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## **British Report Calls for National Marine Agency**

**LONDON** - A British parliamentary committee called on Thursday for creation of a national marine science agency to take responsibility for all aspects of the use and conservation of the seas in the light of global warming.

The report, *Investigating the Oceans*, from the all-party Science and Technology Committee said the new overarching agency should supersede the current inter-agency coordinating committee and greatly broaden its scope.

"The UK has the capacity to be a world leader in key aspects of marine science, such as coastal work which is vitally important because of climate change," said committee chairman Phil Willis.

"But if we are to achieve this, the UK needs a properly funded and co-ordinated marine agency. It also desperately needs a strategy both for science and for wider maritime issues to ensure effective co-ordination of priorities and activities."

The report said the agency should co-ordinate marine science throughout Britain, promote marine science education, engage with industry and smooth British involvement in international organisations.

It said the agency should also co-ordinate ocean monitoring and observations, particularly in view of the climate crisis.

The report, which attacks the government's record on marine conservation and planning, comes as the government ends public consultations on a draft Marine Bill which should be presented to parliament early next year.

The consultation document launched last late year proposed a strategic marine planning system to set national objectives and priorities for offshore developments.

It also aims to speed up the marine licensing process and create a new oversight body, the Marine Management Organisation, to ensure that proposals for wind and wave power developments are in the right place and do not threaten wildlife.

"We need to take a strategic approach across the whole UK so that all our seas are afforded the same protection," said Jonathan Shaw, minister of state for marine, landscape and rural affairs.

"It is important that we get it right, so that future generations will continue to benefit from a clean, healthy and productive marine environment," he added in a statement.

A spokeswoman for the parliamentary committee said there was no duplication between the two oversight bodies as the proposed maritime agency would have a far wider remit than the Marine Management Organisation.

Story by Jeremy Lovell