

**Scottish Marine Bill welcomed,
now action needed to match rhetoric**

For immediate release

Scotland's leading environment groups today welcomed the announcement by Environment Cabinet Secretary Richard Lochhead that the new Scottish government intends to introduce a Scottish Marine Bill.

Speaking on behalf of the Scottish Environment LINK Marine Task Force, convenor Calum Duncan, said *"We are delighted that the new government recognises Scotland's seas are in a guddle and need urgent attention. A Scottish Marine Bill must urgently deliver effective planning and protection for our coasts and seas, linking closely to the UK Marine Bill."*

Much of Scotland's marine life, including seabirds, sea grass beds, fish species such as skate and horse mussel reefs are in decline and in urgent need of proper protection. Most pressing is the need for laws to designate and protect sites with good examples of marine habitats and species important to Scotland, in addition to existing sites of European importance. Indeed, there are pressing international commitments to establish a complete network by 2010.

Scottish Environment LINK therefore welcomed the recommendations from the Ministerial Advisory Group on the Marine and Coastal Strategy (AGMACS), particularly commitments to a statutory system of Marine Spatial Planning, effective marine nature conservation measures, a Scottish Marine Management Organisation and a suite of Marine Ecosystem Objectives.

Calum continued *"There is unprecedented cross-party support for the need to streamline legislation and improve the way we manage our seas. We look forward to helping the new Government turn the rhetoric of effective protection and management of our seas into a reality."*

For further details:

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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
Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society
WWF Scotland

LINK has just employed a Marine Bill Research Officer and Marine Bill Campaigns Officer to lobby for delivery of a Marine Act for Scotland that delivers proper protection and management for Scotland's seas. **We are very grateful to the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation and Tubney Charitable Trust for funding these new posts.**

2. UK Marine Bill

Scottish Environment LINK recently responded to the UK Marine Bill White Paper and supported proposals for a establishing Marine Planning throughout UK waters, delivered according to an overarching UK Marine Policy Statement. We would urge the Scottish Executive and UK Government to work closely together, along with the Welsh and Northern Irish administrations, to produce the UK Marine Policy Statement.

3. OSPAR and World Summit on Sustainable Development commitments – the UK government and devolved administrations are committed to establishing a network of ecologically coherent marine protected areas by 2010.

4. Advisory Group for the Marine and Coastal Strategy

Scottish Environment LINK warmly welcomed the AGMACS recommendations and urge that they are implemented through a Marine Act for Scotland and also incorporated into the UK marine policy statement. We would like to draw attention to our particular support for the following AGMACS recommendations (paraphrased and with LINK emphasis in **bold**):

- **There should be a Scottish Marine Management Organisation with a remit of national coordination of ICZM and Marine Spatial Planning delivery and a local dimension with powers that can be delegated as required**
- There should be a **statutory** system of **Marine Spatial Planning** carried out by the Scottish MMO
- The Marine Spatial Planning system should be based on **3 tiers**: the top level should be UK level, **ensuring connection to regional seas**; the middle level should be "Scotland" in some sense; and the bottom level should be local.
- Consideration should be given to the Scottish MMO having responsibility for Marine Nature Conservation and Fisheries to 200nm
- Scotland's system of marine nature conservation should follow a **3-pillar approach**, based on objective scientific guidance, with specific measures for species conservation, policy, and site protection.
- A Scottish set of **Marine Ecosystem Objectives** (MEOs) should be drawn together, with full stakeholder engagement, during 2007.