

Appendix 10.1

Grey Seal Sightings

1.0 Seal sightings

1.0.0.1 This research was commissioned by Tidal Lagoon Swansea Bay plc to further examine the presence of grey seals in Swansea Bay. The research was undertaken in November 2013 by Winnie Courtene-Jones (Boncath, Pembrokeshire), who was working in collaboration with SEACAMS.

1.1 Swansea Bay

1.1.0.1 Very few, if any sightings are reported of grey seals in or around Swansea Bay (Barnes & Evans, 2012), while this may reflect the little time (effort) spent observing these sites, it may also indicate the very infrequent visits of seals to this region.

1.1.0.2 In the absence of dedicated survey data of grey seal abundance and distribution in Swansea Bay area, the researcher conducted brief interviews in November 2013 with local sea users, such as fishermen and commercial skippers, and also coastal wildlife enthusiasts, bird observers and other marine mammal watchers. Most frequent users of the area report having seen grey seals within the bay area sometime within the last 36 months. However these sightings are not common and typically consist of a single seal sighted, bottling (positioned upright) in the water. No known haul-out sites are reported anywhere within the Bay area, nearest being the Worm's head at Gower Peninsula where a very small number of seals have been sighted, but not on a regular basis. None of the seven people interviewed report having ever seen juvenile seals within the Bay. There were also no records found of evidence of grey seal pupping sites anywhere within Swansea Bay, or wider area, within the last ten years. The only reports of pups were from the mid 1990's from the Worm's head on the Gower peninsula.

1.1.0.3 The results of these (albeit non qualitative interviews) indicate that the Swansea Bay may be utilised only very occasionally by few individual seals, who probably travel there from haul-out sites in Pembrokeshire or North Devon.

1.1.0.4 Below are two examples of anecdotal evidence from two experienced local wildlife watchers who prefer to stay anonymous.

1.1.0.5 Bird watcher A reported regular watches in an area between Swansea docks and Port Talbot docks and especially from August to March, when the seabird and shorebird numbers are traditionally good. Harbour porpoises are reported off Aberavon Beach, Port Talbot breakwater and to a lesser degree off Crymlyn Burrows Beach although there seems to have been a decline in numbers sighted in the last 12 months until recently, when a mother and calf pair was sighted off Aberavon beach. Seals are a more regular feature of the bay, although not in

numbers. Only single sightings of seals are regularly reported – typically near or in Neath river on a high tide or close to Crymlyn Burrows. Watcher A has been watching the sea for years in the Swansea Bay area and reports with certainty that he has never seen a seal haul out of water anywhere in the bay.

- 1.1.0.6 Wildlife enthusiast, marine mammal watcher and ecologist B reports few sightings of seals from the west end of Gower peninsula, but typically most seals in his records have been sighted south-west of Gower and further away from the Swansea Bay, with nearest sightings of seal pups to the Bay at Worm's head in the mid 1990's. The Worm is also a known (albeit not a regular) haul-out site for the seals, last sighting reported a few years ago by canoers. He also remembers two specific occasions of single seals foraging off Neath river mouth on the flooding tide – but makes a point that in his opinions seals are not regular visitors to the river.