
PHOTO STORY: THOUSANDS SUPPORT BETTER PROTECTION FOR SCOTLAND'S SEALIFE

[High resolution photos of Scotland's sealife are available for use on request]

Over 10,000 people have stated their support for more ambitious protection of sealife in Scotland. The Scottish Government's consultation on proposals for a network of marine protected areas (MPAs) closes today (November 13th) and solicits views from across Scotland. Approximately 10,000 consultation responses have already been submitted as part of environmental campaigns to both support the concept of marine protected areas and challenge the Scottish Government to plug some major gaps in the proposed network.

Scottish Environment LINK's marine taskforce - a coalition of environmental charities campaigning to protect and recover Scotland's seas - urge people to back the proposals and show support for the "best 29 sites," which include some of the most important remaining areas for biodiversity in Scottish waters. However, the Scottish Government plans do not provide adequate protection for all of Scotland's amazing sealife, with a number of iconic and nationally important species currently excluded from the proposed MPA network.

Calum Duncan, Convenor of Scottish Environment LINK's marine taskforce and Scotland Programme Manager for the Marine Conservation Society said: "The proposed Marine Protected Areas are will be an important first step but there will still be major gaps in the network, notably for seabirds, whales, dolphins, porpoises and basking sharks, as well as other fragile seabed features. It's great to see this level of support for the proposals, but also to highlight these gaps to the Scottish Government. Beneath our waves is a precious marine landscape containing awe-inspiring biodiversity that sustains Scotland's maritime culture and economy. We must collectively make sure these MPAs do not end up becoming paper parks as has happened in other countries."

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For more information/pictures:

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Notes for editors:

Scottish Environment LINK's Marine Taskforce comprises the following eight organisations: Hebridean Whale & Dolphin Trust, Marine Conservation Society, National Trust for Scotland, RSPB Scotland, Scottish Ornithologists' Club, Scottish Wildlife Trust, WWF Scotland, Whale& Dolphin Conservation.

(<http://www.scotlink.org/public/work/taskforce.php?id=7>) The members campaign for Marine Protected Areas via www.savescottishseas.org

- Planning Scotland's Seas is the Scottish Government's marine consultation package on a Draft National Marine Plan, a network of Marine Protected Areas and sectoral plans for marine renewable energy
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-consultation/>
- A map showing the locations can be viewed here: <http://www.savescottishseas.org/scottish-marine-protected-area-network>
- SNH Commissioned Report no 547: highlights the advice given to the Scottish Government by its scientific advisors: <http://www.snh.gov.uk/publications-data-and-research/publications/search-the-catalogue/publication-detail/?id=1959>
- A review of a Scottish Government 'Planning Scotland's Seas' drop-in event can be read here: <http://www.savescottishseas.org/news/blog/will-ecosystem-based-marine-planning-draw-the-crowds/>
- A map showing the concerning and declining state of Scotland's seas can be found here: <http://www.savescottishseas.org/save-scottish-seas/recover/>
- Related information on MPAs can be found at www.savescottishseas.org/why-we-need-mpas and <http://www.savescottishseas.org/why-we-support-29-mpas>