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## Scottish MPA network worth £10billion

Creating a network of Scottish marine protected areas (MPAs) could provide benefits to Scotland to the tune of £10billion, and potentially more, according to a report published today.

Much of Scotland's marine environment is now recognised to be in a state of decline or concern. The report finds that if such a network was set up to help protect Scotland's seas, MPAs would help safeguard a range of hidden benefits that are currently under threat. Mitigation against extreme weather impacts, boosting fisheries and securing Scotland's tourism appeal are amongst the many economic and social values described in the report.

The report's findings come just weeks before MSPs are due to see proposals by the Scottish Government for a network of nature conservation MPAs to help protect and recover Scotland's seas.

Commissioned by Scottish Environment LINK's marine taskforce, the detailed study firstly identifies the many economic benefits provided by our seas. It then assesses what would happen if the existing management regime continues and compares that to the impacts of different theoretical MPA network scenarios over the next 20 years.

The study finds that the greatest economic benefits would come from a network that protects a high proportion of habitats and species which are currently threatened or in decline. The findings also highlight that significant benefits arise from stopping activities, such as the use of bottom-towed fishing gear, that currently have a detrimental impact on some marine habitats and their dependent species.

Protection of spawning and nursery grounds for fish is also identified by the researchers as important for achieving the largest economic benefits, indicating that fishermen stand to gain from this increased protection.

The report states that the 'scenario-based' values (between £6.3 billion and £10 billion) attributed to a theoretical marine protected area network in Scotland are likely to be minimum estimates, due to a number of important factors being excluded due to a shortage of data and need for further research.

**Calum Duncan, Marine Conservation Society, (Scotland Programme Manager)** said: "£10 billion is a large figure, but potentially even then a major under-valuation. The figures do not take into account the huge value in simply having a resource available in the future, what is known as an 'option-use value' by economists, nor the economic value of potential overspill from MPAs. What is clear, however, is that for the benefits to flow, marine protected areas must be well-managed and must properly protect ecosystem function. They must not become 'paper parks'. Once these figures sink in to policy circles, there is only one way forward. A network of well-managed marine protected areas is a vital part of the way we expect our seas to be recovered."

**Kara Brydson, RSPB Scotland (Senior Marine Policy Officer)** said: "Seabirds bring significant tourism revenue to remote and coastal communities which, in financial terms, makes it all the more concerning that breeding populations of some Scottish seabirds are estimated to have plummeted by over 70% in one human

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generation. A smart government will protect seabirds and the benefits they provide to Scotland's economy, and the simplest and best way to do this is to create MPAs for seabird feeding hotspots out at sea."

**Alex Kinninmonth, Scottish Wildlife Trust (Living Seas Officer)** said: "The main purpose of protected areas is the conservation of wildlife and natural systems and the benefits that flow from them. However, the economic value of protected areas has tended to be overlooked. This needs to change: if the economic value of marine protected areas is not recognised, they are unlikely to receive the investment from Government they so urgently need. The biological benefits of well-managed protected areas on land and sea are clear, but figures like these highlight that Scotland's long term prosperity can be enhanced at the same time – its a win-win."

**Sarah Dolman, Whale Dolphin Conservation, (Head of Policy, Scotland)** said: "Whale and dolphin watching around Scotland's coastlines generates millions of pounds and valuable jobs. For example, whale watching in western Scotland is worth about £7.8 million a year, supporting over 60 boat operators. Dolphin watching in the Moray Firth alone was recently found to be worth more than £4 million and generating more than 200 equivalent time jobs."

**ENDS**

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**Notes for editors:**

**An electronic copy of the report (also embargoed until 3<sup>rd</sup> December) is available on request.**

**Support for images is available on request**

Scottish Environment LINK's Marine Taskforce comprises of eight organisations: Hebridean Whale & Dolphin Trust, Marine Conservation Society, National Trust for Scotland, RSPB Scotland, Scottish Ornithologists' Club, Scottish Wildlife Trust, WWF Scotland, Whale & Dolphin Conservation.

The report (Valuing the Benefits of Designating a Scottish Network of MPAs in Territorial and Offshore Waters) was commissioned by Scottish Environment LINK and undertaken by researchers at the Institute of Natural Resources and Spatial Planning (INDUROT), Universidad de Oviedo and peer-reviewed by Dr Salman Hussain at the newly-established SRUC ([www.sruc.ac.uk](http://www.sruc.ac.uk)) (formerly the Scottish Agricultural College).

The report deploys a methodology developed for Defra by the Scottish Agricultural College and University of Liverpool used for estimating the total economic value of marine biodiversity. (*Marine biodiversity: An economic valuation*. Final Report to Defra - see link below)

Ecosystem services such as the sea's capacity to remove pollutants, and ensure ecosystem resistance against threats such as disease were left out of the final valuation. Other values such as the cultural heritage of the sea or the economic value of off-site benefits were also not factored in to the report, due to a shortage of economic data and need for further research.

In December, the Scottish Government is due to recommend potentially upwards of 30 nature conservation Marine Protected Areas as part of Scotland's emerging network of MPAs. The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Environment will then provide an update to the Scottish Parliament based on these recommendations. This update will be publically available. The MPAs have been searched for in Scotland's territorial and offshore waters and identified using a range of species and habitats on a 'MPA search features' list. They will protect a wider range of species and habitats on a 'MPA Protected Features' list. In addition to examples of representative habitats that need protecting, threatened and declining habitats and species on the 'MPA search feature' list include: burrowed mud, flameshell beds, horsemussel beds and common skate.

Potential sites for designation will then be aired via a public consultation in summer 2013.

#### Related links:

- The report 'Valuing the Benefits of Designating a Scottish Network of MPAs in Territorial and Offshore Waters' (2012) will be available to download on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> December at <http://www.scotlink.org/public/publications/reports.php>
- Marine biodiversity: An economic valuation. Final Report to Defra [http://randd.Defra.gov.uk/Document.aspx?Document=WC04029\\_4013\\_FRP.pdf](http://randd.Defra.gov.uk/Document.aspx?Document=WC04029_4013_FRP.pdf).
- The study for UK's 'National Ecosystem Assessment' <http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/>
- Scotland's Marine Atlas: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/03/16182005/0>
- A map showing the concerning and declining state of Scotland's seas can be found here: <http://www.savescottishseas.org/save-scottish-seas/recover/>
- Background documents on MPAs can be found at [www.savescottishseas.org/reading-room/](http://www.savescottishseas.org/reading-room/)
- Specific examples of hidden benefits of marine protection:
  - The Value of Tourism Expenditure related to the East of Scotland Bottlenose Dolphin Population, ACES, 2010 <http://www.morayfirth-partnership.org/assets/files/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20The%20Value%20of%20Tourism%20Expenditure%20related%20to%20the%20East%20of%20Scotland%20.pdf>
  - The Local Value of Seabirds, RSPB, August 2010, [http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/seabirds\\_tcm9-262584.pdf](http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/seabirds_tcm9-262584.pdf)