

4. ISSUE PAPER: INSHORE FISHERIES

Scottish Environment LINK Marine Task Force is calling for fundamental reform of how we manage Scotland's seas.

Why does it require urgent attention?

Difficulties facing Scottish **offshore fisheries**, such as cod and haddock, have been widely publicised. 17 out of 21 commercial fish stocks are outside their safe biological limits, in other words - at risk of **irreversible collapse**. However, the future of Scotland's **inshore fisheries** is also in the balance.

Often overlooked in these difficult times for the wider fishing industry, inshore fisheries are experiencing problems of their own. Inshore fish and shellfish stocks support almost three-quarters of the Scottish fleet. However, they are under mounting pressure for a variety of reasons including the displacement of fishing effort resulting from restrictions on the offshore fleet. There is work to be done if Government and the fishing industry are to help ensure the sustainability of the inshore fish and shellfish stocks and the environment that supports them.

What's the problem?

The coastal and inshore waters of Scotland are of high importance for both fishing communities and the natural marine diversity that sustains them. This is no coincidence and results from their high productivity and exceptional quality. It follows that protecting the quality and the productivity of the marine environment should be the shared goal for all with an interest in fish and other marine wildlife. However, the inshore ecosystem and its fish stocks, which support the fleet and seabirds, are under increasing pressure.

Despite these pressures and the importance of the inshore ecosystem for fishing communities and marine wildlife, there is concern that the existing management systems in Scotland contain significant limitation with respect to the integration of environmental and sustainability considerations. The Scottish fishing industry is struggling to be economically, socially or environmentally sustainable.

The higher profile of inshore fisheries has been reflected in the establishment of the Scottish Executive's current review of inshore fishery management. As a direct contribution to the review, Scottish Natural Heritage and RSPB Scotland commissioned the University of Hull International Fisheries Institute to assess how well the current system for managing Scotland's inshore fisheries is working in integrating environmental concerns¹

The importance of inshore waters for both wildlife and fishing communities:

- A wealth of marine biodiversity, being home to over 8,000 species of marine life;
- Over 30 candidate marine SACs proposed under the EU Habitats & Species Directive;
- Internationally important numbers of breeding seabirds and wintering shorebirds. These depend on healthy stocks of finfish and shellfish as food;
- Over two thousand fishing vessels. This represents over three-quarters of the Scottish fleet, showing clearly the importance of the inshore fishing industry to the economies and communities of rural areas in Scotland;
- Important spawning and nursery grounds for commercial species such as cod and haddock.

What brings about these problems?

The 2002 reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) gave Member States full control over the management of all fishing vessels within their inshore (12nm) limits. This has put Scotland's approach to inshore management, including environmental integration, under closer scrutiny. There are questions about whether the system will bear up to such inspection – reform of the existing controls in Scotland is required to deliver environmentally sustainable and locally managed fisheries within the Scottish 12nm limits. The need for reform is becoming urgent. The current problems are:

Fisheries management and governance is playing catch up

- The approach to inshore fisheries management is unstrategic, uncoordinated and under-resourced. There is, as yet, no overall strategy to guide the sustainable development of inshore fisheries.
- Inadequate resourcing for regulating and enforcing inshore fisheries, combined with poor funding for research.
- The Scottish Executive has acknowledged the need for a review and overhaul of the inshore fishing regime in Scotland and is undertaking a welcome review of inshore fisheries in Scotland. It will look at the effectiveness of the main inshore fisheries legislation as well as exploring the key principles to improve the future management of Scotland's inshore fisheries.

Poor involvement of stakeholders in management

- Initiatives like the Scottish Inshore Fisheries Advisory Group (SIFAG) have begun building positive relationships between decision makers and fisheries interests. The relationship between NGOs and the fishing industry has also been built up considerably over the last 18 months.
- However, there is a limited ability to allow 'local' management of fisheries and management involving stakeholders.
- In the absence of the equivalent of a Sea Fishery Committee system in Scotland, Regulating Orders are under development for large stretches of the coastline. However, although they are a tool that can promote the environmental dimension of inshore fisheries and local management, they were not designed with conservation in mind and the experience so far in Shetland suggests that they will not be used for this purpose.

Poor integration

- There are few examples of environmental objectives being built into inshore fisheries management.
- The suite of tools available for sustainable management, including the protection of the environment, is very limited.

What's the solution?

In addition to the primary framework legislation, a Marine (Scotland) Act, to underpin the cross-cutting structural, management and policy changes required (as outlined in 'A Future for Our Seas'), an urgent overhaul of existing fisheries legislation and structures is needed.

The current difficulties have arisen through the weaknesses, gaps and inadequacies in the current legislation. In addition, there are limitations in the policy and organisational structures established to underpin the implementation of this legislation. Whilst specific legislative changes are needed (see below), these must go hand in hand with improvements in the implementation of existing inshore fisheries legislation in Scotland.

Legislative changes

- Provide for environmental integration into fisheries management, for example by establishing the principles of Strategic Environmental Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment in fisheries legislation.
- Assess other key fisheries legislation constraints and/or advances in environmental integration & local management, identifying specific changes to Inshore Fishing (Scotland) Act 1984 and Sea Fisheries (Shellfish) Act 1967

Policy changes

- Establish a duty of care on all fisheries managers.
- Develop, implement and resource a Scottish fisheries strategy based on delivering economic, social, environmental and resource conservation objectives.
- Provide incentives for environmentally friendly fisheries.

Organisational changes

- Provide for local/area management frameworks covering all shell & and finfish species.
- Increase resourcing of SEERAD inshore Fisheries Branch
- Increase resourcing of the Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency to enable enforcement/support for local management frameworks.
- Increase resourcing of Fisheries Research Services to support the development of inshore fisheries management and the monitoring of the condition of inshore fisheries.

This paper has been produced by the Scottish Environment LINK Marine Task Force

Scottish Environment LINK (LINK) is the umbrella body for Scotland's voluntary sector environmental organisations which together represent around 500,000 members throughout Scotland. The LINK 'Marine Task Force' consists of the following environmental organisations working on marine issues in Scotland:

British Association of Nature Conservationists (Scotland)	RSPB Scotland
Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust	Scottish Wildlife Trust
Marine Conservation Society	WWF Scotland
National Trust for Scotland	Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society

For further information contact Campaign Convener, Calum Duncan at the Marine Conservation Society on 0131 226 6360 or Jessica Pepper, LINK Parliamentary Officer, Scottish Environment LINK Parliamentary Office, PO BOX 23137, Edinburgh or call 0131 225 4345.

1.Symes, D and Ridgway, S (2003) *Inshore fisheries regulation and management in Scotland: meeting the challenge of environmental integration*. A report for RSPB Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage.