

MPA CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

1. Do you support the development of an MPA network in Scotland's Seas?

Yes ✓ No

Britain's seas are being constantly damaged by human activities. We must do all we can to prevent further deterioration through well-organised and well-maintained conservation measures.

Individual possible Nature Conservation MPAs

2. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the possible Nature Conservation MPA(s)?

INSERT RELEVANT pMPA NAME(S) HERE Small Isles MPA

Designation:

Yes ✓ No

The present proposed extent of the Small Isles MPA covers many important areas of conservation importance. However, to someone who knows the marine biology of south Skye it is inexplicable that the boundary currently excludes Lochs Scavaig, Slapin and Eishort.

I request that the boundary be extended to include all three of the south Skye sea lochs mentioned above so that the numerous LBAP Priority Habitats there (incl. maerl beds, seagrass beds, burrowed mud and intertidal boulder beds, plus native oyster beds and numerous low shore/sublittoral rocky reefs colonised by exceptional communities of plants and animals) and extraordinary biodiversity may be known, understood and protected.

Seashore surveys have made not just a few discoveries that illustrate high biodiversity around and within these lochs: a rapid gathering of recent information has compiled a list of 26 new species for the region (spreadsheet enclosed; also available from huntsup@theyorkwaits.org.uk), many of which are nationally rare or even, the public records attest, not found previously on the entire Highland coast.

These are merely the findings of amateurs visiting the shores of the south Skye lochs and represent only a fragment of what might be found if full surveys were to be undertaken by professionals. It seems that SNH is unaware of the ecological content and importance of the sea lochs east of Soay Sound and does not (officially) recognise the presence of extensive maerl and seagrass beds in Loch Eishort and at other sites in south Skye.

Management Options:

Yes ✓ No

Divers report that the maerl beds in Loch Eishort – and maybe elsewhere, yet to be visited – are being systematically disrupted by (it is presumed) scallop dredging. A function of urgently-needed conservation measures, perhaps by inclusion of the south Skye lochs within the Small Isles pMPA, would be to prevent harmful incursions by dredging boats with advantages: see below.

Socioeconomic Assessment:

Yes ✓ No

Maerl and Seagrass beds are acknowledged to be nursery sites for several species of economic importance, especially scallops whose young attach to seagrass leaves by a byssus (as more familiarly do mussels) until ready for their usual free-swimming lifestyle. Loss of maerl and seagrass means loss of juvenile scallops means reduced populations of adult scallops, with obvious socioeconomic consequences. The remedy is also obvious, though the means of carrying it out is for the legislators to implement.

Like maerl and seagrass, native oysters are in decline and of conservation importance. There are at least two major populations of them – in Loch Scavaig and Loch Eishort – that are in need of protection.

All of the above:

Yes ✓ No

Despite harm by dredging and now defunct aquaculture installations, the south Skye lochs retain much of their ecological integrity which is of national importance. If extending the boundary of the Small Isles pMPA will enhance their conservation status, then I request that extension. If not, attention should still be given to learning the marine and maritime biodiversity of the region and implementing alternative conservation measures that will protect this valuable natural and socioeconomic resource.

Sustainability Appraisal

3. Do you have any comments on the Sustainability Appraisal of the MPA network as a whole?

Yes No

Insert comments

Final Thoughts

4. On the basis of your preferences on which pMPAs should be designated, do you view this to form a complete or ecologically coherent network, subject to the completion and recommendations of SNH's further work on the 4 remaining search locations?

Yes No

If SNH is to oversee conservation in Highland seas it must do its utmost to discover where key species and habitats are to be found. Conversation with SNH representatives has revealed that the south Skye sea lochs, where biodiversity is known by local residents and amateur naturalists to be exceptional, have not been properly surveyed, if at all. This must be remedied, a.s.a.p. please.
SNH will not be able to make competent decisions for conservation until its knowledge base includes the south Skye lochs.

5. Do you have any other comments on the case for designation, management options, environmental or socioeconomic assessments of the pMPAs, or the network as a whole?

Yes No

Insert comments

Thank You.

Loch Eishort/Slapin Biology 2013

N.B. Except rows 6, 13 & 14, includes only sites that have been visited by the compiler:

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Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats

	JNCC code	Present	Suspected	Location 1
Circumlittoral Muds with Sea Pens	SS.SMu.CFiMu.SpnmMeg	Y	-	NG5839516552
Maerl Beds (<i>Phymatolithon calcareum</i>) Live maerl	SS.SMp.Mrl	Y	-	NG6184514342
Maerl Beds (<i>Phymatolithon calcareum</i>) Dead maerl on shore	-	Y	-	NG5543416842
Sea Grass Beds (<i>Zostera marina</i>) Live sea grass	LS.LMp.LSgr	Y	-	NG6184514342
Sea Grass Beds (<i>Zostera marina</i>) Sea grass leaves washed up	-	Y	-	NG5760519752
Intertidal Under-Boulder Communities (<i>Fucus serratus</i> zone)	LR.MLR.BF.Fser.Bo	Y	-	NG58090009612
Intertidal Under-Boulder Communities (<i>Laminaria digitata</i> zone)	IR.MIR.KR.Ldig.Bo	Y	-	NG58090009612
File Shell Reefs (<i>Limaria hians</i>)	SS.SMX.IMX.Lim	-	Y	-
Horse Mussel Reefs (<i>Modiolus modiolus</i>)	SS.SBR.SMus.ModT/Mx/HAs/Cvar	-	Y	-

Other Habitats

Species-Rich Rocky Reefs from lower shore to sublittoral zone.

Species Name (seashore surveys)

Presence/Absence Reference: National Biodiversity Database (NBN) distribution maps.

Species Name	Highland Status (ACFORN)	New Record	Location 1
Maerl <i>Phymatolithon calcareum</i>	R	Y	not given if common NG6184514342
Seagrass (Eelgrass) <i>Zostera marina</i>	R	Y	NG6184514342
Long-legged Spider Crab <i>Macropodia rostrata</i>	F	Y	NG6205513962
Broad-clawed Porcelain Crab <i>Porcellana platycheles</i>	O	Y	NG6205513962
Long-clawed Porcelain Crab <i>Porcellana longicornis</i>	O	Y	NG6073512952
Shore Crab <i>Carcinus maenas</i>	A	N	Ubiquitous
Edible Crab <i>Cancer pagurus</i>	A	N	Ubiquitous
Hairy Crab <i>Pilumnus hirtellus</i>	R	Y	NG6205513962
Montagu's Crab <i>Lophozozymus incisus</i>	R	Y	NG6205513962
Montagu's Crab <i>Lophozozymus incisus</i> (mottled form)	R	Y	NG6205513962
Risso's Crab <i>Xantho pilipes</i>	R	Y	NG6205513962
Velvet Swimming Crab <i>Necora puber</i>	F	N	NG6205513962
Harbour Swimming Crab <i>Liocarcinus depurator</i>	F	N	NG6205513962
Marbled Swimming Crab <i>Liocarcinus marmoreus</i>	R	N	NG6184514342

suspected

Wrinkled Swimming Crab <i>Liocarcinus corrugatus</i>	R	Y	NG6178514372
Plumose anemone <i>Metridium senile</i>	F	Y	NG5759509552
Daisy anemone <i>Cereus pedunculatus</i>	R	Y	NG6178514372
An anemone <i>Isozoanthus sulcatus</i>	R	Y	~ 1 km out from Or
Sea Potato <i>Echinocardium cordatum</i>	F	Y	NG5841508822
Purple Heart Urchin <i>Spatangus purpureus</i>	R	Y	NG6192514402
Peanut Worm <i>Golfingia vulgaris</i>	R	Y	NG6205513962
Unidentified Sipunculid	?	?	NG5959511632
Thick Trough Shell <i>Spisula solida</i>	R	Y	NG6203514122
Sword Razor Clam <i>Ensis ensis</i>	O	Y	NG6203514122
Pullet Carpet Shell <i>Venerupis senegalensis</i>	F	Y	NG6203514122
Large Sunset Shell <i>Gari depressa</i>	R	Y	NG6203514122
Native oyster <i>Ostrea edulis</i>	O	Y	NG5942511542
Variiegated scallop <i>Chlamys varia</i>	O	Y	NG6474115672
Blue-rayed Limpet <i>Helcion pellucidum</i>	C	Y	NG6178514372
Pink Plates (rhodophyceae) <i>Mesophyllum lichenoides</i>	R	Y	NG6205513962
Butterfish <i>Pholis gunellus</i>	A	Y	Ubiquitous
Rock Goby <i>Gobius paganellus</i>	N (until this record)	Y	NG6073512952
Total New Records		26	

A = abundant; C = common; F = frequent; O = occasional; R = rare; N = none.

N.B. There are, of course, very many other species to be found on these shores, not included in this list of mostly unusual and rare species.

Sites visited include shores at Tarskavaig Bay, Ob Gausgavaig (Tokavaig), shore west of Ord, shores north-east of Ord and 'Coral Beaches' adjacent to Rubha Dubh Aird, Heaste Island and reefs off Rubha Suisnish.

Location 2	Location 3
-	-
NG6204514132	-
-	-
NG6204514132	Reported: head of Loch Slapin
-	-
NG6073512952	NG6205513962
NG6073512952	NG6205513962
-	-
-	-
NG5940515502	-

Location 2	Location 3
NG6204514132	-
NG6204514132	-
NG6073512952	-
NG6073512952	-
-	-
-	-
-	-
NG5963511722	-
NG6073512952	NG5942511542
-	-
NG5942511542	-
NG6184514342	-
-	-
-	-

-	-
-	-
-	-
d Bay (Neil MacInnes)	-
-	-
-	-
NG5810509612	-
-	-
-	-
-	-
-	-
-	-
NG6474115672	-
-	-
NG5810509612	-
-	-
-	-