Northern Ireland and Energy Strategy Action Plan 2022, in particular the aim for 1GW of offshore wind in Northern Irish waters from 2030.

Coastal

We work with partners and communities along our coastal interests in Northern Ireland on a number of projects, and continue to participate in relevant environmental groups, including the Ards Peninsula Coastal Erosion Group, Strangford Lough Marine Protected Area Management Steering Group and Rathlin Island European Marine Site and Environment Forum.

We continue to assist coastal Councils with important infrastructure projects such as the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council's extension of harbour protection at Portrush to provide larger, safer mooring areas and the provision of extended and improved berthing facilities at Rathlin Harbour.

Residential development remained buoyant in Northern Ireland and we assisted various residential developments by providing essential stormwater drainage consents.

Northern Ireland is a popular location for filming and the foreshore continues to be in demand. Last year several filming licences were granted and the various Loughs remain favourites for major film productions.

In Belfast, we agreed improved access over the Connswater bridge to Connswater Retail Park which assisted in the conveyance of both the Connswater Shopping Centre and Retail Park. We are hopeful that these transactions may provide future development opportunities.

Public recreational facilities, built on reclaimed land at the Daisyfield Pitches, Derry, operated by the Derry City and Strabane District Council, will be greatly improved by the development of a new sports centre, changing pavilion and associated buildings due to the relaxation of restrictive building covenants.

Mines Royal

In our role as the manager of rights to deposits of gold and silver, we consider applications from responsible parties for extraction and mining, and where appropriate grant options or leases. Flintridge Resources Ltd (a wholly owned subsidiary of Galantas Gold Corporation) holds a lease from The Crown Estate for its underground gold mining operation at Cavanacaw Mine in County Tyrone, which received planning permission in 2015. Flintridge continues to invest capital in exploration, underground development and mine production and is in the process of updating its mineral resource assessment. Dalradian Gold holds an option from The Crown Estate for its Curraghinalt Mine Project in County Tyrone. The company submitted a planning application for the project in November 2017, and in 2021 the application was referred to the Planning Appeals Commission (NI) for determination by public inquiry.

Sharing knowledge

The Marine Data Exchange (MDE) is a first of its kind data repository storing the world's largest collection of offshore industry survey data, research and evidence. Built in 2013 and relaunched in 2021, the MDE holds offshore survey data collected by our customers throughout the lifecycle of their project, as well as new research that addresses evidence gaps. The MDE holds 2 terabytes of offshore survey data and evidence collected in waters off Northern Ireland, covering a variety of survey campaigns, including environmental monitoring and tidal resource assessments from offshore wind and tidal stream projects. 65% of this data has been made publicly available, allowing users to download and utilise the data with ease. By making this wealth of data freely available we aim to give offshore projects in the UK a valuable head start, helping those involved to make informed, evidence-based decisions which support the sustainable development of the UK's seabed and the safeguarding of the marine environment. The Marine Data Exchange can be accessed online at: www.marinedataexchange.co.uk

Find out more

thecrownestate.co.uk/annual-report-2022

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