

NORTH EAST MOUNTAIN TRUST

*A Quality Future
for Mountaineers
and Hill-Walkers*



PO Box 40
Aberdeen
AB11 6QQ

9th January 2007

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

Dear Madam,

Re: Marine Park Consultation

I write on behalf of the North East Mountain Trust to comment on the above document. The North East Mountain Trust draws members from recreational users concerned about the future of the Scottish hills and coast. Through individual and affiliate membership we represent over 16,500 people. Despite our name, our constitution extends to interests in the whole of Scotland's coastline and mountains. We are pleased to be able to comment on the protection of our natural environment.

We have considered the document in detail and are highly supportive of the principle of a Coastal and Marine National Park. Whilst maybe not on the same scale as some of the global examples, Scotland has areas around its coast worthy of, and in need of such protection. Although it is early days for Scotland's two National Parks, they are beginning to demonstrate the benefits of designation. We should continue to watch their progress, and the progress of other forms of collective management (including the Nevis Partnership) before designating any further land areas. We were pleased that the enabling Act allows designation of our marine heritage.

We believe that the selection of an area should be based more on its character and the environmental benefits that designation can bring, than on its ease of access. Designation should be for the qualities of an area more than any business benefit. We acknowledge that designation can bring business opportunities and encourage these where there is no threat to the environment. In general we feel that it is better to designate a large area. Just as on land, management of the wider area is necessary to ensure appropriate enjoyment and protection of the key core areas.

We are slightly puzzled that the decision to designate an area is made ahead of consideration of a specific area. Considering the specific areas listed, we agree that the west coast has most potential. The Clyde is already too developed and populated. A combination of South Skye and the Argyll coast is our preferred site. We have insufficient experience of the seas around the outer (and Northern) Isles.

We encourage the Executive to grant the new authority full powers, including as regulator. Insufficient powers will lead to a failure to gain credibility. Powers will differ somewhat from those needed in a land National Park. Care must be taken to ensure that appropriate functions are transferred from other public bodies and not duplicated by a Park Authority. Transfer of experienced staff may be an appropriate way to achieve this. Arrangements for Planning Control will depend on the quantity of land included in the area. Strategic Planning should be the responsibility of the Park Authority as this

function is at the heart of the management of the area. This may include control of aspects not covered by current Local Authorities, perhaps through the equivalent of local by-laws. Zoning is essential to ensure appropriate management of an area that is large enough to be meaningful. We agree that further decisions about the make up and powers of the Authority can only be made once an area is selected. It will be difficult to obtain a suitable mix of local and national/international interests.

As we have stated previously, the success of such a project is dependant on appropriate management and adequate resourcing.

Yours Faithfully,

Donald Thomas
On behalf of General Council