

News Release

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MARINE ACT HERALDS NEW DAWN FOR MANAGEMENT OF SCOTLAND'S SEAS

Following a decade of campaigning by members of Scottish Environment LINK [1], and the passing of the Marine (Scotland) Bill by the Scottish Parliament on 4th February, today's Royal Assent by Her Majesty the Queen creates the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010.

In the weeks leading up to the February vote, well over six thousand emails and letters were sent to MSPs by members of the public calling for the Bill to be strengthened leaving them in no doubt that their constituents demanded a strong Marine (Scotland) Act. The newly enacted legislation puts in place a planning system to help manage Scotland's marine environment in a sustainable way, a requirement for environmental targets to be incorporated into marine plans, a duty to set up a network of marine protected areas in Scottish inshore waters that also contributes to a UK network and a general duty on Scottish Ministers to protect and improve the health of Scotland's seas.

Convenor of Scottish Environment LINK Marine Task Force [2], Calum Duncan of the Marine Conservation Society said:

"After almost ten years of campaigning, we are delighted that we now have a Marine (Scotland) Act. We particularly welcome the duty to protect and enhance our seas, a marine planning system that includes environmental targets and a duty to deliver a network of marine protected areas. As the sea knows no boundaries, future management must also join-up with the UK Marine and Coastal Access Act and EU legislation. Now we look forward to helping implement both Scottish and UK Acts, improving the health of our seas for the long-term benefit of marine wildlife, coastal communities and all who benefit from the food, recreation and energy the sea provides."

Marine Policy Officer for RSPB Scotland, Rory Crawford added:

"It is our hope that this most welcome Act delivers for Scotland's incredible wildlife, including almost half of the EU's breeding seabirds. In recent years, there have been worrying declines in seabird populations - thought to be the result of climate change disrupting the plankton community, adversely impacting on sandeels and, in turn, the birds dependent on these small fish for prey. The Marine (Scotland) Act won't stop climate change, but it does provide us with a crucial

opportunity to make our invaluable marine life more resilient to a whole host of other pressures.”

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Contact details

For more information please contact

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Editors' Notes

(1) Scottish Environment LINK is the network for Scotland's voluntary sector environmental organisations. LINK has over 30 member organisations spanning interests across the natural environment and associated cultural heritage and supported by around 500,000 people. Further information on LINK is available at www.scotlink.org

(2) 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.