

The Deep Sea - Brian Whittle MSP

Descending more than 200 metres, light begins to fade in the ocean, and it is here that the deep sea begins - the largest ecosystem on Earth and the least explored.

Hello, my name is Brian Whittle and I am a Member of the Scottish Parliament for the South of Scotland region. I am also the Nature Champion for the largest, deepest diving, and most widespread marine turtle in the world – the leatherback turtle.

Growing up to 2m long and weighing up to a tonne, the leatherback turtle can dive to depths of over twelve-hundred metres for up to 85 minutes. Many leatherback turtles migrate to the British coast in summer months to feed on the large numbers of jellyfish.

In Scottish waters, the Bailey, Rockall, Hatton and Faroe-Shetland Channel Offshore Marine Regions make up Scotland's deep-sea area. These seas host a great variety of species and habitats including microbes, plankton, cold-water corals, sponge fields, reefs and seamounts. They are home to molluscs, crabs, starfish and anemones, and also slow-growing deep-sea fish, rare sharks and mammals, including sperm whales, who dive down to thousand-meter depths around the Anton Dohrn Seamount.

Deep-sea organisms live in fragile habitats, and whilst they may seem distant, these deep seas are interconnected with our coastal and nearshore ecosystems, forming a complex and dynamic marine environment that we must look after.