



Marine
Conservation
Society



‘Sea change needed’, environment groups urge MSPs

Scotland’s environment groups welcome the Scottish Marine Bill

Scottish Environment LINK (LINK), the coalition of Scotland’s environment charities, has welcomed today’s introduction of the Marine Bill to the Scottish Parliament, and calls on all MSPs to ensure that it becomes a truly groundbreaking piece of legislation, delivering effective protection for Scotland’s seas, shores and wildlife.

Calum Duncan of the Marine Conservation Society who chairs the LINK Marine Task Force, said: *‘After years of campaigning, we are delighted to see a Marine Bill before the Scottish Parliament. This Bill is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to ensure that our seas are adequately protected and sustainably managed, so that future generations can benefit from them as we have.’*

‘As the Bill progresses, it is now crucial that we get it right. Healthy seas are the foundation on which all other activities at sea depend and therefore need to be at the very heart of what the Bill is for. A healthy marine ecosystem underpins the productivity of our seas: human induced changes to this ecosystem result not only in the decline of marine wildlife, but also in damage to the economy, as fishing, wildlife tourism and other industries suffer the consequences.’

‘There are still some areas in the Bill where there is significant room for improvement and we will be pushing for it to be as strong as possible. In particular, we are concerned that the health of the marine ecosystem will be traded off against social and economic objectives for our seas rather than underpinning them’.

‘We now call on all MSPs to make sure that this Bill delivers a Scottish Marine Act that properly protects Scotland’s seas, shores and wildlife and integrates with the forthcoming UK Marine Bill, which will cover some activities in Scottish waters’.

-ENDS-

NOTES TO EDITORS

(1) Calum Duncan, Scottish Conservation Manager for the Marine Conservation Society and Scottish Environment LINK Marine Task Force Convenor is available for comment on 07841 985 595.

(2) Scottish Environment LINK’s Save Scottish Seas campaign for a Scottish Marine Bill is a joint initiative by these members:



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

RSPB Scotland
Scottish Wildlife Trust
Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society

(3) What must be included in the Scottish Marine Bill

The proposal in the Scottish Marine Bill for a 'three-pillared approach to nature conservation' is key – it has the potential to make the Scottish Marine Bill a groundbreaking piece of legislation, delivering an environmentally sustainable future for our seas.

To do this, it must deliver:

1. Management within environmental limits

- A planning system for the sea, based on an 'ecosystem approach' and founded on Sustainable Development principles, covering all of Scotland's waters, and tying in with planning for UK waters covered by the UK Marine Bill.
- An open and accountable public appeals process for challenging marine plans and decisions made by Marine Scotland.
- Marine planning and licensing based on independent scientific advice and underpinned by 'marine ecosystem objectives'.

2. A network of Marine Protected Areas

- A comprehensive, well-managed network of Marine Protected Areas, which is ecologically-coherent and includes sites from multiple-use to highly protected, of national importance to Scotland.
- Sites contributing to the network should be designated using scientific criteria alone and must have a management plan.
- There must be emergency stop powers to halt damaging activities.

3. Protection for Marine Species

- To help protect and recover our seas, we need to make sure that the most vulnerable and threatened species are protected throughout Scottish waters to 200 nautical miles.
- As currently there are no proposals for improvement to species protection under the UK Marine Bill, we remain concerned that a three-pillar approach cannot be delivered in Scottish offshore waters. (Out to 200 nautical miles).
- Marine Scotland must be suitably resourced to enable proper enforcement of species protection laws and effective monitoring of activities at sea.

(4) Scottish Environment LINK is the network for Scotland's voluntary sector environmental organisations. LINK has 32 member organisations spanning interests across the natural environment and associated cultural heritage, representing around 500,000 members. Further information on LINK is available at www.scotlink.org

The campaign is funded by grants from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation and the Tubney Charitable Trust. For more information visit the campaign website www.savescottishseas.org

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