

Response to the South Arran Marine Protected Area Consultation

In late 2014 (before the designation of the South Arran Marine Protected (MPA) Area in July 2014) COAST carried out a campaign consultation, in addition to Marine Scotland's standard consultation, amongst its supporters to determine how they perceived the creation of the South Arran Marine Protected Area, what they saw its main purpose as and how they thought it should be managed. The 1,311 responses were given to Marine Scotland for their consideration in the MPA designation process. In addition, a further 93 responses were sent directly to the Scottish Government regarding the South Arran MPA, as part of the standard consultation response.

Although the MPA was designated, no management plans were put in place at this stage. Marine Scotland then carried out another consultation on the management of Scotland's MPAs in late 2014-early 2015. Three management options have been proposed by Marine Scotland for the South Arran MPA. All of these options include the continuation of dredging and trawling within the MPA despite 79 % of respondents of the COAST South Arran MPA consultation indicating that they did not approve of dredging or trawling in the MPA.

COAST received an overwhelming 1,311 responses to the South Arran MPA public consultation. Each one of these responses contains the thoughts and opinions of people who have taken the time to share their stories, hopes and fears for Arran's seas. The public have sent a clear message to the government. Over 99 % of the responses called for an MPA around the South of Arran and 79 % agreed with a complete ban on dredging and trawling.

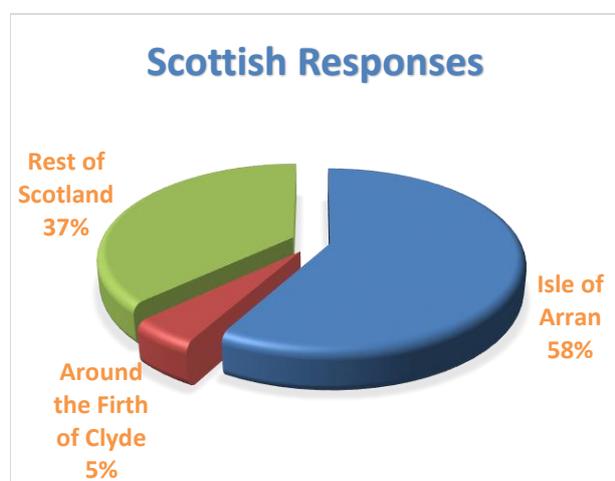


Figure 1 Responses to COASTS MPA consultation showing where Scottish respondents lived.

The responses came from individuals, clubs, business and charities from around Arran and the rest of the UK. COAST has support from people of all ages, from children learning about the sorry state of our seas to the older generation who were privileged to see our coastal waters teeming with marine life. Others have shared stories of the once proud sea-angling festivals held in Lamlash Bay that brought a huge number of anglers to Arran each year. Arran Yacht Club notes: *"Many members recall the hugely successful Arran Sea Angling Festival held annually in the latter decades of the twentieth century and the large and diverse catch landed during that event.*

Now there would be little point in holding such an event as there are few fish to be caught and those that are, are generally immature specimens. Our members see this catastrophic decline as the result of years of bottom trawling and clam dredging and the proposed MPA as a huge opportunity to reverse this parlous situation".

Passion and anger can be heard in responses from those who have witnessed the demise of our fragile marine ecosystem. This has directly impacted local livelihoods, such as this local diver: *"I have dived for scallops commercially on the West coast of Scotland since 1977 and have witnessed the destruction wrought on the seabed, out of the sight of the public and the relentless impoverishment of the marine*

life there.” One respondent also noted that “*If allowed to flourish, the MPA could help increase fish stocks out with the MPA, benefitting the fishing industry.*”

Most of the responses received by COAST have specifically called for the exclusion of destructive mobile fishing methods such as trawling and dredging within the MPA. However like COAST, they are not anti-fishing. Many show their support for a sustainable fishing industry underpinned by effective effort control and spatial management measures.

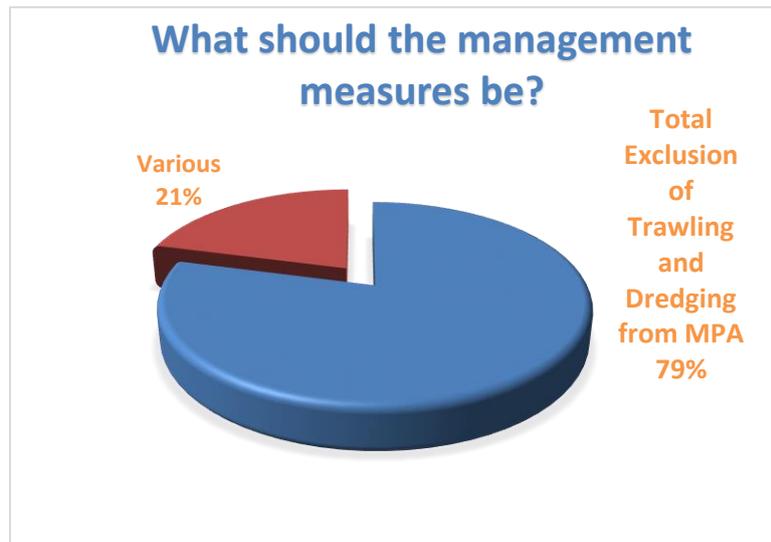


Figure 2 Chart indicating respondents’ support for different management measures to be put in place in the South Arran MPA.

They also believe the benefits of improved management will reach beyond the fishing industry to other sectors. As well as replenishing fish stocks there will be direct advantages to Arran’s economy and the Clyde tourist industry (worth an estimated £38m to Arran alone in 2012). Tourism is such a

vital part of life on the Isle of Arran (and Scotland) and we have seen many residents express the view that “*Healthier sea life will attract further tourism and fits the ‘all natural’ image that Arran projects to visitors.*” This view is shared by many individuals and organisation on Arran. The Arran Trust wishes to: “... encourage sustainable fishing as an industry around Arran once again. For visitors there is potential for this to be a huge attraction – to see sea life at it best. All (sectors) could flourish and as a result the economy will be given a positive boost.”



Figure 3 Kenneth Gibson MSP handing over COAST’s responses for the proposed South Arran MPA to Richard Lochhead, Cab Sec, at Holyrood.

Businesses on Arran rely on the health of the marine environment and so have not been shy in their response to the government. The Auchrannie resort in Brodick, “agree with the management proposals submitted by COAST”, they believe “SNH proposals do not go far enough to return the Clyde’s health”. Arran businesses, large and small, demand more from the government and will not be satisfied with a weak MPA that does nothing to protect the future of the environment or the tourist industry built around it. Many businesses, such as the Island Cheese Company, would, “prefer if it (the MPA) was extended to all around the Isle of Arran”.

Respondents have also commented on their embarrassment at Scotland’s poor marine stewardship in comparison to other countries around the world. *“I fully support the proposed Arran MPA. These have been proved effective in many parts of the world and I cannot understand why the UK is so slow in adopting them. We have the knowledge to be environmental leaders, instead we are laggards.”*

The comments from this consultation reveal a clear desire for the government to take immediate action. A well-managed MPA around the South of Arran is a necessary first step to a return of fish

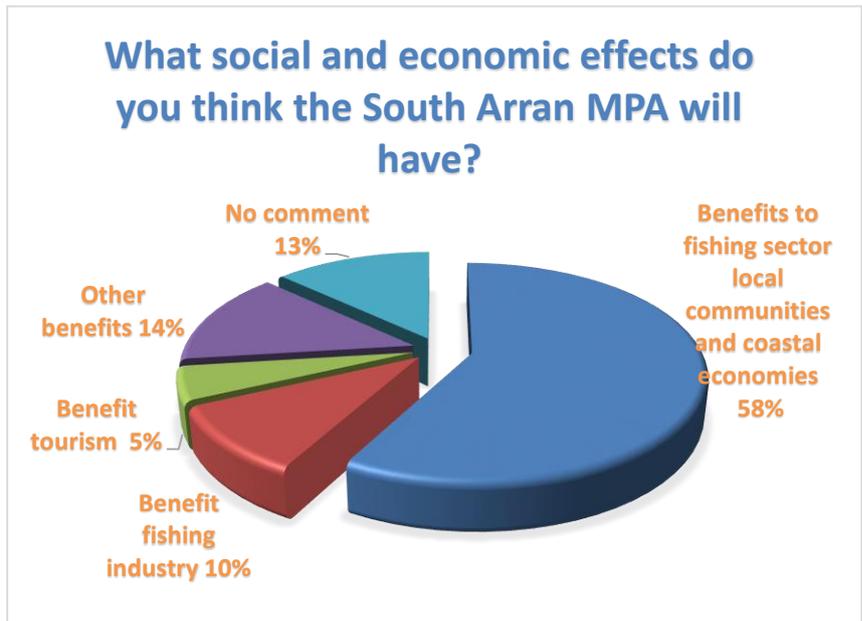


Figure 4 Responses to the COAST MPA consultation regarding the potential social and economic effects which the MPA will have.

stocks and in establishing ecosystem and species conservation. It’s now up to the government to listen to the respondents who realise that: *“For too long the Scottish and UK governments have been concerned only with the short-term requirements of the larger elements of the fishing industry. It is time for the government to accept that all people are stakeholders in the seas and that the marine*

environment must be managed in such a way as to ensure its restoration for the benefit of future generations.”

In their analysis of the South Arran MPA consultation responses, Marine Scotland acknowledged that respondents *“wanted to see bottom trawling and dredging prohibited in the area”* (there were responses from mobile fishing respondents stating that there is a lack of evidence to suggest that scallop dredging has been responsible for the destruction of the seabed). Static fishing respondents wanted to see forms of fishing such as creeling, angling and shellfish diving to be continued within the MPA, but this sector of the fishing industry supported a ban on dredging and trawling in the MPA. Individual responses from the tourist and recreational marine sector also supported a trawling and dredging ban. Additional feedback to Marine Scotland said that the proposed network is not ecologically coherent and, furthermore, the management measures proposed support the status quo rather than making every effort to regenerate biodiversity across the proposed MPA network.

One word that is repeated continually throughout the responses is *opportunity*. Many respondents are united in the view that the proposed South Arran marine Protected Area is an opportunity for Arran and for Scotland. Allowing this opportunity to pass us by as our seas continue to be degraded would be a tragic loss for future generations. Let’s hope the government take notice of these views and take steps to leaving the next generation a legacy of effective management and healthy fish stocks.