

Comment on Scotland's First Coastal and Marine National Park from Fair Isle.

The Environment & Rural Affairs Department - Marine Group is familiar with Fair Isle's commitment to some form of marine protection for our sea area & the island's desire to be at the forefront of any planning & management process. We look forward to continued communication with the Department to pursue this aim.

The MNP Road Show consultation in Shetland was very poor. An unmarked people carrier in a different location from that notified to interested parties & no advertising in the local press is totally inadequate. It should not allow the Department to think that it has consulted wider than its 'official' list.

In relation to MNP's SNH has still not fulfilled its obligation to meet with the Fair Isle community. This has impacted on their assessment & advice to ministers on a potential site. In 7 of the 8 categories being used by SNH Fair Isle scores 'LOW'. Our interpretation is different & has been communicated to SNH. Thankfully we have been able to speak directly to David Mallon on a variety of issues but this does not change the information that has been presented to ministers.

We appreciated the fact that Fair Isle is specifically recognised in the Shetland section of the document & that we remain within the consultation process on MNP's. The Fair Isle community acknowledge that the criteria for MNP status favours larger & more easily accessible sites however this implies that actual need, environmental etc, is secondary to the need for access. We support comment by Mr Ross Finnie in the recent Scottish Parliament debate on MNP's when he discusses the need for 'stewardship of our marine environment & the sustainable management of our natural & cultural heritage'. This is the area we feel will be lost as access is obviously the main concern driving ministers. At the same debate Eleanor Scott MSP suggested that Fair Isle should not be ruled out on the grounds of access but very definitely ruled in given other evidence & on successful land management & **give Fair Isle 'the same rights & responsibilities over their marine environment'**. She goes on to say that **'Fair Isle could become' 'the best small marine national park in the world'**.

Whilst realising that the opportunity is limited for Fair Isle, Shetland as a whole should still be given proper consideration. A look at recent visitor numbers, many coming for the very attributes a MNP would be proud of, would suggest that Shetland is as accessible as many areas of Scotland. The socio-economic benefits to all sectors of the Shetland wide community could be greatly enhanced if all interested parties could embrace the MNP concept.

It has been suggested that Fair Isle could be used as a comparative site to a larger MNP. This idea is worth pursuing given the united community support (a fact that ministers, agencies etc probably find difficult to cope with), Fair Isle wants to be actively involved. This is a unique situation & one that we believe promises success not only for Fair Isle but also for the Scottish Parliament.

Local involvement & the issue of governance is where any MNP authority must not only engage with communities but also actively recruit as many local people as possible. Undoubtedly the usual stakeholders will be in there - SNH, SEPA, RSPB, Councils, Fishermen's Associations & businesses etc, all very powerful & quite frightening if you don't have the right jargon & skills. Perhaps there will be a need to train or offer support to small groups/interested parties or individuals that will enable good participation & a true sense of ownership.

The Department already has comment from Mr Nick Riddiford, Chairman of the Fair Isle Committee, & our supporting document 'Safeguarding our Heritage' which offers evidence that demonstrates Fair Isles credibility. **Fair Isle is deserving of proper assessment.**

I have enclosed a further copy of this document, a booklet produced by the isle that highlights dwindling fish stocks & catch off Fair Isle, & a copy of the European Diploma recommendations for Fair Isle

SM

229/2005

APPENDIX II

**Draft resolution
on the renewal of the European Diploma of Protected Areas
to the Fair Isle National Scenic Area (United Kingdom)**

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.a of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to Resolution (65) 6 instituting the European Diploma as amended by Resolution (98) 29 on the regulations for the European Diploma of protected areas;

Having regard to Resolution (85) 14 on the award of the European Diploma to the Fair Isle National Scenic Area;

Taking into consideration the expert's report as presented at the meeting of the Group of Specialists for the European Diploma on Protected Areas on 28 February and 1 March 2005;

Having regard to the proposals of the Committee for the activities of the Council of Europe in the field of biological and landscape diversity (CO-DBP);

Renews the European Diploma awarded to the Fair Isle National Scenic Area until 21 September 2010;

Attaches the following recommendations to the renewal:

1. The establishment of a marine protected area in Fair Isle adjacent waters in consultation with the Fair Isle's Community representatives;
2. The complete ban on sandeel *Ammodytes marinus* fishing should be maintained as long as the current disastrous situation of sandeels does not greatly improve.;
3. The setting up of a legal mechanism prohibiting ships carrying polluting cargoes within at least 16 kilometres of Fair Isle;
4. The traditions and culture of the island population should be taken into consideration when issuing regulations, which although they may be applicable nationally, are inappropriate if applied to Fair Isle waters;
5. The management plan should continue to be revised every 5 years and all efforts should be made to implement all the items;
6. Improvements to housing and infrastructures should be maintained.