

Good planning essential for improving health of Scotland's seas

Scotland's planning system must be directed to improve the health of our marine environment, according to a new report published today by Scottish Environment LINK's Marine Group. 'Living with the seas' outlines a far-sighted vision for delivering sustainable development of Scotland's sea area and securing environmental recovery from decades of decline. The report makes a series of recommendations that include the need for marine planning to:

1. **Plan for recovery:** our seas are at risk of poorly-coordinated development. Plans must seek opportunities to recover our damaged marine environment. If the planning system is directed to enhancing the health of our marine environment using the 'ecosystem approach', our seas will become more productive.
2. **Help empower communities:** the process of developing and delivering regional marine plans must be transparent and accessible to coastal communities and all stakeholders to ensure local knowledge contributes to the decision-making process.
3. **Receive adequate funding at regional level:** regional marine planning partnerships must be adequately resourced to deliver effective regional marine plans

Sam Gardner, Head of Conservation, WWF Scotland said: "Scotland's economy depends on the health of our seas and to secure any socio-economic benefits, we must start implementing a bold ecosystem approach to marine planning. Regional marine planning must be effectively resourced and directed towards not just managing activities, but also the improvement of our degraded seas."

Calum Duncan, Convenor of Scottish Environment LINK's Marine Group and Head of Conservation Scotland, Marine Conservation Society said: "An effective planning system provides a dependable regulatory framework amidst these times of major political and environmental change – a planning system for the sea can give Scotland's many important marine industries greater confidence that they are operating within environmental limits and also identify opportunities for pro-actively improving the health of damaged marine ecosystems."

Sam Collin, Marine Planning Officer, Scottish Wildlife Trust said: "Well-resourced marine planning partnerships can help empower Scotland's communities by encouraging direct public participation in the preparation and implementation of regional marine plans. Our communities care about the health and management of Scotland's coastlines and seas and a fair regional marine planning process can help ensure those voices are heard."

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Notes/links for editors:

1. The report 'Living with the seas' can be downloaded in full here: <http://www.scotlink.org/public-documents/living-with-the-seas/>
2. The report contains seven priority recommendations:
 - I. Plans must clearly prioritise the natural environment as the basis upon which goods and services rely;

- II. Plan policies need to be tailored to suit the needs of the plan area;
 - III. Management targets for the RMP should aim to fill knowledge gaps;
 - IV. Plans should identify opportunities (both spatial and temporal) for marine ecosystem enhancement as well as development constraints;
 - V. Plans should be developed in a transparent manner with regular stakeholder engagement;
 - VI. Plans should integrate local knowledge and expertise;
 - VII. Plans should be informed by evidence-based environmental baselines and decisions must use the precautionary approach where confidence is low and/or risk is high.
3. There 11 Scottish Marine Regions (Argyll, Clyde, Forth & Tay, Moray Firth, North Coast, North East, Outer Hebrides, Orkney Islands, Shetland Isles, Solway, West Highlands).
<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/marine/seamanagement/regional/Boundaries>
4. Further background to marine planning in Scotland
<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/marine/seamanagement>
5. Our campaign blog providing more background to marine planning in Scotland:
[First Marine Plan a step change for Scotland](#)
[The National Marine Plan – all journeys start with a single step](#)

Scottish Environment LINK's Marine Group - a coalition of environmental charities campaigning to protect and recover Scotland's seas – comprises the following organisations: Hebridean Whale & Dolphin Trust, Marine Conservation Society, National Trust for Scotland, Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, RSPB Scotland, Scottish Wildlife Trust, WWF Scotland, Whale & Dolphin Conservation (<http://www.scotlink.org/public/work/taskforce.php?id=7>) The members' campaign for effective marine planning and well-managed Marine Protected Areas can be accessed via <http://www.savescottishseas.org>