



Scottish
Environment

LINK

News Release

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Our seas at risk without protected areas

New report calls for protection of unique Scottish wildlife

A report calling for marine protected areas in order to safeguard wildlife of special importance to Scotland will be published today. The report by Scottish Environment LINK (LINK), a coalition of Scotland's major environment groups, argues that a network of 'nationally important marine areas' must be included in the upcoming Scottish Marine Bill, if Scotland is to save its unique marine wildlife, such as reefs and sea beds, basking sharks and black guillemots for future generations.

Calum Duncan, Convenor of LINK's Marine Task Force said: *'Scotland's coasts and seas are amongst the most diverse in the world. At the moment, less than 1% of Scotland's seas have any kind of protection and only a limited number of species and habitats can be protected under the current laws. We need a comprehensive network of Nationally Important Marine Areas to protect marine species and habitats of special significance to Scotland and to help regenerate our seas, to ensure that they can support marine life, social well-being and economic activity, now and in the future'*.

One of the areas mentioned in the report in need of protection is the Firth Of Clyde. Owen Paisley, Seasearch Coordinator for the West of Scotland with the Marine Conservation Society, said: *'The marine environment in the Firth of Clyde is very degraded and needs urgent action, or we risk losing some of our most spectacular marine wildlife, such as the magnificent colonies of firework anemones in Loch Shira, flameshell reefs in Loch Fyne and the maerl beds around Inchmarnock and Arran, which*

provide shelter and nursery grounds for hundreds of species, including crabs and lobsters. Without an effective network of protected areas, we simply will not be able to safeguard our marine natural heritage for future generations.'

-ENDS-

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. Owen Paisley and Calum Duncan are available for comment.
2. Pictures of flameshell, firework anemones and other marine species are available, see contact details below.
3. Scottish Environment LINK (LINK) is the network for Scotland's voluntary sector environmental organisations. LINK has 34 member organisations spanning interests across the natural environment and associated cultural heritage, representing around 500.000 members. Further information on LINK is available at www.scotlink.org
4. LINK's Marine Task Force consists of the following environmental NGO's, working together on marine issues in Scotland:
 - Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust
 - Marine Conservation Society
 - National Trust for Scotland
 - RSPB Scotland
 - Scottish Wildlife Trust
 - Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society
 - WWF Scotland
5. The LINK Marine Bill Campaign is campaigning for a Scottish Marine Bill that includes:
 - Proper protection for Scotland's marine wildlife, including identification, designation and protection for Nationally Important Marine Areas
 - An effective new planning system for Scotland's seas
 - A Marine Management Organisation to take charge of planning, licensing and enforcement at sea
 - Clear targets to measure the recovery of our seas

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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