

New wave of measures agreed for Scotland's seas

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Marine spatial planning, a new Marine Management Organisation and ways to protect species and habitats that are 'Scottish specialities' could revolutionise how we manage our seas and coasts. These recommendations from a group of marine experts, convened by the Scottish Environment and Rural Affairs Minister Ross Finnie, could greatly benefit people and wildlife says Scottish Environment LINK.

RSPB Scotland's Head of Policy Lloyd Austin, who represented LINK on the Minister's Advisory Group on Marine and Coastal Strategy (AGMACS), said: *"When a diverse group of specialists, from the fishing and oil industries to government scientists and environmental bodies, come together to call for better management of Scotland's seas, we trust that the Scottish Executive will take action. The next step is for Holyrood to deliver a Marine Act for Scotland so these recommendations can become a reality."*

WWF Scotland Director Dr Richard Dixon, also representing LINK, said: *"These recommendations highlight the importance of healthy and abundant seas to Scotland's economy. We're Europe's number one wildlife watching destination, and yet we offer little protection to those marine species and habitats which put Scotland on the map. The choice is either new laws to create marine protected areas for important Scottish species and habitats, or to fail in our international responsibilities to protect marine biodiversity and the many thousands of jobs which depend on it."*

The Scottish Executive controls most activities within 12nm of the Scottish shore, including fisheries, aquaculture, coastal management, renewable energy, conservation, pollution, dumping and dredging, marine works and research. Scottish Environment LINK's Marine Task Force therefore argues that there should be a Marine Act for Scotland to complement legislation currently being developed at Westminster. The UK government will this week publish a White Paper to outline new legislation that will cover reserved issues within Scottish waters (such as oil and gas and navigation) and the sea between 12 – 200 miles from the Scottish coastline.

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EDITOR'S NOTES

1. Scottish Environment LINK (LINK)

LINK is an umbrella body for Scotland's voluntary environmental organisations representing approximately half a million members throughout Scotland. LINK's Marine Task Force consists of the following environmental NGOs working on marine issues in Scotland:

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

RSPB Scotland
Scottish Wildlife Trust
Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society
WWF Scotland