

## Recovering the Clyde

**LINK members welcome the spirit of collaboration emerging as part of the Clyde 2020 programme's strategic objective to regenerate marine biodiversity in the Clyde Basin; highlight that management measures developed as part of the imminently-designated Scottish Marine Protected Area network can help co-deliver ecological – and consequent socio-economic - recovery for all stakeholders; emphasise the need for integration with River Basin Management Planning; and support the potential of regulatory tools such as Regulatory Orders to manage a diversified fishery in the Clyde.**

### Context

The Clyde Sea Area (3,600km<sup>2</sup>) is a semi-enclosed fjordic basin and therefore an appropriate area for coordinated regulation. The ecological history of the Clyde has been the subject of recent academic research and although the Clyde supports a wide range of inshore habitats and species, the Clyde ecosystem is not in good ecological condition. There is some concern that human activities may have already impacted on those species and habitats, through overexploitation, habitat destruction and environmental change.

The total collapse of the Clyde herring fishery<sup>i</sup> (averaging 14,000 tonnes per annum as recently as the 1960s) has been well documented, and commercial fishing is now largely dependent on shellfish species (*Nephrops* and scallops). This commercially valuable fishery nevertheless indicates a less diverse environment and there is a concern that it reflects an unsustainable 'fishing down the food chain' which leaves the Clyde ecosystem - and its reliant economy - more susceptible to another collapse. In the Scottish Government's [Clyde Ecosystem Review](#), lead authors Heath and Spiers<sup>ii</sup> said the Clyde was best described as "used agricultural land in need of restoration."

The Clyde currently has an overall classification of 'Moderate Environmental Status' under the Water Framework Directive, primarily due to changes to the physical structure of many of its constituent water bodies, high nitrogen levels from diffuse inputs and seasonal low oxygen levels related to impacts of organic waste combined with low river flows and reduced mixing. The Scottish Government has announced an outline for a Clyde 2020 programme which is a welcome step towards recovering the Clyde ecosystem to achieve Good Environmental Status, a core duty under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).

Members of Scottish Environment LINK's marine taskforce:

- **welcome the cross-party support for the ecological regeneration of the Clyde** (as indicated by the wide range of signatories to Kenneth Gibson MSP's [motion: S4M-08449](#) lodged 28<sup>th</sup> November 2013) and support the opportunity to tackle the ecological challenges in the current Clyde fishery.
- **seek clarity on the Clyde 2020 objectives.** LINK members are currently unsure what the targets of the Clyde 2020 project are and how they will be measured. We look forward to helping to set clear targets during participation in the [forthcoming summit on April 23<sup>rd</sup>](#).
- **highlight the potential for Marine Protected Areas to co-deliver Clyde 2020 objectives.** The Scottish Government will soon publish its analysis of responses to the recent consultation on a network of nature conservation MPAs. LINK members support [Clyde Sea Sill MPA](#), [South Arran MPA](#) and the [Upper Loch Fyne and Loch Goil MPA](#) (which comprise 29.4% of the Clyde Sea area) being designated, with an announcement on all proposed MPAs due we hope before summer recess. In the pressing



context of marine biodiversity decline, it is crucial that the management measures for those MPAs are developed to deliver *ecological enhancement*, which will contribute significantly to protect and recover these vital areas, contribute to the wider improvement in the status of the Clyde and therefore further the Clyde's environmental and socio-economic recovery. In short, MPAs are part of the regulatory jigsaw and decisions need to be made soon to ensure they are well-managed by 2016, in line with OSPAR targets.

- **emphasize the importance of integration with terrestrial planning.** The Clyde Area Advisory Group has set out key targets<sup>iii</sup> to meet commitments required by the Water Framework Directive, many of which directly relate to the Clyde 2020 (MSFD) target of Good Environmental Status. Coordination between delivery and reporting of these overlapping programmes of measures is essential.<sup>iv</sup>
- **support the potential of fisheries management tools to recover fish and shellfish stocks through stock enhancement.** The Shetland Shellfish Management Organisation<sup>v</sup> provides a good example of how a Regulatory Order can provide the framework for sensitive, effective and localised management. LINK members welcome further detail about emerging management proposals and their potential to meet the distinct and complex needs of the Clyde fishery.



Scottish Environment LINK's Marine Taskforce collectively represents over **480,000 memberships** and comprises of eight organisations: Hebridean Whale & Dolphin Trust, Marine Conservation Society; National Trust for Scotland; RSPB Scotland; Scottish Ornithologists' Club; Scottish Wildlife Trust; Whale & Dolphin Conservation; WWF Scotland.

**For more information contact:**

**Esther Brooker**

LINK Marine Policy & Advocacy Officer  
 07920287086 [esther@scotlink.org](mailto:esther@scotlink.org)

**Nick Underdown**

LINK Marine Policy & Engagement Officer  
 07726362727 [nick@scotlink.org](mailto:nick@scotlink.org)

<sup>i</sup> Ware, S.J. (2009). The importance of inshore areas on the west coast of Scotland as nursery grounds for commercially important fish species. [Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No. 342](#) (ROAME No. FO2AA407)

<sup>ii</sup> <sup>1</sup> Heath, M.R. and Speirs, D.C. (2011) Changes in species diversity and size composition in the Firth of Clyde demersal fish community (1927 – 2009). *Proc. R. Soc. B.* published online 6 July 2011

<sup>iii</sup> [http://www.sepa.org.uk/water/river\\_basin\\_planning/area\\_advisory\\_groups/clyde/condition\\_and\\_objectives.aspx](http://www.sepa.org.uk/water/river_basin_planning/area_advisory_groups/clyde/condition_and_objectives.aspx)

<sup>iv</sup> [Common Implementation Strategy for the Water Framework Directive \(2000/60/EC\) and the Floods Directive \(2007/60/EC\)](#)

<sup>v</sup> [Shetland Islands Regulated Fishery \(Scotland\) Order 2010](#)