

# Fisheries in brief

## 5: Improved spatial planning of fishing activities

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Fishing activity is recognised as one of the most significant and widespread pressures in Scottish waters, and a key driver of climate change and biodiversity loss. The degree of impact fishing activity has on the environment is determined by a number of factors, such as gear type, location, area, and type of species or habitat affected. Information on the distribution of fishing activity is generally poor, which creates challenges for developing spatial (area) management plans.

As the scale, intensity and range of human activities in the marine environment increases, it is essential that fishing activity is integrated into the wider context of marine planning, which includes the management of human activity and environmental health.

The benefits of integrating fishing activity into spatial marine plans include:

- Fragile, vulnerable and threatened habitats are identified and adequately protected, restored and enhanced.
- Improved spatial coherence and conflict resolution for marine industries and users, ensuring that ecological, economic and social objectives are achieved.
- Better management of blue carbon habitats, increasing their contribution to combatting climate change as 'natural climate solutions'.

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

- At least 30% of Scottish seas as 'highly protected', with at least 10% 'fully protected', by 2030.
- Scottish vessels, and those operating within Scottish waters, to be required to comply with spatial management measures.
- Spatial management of fishing activity integrated into Regional Marine Plans.
- The trial of a low impact zone in Scottish inshore waters that encourages environmentally sustainable fishing practices and protects inshore habitats.
- A ban on indiscriminate fishing practices in fragile habitats.
- Research to further identify and understand ecologically important areas in Scottish waters (e.g., spawning and nursery grounds, blue carbon habitats), and assess the effectiveness of current fisheries management measures for protecting seafloor integrity.
- A whole-site approach to Marine Protected Area management to protect all habitats and species within the site boundary.
- Electronic monitoring technology introduced to inform adaptive management approaches (e.g., spawning and real-time closures).
- The trialling innovative and novel approaches to fisheries management, such as co-location of activities and utilisation of Demonstration and Research Marine Protected Areas.
- The protection of deep-sea habitats and features through a prohibition of fishing activity below 600m, in line with scientific advice, and with appropriate regulation, monitoring, and reporting.

To read our full Fisheries Management Policy, visit: [scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/living-seas](https://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/living-seas)

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