

MPA CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

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

Yes

Scotland's seas are a national asset. They could provide a major contribution to the Scottish economy through tourism and commercial fishing. Historically they have supported a vast range of marine life and been highly productive for fishing, seaweed harvesting and other marine industries. The only way to maximise the value of Scotland's coastal ecosystem is to manage it with a view to its long term diversity and productivity. A network of marine protected areas is an essential tool for protecting and enhancing the environment and livelihoods of coastal communities.

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)?

Small Isles MPA

Designation:

Yes No

This MPA would make a more valuable contribution to Scotland's MPA network if the **boundary was extended to the coastline of Skye to include sea areas around the Isle of Soay, Loch Scavaig, Loch Slapin and Loch Eishort.**

This would bring two key benefits:

- Additional areas supporting MPA search features
- Simpler and more effective boundary

Extension of the boundary would include additional areas supporting MPA search features:

- Maerl Beds
- Seagrass Beds
- Burrowed Mud Habitat
- Blue Mussel Beds
- Kelp and Seaweed communities on Sublitoral Sediment
- Low or Variable Salinity Habitats
- Native Oysters
- Black Guillemot
- Mobile species of importance including Minke Whale
- Other Scottish marine priority species, including Basking Shark and Sea Trout

Extension of the boundary would close the unprotected corridor between the small

isles and the Isle of Skye. This would improve create a coherent ecological area and improve the effectiveness of the MPA for the following reasons:

- It would remove the risk of channelling destructive trawling practises into the area between the MPA and the Isles of Soay and Skye.
- It would make the boundary of the MPA simpler to identify from land or sea and therefore easier to protect.
- It would include the local fishing community at Elgol and therefore the local, commercial interest in the productivity of the local seas.

If it is considered inappropriate to add on the south Skye sea lochs area to the possible Small Isles Nature Conservation MPA at this stage, I would request that a **Research & Demonstration MPA** is developed to adjoin the Small Isles MPA. This would enable a thorough assessment of the South Skye sea lochs area prior to allowing any potentially damaging industrial developments to proceed further within this area (e.g. large open-cage salmon farms).

Management Options:

Yes No

An extension to this MPA should protect and recover Maerl beds and Seagrass beds because of their ecological value and value to species of commercial fisheries importance. It should also protect all other MPA search features and priority species from further degradation (as proposed for possible North West Sealochs and Summer Isles MPA).

Socioeconomic Assessment:

Yes No

An extension of this MPA would support and safeguard local fishing and tourist industries.

There is an emergent wildlife tourist industry in the South Skye sea lochs area with boat trips running from Elgol.

The area is also of importance for shellfish farming and scallop diving. Local scallop divers report a collapse in the scallop populations due to unsustainable and very damaging scallop dredging of areas such as maerl beds and coarse sediment over the past 20+ years. If the seabed was allowed to recover, shallow areas in these lochs would produce more scallops to provide more employment for scallop divers and other inshore fishermen.

Recovery of marine fish populations including sea trout, cod, haddock, various flatfish and other species could regenerate a valuable angling tourism industry.

The area has some of Scotland's finest and most iconic landscapes and seascapes. These could also be safeguarded in parallel with MPA development.

All of the above:

Yes No

I believe that an enviro-socio-economic assessment for the extension of the Small Isles MPA to include sea areas around the **Isle of Soay, Loch Scavaig, Loch Slapin and Loch Eishort is urgently needed.** I believe an MPA extending to this area would be of increase the effectiveness of the MPA and be of benefit to local people, offering a wider range of opportunities for sustainable employment than at present.

Sustainability Appraisal

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

Yes No

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

Some species of 'keystone' importance within inshore marine ecosystems around Scotland (e.g. fin-fish species such as **herring**, which spawn on the seabed and juvenile gadids) were not included on the list of MPA search features.

To achieve ecological coherence, SNH needs to focus more on the role of finfish and shellfish species, traditionally regarded as only of importance to commercial fisheries (under Marine Scotland's remit), within marine ecosystems.

Even after the proposed MPA network has been designated, larger areas of the sea will remain unprotected than protected. For this reason, it is possible that there will be a continued net loss rather than net recovery of important habitats such as maerl beds and eelgrass beds in Scottish waters because these habitats will continue to be subject to damage and destruction outside the MPAs.

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

The MPA network is positive initiative and one that I support. It is urgently needed to prevent further damage to inshore marine habitats and to help protect stocks of commercially important species. Further measures will be required to recover marine biodiversity and the productive value of inshore waters around Scotland.

Thank You.