

## 'Protect marine wildlife to protect our livelihoods', say tourism industry

Some of Scotland's most prestigious tourism businesses are calling on the Scottish Government to do more to protect and restore Scotland's seas.

In a joint letter to Fergus Ewing, Minister for Tourism, tourism operators and businesses highlighted the substantial economic benefits provided by the country's most fragile ecosystems.

The letter, coordinated by Scottish Environment LINK, emphasised that vital jobs, income and opportunities existed in Scotland because of our spectacular wildlife.

With a total of £100 million spent annually by tourists visiting Scotland's coast, and £63million generated by those specifically enjoying marine wildlife, the industry is vital in creating jobs, income and opportunities for many of Scotland's rural communities.

Worryingly, evidence shows that Scotland's marine environment is damaged and in desperate need of recovery<sup>1</sup>. The Scottish Government is currently developing a network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs); it is vital this network is well managed and ambitious enough to restore our seas to a condition we can be proud of.

Steve Sankey of Orcadian Wildlife said: "My business and many others rely on wildlife, so we call upon the Minister to show his support for MPAs and ensure a healthy future for both my family's livelihood and Scotland's seas"

Last month the Minister launched Tourism Intelligence Scotland's guide on Wildlife Tourism<sup>2</sup>. Here he recognised that Scotland has some of the most fantastic, world-class settings in which to enjoy wildlife, and that the industry has significant scope to expand.

Members of the wildlife tourism industry are now asking him to support them by backing a network of Marine Protected Areas that will properly protect and restore the precious marine environment, including the whales, dolphins and seabirds, which many tourists come to see.

Many local communities are reliant on the beauty of the natural environment, and the wildlife it supports. Susan Phillips, owner of Aurorabearealis, an arts and crafts studio in North Kessock, said her business was heavily dependent on local coastal wildlife.

"We would be very short of customers if it wasn't for those who come to see the local wildlife – particularly the dolphins. We, and the wildlife, are heavily dependent on the marine environment. We all need to be seen to be concerned and doing something about the state of Scotland's seas."

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<sup>1</sup> See page 5: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/345830/0115128.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.tourism-intelligence.co.uk/Assets/~/\\_media/TIS/Documents/Intelligence%20and%20insights/Wildlife%20Tourism%20Guide%20for%20web.ashx](http://www.tourism-intelligence.co.uk/Assets/~/_media/TIS/Documents/Intelligence%20and%20insights/Wildlife%20Tourism%20Guide%20for%20web.ashx)

Rory Crawford from RSPB Scotland, a member of Scottish Environment LINK, said "It is great to see such fantastic support for MPAs from our vibrant wildlife tourism sector here in Scotland, and it should be no surprise. A healthy marine environment and the future of many businesses are inextricably linked. We need to protect wildlife for its own sake – but there is an increasing recognition that we need to protect it for *our own* sake too. We hope that the Minister will recognise that through strong support for Marine Protected Areas."

#### NOTE TO EDITORS

- 1). Figures quoted above taken from Scottish Government commissioned report '*The Economic Impact of Wildlife Tourism in Scotland*' (2010)  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/05/12164456/0>
- 2). The letter to the Minister for Tourism was coordinated on behalf of the signatories by Scottish Environment LINK.
- 3). Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment organisations, with over 30 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.
- 4). The Scottish Environment LINK Marine Task Force comprises the following organisations: Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust, Marine Conservation Society, National Trust for Scotland, RSPB Scotland, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society and WWF Scotland.

Further information on LINK is available at [www.scotlink.org](http://www.scotlink.org)

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