

## The Scottish Marine Bill

A once in a lifetime opportunity to safeguard our marine environment



Puffins. Photo © George Brown

### Who benefits?

Scotland has the longest and most diverse coastline in the UK and our seas are home to half of Scotland's wildlife. Scotland's seas also provide us with a range of important goods and services – including food, energy and recreation – and the employment opportunities these support, from fishing and aquaculture to leisure and tourism, rely fundamentally on a healthy marine environment.

A continued decline in our marine biodiversity would impact on industries such as fisheries, as important breeding and nursery areas for commercially important fish could disappear. Loss of wildlife would also affect Scotland's leisure and tourism sectors in coastal areas, as wildlife watching is a major factor in why people visit Scotland.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> People from across the UK recently voted dolphin watching as their top activity for spending a 'perfect day' in Scotland (Valuing our Environment, SNH, 2008)

### Healthy seas: Priceless!

A Scottish Marine Bill has at last been introduced to Parliament. This historic opportunity must be seized to ensure the Bill protects and recovers our marine biodiversity, helps deliver healthy, well-managed and productive seas and provides a sustainable future for Scottish coastal communities and businesses. Environmental sustainability must have top priority because it is the basis for all social and economic benefits. Anything less will undermine any benefits the Bill could potentially provide for marine wildlife and people.



## What must be included in the Scottish Marine Bill

By taking a 3-pillar approach to nature conservation, set out below, the Scottish Marine Bill has the potential to be a groundbreaking piece of legislation, delivering an environmentally sustainable future for our seas.

To do this, the Scottish Marine Bill must deliver:

### 1. Management within environmental limits

- A planning system for the sea based on the 'ecosystem approach'<sup>1</sup> and founded on Sustainable Development principles.
- Marine plans that cover all activities in all of Scotland's waters that integrate with plans from the UK Marine Bill in cross-border areas.
- Marine planning underpinned by 'marine ecosystem objectives' and based on sound science.
- An open and accountable public appeals process.
- Licensing decisions made in accordance with marine plans.
- Compliance with the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

### 2. A coherent network of Marine Protected Areas

- An 'ecologically coherent'<sup>2</sup> network of well-managed Marine Protected Areas, including sites of national importance to Scotland.
- Sites are needed to help prevent the continued loss of marine biodiversity and let important areas recover from damage and over-use.
- Sites should be designated using scientific criteria alone and must have a management plan to ensure conservation objectives are met.
- They must be managed according to the needs of the wildlife being protected. Some sites would need to be highly protected, whereas others could allow for multiple-use.
- There must be emergency stop powers to halt damaging activities.

### 3. Protection for Marine Species

- To recover our seas, we need to make sure that marine species, including the most vulnerable and threatened, are adequately protected throughout Scottish waters to 200 nautical miles. However, there are currently no proposals for improvements to species protection under the UK Bill, which covers much of Scottish waters.

<sup>1</sup> Convention on Biological Diversity, 1992

<sup>2</sup> Representative sites, adequate connectivity between sites and replication of sites

## Let's make it happen!

The delivery of this 3-pillar approach will ensure the protection and recovery of Scotland's marine biodiversity and help safeguard an environmentally sustainable future for Scottish coastal communities and businesses.

## Scottish Environment LINK

Scottish Charity No: SC00296

We are the umbrella body for Scotland's voluntary environmental organisations, representing around 500,000 members. Scottish Environment LINK's Marine Task Force and its campaign for a Scottish Marine Bill is supported by:



Little cuttlefish. Photo © George Brown

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