



Scottish  
Environment  
LINK

# Still Delivering the Goods

## Case Study 6



ONGOING

**Save Scottish Seas**  
Scottish Environment LINK



Photo: Calum Langdale

Read the full report, with the 15 case studies here:

<https://www.scotlink.org/publication/still-delivering-the-goods/>



### Background

Save Scottish Seas is a campaign, coordinated by LINK's **Marine Group** and supported by LINK marine project staff. The campaign started in 2007, and has continued through different funded phases, working with the collective vision of achieving healthy, well-managed seas, where wildlife and coastal communities are flourishing and ecosystems are protected, connected, and thriving.



### Project aims

The aims have varied according to the project phase; the aims of earlier phases of the campaign (now completed) were set out in the **2008 Delivering the Goods** report. The most relevant aims for the current phase (2017–2021) are:

- 1 Secure a well-managed ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)**
  - > Secure designation and commitment to designate 14 Special Protection Areas (SPA), 4 mobile species MPAs, harbour porpoise Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).
  - > Secure effective management (of all MPAs, SPAs and SACs).
  - > Establish effective management measures for the network to ensure protection and recovery of Scotland's seas, including designated features, key non-designated features, and ecosystem function.
  - > Secure an ecologically coherent network (ECN): that the Scottish network meets OSPAR-level criteria of Ecological Coherence.
- 2 Marine Planning**
  - > Secure a National Marine Plan that meets legal duties of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010
  - > Secure well-resourced Regional Marine Plans: established through a strong ecosystem approach, integrating all sectors, and joined up with terrestrial planning.
  - > Secure ecosystem-based Regional Marine Plans.
- 3 Fisheries management**
  - > Secure ecosystem-based fisheries management post-EU exit with new legislation providing for holistic spatial approach, integrated with MPA management and Regional Marine Plans).



### Project Timescale

From 2007–2020, milestones of the project included:

- 2010** Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 passed, securing legislation sought by campaign.
- 2014** "Best 29" MPAs secured with 30 new nature conservation MPAs designated.
- 2015** National Marine Plan published including requirement for sustainable development.
- 2016** LINK #donttaketheP campaign successfully secures ecosystem-based fisheries management measures in most vulnerable 18 inshore MPAs and SACs.
- 2017** Loch Carron MPA given emergency protection (made permanent in 2019).
- 2020** Target missed to have ecologically coherent network of well-managed MPAs complete and for Scotland and UK seas to be in Good Environmental Status. However, West of Scotland MPA, four inshore nature conservation MPAs, including for basking sharks, minke whale and Risso's dolphin and 12 marine SPAs have all been designated.

The current phase of this project ends in June 2021. Funding has now been secured from John Ellerman Foundation to continue this work until 2024, focusing on delivery of our **Ocean Recovery Plan**.



### SBS Objectives

Photo: Scottish Environment LINK



The aims from the *2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity*:

**1**

To protect and restore biodiversity on land and in our seas, and to support healthier ecosystems.

MPAs, ecosystem-based marine planning with climate and nature positive fisheries management if done properly help protect and restore biodiversity at sea.

**2**

To connect people with the natural world, for their health and wellbeing and to involve them more in decisions about their environment.

The work to promote MPAs, ecosystem-based marine planning and climate and nature positive fisheries management connects people through regional marine planning, such as Shetland and Firth of Clyde, and MPA co-management such as South Arran MPA and Fair Isle.

**3**

To maximise the benefits for Scotland of a diverse natural environment and the services it provides, contributing to sustainable economic growth.

MPAs, ecosystem-based marine planning and climate and nature positive fisheries management can "maximise the benefits for Scotland of a diverse natural environment and the services it provides" if management delivers ocean recovery.



### Project Summary

The project has achieved a number of successes, below, and is now coming into a fifth phase to support completion of Marine (Scotland) Act delivery and more importantly looking to secure transformative change in the MPA network, fisheries management and marine planning that delivers ocean recovery at scale.

Further progress is sought on delivering fisheries protection in the remaining inshore and offshore MPAs and SACs; on improving protection of Priority Marine Features (PMFs) beyond the MPA network, on delivering climate and nature positive fisheries management and on the delayed roll-out of Regional Marine Plans. Detail is in the [Ocean Recovery Plan](#).



### Climate Impacts

Securing effectively protected MPAs and nature and climate positive fisheries will help mitigate the impacts of climate change through enabling carbon-sequestering habitats to recover and expand, protecting deep-water fish populations that act as carbon-pumps and, potentially, through limiting re-entry to the atmosphere of carbon resuspended from mobile fishing gear.





## People Information

**Direct employment:** From 2007–2016, the project employed two full time LINK marine posts and from 2016, one full-time LINK marine post.

**Wider engagement:** These posts, working with LINK members bodies, informed and enthused many thousands of people, throughout Scotland to press for its conservation. An example is the 15,000+ letters and emails to support a progressive Marine (Scotland) Act in 2008.

**Community engagement:** The campaign also worked closely with many coastal communities, through for example, the Coastal Communities Network, who co-ordinate the work of coastal community groups wishing to press for conservation actions in their local areas. The Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, a result of the Save Scottish Seas project, provides the legal and policy frameworks through which these ambitions can be realised.

**Industry:** A healthy marine environment underpins employment in any industries that exploit that environment sustainably. The Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 and particularly aspects of its implementation, such as MPA management measures, are still relatively new – and, to date, there is little evidence to demonstrate the impacts. However, the Scottish Government's early assessment of **the socio-economic impacts of MPAs** shows several positive indications, including increased opportunities for static gear fishing within MPAs and increased crew.

**Tourism:** The same Government report reflected MPAs providing “an additional tourist attraction for areas nearby.”



## Successes and achievements

To date the project has been successful in securing:

- Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 and commitments therein, resulting in the following examples:
- A total of 36 new nature conservation MPAs including the largest in Europe.
- A National Marine Plan.
- The protection of over 2,200km<sup>2</sup> of the most vulnerable inshore MPAs and SACs from mobile bottom trawling and mechanical dredging.

There are good signs of recovery in the South Arran MPA and Firth of Lorn SAC but management measures for the remaining inshore sites and all offshore sites are still awaited, non-compliance with existing fisheries management measures in MPAs remains a big concern and proposed work to improve protection of Priority Marine Features beyond the MPA network is delayed.



Photo: Calum Duncan



### Issues and challenges

- Delays in progress on delivering fisheries protection in the remaining inshore MPAs and SACs and offshore MPAs and SACs; delays in improving protection of PMFs beyond the MPA network and delays to the roll-out of Regional Marine Plans.
- Business-as-usual approach to marine conservation, particularly as it overlaps with fisheries management and to a lesser extent aquaculture and other sectors. The Government approach to date has been more feature-based than ecosystem-based, protecting often diminished remnants of habitats and species populations with limited scope for ecosystem recovery.
- Capacity within the Scottish Government to deliver the measures needed is another challenge, with a small team seeking to protect the 61% of UK seas that Scotland's marine area comprises. The Marine Conservation team is working more closely with the Fisheries and Marine Planning Teams now but a siloed approach to management from the Cabinet down creates a "false dichotomy" pitching business (fishing, aquaculture, renewables etc) "against" conservation. There is some way to go until the rhetoric turns into reality, despite some welcome progress to date.



### Funding

The total budget for the first four phases of this project was over £1.1 million. In different phases, a significant proportion of these costs have been raised from the John Ellerman Foundation, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, and the Tubney Trust. These grants have been complemented by funds or in-kind support from Marine Conservation Society Scotland, RSPB Scotland and WWF Scotland, as well as from LINK itself.



### Further information

<https://www.scotlink.org/our-work/our-seas/marine/>  
<http://www.savescottishseas.org/>  
[https://www.scotlink.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/OceanRecoveryPlan\\_spreads-1.pdf](https://www.scotlink.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/OceanRecoveryPlan_spreads-1.pdf)  
<https://www.mcsuk.org/media/marine-unprotected-areas-full-report.pdf>