

# Nature in brief

## 6: Marine Protected Areas



Healthy marine ecosystems can bring **enormous benefits to Scotland's society and economy** yet much of our seas are degraded and vulnerable.

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are sites at sea in which human activity is restricted to varying degrees. They are the cornerstones of international efforts to **conserve marine biodiversity** and associated ecosystem services and cultural values.

MPAs have been established in Scotland to **safeguard marine habitats and species of European significance**, from the famous bottlenose dolphins of the Moray Firth to the world's largest area of serpulid reef in Loch Creran.

Recent UK and Scottish marine legislation now allows the designation of a new type of MPA to protect and enhance **nationally important marine habitats and species**.

Scottish '*Nature Conservation MPAs*' will build upon existing designated sites and other measures to help meet **international commitments to establish an ecologically coherent network of MPAs**.

A project to identify new MPAs in Scottish waters has recommended **at least 29 new MPAs**. Further MPAs are to be derived from ongoing research on important areas for **basking sharks, whales, dolphins and sites at sea for seabirds**. A public consultation on the initial proposals is set to open in July 2013.

Designation of MPAs is merely the start. **Effective management** is what delivers results and the success of MPAs relies on the **cooperation and stewardship** of marine industries and coastal communities.

### What the Scottish Wildlife Trust would like to see:

- **The designation of new Nature Conservation MPAs** in line with the recommendations of Government's nature conservation advisory bodies.
- **A commitment to progress new MPAs** for basking sharks, whales and dolphins and sites for birds at sea.
- **Effective management** of MPAs to ensure protection and recovery of vulnerable and degraded marine species and habitats.
- **A new marine planning system** that supports the conservation objectives of the MPA network.
- **Adequate financing** of marine monitoring to measure progress and inform adaptive management.
- **Improved public awareness** of the rich and varied marine wildlife of Scotland.

**For further information please contact:**

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