



## The Scottish Sub Aqua Club

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### **CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED MARINE RESERVE IN LAMLASH BAY Response by The Scottish Sub Aqua Club (SSAC)**

#### **Introduction**

The Scottish Sub Aqua Club welcomes this consultation and the opportunity to contribute views on behalf of the recreational diving community.

The Scottish Sub Aqua Club is the national governing body for snorkelling and diving in Scotland, and is recognised and supported by **sportscotland**. We represent the interests of 1500 recreational divers across 70 clubs throughout Scotland and northern England. SSAC is one of the longest established diving organisations in the world, having been formed in 1953. SSAC is run entirely by volunteers, delivering quality diver training and events.

#### **Consultation questions**

Question 1: Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to establish a Marine Reserve in Lamlash Bay?

We are in full agreement with the establishment of a Marine Reserve in Lamlash Bay.

Question 2: Do you think there would be any a) positive and b) negative implications should the reserve be established in Lamlash Bay?

- a) There would be many positive implications should the reserve be established. Such protection would allow marine life to flourish leading to the seabed returning to a pristine state. This in turn would lead to a greater abundance and variety of marine life which would spread out to surrounding areas which has a beneficial effect on fishing in the area. Being inshore the biggest benefit would be to local fishermen and local charter boats taking out parties of anglers and divers. There is also the potential for the growing market for eco-tourism many coastal fishermen are realising the potential for taking parties of tourist out to see seals, porpoise and dolphins. This in turn benefits hotels, guest houses, B&Bs Restaurants etc.

- b) If full protection is envisaged there would be a negative effect for leisure users anglers, divers and of course fishermen. Protection means leaving the area untouched and as divers we would be happy to have areas where we could not dive as we are certain such measures are crucial to the future health of marine life and the sea.

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

There is ample evidence from around the world where marine protected areas have been established that shows the positive benefits. New Zealand set up their first over twenty years ago and now have a network of them around the country. Fishermen at first opposed them but soon realised the benefits by recording better catches in the area adjacent to the MPA. More recently the Isle of Man has set up MPAs ostensibly to create breeding grounds for the scallop fishery. This has been a resounding success and the scallop fishermen have welcomed this move as it now makes their type of fishing more sustainable. Although there is no scientific evidence, because no research has been carried out, many scientists believe having small protected areas could have an effect on breeding for the white fish species. If we are to continue to enjoy a healthy fishing industry we must take measures to make it sustainable. The evidence from the Clyde as a fishery shows that as species such as Cod have disappeared fishermen have turned to other species such as prawns and scallops. The methods used, dredging with heavy chain bags, is extremely destructive and cannot in any way be described as sustainable. It would be difficult for the Government to ban this practise but creating Marine Protected Areas would at least give those, indeed all species somewhere to breed.

This response is submitted on behalf of a national governing body for sport. We are happy for our response to be made available to the public and for Scottish Government policy teams to contact me again in the future.