

Scottish MPA project – Developing boundary setting guidance for zonal management of Nature Conservation MPAs

Aim

1. To advise of the process to develop management boundary setting guidance for MPAs in Scotland's seas.

Background

2. The draft management handbook¹ makes a commitment to the principle of sustainable use where interventions will be made to ensure that the conservation objectives can be achieved. For fishing this means that management interventions will be considered on a feature by feature basis, with a view to a zonal management approach given that the boundaries of management zones may differ from the designated boundary of the MPA delineating the feature.

3. There is already JNCC boundary setting guidance for Special Areas of Conservation². Principles relating to warp length / water depth ratios for trawling will be applicable to MPAs on an individual feature basis.

4. Furthermore ICES has also produced guidance for buffer zones around Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems³. This re-affirms the warp length / water depth ratios as per the JNCC guidance but also points to pragmatism where there are natural barriers to features.

Proposal

5. The intention is to create a technical guidance document to sit alongside the draft management handbook. It will be largely based on the existing guidance noted above but stakeholders are also invited to input other practical and technical matters which will need to be considered.

6. As the warp length / water depth ratios apply only to trawling consideration will also have to be given to what appropriate buffer zones are required for static gear, in the event that spatial management around a feature is considered necessary.

Timescales

7. A recent commitment was made by Ministers to develop the guidance before any designations take place in response to a parliamentary question⁴. Therefore the intention will be to complete this work by early 2014 alongside the displacement study.

**Marine Scotland
October 2013**

¹ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0042/00428637.pdf>

² http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/SACHabBoundaryGuidance_2012Update.pdf

³ http://www.ices.dk/Advice/2013/NEAFC_Evaluation_of_buffer_zones.pdf

⁴ <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/...S4W-17242>