

**MARINE BULLETIN 3 - MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING**  
**September 2006**

*But the time is right to take a wider view, to get better at co-ordinating activity and at measuring and tackling cumulative impacts on our seas.*  
 Ross Finnie  
 Minister for Environment and Rural Affairs

**Why do Scotland's seas need Marine Spatial Planning?**

Pressure on our seas is growing: fish farms, pipelines, tourist boats and dredging machinery all vie for space. These uses can conflict with one another *and* have adverse environmental impacts, blocking sustainable development and wrecking the economic and social benefits of nature conservation.



In contrast to the well-developed terrestrial planning system, no overall framework exists for planning the use of the sea. Instead, there is an *ad hoc* sectoral approach to consenting of marine activities, involving different pieces of legislation, using different scales and means of mapping, and all managed by different authorities.

The inevitable result is planning disputes that waste time and money, undermine the potential economic, social and environmental benefits of new developments and put wildlife and historic features at risk.

New, workable solutions must be found to protect one of Scotland's most valuable resources.

**The Opportunity**

We need a forward-looking, integrated approach for all activities in the marine environment – a spatial planning system for the sea. Comprehensive and statutory Marine Spatial Planning will:

- ❑ Provide greater certainty about where and how developments should be allowed
- ❑ Help avoid and resolve planning disputes, thus speeding decision making and helping the economy
- ❑ Help safeguard important wildlife and historic sites
- ❑ Put the ecosystem approach at the heart of decision-making to ensure sustainable development.

**Why does Scotland need its own Marine Act to deliver Marine Spatial Planning?**

Defra's UK Marine Bill consultation set out proposals for Marine Spatial Planning in UK waters. However, Westminster's jurisdiction over most marine activities stops outside Scotland's 12 nautical mile (nm) territorial limit. Marine wildlife takes no notice of this complex mix of devolved and reserved legislative powers.

Without a Marine Act for Scotland, the benefits of binding, ecosystem based Marine Spatial Plans for devolved issues like marine renewable energy and fishing will go unrealised, and key wildlife sites will continue to be at risk from unco-ordinated developments in Scottish waters.

LINK will continue to campaign for a Marine Act for Scotland to establish a statutory system of Marine Spatial Planning, to coordinate all human activities in our seas, and integrate fully with Marine Spatial Plans throughout the UK.

## The UK Marine Bill

Defra's proposals for Marine Spatial Planning take into consideration the following recommendations from the recent Irish Sea Marine Spatial Planning Pilot. It recommended that Marine Spatial Planning should be:

- ❑ a statutory system
- ❑ implemented at a 'regional seas' scale, out to 200nm with cooperation between devolved administrations
- ❑ coordinated by a plan-making body, eg a Marine Management Organisation
- ❑ flexible and adaptive, and take a long-term view on issues such as climate change.

LINK supports the concept of Marine Spatial Planning outlined in the UK Marine Bill consultation, based on sustainable development and an ecosystem approach, and favours a comprehensive system of legally-binding plans, covering all human activities, with a lead decision-making body for Scotland to oversee strategic spatial planning and to co-ordinate with a UK Marine Management Organisation.

### The truth about Marine Spatial Planning

- ❑ By reducing conflict and red tape, it is good for industry AND wildlife. Industries from marine renewables to tourism will benefit from clear guidance on where they can develop sustainably, and important fishing grounds can be protected from developments.
- ❑ It is the only way to examine the cumulative and in-combination impacts the many different maritime industry sectors have on our seas and coasts, by

presenting an overview of all human activities and developments in an area.

- ❑ It does not replace the need for Marine Protected Areas, but will be part of the framework to ensure that nationally and internationally important sites and their conservation objectives are protected from human developments and activities.
- ❑ It does not duplicate Integrated Coastal Zone Management, which should be the formal mechanism to provide the land/sea 'zip' between terrestrial and marine planning.
- ❑ One size does not fit all – a strategic marine planning policy statement, plus a hierarchy of national, regional and local plans will deliver fit-for-purpose guidance.

### What should Scotland do now?

Environment and Rural Affairs Minister Ross Finnie is leading an Advisory Group of stakeholders to consider how Marine Spatial Planning can help deliver the Scottish Executive's vision of '*clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse marine and coastal environments, managed to meet the long term needs of nature and people*'. It is important that:

- ❑ The options for Marine Spatial Planning outlined in the UK Marine Bill consultation are fully discussed within the national Advisory Group.
- ❑ Scotland's stakeholders should participate fully in the development of the UK Marine Bill.
- ❑ Those responsible for the Scottish legislative programme after May 2007 should give priority to marine legislation to introduce Marine Spatial Planning in Scottish waters, to complement the UK Marine Bill.

Marine Spatial Planning in Scotland and the Economic Benefits of Marine Spatial Planning have been explored in depth in 2 RSPB reports (available at <http://www.rspb.org.uk/policy/marine/legislation/planningsystem/index.asp>)

This bulletin is the third of a series by the LINK Marine Task Force on marine issues in Scotland. The LINK members listed below, that 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

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