

Scottish Environment LINK

Media Release

20th September 2005

Promise for Scotland's Seas must be Countdown to Action



Scottish Environment LINK press release, 12 September 2005

Welcoming the Scottish Marine and Coastal Strategy launched today by Environment Minister Ross Finnie MSP, Scottish Environment LINK's Marine Task Force¹ said only prompt, decisive action can protect Scotland's seas. Calum Duncan, Convener of the LINK Marine Task Force, said:

"In the eighteen months since the Scottish Executive ended its consultation on a Strategic Framework for Scotland's Marine Environment³ we have seen the two most devastating breeding seasons on record for Scotland's seabirds and economic crisis in the fishing industry. It is crunch time for Scotland's seas. We welcome the Strategy announced today, and being invited to join the Stakeholder Group. We are optimistic it can reverse the decline around our coast - provided the Executive ensures these fine words lead to bold, decisive action."

Calum Duncan, added:

"This Strategy must be a countdown to delivery - setting clear, measurable, time-bound outputs. Specifically, it must lay the foundations for a national marine agency, for marine spatial planning to ensure co-operation between sea users and a network of protected areas at sea to conserve our nationally and internationally important marine wildlife. To deliver these, the Stakeholder Group and Executive must get to grips with the need for a Marine Act for Scotland.⁴

Scotland's marine and estuarine environment is our most valuable resource, contributing £14 billion to Scotland's £64 billion GDP, and providing the foundation for important economic and social activities. This environment can only remain productive if it is managed sustainably, through activities such as well-planned renewable marine energy production, sustainable aquaculture, marine eco-tourism, marine conservation and sustainable fisheries producing high quality seafood.

Lloyd Austin, of RSPB Scotland, and Chair of Scottish Environment LINK, said:

"Scottish Environment LINK and our members welcome this announcement. We look forward to participating in the Stakeholder Group, and will be working hard with others to develop actions, including legislative proposals, that will fulfil the Executive's internationally-agreed

commitments to deliver a halt to marine biodiversity loss and a network of protected areas by 20105.

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Contact details for press release:

Calum Duncan, Marine Conservation Society and Convenor LINK Marine Task Force:
07841 985 595

Lloyd Austin, RSPB Scotland and Chair Scottish Environment LINK:
07801 030397

Claire Pescod, WWF Scotland Marine Policy Officer
07867 720 633

EDITOR'S NOTES

1. Scottish Environment LINK (LINK)

LINK is an umbrella body for Scotland's voluntary environmental organisations representing approximately half a million members throughout Scotland. LINK's Marine Task Force consists of the following environmental NGOs working on marine issues in Scotland:

- Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust
- Marine Conservation Society
- National Trust for Scotland
- RSPB Scotland
- Scottish Wildlife Trust
- WWF Scotland
- Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society

2. UK Marine Bill

Following the Queen's Speech on Tuesday 17th May, it was confirmed that a draft Marine Bill will be in the programme of legislation for the new session of the UK Parliament at Westminster. The purpose of such a UK Bill will be to establish a sustainable development framework for planning and managing coastal areas, marine habitats and wildlife. The proposed Westminster legislation will cover reserved matters in Scotland's seas. A separate Marine (Scotland) Act is needed north of the border to address devolved matters: this should be developed in parallel to (and not subsequent to) the Westminster bill.

3. Developing a Strategic Framework for Scotland's Marine Environment

This marine consultation run by the Scottish Executive closed at the end of July 2004. Scottish Environment LINK Marine Task Force and a range of other stakeholders have been waiting on an announcement of the outcome of the consultation since September 2004.

4. Marine (Scotland) Act

Since the Scottish Executive controls most activities within 12nm of the Scottish shore, including inshore fisheries, aquaculture, coastal management, renewable energy, conservation, pollution, dumping and dredging, marine works and research, Scottish Environment LINK's Marine Task Force is calling for a Marine (Scotland) Act to manage Scottish inshore waters in such a way as to ensure they are healthy and productive in perpetuity by delivering:

Adequate protection for marine species and habitats of national and international importance, encompassing a network of well-managed marine areas protected by law. This network should comprise of at least one Marine National Park, further European marine sites, including marine Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for seabirds, and a new domestic designation of marine protected area to allow protection of marine species and habitats of national importance.

Effective Marine Spatial Planning - a hierarchy of plans and policies for Scotland's inshore seas managing the vast range of marine activities and the regulation of proposals for change.

An identified lead body - a national decision-making 'body' to oversee marine strategic and spatial planning of devolved activities in Scottish waters in co-ordination with a UK body responsible for reserved matters.

Local management - delegating powers and putting in place structures for local decision-making, including input to spatial planning and resource management.

A duty of care on all bodies whose activities impact upon the marine environment - to protect, manage and enhance marine species, habitats and ecosystems.

5. Targets agreed for 2010

Biodiversity: as part of the European Union, the Scottish Executive is committed to halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010. This commitment forms the centrepiece of its Scottish Biodiversity Strategy - and should, therefore, be one of the key environmental objectives of the Marine and Coastal Strategy. As this is a commitment, already agreed at EU level, the Minister could clearly state, now, that the new strategy will include this objective - and measures to achieve it.

Protected areas: at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, in Johannesburg, attended by the First Minister, Jack McConnell, the UK (and the devolved administrations) committed themselves to establishing a comprehensive network of marine protected areas by 2010. As this internationally-agreed commitment already exists, the Minister could clearly state now, that the new strategy will include measures to establish such a network on such a timescale.

