



Scottish
Environment
LINK

An Ocean Recovery Plan for Scotland



Scottish Seas

With an area six times larger than the land, Scotland's seas are one of our greatest assets whose shores comprise an astonishing 10% of Europe's coastline. Maritime heritage is key to Scotland's cultural identity and has played an important role in shaping our communities, particularly those on the over 90 inhabited islands. But despite their significance, climate change, unsustainable fishing, industrial development and pollution have caused widespread degradation across marine ecosystems.

Although human activity is putting the ocean under immense pressure, we do have a window of opportunity to save our seas from their spiral of decline. With a paradigm shift in management and resource use, we can secure healthy and productive marine ecosystems that deliver for the environment, society and economy.

Ten years ago, the hard-won Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 became law, requiring Scottish Ministers not only to protect, but also enhance the health of Scotland's seas. However, it is clear that implementation of the Act is not fulfilling its full potential and may be insufficient for delivering the scale of change needed to recover and protect the ocean in the face of the intertwined climate and nature crises.

We agree with the international scientific consensus, and the many thousands demonstrating in Scotland and throughout the world, that nothing short of tangible, transformative change is urgently needed. For a successful Green Recovery from the impacts of Covid-19 it is vital that the health of the environment, including the ocean, becomes the *key focus* of repairing the economy such that social wellbeing is supported and further damage to the natural environment upon which we all depend is avoided and reversed.

With devolved responsibility for conservation in 61% of UK seas, the Scottish Government has the opportunity to make a difference, to be world-leading and set the international gold-standard for marine conservation. The first step in realising this ambition is to recognise that business as usual is not an option.

KEY ASKS:

- Create legally binding targets for ocean recovery
- Strengthen the MPA network for ocean recovery
- Reform fisheries for resilience
- Invest for our future



Scotland's seas are at a tipping point

Understanding of our impact on nature, including in the ocean, deepened in 2019 with the hard-hitting IPCC 1.5 degrees, IPBES global assessment and IPCC SROCC reports underlining the impact of climate change, unsustainable fishing activity and sea-use change on ocean health.

April 2020 also marked one year since Scotland's First Minister, along with other world leaders, declared a Global Climate Emergency, acknowledging the need to take meaningful action to avoid the most severe impacts of warming.

Closer to home, the *State of Nature* report documented a continuing decline in Scotland's biodiversity, driven largely by climate change and poor management of unsustainable human activity. UK administrations collectively failed to achieve Good Environmental Status (GES) for 11 out of 15 indicators under the UK Marine Strategy, with seabird populations in particular continuing to decline and the seabed in poor condition. International targets, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Target 6 (mirrored under the EU Common Fisheries Policy), requiring all stocks to be fished at sustainable levels by 2020, have also been missed.

Whilst approximately 37% of Scotland's seas are included within a network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), management measures are currently very limited and are *unlikely to enable significant ecosystem recovery*.

We in Scotland have a particular responsibility for our unique corner of the global ocean, but the scale of recovery needed cannot be delivered by just protecting the small hotspots of biodiversity we have left. We must focus on nature-based solutions, including restoration of "blue carbon" habitats, to protect and enhance the marine environment. We must urgently follow scientific advice and transform the way we manage and use our seas if we are to safeguard our future.

As a society we depend on Scotland's marine environment as it provides us with essential ecosystem services, many of which are at risk on current trajectories of decline.

- Natural marine carbon sinks regulate our climate and mitigate the effects of climate change. The estimated carbon storage capacity of Scotland's marine sediments is estimated to account for approximately 52% of Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions in 2011 – but only 2.7% of inorganic and 1.6% organic marine carbon stores are currently included within Scotland's MPA network
- Wild and farmed fishery resources support rural jobs. In 2018, Scottish fishing vessels accounted for 64% of UK landings, with those from Peterhead alone worth £169 million, the highest of any UK port
- A diverse array of nature attracts visitors and supports a marine tourism sector that is worth around £4 billion to the Scottish economy. Scottish seas are considered among the best in Europe for whale-watching
- Accessible coastal habitats support recreational activities such as walking, boating, swimming and beachcombing which promote health, wellbeing and educational opportunities.

THE SCALE OF DETERIORATION IN OUR SEAS OVER RECENT DECADES IS STARK:

Harbour seal populations have declined by as much as 95% in parts of Scotland

Black-legged kittiwake populations have declined by 69% since 1986

North Sea cod stocks have reduced by 31% since 2015

High mortality for whales in Scotland from entanglement in fishing gear, hamper regional recovery efforts for some migratory species

Most of Scotland's seabed, particularly reef and "blue carbon" habitats, is not in good condition

THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

The role of the Scottish Government will be critical in recovering the health of our seas.

To ensure that nature thrives and the ecosystem services provided by the marine environment are available in the future, the Scottish Government must commit to delivering ocean recovery by managing activities within precautionary environmental limits as determined by the best available science. By 2030 environmental decline in Scotland's seas must have been halted and marine ecosystems must be on a clear path of recovery.

We call on the Scottish Government to:

1/ Create legally binding targets for ocean recovery

Place environmental health at the core of decision-making by enshrining ambitious targets for recovering the health of Scotland's seas into law, including:

- Achieving and going beyond current targets for Good Environmental Status
- Eliminating plastic and chemical pollution at source, and better regulation to reduce underwater noise pollution

2/ Strengthen the MPA network for ocean recovery

Commit to at least 30% of Scotland's seas being highly protected, at least a third of which are fully protected (therefore 10% of Scotland's seas), from destructive and extractive activities by 2030 (meeting the ambition of international benchmarks), including:

- Completing all designations and implementing management measures for Scotland's MPAs and greatly recovering Priority Marine Feature extent and status outside the network
- Establishing an independent commission to advise on the developing MPA network, including reviewing network condition and resilience to climate change, transforming MPA management, and identifying if new sites are needed to deliver ocean recovery

3/ Reform fisheries for resilience

Introduce new policies and where necessary legislation to support a just transition to a modern, world-leading climate and nature friendly fishing industry which includes:

- Binding targets to end over-fishing and eliminate the bycatch and entanglement of non-target and protected species
- A requirement for fully documented fisheries delivered through Remote Electronic Monitoring (with cameras) to improve data collection and help to end Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing
- A mechanism to improve inshore fisheries governance and transition to a new spatial management regime, which includes a presumption against trawling and dredging in a significant part of Scotland's inshore water
- A new vessel licencing system that allocates fishing opportunities according to transparent and objective environmental, social and economic criteria to incentivise the most sustainable fishing practices

4/ Invest for our future

Provide and incentivise investment in marine conservation and sustainability to match the scale of the nature and climate emergencies by:

- Increasing the public budget for conservation, including long-term marine monitoring programmes and MPA management plans, and investing more in science agencies and applied research
- Completing and resourcing Regional Marine Plans that drive ecosystem recovery and restoration
- Developing innovative finance models and scaling up investment, including establishment and demonstrable progress of a Marine Nature Fund, into which all marine industries benefiting from public goods in, on or by the sea contribute to fund ocean restoration
- Utilising robust enforcement, such as fines for environmental damage, to encourage best practice

As we enter the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, the Scottish Government must grasp the opportunity for transformative change. Whatever the constitutional and global outlook, Scotland must lead by setting an ambitious trajectory for ocean recovery that will underpin the vision and reality of a more progressive, resilient and equal Scotland.





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Roadmap

2020

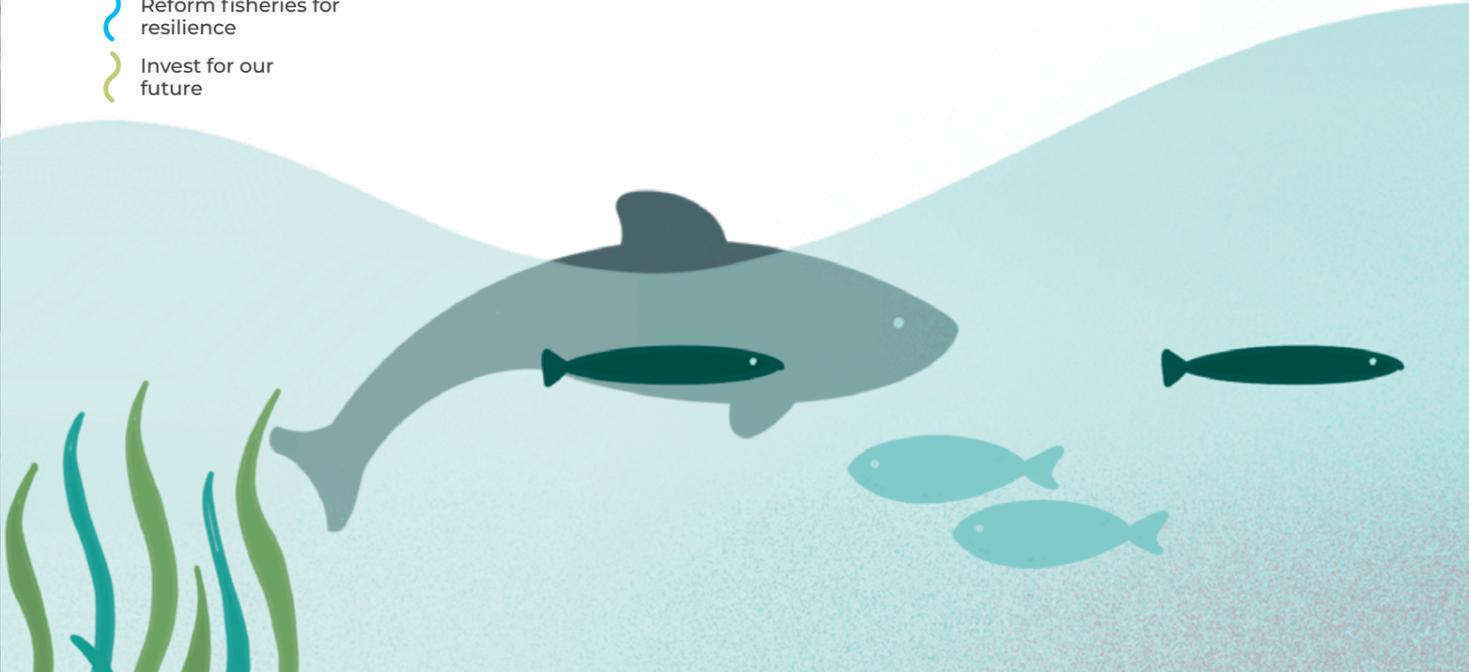
- Scottish Government invests in nature and wellbeing to ensure a green recovery and recognises the economic benefits that arise from environmental sustainability
- Scottish Government commits to developing a regulatory regime that prevents chemical pollution and goes beyond EU REACH regulations
- Four inshore Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and 13 marine bird SPAs are designated
- Strategy for Scotland's Sea Fisheries** is published which includes a commitment to climate and nature smart fishing, new legislation where necessary and roll-out of Remote Electronic Monitoring with cameras (REM) across all over 10m and smaller high-risk vessels fishing in Scottish waters and Scottish vessels fishing elsewhere

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- This and every year, UK fisheries authorities publish precautionary recovery plans for all depleted fish stocks, including requirement for REM on vessels accessing these stocks, and work together to ensure catch limits follow the science and end overfishing
- Scottish Government marine and national litter strategies and response to single-use plastics consultation drive further measures to stop ocean waste and plastic, including tackling sewage related debris and fishing litter

2021

- Scottish Government publish and drive an **ambitious UK Dolphin and Porpoise Conservation Strategy**, which provides clear approaches to baseline monitoring, eliminating cetacean bycatch and mitigating detrimental impacts from human activities, including noise pollution, disturbance and habitat damage
- Scottish Government develops ambitious positions for COP15 and COP26** that recognise the need for ocean protection, recovery and restoration targets
- Cabinet Secretary for Ocean Health and Maritime Affairs** established to drive transformative change in how we manage marine resources and recover ocean health
- Scottish Government **champions an ambitious Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity** that recognises the need for ocean protection and restoration targets alongside a strong role for regional and sub-national governments and communities in line with the Edinburgh Declaration
- Maritime sectors are encouraged to outline their plans for their contribution to net zero ahead of COP26 in Glasgow



2022

Scottish Government **prioritises environmental recovery and restoration**, including action to recover the most threatened marine species, by committing to an Environment (Scotland) Act that includes new, ambitious ocean recovery targets in support of achieving enhanced GES (GES+) by 2030

All UK administrations commit to delivering the monitoring programmes needed to measure progress towards achieving GES by 2024

Introduce world-leading fisheries legislation, policy and governance that supports delivery of new inshore fisheries governance bodies, REM, spatial management and a new licencing regime based on environmental, social and economic criteria

Scottish Government undertakes a review of current REM ahead of wider roll-out across over 10m and smaller high risk vessels

Scottish Government works with **other UK administrations and communities of interest to develop the Joint Fisheries Statement and Fisheries Management Plans** that are nature and climate positive and enable ocean recovery

Fisheries Management Plans **include requirements to improve data** to ensure all commercially targeted fish stocks and those at risk of being overfished have adequate stock assessments, and protection of sensitive species and habitats, enabling ocean recovery

Scottish Seabird Conservation Strategy is published, providing a clear, accountable framework to ensure the recovery of nationally and internationally important seabirds

Scottish Government **outline and commit to a strategy to have all 11 Regional Marine Plans in place and functioning effectively by 2030**, including integration of all sectors (such as aquaculture spatial plans), with appropriate resourcing

Scottish Marine Environmental Enhancement Fund is established, in collaboration with government, NGOs, industry, and businesses, to support and drive an increase in practical conservation and restoration projects, such as those for native oyster and seagrass, to help strengthen the resilience of the marine and coastal environment

Sectoral marine plan for offshore wind energy adopted, which ensures nature is not harmed and, where needed, protects seascapes

A new independent commission is established to advise on the transformative change needed in the MPA network and in site management to meet 2030 target for Scotland's seas

All existing and new salmon farms are managed under SEPA's updated regulations and new regulations on the use and management of acoustic deterrent devices on salmon farms

Circular Economy (Scotland) Bill is introduced that commits to reduction of absolute resource use, sets targets for refill and reuse of consumable items and prevents plastic and chemicals of concern from entering the sea

British Standards Institution (BSI) Publicly Available Specification (PAS) for plastic pellet supply chain adopted with a roadmap for introduction as a legal requirement

Scottish Government adopts the UK Plan of Action on Seabird Bycatch

National Marine Plan review is published and scrutinised by Parliament

A funding mechanism is agreed that replaces the function of and is comparable to the amount of the European Maritime Fisheries Fund, with a focus on supporting sustainable livelihoods and achieving ecosystem objectives

Scottish Government commits to a strategy for regulating and managing commercial and recreational marine tourism, particularly wildlife-watching and interaction, to ensure that any sector growth occurs in a managed way and allows for nature recovery

Scottish government encourages UK government for a review of military exercise impact on cetaceans and other marine wildlife in Northwest Exercise Area

The updated **Climate Change Plan includes policies and targets for blue carbon protection and restoration**

Scottish Government completes the current phase of management measures for the MPA network, **adopting a whole-site management approach** where possible, as a step toward highly and fully protected areas

A presumption against trawling and dredging within a significant part of inshore waters improves Priority Marine Feature protection beyond the MPA network and helps to recover the health and productivity of inshore marine ecosystems

Scottish Government, advised by MPA commission, reviews progress towards National Marine Plan General Policy 9(b) for all other Priority Marine Features and develop action plans for features not currently addressed

Scottish Government introduces a requirement for all over 10m and high-risk smaller fishing vessels operating in Scottish waters and Scottish vessels fishing elsewhere to install REM with cameras by end of 2022

Scottish Government **implements a new spatial management regime for commercial and recreational fishing** that incorporates no-take zones, static gear zones, jointly-agreed fish stock recovery areas, real-time temporary closures and short-term technical controls

Scottish Government advocates for a global concordat to support an international moratorium on deep seabed mining

A ban on all new fossil fuel developments is included in the National Planning Framework

The Independent MPA commission publishes review of Scotland's MPA network and its recommendations for the transformative change needed to achieve the 2030 target

Scotland's **second National Marine Plan is published, as a holistic approach to planning for all sectors (including fisheries) and with ecosystem-based sectoral policies** that enable sustainable development within environmental limits and drive ocean recovery

Scotland's all-inclusive return to retail **Deposit Return Scheme is operational** and protocols reviewed so it can be adapted for Refill systems

Scottish Government outlines **strategy for identifying and tackling all contaminants of concern** at sea, including chemicals, nanomaterials, plastics and microplastics; commits to an action plan to end non-essential use of all chemicals of concern; and new REACH chemical regulations match ambition and timeline of EU REACH

Scottish Government **match or exceed EU Single-Use Plastics Directive**, including bans on items such as cutlery, coffee cup lids and plastic cigarette butts and all multi-material packaging is removed from market unless proven economically viable to recycle in Scotland

All of Scotland's bathing waters meet Sufficient and 95% meet Good or Excellent water quality

Impacts on wild salmonid populations are accounted for in regulation, resulting in locations of all new salmon farms posing no threat to wild salmonids



2023

Scottish Government develops an ambitious **Programme of Measures to achieve GES+ by 2030**

Updated MPA proposals and legislative requirements are outlined by the Scottish Government in line with independent MPA commission recommendations, **including fully (no extractive or destructive activities) and highly (only "lightly" extractive activities) protected marine areas**

Scottish Government commits to a **new deep-sea access regime restricting bottom-contact fishing gear below 600 metres, and strengthens controls on forage fisheries** to ensure they are managed to reflect their critical role in the ocean ecosystem, with much stronger curbs, including prohibitions, on fishing for sandeels and sprat.

All over 10m and high-risk smaller fishing vessels operating in Scottish waters and Scottish vessels fishing elsewhere are fitted with REM with cameras

All commercially targeted fish stocks and those at risk of being overfished **have adequate stock assessments**

Review the cumulative chemical and medicinal use of salmon treatments and their impact on the marine environment in Scotland

2024

Scotland's seas achieve Good Environmental Status for all indicators.

Scottish Government supports the International Maritime Organisation to push for an **emissions reduction pathway for international shipping compatible with the Paris Agreement** on climate change and supports a moratorium on ship-to-ship oil transfers.

Aquaculture, including salmon farming, is integrated into regional marine planning; all areas deemed unsuitable are designated aquaculture free-zones and all poorly sited farms relocated or closed, taking into account MPA conservation objectives, PMF distribution, sea lice mapping and cumulative impacts

Per-fluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS) are removed from all non-essential uses and **Scottish Government develops road-map for PFAS removal** from essential uses such as firefighting foam

All washing machines sold in Scotland have a microfibre filter fitted and all commercial machines are retrofitted with one

All intermittent sewage overflows are reviewed to ensure they meet licence requirements, and monitored, with information including real-time data for bathing waters, other recreational waters and shellfish waters publicly available

2025

Independent MPA Commission publish second review of Scotland's MPA network and protection of PMFs outside MPAs, including reporting on progress toward 2030 target; **Scottish Government commits to further action required to transform MPA protection**, based on the Commission's recommendations

Inshore fisheries authorities are established and resourced with governance inclusive of fisheries, environmental and recreational stakeholders; and fisheries research and management plans that contribute to nature and climate positive fishing and ocean recovery are developed

The second National Marine Plan is reviewed and robustly scrutinised by the Scottish Parliament to ensure it is on-track to help meet 2030 targets

All feed ingredients used in Scottish aquaculture are recognised as sustainable; all salmon farms are Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) certified and a seaweed aquaculture Code of Good Practice developed and implemented.

Scotland's refill and reuse system to meet targets is introduced and operational

2026

Scottish Government reviews Regional Marine Plans, including their progress toward supporting recovery of the environmental health of Scotland's marine regions

2027

Inshore fisheries authorities review and update fisheries research and management plans to ensure they are contributing to nature and climate positive fishing and ocean recovery

2028

The Independent MPA commission publish third review of Scotland's MPA network; **Scottish Government commits to any further action required to improve MPA network and management**, based on commission recommendations

All marine industries invest to appropriate level in the Scottish Marine Environmental Enhancement Fund, ensuring the fund is operating, well-funded and delivering practical marine and coastal restoration projects

2029

All salmon farms in Scotland are ASC certified, well-sited, and operate in harmony with the marine environment, through the avoidance of sea lice hotspots, sensitive habitats, seal haul-outs and wild salmonid interactions, and the adoption of a range of technologies, including offshore, semi-closed and closed systems.

2030

Scotland's seas are at GES+; ecological decline is halted, marine ecosystems are recovering, a climate and nature positive fishing framework is in place and seas and coasts are clean and pollution free.

At least 30% of Scotland's seas are highly protected, at least one third of which (therefore 10% of Scotland's seas) are **fully protected** from extractive and destructive activities.

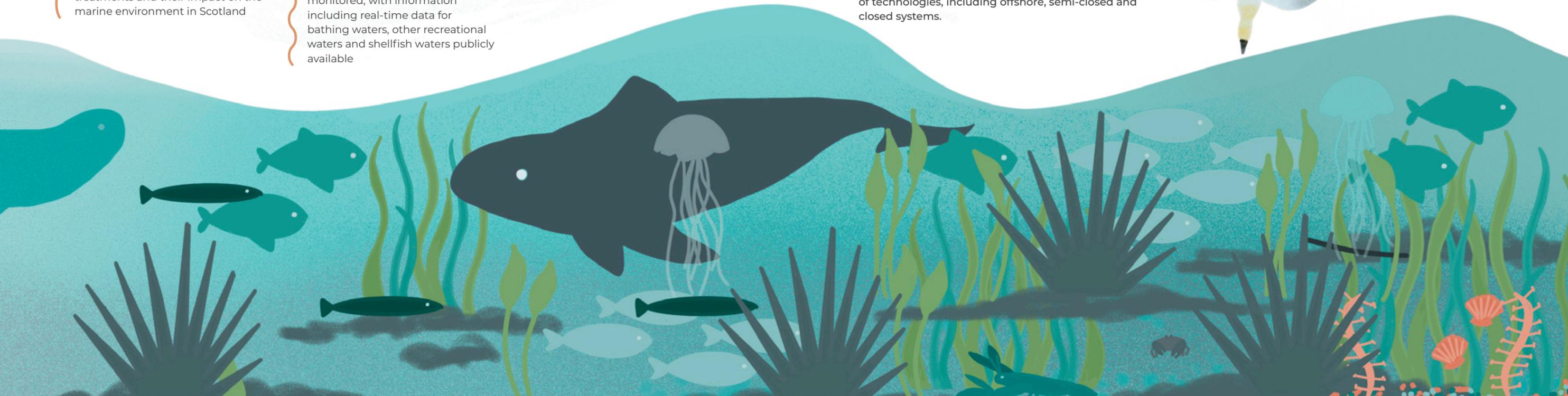
The National Marine Plan and 11 Regional Marine Plans **drive the restoration of marine ecosystems throughout Scotland's marine area**, ensuring all human activities operate within environmental limits and are robustly monitored.

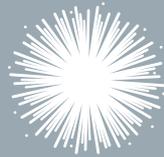
Low impact, demonstrably by-catch free, high-value nature and climate positive fisheries, with healthy and resilient stocks, support sustainable fishing opportunities, coastal communities and a growing domestic seafood market.

Scotland has a **waste-free circular economy**, where refill/reuse of consumable products is required and where single-use items become redundant.

The interim target for meeting net zero by 2045 to reduce greenhouse gases by 75% by 2030 is at least met or exceeded.

Scotland meets or exceeds the global Sustainable Development Goals.





Scottish
Environment
LINK

Marine Group members:



Phone
01738 630804

Email
information@scotlink.org

Web
www.scotlink.org
www.savescottishseas.org
www.fightforscotlandsnature.scot

Twitter @scotlink
Facebook @ScottishEnvironmentLINK

Scottish Charity SC000296 Scottish Company SC250899
Registered office: 13 Marshall Place, Perth PH2 8AH

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