

## South Arran Marine Protected Area Proposal

This is taken from Appendix D- Consultation Questions in response to the Marine protected Areas Network proposals Consultation

(<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/07/2072/downloads>)

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

Yes  No

22. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *South Arran* possible Nature Conservation MPA?

Designation:

Yes  No

Comments

The Arran Natural History Society (ANHS) agrees with the location and designation of the possible South Arran MPA

Management Options:

Yes  No

Comments

ANHS strongly supports COAST's management proposals, especially that ALL damaging methods (e.g. trawling and dredging) should be fully excluded from the MPA.

Socioeconomic Assessment:

Yes  No

Comments

ANHS considers that the MPA will bring a boost to the Arran and Clyde economy by improving the health of our coastal waters, increasing natural diversity. This increased diversity will be economically positive for local creel boats and hand divers and will also potentially increase tourism, in particular tourism associated with wildlife watching.

Any Other Comments:

***Summary of SNH  
South Arran MPA  
Management  
Recommendations ,  
COAST's position and  
ANHS comments  
Pressure  
Anchorages:***

**SNH recommendations**

**COAST's position and  
ANHS comments**

**Remove pressures** associated with anchorages in Whiting Bay which overlap with seagrass beds because this feature has medium sensitivity to surface abrasion pressure associated with anchoring.

**No additional management required** for other anchorages in possible MPA area that overlap with shallow tide-swept coarse sands with burrowing bivalves and kelp and seaweed communities on sublittoral sediment.

These features have low sensitivity to surface abrasion associated with anchoring and tend to be more dynamic habitats that can recover quicker from such pressures.

**Aquaculture – shellfish**

**No additional management required.**

COAST agrees with this recommendation. There is an opportunity to replace old moorings buoys with new buoys outside seagrass beds in Whiting Bay. Also once installed to encourage the use of the new moorings rather than anchoring in Seagrass. COAST will discuss with Whiting Bay Improvements Association, Yacht Club and RYA. COAST agrees with this recommendation.

***ANHS agrees with these recommendations***

**Aquaculture – finfish**

**No additional management required.**

COAST agrees with this recommendation.

COAST agrees with this recommendation.

***ANHS agrees with these recommendations***

**Fishing – demersal mobile/ active gear**

**Remove /avoid pressures** – the exclusion of towed/ active gear (including trawls, dredges and hydraulic methods) from areas of maerl beds, maerl or coarse shell gravel with burrowing sea cucumbers and seagrass beds **is recommended**. These features occur at discrete, widely spaced locations within the site. It would be possible to focus management measures around these features and they would not need to apply to the whole site. The exclusion of targeted fishing for ocean quahog **is recommended**. **Reduce/limit pressures:**

- Measures to reduce or limit mobile/active gear from areas with burrowed mud **should be considered**, particularly where there are aggregations of

COAST does not agree with the recommendations for mobile gear. Our position is that all towed/ active gear (including trawls, dredges and hydraulic methods) should be excluded from the proposed South Arran MPA. COAST is opposed to 'relic' or 'patch' management within the MPA

***ANHS agrees with the position stated by COAST here. ANHS considers that 'relic' or 'patch' management within the MPA will be impossible to police adequately and will not provide sufficient protection for the marine environment.***

epibenthic species.

- Measures to reduce or limit hydraulic dredging in areas with shallow tide-swept coarse sand with burrowing bivalves and ocean quahog **should be considered**.
- A seasonal restriction on the use of mobile/active gear on herring spawning grounds **is recommended**.

**Fishing – static gear**

**Reduce or limit pressures** – Management measures to reduce or limit static gear fishing on burrowed mud (particularly where there are aggregations of epibenthic species), maerl beds and seagrass beds **should be considered**.

COAST agrees that at current fishing intensity within the MPA there is no need for further management measures. However COAST recommends that stock management measures are put in place at the time of designation to ensure the sustainability of local creel boat operations. COAST will discuss with local creelers.

***ANHS agrees with the position stated by COAST here.***

**Fishing –  
diver  
collection  
of bivalves**

**Remove or avoid pressures:**

The exclusion of diver - operated hydraulic methods from the areas within the site where the features maerl beds, maerl or coarse shell gravel with burrowing sea cucumbers and seagrass beds **is recommended.**

These features occur at discrete locations within the site. Management should therefore be focussed around these locations and does not need to be put in place across the whole MPA.

**Remove or avoid pressures –** the exclusion of targeted collection of ocean quahog **is recommended.**

**Reduce or limit pressures:**

- Management measures to reduce or limit diver-operated hydraulic gear in areas with shallow tide-swept coarse sands with burrowing bivalves **should be considered.**

- Management measures to regulate fishing for burrowing bivalves by hand in areas with shallow tide-swept coarse sands with burrowing bivalves **should be considered.**

COAST's position is that hydraulic methods should be excluded from the entire MPA.

At current fishing intensities there is no requirement for additional management measures for hand diving. However prior to designation stock management measures should be put in place to ensure the sustainability of local hand dive operations. COAST will discuss with local divers.

***ANHS agrees with the position stated by COAST here. ANHS considers that 'patch' management of hydraulic methods within the MPA will be impossible to police adequately and will not provide sufficient protection for the marine environment.***

***In addition to the above, ANHS would wish to formally support the comments of its Bird Recorder, Dr Jim Cassels:***

***The Arran MPA is an opportunity to bring real environmental, social and economic benefits by protecting and helping to restore fragile marine habitats in our waters. Fish spawning and nursery grounds as well as intricate maerl beds will receive long overdue protection from bottom trawling and dredging if the proposal is properly implemented. .***

***In the South Arran MPA there is no mention of birds. There is no mention of those species that depend totally or largely on the sea like Gannet, Eider, Black Guillemot, Arctic Tern. There is no mention of those species that are totally or largely dependent on the shore and intertidal zones like Oystercatcher and Ringed Plover.***

***Birds to use the jargon of the consultation should be recognised as "marine priority features". Bird distributions can be monitored and the information collected could be used to indicate the health of the marine environment.***

***The ANHS does have a base of information on the birds in the proposed South Arran MPA.***

***The ANHS produces each year an annual bird report.***

***More specifically and contributing to these reports are the monthly British Trust for Ornithology Wetland Bird Surveys which are carried out in designated areas throughout the UK on a specified Sunday each month.***

***There are eight shores on Arran walked by members of ANHS, four in the***

**Arran MPA namely Lamlash, Whiting Bay, Kildonan and Blackwaterfoot. In addition, the ANHS supported the latest national atlas, Bird Atlas 2007–2011. This is a partnership between the British Trust for Ornithology, BirdWatch Ireland and the Scottish Ornithologists' Club covering both breeding and wintering birds**

**Alongside the fieldwork for the national atlas, the Arran Natural History organised additional fieldwork with the aim of producing a detailed local atlas of distribution and abundance for all bird species. To gather enough data to do this, every area in Arran has been surveyed. In all there are around one hundred and forty tetrads (2x2 kmsq) surveyed across Arran. Each tetrad has been surveyed twice during winter and twice during the breeding season, using the same methodology as used for the National Atlas.**

**The annual bird reports, the WeBS survey and the local atlas work means that the ANHS has collected a lot of data over the last five years 2008-2012.**

**Focusing on the twenty five tetrads, which cover the coastal area of the South Arran MPA from Claunchlands Point in the east to Drumadoon Point in the west including Holy Isle and Pladda, the number of bird sightings recorded was almost 11,000 on over 170 species of birds.**

**Of those species, 81 are either totally or largely dependent on the sea or the intertidal zones. For each species the number of years that it was recorded is shown maximum five, the number of tetrads in which it was seen maximum twenty five and the largest group seen is shown.**

**As well as these species, there are species that move to the coast in winter from our rivers and burns like Dipper seen in five years in twelve tetrads, Kingfisher seen in four years in two tetrads and Grey Wagtail seen in five years in thirteen tetrads.**

**In addition there are large number of species while not totally dependent on the marine environment at migration times move through the coastal areas where there is ready access to food like kelp flies. Again selecting three examples which appear every year, White Wagtail was recorded in 12 tetrads largest group 96, Linnet in 15 tetrads largest group 300 and Swallow in 21 tetrads largest group 150. With the migrants come birds of prey. For example Merlin was recorded in 12 tetrads and Peregrine in 18.**

**This broad brush look at the data for the South Arran MPA with over 170 species of which 81 are totally or largely dependent on the sea clearly indicates that the proposed MPA is an important area for birds. This is true of the breeding season, migration times and during the winter.**

**The broad brush look may however hide underlying concerns, namely what is happening to seabird populations. For example there has been a more focused look at Eiders not just round Arran but in the whole Clyde estuary.**

**The annual survey work of Chris Waltho shows a 67% decline in Eider population between 1997 and 2012.**

**Scotland holds internationally important numbers of breeding seabirds and supports the majority of the UK's breeding seabirds. Many breed in large colonies.**

**It is recognised that seabirds are useful and important indicators for assessing the state of the marine environment. They rely on the sea but breed on the land and are therefore relatively easy to monitor regularly at their breeding colonies. There is none or very little monitoring of seabirds in their feeding areas.**

**Currently there is legislation in place that protects birds including seabirds at their breeding colonies but there is no legislation currently protecting areas where seabirds feed. This should be a feature of all the proposed Scottish MPA.**

***As stated earlier, the proposed MPA is an important area for birds. This is true of the breeding season, migration times and during the winter. In the South Arran MPA there are small breeding colonies of seabirds on for example Holy Isle and Pladda. In addition the South Arran MPA is an important feeding area for seabirds including the internationally important seabird colony on Ailsa Craig. In conclusion birds should be included in the systematic monitoring of the South Arran MPA. The absence of birds as marine priority features in the present proposal is a serious omission. The systematic monitoring of a select group of seabirds in the South Arran MPA would provide important indicators for assessing the state not only of the birds but of the marine environment. ANHS members with their collective experience of regular recording are in an ideal position to carry out this monitoring.***