

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE CONSULTATION on SCOTLAND'S FIRST COASTAL and MARINE NATIONAL PARK CSA RESPONSE

Introduction

Council for Scottish Archaeology (CSA)¹ welcomes this consultation and the recognition by the Scottish Ministers that the cultural and natural heritage of marine and coastal areas of Scotland are as worthy of special protection as the two already designated terrestrial national parks. A Coastal and Marine National Park, as part of a package of measures to ensure greater sustainable use of the marine and coastal heritage, should encourage the development of best practice and be an exemplar for the rest of Scotland. It is particularly important that a fully integrated policy is adopted that links the economic and social factors with practice that truly protects Scotland's internationally important marine and coastal heritage.

CSA do not have a particular preference as to where the first Coastal and Marine National Park (CMNP) should be sited and are more concerned that the policies and best practice developed in the chosen area are then extended to the remaining special areas around Scotland's coasts.

Consultation question responses

1 *CSA views on the added value and benefits of a Coastal and Marine National Park*

1.1 How could a Coastal and Marine National Park (CMNP) help communities develop in a more sustainable way and meet community aspirations?

The recognition under the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 that the Park Authority must prioritise the conservation and enhancement of the natural and cultural heritage of the area will lead to the development of truly sustainable policies. Without such direction there would be a temptation to allow short-term developments that would favour neither the communities nor their longer-term economies. Only by placing marine and coastal planning under the framework of a spatial plan will the long-term sustainable use of the resource be maintained. A new CMNP should thus become the exemplar for best practice elsewhere in Scotland. This is not to deny the importance of economic and social factors but

¹ *The Council for Scottish Archaeology (CSA) is an independent voluntary body dedicated to the preservation, study and enjoyment of Scotland's archaeological heritage. CSA defines the archaeological resource in the widest sense to include the cultural heritage and historic environment of Scotland. This definition is inclusive of historic landscapes and places of memory as well as the more physical remains of Scotland's past. It speaks for the archaeological community, amateur and professional, and has the overriding aim of securing Scotland's past for the future. Its remit covers education, liaison between statutory, voluntary and other appropriate organisations, promotion of the identification and conservation of the archaeological resource, and the encouragement of policies to ensure adequate measures for the preservation, management and interpretation of this resource*

the CMNP will lead to policies that are more integrated in their objectives and execution.

Also by giving a community focus to the policies developed it will give a greater sense of ownership to the communities that depend on these areas for their livelihood. This is often lacking in policies developed from central government and by giving a community focus to policies, such as through community planning, there will be a greater sense of local engagement with the sustainable practices that allow for the proper protection of the heritage of these areas.

1.2 What problems could a Coastal and Marine National Park address?

To date coastal and marine areas suffer from a variety of economic and environmental pressures such as overfishing and inappropriate development, leading to degradation of the environment, landscape and heritage of these special areas.

By providing a forum a forum and a structure where more integrated planning is undertaken of economic and social drivers to assess their community and heritage impact, a more sustainable policy should result.

1.3 Are there any other examples of benefits that a Park could bring?

As an exemplar of best practice for other areas, a CMNP will be of more than local value. Indeed as a national park, it should be anticipated that the experience and policies tested and implemented here will have a much wider application.

2 Selecting the Location of Scotland's First Coastal and Marine National Park

2.1 What should be the basis for selecting the location, including how accessibility can be defined?

CSA agrees that the park area should be primarily defined for the outstanding national importance of its natural and cultural heritage. To date criteria have been primarily for natural heritage designations such as NSAs (National Scenic Areas), SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) or SACs (Special Areas of Conservation) with only the former now being recently legislated to cover some cultural aspects of landscapes. This reflects the lack of sufficient research to define cultural heritage assets in both the marine and coastal zones and beyond; using this criterion the Executive must commit sufficient resources to evaluate accurately the cultural heritage assets of the proposed park area. This may require for example sonar mapping of the sea-bed.

The other criteria for defining a National Park as provided for in the National Parks (Scotland) Act (such as that the area should have a distinctive character and coherent identity) are as relevant for a marine and coastal park as for one entirely land-based and should be followed.

The criteria that 'the designation would make a 'significant contribution to the social and economic development of its communities' and 'the area should be, or have the potential to be, generally accessible to the population of Scotland', are relevant and significant, but this should not detract from the primary conservation objectives in designating a park area. A coastal and marine national park which meets the requirements suggested here will have the potential to bring social and economic development in its wake.

Public support for the final designated area will depend on the coherence of the area defined and the structure of the management proposed. For people living outwith the proposed park boundaries, easy access to the park area will only be one of a number of reasons for defining a park area and should not be overriding.

2.2 Which area do you consider to be the strongest candidate as a Coastal and Marine National Park?

CSA has no especial preference for any of the proposed park areas because we do not feel an adequate assessment of the special heritage qualities has yet been carried out. This is not to deny that all ten areas identified are excellent candidates for such designation and CSA would be happy with any of the areas being proposed. Given that only one park area is being proposed for designation, it is more important to define the boundaries of an appropriate area and develop an effective methodology for managing the area so defined. The development of best practice can then sooner inform and support areas not so selected but also worthy of sustainable and integrated management.

2.3 What criteria would you use to set the landward and seaward boundaries of the Park?

The boundaries must be coherent and inclusive. Thus if the Argyll Islands or the Ardnamurchan Peninsula become the selected area then the whole of these areas should be included, as it makes little sense in planning or landscape terms to create an arbitrary inland boundary.

The landward boundary should be set with regard to the historic and contemporary links (e.g. crofting and fishing communities) with the coast and the sea, and in harmony with the landscape and topography of the area.

3 Functions and Powers of the Park Authority

3.1 What functions and powers would you wish a park to have?

CSA consider that the third option is likely to be the most effective in justifying the creation of a park structure. Without adequate powers to co-ordinate development and to integrate the different interests within the park area the authority is unlikely to achieve the overall aims set out for the park.

3.2 Do you consider that planning control for the land component should remain

with the local authority or should it be transferred to the Park Authority?

CSA consider that with suitable checks on the decision making process, it would be more appropriate for the Park Authority to have planning control for the Park Area.

3.3 Do you think the potential for zoning to form an element of the development and implementation of the Plan is sufficient or should other site-based protection measures be considered?

While zoning may be useful to define sensitive areas within the Park Plan, this should not exclude site-based measures to support specific protection for key sites.

3.4 Ministers seek consultees' views on whether the Park Authority should be given a last resort 'stop' power.

CSA consider that a 'stop' power may well be necessary and that this should not just be restricted to biodiversity concerns. There are sensitive archaeological sites and areas not currently protected by legislation, that are vulnerable to dredging or other marine exploitation or pursuits. A 'stop' activity should cover the intertidal zone and foreshore as well as the marine area, as it is often these areas that are the most sensitive to damaging activities.

3.5 How can Inshore Fisheries Groups work within the Park Authority?

At present the cultural heritage interest is not specifically represented on IFGs; given the importance of our marine historic environment, this imbalance should be addressed.

3.6 Do you agree with the proposed approach (option e) to managing aquaculture?

The approach followed will depend on the area selected, but the requirements of the Park may require both a strategic and a site approach more rigorous than that adopted by the local authority. If the Park Authority has planning powers then it would be appropriate that these be extended to cover aquaculture activities and Marine Spatial Planning more broadly within the park area.

3.7 Are the principles for establishing the Park Board the right ones for ensuring local and national views are taken into account, including the views of those using the area but who do not live there? Do you have any other views on the Board and the governance of the National Park Authority?

It is important that national interests as well as local interests are well-represented on the Park Board. As the park is designated on the 'conservation and management of the natural and cultural heritage' of the area because of the latter's national or wider significance then it is important that interests representing both the natural and cultural heritage are represented on the Park Board. This may not need representation from specific organisations but would require clear criteria for the selection process to ensure the engagement of appropriately qualified personnel, including cultural heritage specialists.

3.8 Comments are invited on the running costs and financial implications of a Coastal and Marine National Park

If the new Park is to make a significant impact then it may require additional central funding to achieve this. CSA would agree that a successful Park should probably be budgetary neutral on local businesses. It is difficult to predict the reality of this in advance without knowing the area of the park and the areas of responsibility defined because there would be opportunities and challenges depending on the nature of the business being undertaken. Marketing of heritage cachet may well increase the value of products sold from within the park area.

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