

## 1. A FUTURE FOR OUR SEAS

**Scottish Environment LINK Marine Task Force is calling for fundamental reform of how we manage Scotland's seas.**

**What:** A **rescue package** for Scotland's seas is desperately needed and only a whole package (see overleaf) underpinned by framework legislation, a **Marine (Scotland) Act**, will deliver healthy seas and safeguard the resources and communities that depend upon them.

**Why:** Current **management of the coasts and seas** around Scotland is **fragmented, outdated** and **unable to take account of local communities'** relationship with the sea. Several parts of Government deal with marine issues, yet there is **no lead body** and **no overarching marine strategy** to streamline their work. The system is **failing people and our environment**. It is time to deliver truly sustainable management of our seas.

Scotland's seas **support 8,000 higher marine species and a myriad of habitats** that underpin important economic and social activities: from recreational - diving, sailing, tourism and angling - to industrial – energy generation, oil extraction, shipping, aquaculture and fisheries. However, growing human pressures **threaten the health of the sea**, precious marine life and the livelihoods of those dependent upon it:

### **Examples of problems:**

- 17 out of 21 **Scottish fish stocks** are outside their 'safe biological limits' – meaning their populations are in danger of **never recovering**. Scottish cod fishing could be up to five times more profitable if stocks were allowed to recover (Scottish Executive, 2002).
- Scots flush 340 million items of debris down the toilet annually. In 2003, 23.4% of beach litter came from our own homes, three times the UK average (MCS Beachwatch 2003).
- Escapes of farmed salmon more than quadrupled between 1998 (95,000 escapees) and 2000 (440,000). The number of fish farm escapes in the North Atlantic is estimated to be 50% of wild adult salmon in the sea (McGinnity et al Queens University Belfast, 2003)

### **What exactly brings about these problems:**

1. Scotland has **no lead marine body, no coherent marine planning system and no marine strategy** to manage the marine environment. Without these there is no means by which to ensure that our seas remain healthy and productive for future generations

2. Over 85 Acts of Parliament and many separate bodies govern marine activities. **This fragmented, sometimes conflicting legislation does not support sustainable resource use**. Scottish, UK and international competencies are not linked; user groups compete for the same resources; habitats and species are threatened and time and money wasted.

3. **Lack of accountability**. Common access to resources can mean irresponsible use. Currently there are no means of enabling equitable participation of interest groups or structures for local 'ownership' and management.

**Solution:** Scotland's coast and seas need an **effective, co-ordinated marine management strategy** based on an understanding of how ecosystems work.

The only way we will get this is with **fundamental** reform of how we manage our seas, underpinning the whole package with **new framework legislation** for the marine environment, a **Marine (Scotland) Act**. The pieces of the package must include:

**1. A Marine Strategy** – for inshore seas and associated issues out to 12nm placing local stakeholders and the sea at the heart of decision-making and integrating with UK strategy to 200nm.

**2. An identified lead body** - a national decision-making 'body' to oversee marine strategic and spatial planning of devolved activities in Scottish waters in co-ordination with a UK body responsible for reserved matters. The Scottish body should have statutory responsibility for the preparation, implementation and evaluation of a marine strategy and spatial plan(s); powers to decide national priorities, co-ordinate sectoral activities, review policy, oversee enforcement of agreed activities, allocate budget, work with UK bodies on reserved issues, collect and exchange information and ensure the active involvement of stakeholders at all levels. This body need not be a new quango, but could be drawn from existing Scottish Executive departments or agencies. It would be responsible to a nominated Scottish Minister who would lead on, champion and co-ordinate marine affairs within Government.

**3. Effective Marine Spatial Planning** - a hierarchy of plans and policies for Scotland's inshore seas managing the vast range of marine activities and the regulation of proposals for change.

**4. Local management** - delegating powers and putting in place structures for local decision-making, including input to spatial planning and resource management.

**5. Adequate protection for marine species and habitats** of national and international importance, encompassing a network of well-managed marine areas protected by law.

**6. A duty of care** on all bodies whose activities impact upon the marine environment - to protect, manage and enhance marine species, habitats and ecosystems.

Delivery of the above requires the collection and sharing of **good marine information** founded on robust science; excellent communication to aid sound decision-making, transparency and accountability and **allocation of adequate resources** to ensure the human and financial capacity is there to implement the marine strategy and spatial planning.

**The case for reform** – further information is available on:

- **How to sustain our seas**
- **Aquaculture**
- **Inshore fisheries**
- **Protection for marine natural heritage**

---

**This statement has been produced by the LINK Marine Task Force**

Delivering integrated change in the way we manage our seas requires co-ordination with Westminster. LINK Marine Task Force is working closely with LINK marine groups in England, Wales and Northern Ireland for comprehensive legislation at UK level to achieve better protection for marine wildlife and effective management of reserved activities in our seas.

Scottish Environment LINK is the umbrella body for Scotland's voluntary sector environmental organisations. The Marine Task Force consists of:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| British Association of Nature Conservationists (Scotland) | RSPB Scotland                          |
| Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust                         | Scottish Wildlife Trust                |
| Marine Conservation Society                               | WWF Scotland                           |
| National Trust for Scotland                               | Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society |