

Marine Data Exchange Data Holding

May 2025

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:

**Marine
Data Exchange**



**THE CROWN
ESTATE**



**Crown Estate
Scotland**
Oighreachd a' Chrùin Alba

Inspiring everyone to shape the future of our seas, through open and accessible data and evidence

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Document Control

Version	Date	Author	Reviewed by	Description of change
1.0	May 2025	Harry Richardson	John Mitchell	Original Document outlining processes of Data Acquisition

If you need support submitting data, or have any questions on the processes in this document please get in touch with either The Crown Estate or Crown Estate Scotland via the email addresses below:

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Introduction

This document has been created for users of the Marine Data Exchange and provides key information about how the data is provided to The Crown Estate and Crown Estate Scotland. It encompasses information around the requirements, including data standards, data acquisition, and the quality assurance process.

This document is provided for information purposes only.

What is the Marine Data Exchange?

The Marine Data Exchange (MDE) is the first of its kind and a world leading digital platform of industry survey data, research and evidence.

Created by The Crown Estate in 2013, the MDE is a purpose built data management system designed to enable survey data deliverables and research outputs from, or related to, offshore developments, to be uploaded and made freely available to the public, to benefit the marine environment and to give offshore projects in the UK a valuable head start. It provides a digital platform for offshore industries to share survey data collected throughout the lifetime of offshore projects, and hosts new data and research generated through programs such as The Crown Estate's Offshore Wind Evidence and Change (OWEC) program.

In 2024, the MDE became the UK platform for offshore industry data. The Crown Estate continue to own and manage the MDE, working in collaboration with Crown Estate Scotland to ensure a UK wide approach to how offshore industry data is shared. Both The Crown Estate and Crown Estate Scotland use the MDE to ensure that that offshore developments can meet their Agreement obligations regarding the provision of survey data, and ensure that the standards and requirements for providing data are consistent for projects throughout UK waters. The collaboration agreement allows all developers working in UK waters to benefit from a more streamlined and comprehensive dataset for supporting offshore developments, supporting the faster, more sustainable roll-out of offshore technologies that are critical to the UK's energy transition, while protecting and restoring the biodiversity of our seas and the marine environment.

¹ "Agreement" includes an Exclusivity Agreement, Agreement for Lease, Lease, Lease Option, or Option for Lease held with The Crown Estate or Crown Estate Scotland, or a temporary consent to perform intrusive seabed works, such as Seabed Survey Licence or Small Works Licence.

The Data Clause and Data Acquisition

Before an offshore project can be built or developed, a seabed Agreement needs to be secured from The Crown Estate or Crown Estate Scotland and consent needs to be granted by the relevant UK statutory bodies.

Within The Crown Estate's and Crown Estate Scotland's seabed Agreements, there is a data sharing clause that requires all survey data collected throughout the lifetime of an offshore project or development to be shared with The Crown Estate or Crown Estate Scotland and then delivered to the Marine Data Exchange. This data sharing clause was first introduced into our offshore wind Agreements in 2003 and we have been working with our customers ever since to promote the benefits of data sharing. The clause is now in all our offshore Agreements except for oil and gas pipelines. The following sectors and activities commonly have an obligation to provide survey data within The Crown Estate and Crown Estate Scotland Agreements:

- Carbon Storage
- Electricity Interconnector Cables
- Marine Aggregates
- Offshore Transmission Cables
- Seabed Survey Licenses (The Crown Estate) or Small Works Licenses (Crown Estate Scotland)
- Telecommunication Cables
- Tidal Energy
- Offshore Wind

Within this data clause all survey data (including but not limited to environmental, physical and social data) is required to be provided to The Crown Estate or Crown Estate Scotland. This includes the feasibility, consenting, pre-, during and post- construction/dredge monitoring, and decommissioning phases, where applicable. Survey data refers to data collected offshore, in the intertidal area or for the purpose of informing offshore decisions (i.e. vantage point bird surveys carried out onshore and onshore meteorological masts). Onshore data (i.e. relating to the onshore components of an offshore project such as an onshore substation) is not included in requirements for data delivery. All survey data can be considered to include primary observations, investigations, modelling, monitoring, and associated reports.

Through these data clauses we establish contact with the data owners, typically project developers to actively engage and support them throughout the data upload process. Additionally, we assist them through the Quality Assurance (QA) process to ensure the data meets our standards and once the QA process is complete, the MDE team provides support to ensure the data are published in accordance with the policies detailed below.

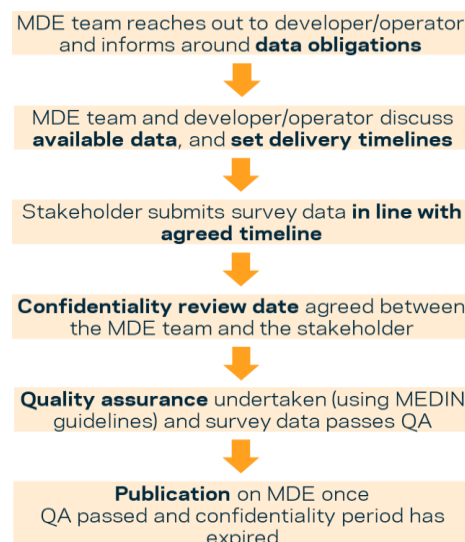


Figure 1, Process flow for MDE engagement with offshore projects.

Our Requirements

To assist in the standardisation of data management and to improve our data holding in line with Q-FAIR data principles (Quality, Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, Reusability), the MDE has adopted the Marine Environmental Data and Information Network (MEDIN) discovery metadata standard, and also uses the MEDIN Data Guidelines to quality assure the survey data we receive. MEDIN is a partnership of over 50 UK organisations committed to improving access to marine data and the MEDIN data model is accepted as best practice across government Data Archive Centres .

The Crown Estate and Crown Estate Scotland require survey data submitted to the MDE to be compliant with the relevant MEDIN data guidelines. It is recommended data is submitted in the MEDIN guideline format, but this is not mandatory. In instances that data is submitted in a non-MEDIN format, we require all of the information needed to complete the MEDIN guideline fields to be present within the reports and data submitted. In practice, complying with the MEDIN guideline means that for each survey primary observations (including raw and processed data), investigations, modelling, monitoring, and associated reports (which includes field reports, calibration/operation/processing reports and interpretative/final reports) need to be submitted to the MDE.

The Crown Estate and Crown Estate Scotland ensure the above requirements are met as fully as possible by implementing the QA process mentioned above. This process involves checking the compliance of submissions with the relevant MEDIN guidelines and flagging this to data submitters where data is non-compliant. We then work with data submitters to resolve issues, with the aim of ensuring the data uploaded to MDE is as Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reuseable as possible. In some cases, where issues cannot be resolved, we will judge that the data is still of value to publish in a non-compliant state.

Confidentiality and Publication

It is the intention of The Crown Estate and Crown Estate Scotland to ultimately publish all survey data held on the MDE where possible and within a “reasonable timeframe”.

This “reasonable timeframe” is defined according to the stage of the project (see confidentiality timelines below), or as within a year of data submission, unless the release of data is considered a commercial risk to the project.

The Crown Estate and Crown Estate Scotland are subject to both the Freedom of Information Act and the Environmental Information Regulations, and will respond to requests for data in accordance with the provisions within these legislative instruments and communicate with the owners of data when such requests are received to make them aware of the request and of our decision with regards to the release of data.

Confidentiality Timelines

Environmental survey data

The Crown Estate and Crown Estate Scotland will hold environmental survey data collected prior to a consent decision confidentially until the consent decision has been reached, and judicial review period has passed.

Physical survey data including geophysical and geotechnical data

The Crown Estate and Crown Estate Scotland will hold survey data relating to geophysical, geotechnical, metocean and meteorological data, confidentially until a Financial Investment Decision (FID). Where there is a significant period between consent and FID, we will conduct an biannual review of the physical survey data we hold, to ensure the appropriate publication timeline.

Resource data

The Crown Estate and Crown Estate Scotland recognise that resource data can be commercially valuable. Embargo periods for resource data vary across different sectors and between The Crown Estate and Crown Estate Scotland, but the minimum embargo period is 2 years.

Publication

When the publication date has been agreed, the deliverables will be published on the MDE public website, where they will be available to download and use by anyone who complies with the MDE terms of use.

Delays to the publication timelines detailed above may occur, due to data needing to pass the Quality assurance process mentioned above. Where survey data is collected as part of licensed monitoring, we currently wait until regulatory sign off before publication, which can also lead to delays in publication.

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