

Scottish Environment News Release

The logo for Scottish Environment LINK, consisting of the word "LINK" in white capital letters on a dark blue rectangular background.

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Scotland's seas still in desperate need of T.L.C: well-managed Marine Protected Areas more vital than ever

As the third session of the Scottish Parliament draws to a close, Scottish Environment LINK says Scotland's seas are still in desperate need of some T.L.C. Today, LINK publishes a brand new report showing just what needs to be done. All political parties are now challenged to commit to delivering an ecologically coherent network of well-managed marine protected areas (MPAs) during the next Parliamentary session.

Commenting on this report Convenor of Scottish Environment LINK Marine Task Force, Calum Duncan said:

'Scotland's marine environment is damaged and in desperate need of recovery. A network of well-managed marine protected areas is vital to help restore our seas to a condition we can all be proud of. The report from the independent Scottish Association for Marine Science provides a valuable contribution to the debate on how this can be delivered in practice. Making the right management decisions now will allow our MPAs to flourish, playing their part in delivering our shared vision of a healthy, productive and biologically diverse marine and coastal environment.'

The evidence couldn't be clearer. Earlier this month Scotland's Marine Atlas was published. It makes for highly uncomfortable reading. It reveals the health of a staggering proportion of Scotland's marine habitat is deteriorating, with the majority of our seabed facing many serious problems. Seabirds continue to struggle, the common seal population remains in an inexplicable decline while shark and ray populations are highly threatened. This is particularly worrying as the pressures on these vulnerable species are set to increase.

It is time to move from rhetoric to reality. We ask that politicians of all parties stand up for our precious marine environment and commit to fulfilling the promise of recovery enshrined in the Marine (Scotland) Act throughout the next Parliamentary session. '

The report, written for LINK by independent scientists from the Scottish Association for Marine Science, sets out a series of innovative management measures. It makes clear that management of human activities in and around MPAs is fundamental to their success.

While, management decisions must be based on the best available science and designed to meet the conservation needs of the features under protection, the

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LINK is pleased to acknowledge the funding for this report, and associated work, from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and The Tubney Charitable Trust.

report points out that it is vital that all those who use the sea are involved in the process.

Importantly, it emphasises that political will is essential if we are to get the right management measures in the right place. If the next Scottish Government can achieve this, we will be well on the way to delivering a healthy, biologically diverse and productive marine environment.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

1) A full copy of the Scottish Association for Marine Science report 'Making the case for the sound management of Marine Protected Areas' can be found at www.scotlink.org/files/publication/LINKReports/SAMSReportManagingMPAs_full.pdf.

An Executive Summary of the report is at www.scotlink.org/files/publication/LINKReports/SAMSReportManagingMPAs_Exec.pdf.

Scottish Environment LINK has produced a briefing in association with this report to highlight the importance of Marine Protected Area management www.scotlink.org/files/policy/ParliamentaryBriefings/LINKBriefMPAReportGetRight.pdf.

2). Calum Duncan is Scottish Conservation Manager for the Marine Conservation Society.

3). Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment organisations, with over 30 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.

4). The Scottish Environment LINK Marine Task Force comprises the following organisations: Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust, Marine Conservation Society, National Trust for Scotland, RSPB Scotland, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society and WWF Scotland.

Further information on LINK is available at www.scotlink.org

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