

11 January 2007

Nikki Milne
Scottish Executive Environment and Rural
Affairs Department
Marine Management Division
G-H93
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ

Dear Ms Milne,

SCOTLAND'S FIRST COASTAL AND MARINE NATIONAL PARK

Although we wholeheartedly support the protection of our natural heritage positive discrimination can be extremely difficult to undo. Scotland's economy, its people and its culture depend on the nation's coastal and estuarial waters to a huge degree and it seems remarkable that we might jeopardise these by imposing further controls and constraints on human activities taking place along or adjacent to more than half of our coastline.

In addition, to have even the intention to type in bold and underline such a large proportion by way of a special designation can only serve to dilute the importance of that very designation. It raises questions too, not least from say the communities of the western coast of the Kintyre Peninsula or the eastern seaboard from Peterhead to Eyemouth who might enquire, understandably, what is wrong with their coastal waters to the extent that they are not worthy of such special protection?

We all operate in a sea of European and member state legislation yet are we being told that it is insufficient to protect the environment whilst protecting the people. If this is the case then surely more specific remedies exist. If, for example, the main threat to any part of Scotland's marine environment concerns fishing then let us regulate the relevant fishing practices directly; if insensitive development continues to blight our natural heritage then let us use, and refine if necessary, the Town and Country Planning system to improve matters.

What may be worth bearing in mind is the difference between encircling a relatively small area containing near tundra like upland and encircling a huge area of sea littered with coastal communities. We have not the capability of undertaking the relevant demographics and the economic sums but we would hope, of course, that the Scottish Executive will be, or rather has done, so that it might make the distinction.

Albeit conceived with the best of intentions we have no doubt, the full sweep of effects that such a crude and potentially misguided approach to protecting our natural heritage will have can only come to light when we are in too deep.

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In conclusion, we do not for a moment oppose well balanced initiatives to protect our natural heritage and, perhaps, naively, thought we had the means for doing so. Even if we do not have these means for the moment, the answer cannot lie within such geographically widespread proposals. For real Scotland's sake we would trust that the plans and proposals are at least severely tempered and incorporate the needs of all the people who live and work within the proposed boundaries and not just those who speak loudest, have the time to speak loudly, or who simply holiday there or utilise such areas only in pursuit of their personal hobbies and interests

We will be amongst many who would warn of the need to exercise great caution if we are to avoid turning a very large proportion of a very small country into a theme park. Theme parks do well when the economy is doing well.

Yours sincerely,

Gordon Millar

for and on behalf of JIG Limited.