

MORVERN COMMUNITY COUNCIL

"St. Andrew's",
Lochaline,
Morvern,
Argyll PA34 5XT

21 January 2007

Dear Sirs,

COASTAL AND MARINE NATIONAL PARK PROPOSALS

Morvern Community Council would like to make the following observations on the Scottish Executive's proposals for a coastal and marine park in Scotland. (We were granted a two week extension by Ms Milne.) However before examining the specifics, we would like to have noted our deep concerns on the consultation process to date.

Morvern is at the heart of two of the proposed areas. However despite a five page list of consultees, only one is based in Morvern. The Community Development Company, Moorings Association nor the Community Council were informed of the proposals, nor supplied with information packs or given the opportunity of local meetings. The nearest roadshow was in Fort William, an 80 mile round trip by road and ferry, which we only became aware of a few days before in the local newspaper. Those who were able to attend were met with blank looks when questioned about specifics. I requested booklets on 12 December - a month later and three further calls- we still had received nothing. As someone with many years experience of project management with the Civil Service I feel I am qualified to say the whole consultation process has been meaningless and totally amateurish - you have failed to identify the key stakeholders, you have failed to be transparent in your dealings with the communities most affected by the proposals and as a consequence you have alienated key sections of your target audience.

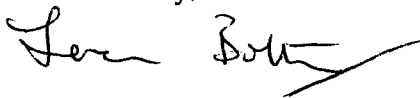
Following on from our concerns about the conduct of the consultation, it is very difficult to be objective about your proposals. Notwithstanding the detail in the information pack, we would have welcomed the opportunity to discuss the issues face to face with yourselves. Morvern is, like many other communities on

the West Coast, geographically very isolated and the community widespread. However many residents rely on the sea and environment for their livelihoods, whether it be through fishing, fish farming, forestry, transport or tourist related jobs. Of course as a community, everyone's lives will be affected if a marine and coastal park is established, in terms of housing, planning and development of local projects to name but three areas. Your consultation list appears to put more emphasis on seeking the views of those groups involved in the environment on a more theoretical level rather than those who actually live here 365 days a year and many for generations. We have a deep knowledge of environmental issues affecting our planet and care about this very much; however the reality is we also must have the ability to support our families and control our development and economy if communities like ours are to have a future.

From the information provided it is difficult to see how a marine park can bring about any changes that the current infrastructure can not. Currently Community Councils and Community Companies work in tandem with local and national Government and other organisations in a way which has brought about many successful initiatives without losing a degree of local control. It appears to us that the establishment of a Coastal and Marine Park will only add more bureaucracy at an extremely expensive price. It doesn't appear to address the problems which matter most to local communities such as healthcare, affordable housing, sensitive planned development to boost local economies and a voice in its own future. There appears to be too much emphasis on tourism and a desire to cater to the wishes of those outside of the park thus placing the decision making process outwith the local area if insufficient local representation is not catered for. We would expect at least 25% local electees plus upto 50% of remaining Board members be nominated by Community Councils for it to have any support in the community.

The above views are based solely on the limited information available to us at very short notice. Many of the crucial questions are dealt with in very general terms in the brochure, so it is very difficult to give detailed views. We as a Community Council are not able to state whether we are "for" or "against" based on the information supplied to date. We would hope that the Scottish Executive will take note of the extremely widespread concern at the manner of consultation and address the issues before any decision on the proposals is made.

Yours faithfully,



TERESA BOLTON,
Secretary, Morvern Community Council

- cc. **Councillor Dr Michael Foxley, Vice Convenor Highland Council**
Mr F.Ewing, MSP
Mr C.Kennedy, MP