



# Hebridean Whale & Dolphin Trust

research education conservation

28 Main Street  
Tobermory  
Isle of Mull  
Argyll PA75 6NU

Daniel Brown  
Sea Fisheries Management, Fishing Communities and Inshore Management Team  
Marine Directorate, DG Environment  
Scottish Government, Room 511  
Pentland House, 47 Robb's Loan  
Edinburgh EH14 1TY

2<sup>nd</sup> June 2008

Dear Mr Brown

## **Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust response to Consultation on a proposed Marine Reserve in Lamlash Bay**

I am writing on behalf of the Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust (HWDT) to comment on the proposed marine reserve in Lamlash Bay.

The Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust (HWDT) is dedicated to enhancing knowledge and understanding of Scotland's whales, dolphins and porpoises (cetaceans) and the Hebridean marine environment through education, research and working within local communities as a basis for the lasting conservation of local species and habitats.

### **1. Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to establish a Marine Reserve in Lamlash Bay?**

HWDT agrees with the proposal to establish a Marine Reserve in Lamlash Bay.

### **2. Do you think there would be any (a) positive or (b) negative implications should a Marine Reserve be established in Lamlash Bay?**

HWDT believes that there would be many (a) positive benefits from establishing a Marine Reserve in Lamlash Bay.

The area around Arran and the Clyde has a high level of marine biodiversity, and as such supports a number of whale, dolphin and porpoise (cetacean) species. Improved conservation status for the Lamlash Bay area through the prohibiting of all fishing activity would not only be beneficial (i) for the habitat and species in their own right, but also (ii) through the enhancement of that area's biodiversity, provide benefits to local cetacean populations.

(i)

Lamlash Bay represents important marine habitats, chiefly maerl beds. Maerl is an important habitat for marine biodiversity, but is also very vulnerable to the impacts of fishing with towed gear. Scallop dredging has, in most Clyde Sea maerl beds, resulted in a dramatic reduction in the levels of live maerl. In contrast, the majority of maerl in some areas of the proposed Marine Reserve is live; such an usually high level of live maerl should be protected, and a ban on fishing is essential to ensure this.

#### **Main Office:**

Tel/Fax: 01688 302620

#### **Education, Research and Sightings Office:**

Tel: 01688 302859

**E-mail:** [admin@hwdt.org](mailto:admin@hwdt.org)

**Web:** [www.hwdt.org](http://www.hwdt.org)

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As an organisation which works closely with local communities, HWDT is concerned for the long-term prosperity of local fishing interests. Establishment of a Marine Reserve should, however, bring long-term benefits to the fishing industry, as species such as scallops which associate with mearl beds will be able to recover, the overspill repopulating areas proximate to the Marine Reserve. This occurrence has been observed in other marine reserves both nationally and internationally, where protected areas enhance fishing productivity outwith the protected zone.

(ii)

The area is already an important habitat for nationally and internationally protected cetacean species such as harbour porpoise, bottlenose dolphin and minke whale. Scottish bottlenose dolphins, for example, live further north than any other individuals of this species, and the small, localised populations in the region are exceptionally vulnerable. They are, therefore very high priority for conservation at the European level as well as on the local and national BAPs, and are listed as 'data deficient' by the World Conservation Union (IUCN). HWDT has photographically identified 35 individual bottlenose dolphins in the Inner Hebrides. This is therefore a small population. In spite of its size, the home range of the population is large – from the Kintyre Peninsula in the south to Skye in the north. The majority of animals have been sighted across the whole study area, typically close to the shore. Due to their vulnerable status, any habitat enhancement that can be afforded bottlenose dolphins within their range is welcome. As apex predators, cetaceans are reliant on a healthy ecosystem in order to maintain a favourable conservation status. Protection of key biodiversity habitats such as maerl beds will assist a strong food web, providing the feeding opportunities on which cetaceans rely.

HWDT does not believe there are (b) any negative implications to this Marine Reserve.

### **3. Are there any other points which you would like to make in relation to the proposed Lamlash Bay Marine Reserve?**

In addition to these measures to establish the Lamlash Bay Marine Reserve, HWDT would support the area's being part of a wider protected area which would see the entire bay closed to mobile gear fishing. We therefore support the establishment of the remainder of Lamlash Bay as a Fisheries Management Area under the Sea Fisheries (Shellfish) Act 1967, which together with the Marine Reserve would form the Lamlash Bay Community Marine Conservation Area.

Yours faithfully

Dr Peter Stevick  
Science Director

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**Web:** [www.hwdt.org](http://www.hwdt.org)

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