

Scottish Environment LINK Marine Task Force Seminar
Houses of Parliament, Tuesday 5 February 2008

A Scottish Marine Bill – What future for Scotland’s seas?

The seminar, hosted by Peter Peacock MSP posed the question:

‘How can we best coordinate and manage activities at sea and safeguard marine wildlife, resources and local communities for the future?’

It also featured the premiere of LINK’s short campaign film ‘Save our Seas’, now available to view at www.savescottishseas.org

Some 60 people attended the event, including eight MSPs and representatives from a wide range of stakeholder groups – from industry, such as Scottish Renewables and the Scottish Fishermen’s Federation, to academia, nature conservation- and community groups and senior civil servants.

Peter Peacock MSP chaired the event and outlined the parliamentary process the legislation is likely to take. He also spoke of the opportunities and challenges with the Bill, such as providing the possibility for a sustainable future for Scottish seas, and the difficulty of making sure that the Marine Bill tackles all related, and often complicated, issues effectively.

Calum Duncan, Scottish Conservation Manager, Marine Conservation Society and Convenor of LINK’s Marine Task Force set out LINK’s vision for what a Scottish Marine Bill should deliver:

- A new system of planning for the sea
- Better nature conservation and improvements to licensing and regulation of the marine environment

Calum highlighted the opportunity for the Bill to deliver win-wins for all stakeholders, by giving greater certainty about where activities can take place, through the marine planning system, while safeguarding important areas for biodiversity to bolster the productivity of our seas. He also spoke of the dangers of not getting the Scottish Marine Bill right, and of the urgent need for protection. Calum said: *‘The time to halt the decimation of the world’s oceans, often recognised as the second biggest environmental challenge of our time [after climate change], is now’*. www.mcsuk.org/mcsaction/scotland

Bill McDermott, of Measan Na Mara Ltd, Shellfish Farmer in Ardnamurchan, spoke passionately from a user’s perspective about the links between damage to the marine environment and the future of coastal communities, which all depend on the sea as a vital resource. Having seen the waters in Ardnamurchan deteriorate in the last ten years, affecting the quality of his catch, he particularly advocated the potential role of ‘no take zones’, so that fish is allowed to grow old before it is caught, to help boost the productivity of our seas. www.scottishshellfish.co.uk/farmers/Oysters_Measan_Na_Mara.asp

Many and wide-ranging questions and discussions followed the talks, including those on coastal access, management of fisheries, marine protected areas and no take zones.



Mingling during the seminar



Peter Peacock and Bill McDermott