

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Q1. Do you agree with the recommended list of Priority Marine Features as the basis for targeting future marine conservation action in Scotland's seas?

If your response includes a suggestion to amend the list, please indicate the specific species and habitats that your comments apply to and, where possible, provide or reference any evidence or data sources which have influenced your comments.

Yes No

Covers an appropriate range of habitats and individual species, and the rationale behind the list and its intended purpose (advice support, guide research and delivery of marine planning) is broadly supported.

General

Q2. Are there other issues that have not been highlighted in this consultation that you would like to mention?

Yes No

Comments

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

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

Yes No

The rationale behind developing a network of MPAs is supported given the importance of the marine environment to Scotland. It is recognised that maintenance of ecosystem functions is necessary to support continued sustainable use and development of these resources.

In general terms the proposed MPAs would appear to include the majority of important marine ecosystems that occur in Scottish waters. The consequences of designating a significant percentage of the Scottish marine environment have been clearly addressed in the management options for each pMPA. It is also important that, in managing a pMPA to either conserve or recover their interest, previous activities are not displaced to and concentrate on non-designated areas so that the impact here becomes unsustainable. Whilst such areas are deemed not to be of 'conservation value' they are an important component of the marine ecosystem as a whole and severe impacts here can spread and extend into a MPA. Whilst the initial selection of pMPAs has been based on sound science it is encouraging to note that socio-economic aspects will feed into the process at a later stage.

The management options for each pMPA would appear to be reasonable in their methodology in taking a risk based approach to the conservation interest and activities that could have an impact. It is evident they have been produced following stakeholder input and the opportunity for further consultation and discussion is supported. An iterative approach based on a six year review cycle is also supported particularly as this will facilitate amendment of pMPA boundaries in response to change and pressure resulting from human activity and natural variability.

Individual possible Nature Conservation MPAs

5. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *Faroe-Shetland sponge belt* possible Nature Conservation MPA?

Designation:

Yes No

The designated biodiversity and geodiversity features of this pMPA are to

be found in a number of other pMPA locations but principally the North-east Faroe Shetland Channel. As such consideration could perhaps be given to reducing its size to include the more significant features (ocean quahog and sponge aggregations) whilst maintaining the North-east Faroe Shetland Channel pMPA as is. Alternatively this site could remain as proposed with a reduction in the area of the North-east Faroe Shetland Channel pMPA.

Management Options:

Yes No

Indications are that fishing effort within the pMPA is low in comprising some otter/beam trawling and limited setting of static gear primarily along the southern boundary of the site. The features at greatest risk from this activity are the sponge and clam aggregations and the subtidal sands and gravel habitat although all are showing some sign of modification as a result of human activity. Reduction of the pMPA area as described above may mean that the 'remove/avoid pressure' management option would be acceptable to those interests that fish this area as the excluded area becomes relatively small in comparison to what is currently proposed. Detailed further discussions with the fishing sector is encouraged and supported.

Socioeconomic Assessment:

Yes No

Comments

All of the above:

Yes No

Comments

6. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *Fetlar to Haroldswick* possible Nature Conservation MPA?

Designation:

Yes No

The case for designation is broadly supported.

Management Options:

Yes No

The potential impacts on proposed designated features are already recognised by the SIC and are taken into account in determining applications in this area. For example conditions requiring micro-siting of anchors have been included in some consents issued to-date. It should be noted that, if a currently undeveloped site has planning permission (whether from Scottish Ministers through the audit/review process or the SIC), there

is no recourse in law to prevent the site from coming back into operation. The fact that the SSMO has introduced closed areas for shellfishing that coincide with the maerl and horse mussel bed features means that the proposed management options and aims can be achieved.

It is encouraging to note the reference to the Shetland Marine Spatial Plan (SMSP) and that the SMSP policies on MPAs and nature conservation in general and those in the management options align and integrate with each other.

Socioeconomic Assessment: Yes No

Whilst it is agreed that the socio-economic impacts of the proposed management options are likely to be low it would be useful to see some of the methodology used to arrive at these evaluations.

All of the above: Yes No

Comments

14. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *Mousa to Boddam* possible Nature Conservation MPA?

Designation: Yes No

Comments

Management Options: Yes No

Comments

Socioeconomic Assessment: Yes No

Comments

All of the above: Yes No

No substantive comments. Acknowledge that the single biggest threat to the pMPA feature is the re-start of a sand-eel fishery this is unlikely to occur for economic reasons. There is merit in undertaking further work to ascertain any interactions between other demersal gear types and sand-eels.

15. Do you have any comments on the case for designation, management options and socioeconomic assessment for the *North-east Faroe Shetland Channel* possible Nature Conservation MPA?

Designation: Yes No

The designated biodiversity and geodiversity features of this pMPA are to be found in a number of other pMPA locations but principally the Faroe - Shetland Sponge Belt pMPA. As such consideration could perhaps be given to reducing its size to include the more significant features (sponge aggregations and mud diapirs) whilst maintaining the Faroe - Shetland Sponge Belt pMPA as is. Alternatively this site could remain as proposed with a reduction in the area of the Faroe - Shetland Sponge Belt pMPA.

Management Options: Yes No

Indications are that fishing effort within the pMPA is low in comprising some otter/beam trawling and limited setting of static gear primarily along the southern boundary of the site. The features at greatest risk from this activity are the sponge and clam aggregations and the subtidal sands and gravel habitat although all are showing some sign of modification as a result of human activity. Reduction of the pMPA area as described above may mean that the 'remove/avoid pressure' management option would be acceptable to those interests that fish this area as the excluded area becomes relatively small in comparison to what is currently proposed. Detailed further discussions with the fishing sector is encouraged and supported.

Socioeconomic Assessment: Yes No

Comments

All of the above: Yes No

Comments

Sustainability Appraisal

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

Yes No

Comments

Final Thoughts

35. 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

Comments

36. 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

Comments