

MARINE BULLETIN 1 – A COASTAL AND MARINE NATIONAL PARK FOR SCOTLAND

February 2006

“Natural resources are the basis of all economics”

Nic Wheeler, Chief Executive
Pembroke Coast National Park

By 2008 Scotland will have the UK’s first Coastal and Marine National Park (CMNP). It will be a multiple-use area in which conservation, sustainable fishing, aquaculture, forestry, recreation and tourism will be encouraged.

Argyll coast and islands, Lochaber and Skye, the Northwest Highland Coast, the Western Isles, Shetland, and the Solway, Clyde and Moray Firths have all been identified as possible sites, and communities and local authorities in these areas are deciding how to respond.

Whichever area is finally chosen during 2006, LINK members believe a Park offers an opportunity to its coastal communities to shape their long-term future if it is well-designed.

The Problem

We all depend on a healthy natural environment - declines in fish stocks, in the quality of the landscape or in wildlife populations can quickly lead to loss of local income. The sea no longer provides the abundance it once did, traditional livelihoods like fishing have declined and young people continue to leave coastal villages.

We have treated the seas as a ‘free-for-all’ resulting in a ‘tragedy of the commons’. There is currently no proper accountable forward planning system that enables us to protect the resources we rely on from irreversible damage.

The Opportunity

While LINK would like to see a Marine Act for Scotland to deliver a better future for all our seas [through a Marine Spatial Planning system and a comprehensive network of marine reserves for nationally important habitats and species], a CMNP will be an excellent showcase of best practice for one area, and promises benefits for local communities and for the environment. For example:



Nephrops or ‘prawn’ © Sue Scott

- ❑ More money for rural areas, both directly from government and through product marketing, eg premiums for fishing produce, and tourism opportunities. The existing National Parks have had over £30m of government investment since their inception.
- ❑ A strong local voice in decision-making and a more ‘joined-up’ planning system through the National Park Plan.
- ❑ Local responsibility and greater care for the special qualities of the area
- ❑ More local, long-term employment

How to get the best possible Park

LINK Marine Task Force members believe the Park should have:

- ❑ A strong National Park Plan that is a clear route map for meeting the Park aims
- ❑ A strong National Park Authority with responsibility for access, full planning powers on land and a lead role in planning and co-ordinating activities at sea
- ❑ Measures to ensure that the natural heritage of the Park is conserved and enhanced
- ❑ A spatial planning system for the sea within the Park
- ❑ An action plan for involving local and national interests in the management of the Park
- ❑ Clear links between Inshore Fisheries Plans and the National Park Plan
- ❑ Tools to influence activities like shipping that are reserved to Westminster
- ❑ Independent review of how well the Park meets its aims

Scottish Environment LINK is the umbrella body for Scotland's voluntary sector environmental organisations and represents approximately half a million members.

This bulletin is the first of a series by the LINK Marine Task Force on marine issues in Scotland. The LINK members listed below, which make up LINK's Marine Task Force, are signatories to the bulletin:

Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust
Marine Conservation Society
National Trust for Scotland

RSPB Scotland
Scottish Wildlife Trust
WWF Scotland

For further information contact Becky Boyd 01463 714 746 or LINK Marine Task Force Convenor Calum Duncan 0131 226 6360, and see www.scotlink.org.

Scotland's World-Class Seas



Northern starfish © Sue Scott

Scotland's coastal and marine natural heritage is world-class, with over 8,000 higher marine species, from flameshells to basking sharks; a wide variety of marine habitats, seascapes and internationally important features, including 45% of all seabirds breeding in the EU and 24 species of whale and dolphin. Commercial fish stocks, aquaculture and coastal and wildlife tourism also rely on healthy seas.

By caring for this natural diversity, a coastal and marine National Park could help secure long-term livelihoods for local communities, providing best-practice lessons that could be used elsewhere.

Clingfish in scallop shell © Sue Scott

