

## News Release

For immediate release: 6 September 2007

### Scottish Marine Bill lost at sea?

A coalition of Scotland's leading marine environment groups today urged the Scottish Government not to ignore the plight of Scotland's seas. In his statement to parliament yesterday, First Minister Alex Salmond revealed that the government intends to consult on new Scottish marine legislation, but with no commitment to a Scottish Marine Bill in the next year.

Speaking on behalf of the Scottish Environment LINK Marine Task Force, convenor Calum Duncan said:

*'A Scottish Marine Bill was a welcome early promise by the SNP, yet there is no sign of it in next year's legislative programme. A Bill is needed to ensure future generations are able to enjoy and make a sustainable living from Scotland's world-class seas. Cross-party support for a Scottish Marine Bill would ensure such an urgently-needed Bill would sail through parliament. This is a win-win opportunity waiting to be grasped.'*

Scottish Environment LINK's campaign for an effective Scottish Marine Bill includes calls for a marine planning system, and new marine protected areas with good examples of habitats and species important to Scotland.

Calum Duncan comments:

*'Scottish seabirds such as the arctic skua, rare fish such as skate, and seabed wonders such as maerl beds and coldwater coral reefs, which provide shelter for hundreds of species, are in decline and in urgent need of protection. Protected areas for nationally important marine species and habitats would help safeguard our marine natural heritage for future generations and enable the Scottish Government to meet important international commitments.'*

The environmental groups are also urging politicians in London and Edinburgh to work closely together to ensure protection for all UK seas.

Calum Duncan concludes: *'Marine life does not recognise political boundaries. It is important therefore for the Scottish Marine Bill to be aligned with the UK Bill so that policy goals for all the UK's seas can be agreed.'*

**-ENDS-**

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## NOTES TO EDITORS:

(1) Calum Duncan, Scottish Environment LINK Marine Task Force Convenor and Scottish Conservation Manager, Marine Conservation Society, is available for comment.

(2) Scottish Environment LINK (LINK) is the umbrella body for Scotland's voluntary environmental organisations, representing approximately half a million members across Scotland. More information at [www.scotlink.org](http://www.scotlink.org)

(3) LINK's Marine Task Force consists of the following environmental NGO's, working together 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

(4) The LINK Marine Bill Campaign is asking for a Marine Bill for Scotland that includes:

- Proper protection for Marine species and habitats – including protection for nationally important marine areas and other measures for conservation and protection.
- A comprehensive statutory system of Marine Spatial Planning – ensuring effective resource management, coordination between sectors and local decision-making.
- A lead Marine body – a Scottish Marine management organisation to carry out marine spatial planning, licensing and enforcement.
- An eco-system approach to marine management, where improvement of the state of our seas is assessed against clear recovery targets for key species and habitats.

The campaign is funded by grants from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation and the Tubney Charitable Trust.

(5) Richard Lochhead's June announcement in Aberdeen can be viewed here: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2007/06/19112631>

(6) At over £14 billion, over 80% of the value of Scotland's ecosystem services (the vital functions that support life on earth including flows of material and energy, nutrient cycling, food production etc.) derives from its estuaries and territorial waters. This compared with Scottish GDP of £64 billion in 1999. Williams *et al*, 2003, *Exploring the value of Scotland's environment*.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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