

MPA CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

1. Do you support the development of an MPA network in Scotland's Seas?

Yes ✓

A network of Marine Protection areas is an initial step to restore the biodiversity of the whole of the Scottish Maritime environment and protect it for future generations. The risk of MPAs as the only step is that the areas which remain excluded will be over-exploited and damaged. There is evidence that MPAs can assist in allowing recovery in the environment and improve fish stocks and fishing as well, but alone they are insufficient.

Individual possible Nature Conservation MPAs

2. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the possible Nature Conservation MPA(s)?

INSERT RELEVANT MPA NAME(S) HERE Small Isles proposed MPA

Designation:

Yes ✓

I am in support of the Small Isles MPA, but disappointed that it does not include the area between its eastern border and the Isle of Skye – from Glen Brittle Point to the Point of Sleat. This area includes the Sound of Soay and Lochs Scavaig, Slapin and Eishort. These areas may not have been surveyed fully in the proposals, but they are known to contain some of the key habitats and species which the MPAs seek to protect and allow to recover where existing commercial activity has caused damage. The key habitats which are known to be present in this area are Maerl beds, Sea Grass beds, Native Oyster beds, Burrowed Mud, and there are some Flame Shells, but this needs clarification, as damage could have occurred to these species from trawling. Creatures on the list known to be in this area are Basking Sharks, Minke Whales and nesting colonies of Black Guillemots. There are also Sea Eagles and Tern colonies.

Management Options:

Yes & No

Clearly these areas need to be managed for conservation and the level of commercial activity has to be regulated to allow appropriate, sustainable exploitation of the resource by all stakeholders. However, commercial fishing and fish farming are only part of this. This area, particularly Loch Scavaig, is very much used by the Tourist industry, and the presence of key species like basking shark, minke whale as well as harbour porpoises, dolphins, seals and many species of bird and fish is a major attraction to tourists who provide considerable local income on land and at sea. Protection and recovery of the maritime infrastructure will serve to enhance this. I have clear evidence of major damage done by large pelagic fishing vessels fishing close into the shore in this area in recent years. This should never happen and needs appropriate local management involving all interested parties.

Socioeconomic Assessment:

Yes & No

A key issue in the proposed Small Isles MPA relates to its Socioeconomic Impact. It is a mistake to believe that commercial fishing and fish farming are the only economic activities in this area. As well as the key habitats and fauna the more common wildlife and spectacular scenery are a major tourist attractions in this area and this is particularly true of Loch Scavaig. The important habitats need protection, but their value is linked to the whole ecology of the area both from the aspect of biodiversity and commercial activity. If properly managed, the overall economy of the area can improve both for local fishermen and the tourist industry.

All of the above:

Yes ✓

The MPA as proposed is clearly of great ecological significance but the area is relatively inaccessible and omits geographical areas which are of greater economic importance to the people living in the area. There are two main industries in the area at present, tourism and fishing. I am unaware of any research which shows the relative economic impact of each, but given the number of boat trips to Coruisk, nature trips around the coast of Skye and to the islands, including Canna, Soay and Rhum and the wild life in and on the sea around these islands and in Loch Scavaig, tourism is a key economic activity. In addition, many come to the areas around Lochs Slapin and Eishort and stay in the area for holidays and use local services. Enhancing the marine environment will only increase the attraction for tourists. The argument in favour of including these three lochs, Scavaig, Slapin and Eishort within the proposed Small Isles MPA can be well made both for economic and environmental reasons.

Sustainability Appraisal

3. Do you have any comments on the Sustainability Appraisal of the MPA network as a whole?

No ✓

Final Thoughts

4. On the basis of your preferences on which pMPAs should be designated, do you view this to form a complete or ecologically coherent network, subject to the completion and recommendations of SNH's further work on the 4 remaining search locations?

Yes No ✓

For the reasons stated above, I think the Small Isles MPA should be extended to include the sea between Skye and the proposed eastern boundary of the Area.

5. Do you have any other comments on the case for designation, management options, environmental or socioeconomic assessments of the pMPAs, or the network as a whole?

Yes ✓ No

Again, as stated above, I have commented on the case for extension of the area of the proposed Small Isles Marine Protection Area, both on economic and ecological grounds. I believe this needs further serious exploration on both counts.

Thank You.