

## Marine Protected Areas in Scotlands Seas: The Scottish Marine Protected Areas Project

The Scottish MPA Project is a joint project between Marine Scotland<sup>1</sup> (Scottish Government), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)<sup>2</sup>, JNCC, Historic Scotland<sup>3</sup> and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)<sup>4</sup>. The aim of the Project is to provide advice to Scottish Ministers on the selection of MPAs under the Marine (Scotland) Act and the UK Marine and Coastal Access Act in Scotland's seas.

Marine Scotland is leading the Scottish MPA Project whilst JNCC and SNH are providing guidance and scientific advice on the selection of Nature Conservation MPAs and development of an ecologically coherent network. SNH is providing advice focused within Scottish territorial waters and JNCC advice is focused on the offshore waters adjacent to Scotland.

Nature Conservation MPAs will be selected using a science-based approach, underpinned by the presence of MPA search features. These largely comprise the Priority Marine Features (PMFs)<sup>5</sup> for which MPAs are considered the most appropriate conservation mechanism.

The Scottish MPA Selection Guidelines<sup>6</sup>, which have been jointly produced between Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), JNCC and Marine Scotland with input from key stakeholders, set out a 5-stage process for selecting Nature Conservation MPAs in Scotland's seas:

**Stage 1** – Identification of MPA search locations based on the presence of key features

**Stage 2** – Prioritisation of MPA search locations based on the qualities of the features they contain

**Stage 3** – Assessment of the scale an MPA search location needs to be in order to maintain the integrity of the features it contains

**Stage 4** – Assessment of the ability to manage features effectively within an MPA search location as part of a Nature Conservation MPA

**Stage 5** – Prioritisation of MPA search locations according to their contribution to the MPA network

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/Directorates/Wealthier-and-Fairer/marine-scotland>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.snh.gov.uk/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.snh.gov.uk/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.sepa.org.uk/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-6052>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork/mpaguidelines>

Although Nature Conservation MPAs will be selected using a science-based approach, there will be key opportunities for stakeholder engagement throughout the process. To date, three national-level workshops have been undertaken with a range of stakeholders to discuss and improve the data we hold on marine features<sup>7</sup>, marine activities<sup>8</sup> and to discuss the initial outputs on the identification of initial MPA search locations<sup>9</sup> through the application of stage 1 of the Selection Guidelines. In addition to this, regular update meetings are, and will continue to be, held with key interest groups.

### **Stage 1 – Presence of key features**

At stage 1 in the process, MPA search locations will be identified based on the presence of key features.

Prior to this, an assessment of the contribution that existing protected areas and other area-based measures in Scotland's seas make to the conservation of those key features will be assessed to avoid duplicating protection for features already considered to be adequately protected.



### ***Defining a list of 'key features'***

Key features can be broadly defined as MPA search features – those Priority Marine Features (PMFs)<sup>10</sup> for which MPAs are considered the most appropriate conservation mechanism.

In addition to those MPA search features derived from the PMF list, a series of large-scale features have been included to help build ecosystem function into the development of the network. These large-scale features include banks, mounds and deeps of the Scottish continental shelf as well as seamounts in the deep waters to the west of Scotland. These are features that may be of wider significance to the health and diversity of Scotland's seas.

The MPA search features are listed in Annex 3 of the MPA Selection Guidelines<sup>11</sup> and an overview of the characteristics and distribution of each feature will be provided in a features description catalogue that will be published in spring 2012.

### ***What do existing measures already afford to the protection of MPA search features?***

MPA search feature priorities have been identified by assessing the contribution made to conserving MPA search features by existing protected areas such as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), and other area-based measures such as areas with fisheries management. This piece of work has been undertaken by JNCC and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and the respective reports that detail work on the contribution of existing protected areas<sup>12</sup> and other area based measures<sup>13</sup> to the MPA network are now available.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork/engagement/workshop1>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork/engagement/workshop2>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork/engagement/workshop3>

<sup>10</sup> <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-6052>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork/mpaguidelines>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork/epa>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork/measures>

### ***Looking for Nature Conservation MPA development opportunities around locations already subject to management***

The Scottish MPA Selection Guidelines<sup>14</sup> state that MPA search locations should be identified first and foremost by assessing the additional contribution that existing protected areas and other area-based measures could make to the MPA network. As such, work on the contribution of existing protected areas and other area-based measures has also considered whether there are opportunities for the development of a Nature Conservation MPA around these locations where existing protected areas, for example, either border or do not currently afford adequate protection to priority MPA search features.

### ***Looking in least damaged/more natural locations before applying the Selection Guidelines more widely***

In addition to this, the guidelines state that the stages in the Selection Guidelines should be applied to least damaged/more natural locations first before being applied more widely. Least damaged/more natural locations are those places in Scotland's seas currently used the least by sea users. Work to identify least damaged/ more natural locations<sup>15</sup> has been undertaken by JNCC and SNH.



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Considering opportunities around existing protected areas and other area-based measures, as well as least damaged/more natural locations, has led to the development of 31 initial MPA search locations (shown below in Figure 1). These were discussed and refined at the third national stakeholder workshop<sup>16</sup> led by Marine Scotland. The workshop guide<sup>17</sup> and overview paper<sup>18</sup> produced for this workshop provide an overview of the MPA search locations discussed with stakeholders. A final workshop report<sup>19</sup> has been produced which

shows how the initial MPA search locations were refined as part of stakeholder discussions.

### ***Identifying MPA search locations to address remaining MPA search feature priorities***

To complete stage 1, additional MPA search locations will be identified to address the remaining MPA search feature priorities not addressed through the consideration of enhancement opportunities to existing protected areas and other area-based measures, or least damaged/more natural locations. These will be discussed at a fourth stakeholder workshop in March 2012. The stage 2 guidelines will then be applied to prioritise the MPA search locations taken forward based on the qualities of the features they contain.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork/locations>

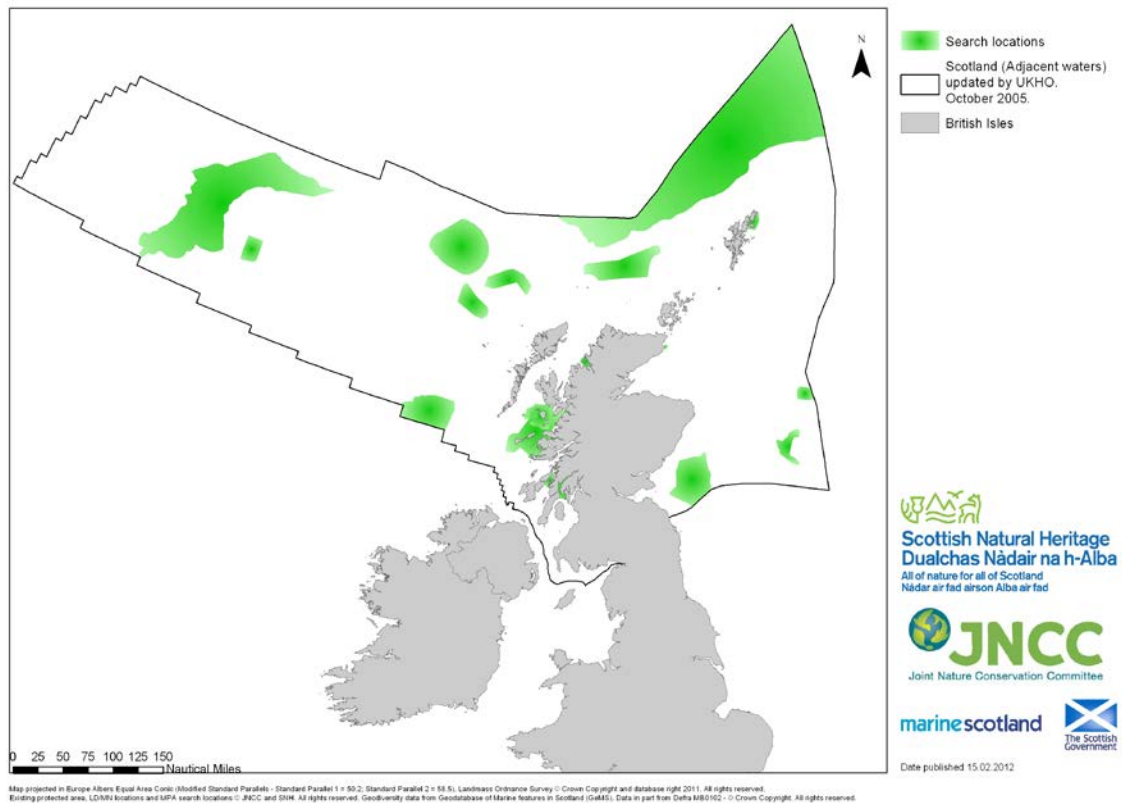
<sup>16</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork/engagement/workshop3>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/295194/0121927.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/295194/0121928.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/295194/0123094.doc>

Figure 1 Scottish MPA Project initial search locations



### Timeframe

In March 2012, a fourth stakeholder workshop will take place to discuss the range of MPA search locations emerging as a result of application of the [Scottish MPA Selection Guidelines](#). Thereafter, the guidelines will be applied to the MPA search locations to refine a suite of possible Nature Conservation MPAs. During summer 2012, these recommendations will be discussed with stakeholders ahead of providing our advice to Marine Scotland in November 2012.

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The Scottish MPA Project will report to Parliament on progress in developing the MPA network by the end of 2012. Thereafter, site proposal documents and associated Impact Assessments will be drawn up and consulted upon. Each site proposal and associated Impacted Assessment will be subject to a 12 week formal public consultation.

### Further Information

A series of [Frequently Asked Questions](#) have been compiled on the Scottish MPA Project. These will be periodically updated as the project continues.

If you require specific information relating to Nature Conservation MPA developments within territorial waters, you can [contact](#) Scottish Natural Heritage or access their [website](#). If you require specific information relating to offshore MPA developments, please [contact JNCC](#).