

# Response ID ANON-JZJN-ZHQV-5

Submitted to **Improving protection given to Priority Marine Features outside the Marine Protected Area network**  
Submitted on **2018-08-31 20:28:35**

## Sustainability Appraisal

### 1 Do you have any comments on the economic assessment methodology?

#### Do you have any comments on the economic assessment methodology?:

As is already well known, and was readily agreed at the consultation meeting Edinburgh this year by SNH and Marine Scotland, this work will be starting from a position of an attempt at benchmarking based on incomplete datasets which consistently underestimate the geographic distribution and type of activity of the majority of fishers who work from small boats with static gear. It is not clear how the known gaps and inaccuracies in the SCOTMAP, VMS and ICES datasets are planned to be filled using new data and techniques and we would like to see this addressed in detail? We see that the WCRIFG and CFA are heralding ANCHORLAB as the fishery management solution but it is unclear whether this is proposed or appropriate on all vessels (mobile and static gear) and how it is integrated into satellite positioning for the spatial element of fishing activity measurement and management.

An assessment period of 20 years may be sufficient time to see the short to mid term impact on costs and income but may not be adequate to see the potential long-term recovery of the ecosystem and the social and commercial gains. What specific type of benchmarking and monitoring is in place to look at the costs vs. benefits over the 20 year period, and how are these differing factors weighted e.g. commercial gains from tourism, diversification, abundance and viability of businesses, marine and associated land-based recreational activities (recreational sea angling.....), community and visitor well being and quality of life e.t.c. e.t.c?

In line with General Policy 19 of the National Marine Plan, all decisions made as part of this review must be "based on sound scientific and socio-economic evidence". Therefore, a robust methodology that takes into account the diverse benefits of the marine ecosystem need to be applied..

COAST support the use of strong baseline data, from sources with a high confidence level, and utilising all available mechanisms. COAST and the other community organisations linked into the Coastal Communities Network can be an integral part of the monitoring process and a number are and will be currently gathering relevant data to submit to Marine Scotland, for the benefit of this initiative. COAST call for coastal community organisations to be resourced specifically by the Scottish Government via Marine Scotland and SNH to assist in this process.

#### Commercial Fishing Economic Assessment

The methods proposed take an approach similar to that done in the Marine Protected Areas consultations. The estimates made in those reports have been proven to be grossly inaccurate, for example, a maximum cost implication of the MPA management measures was estimated to be a £21.31m loss of GVA2, this has since been shown to be inaccurate. The approach needs to be different and to demonstrate rigour.

Importantly, the methodology continues to make two key assumptions which have now been proven to be incorrect and which should be addressed - i) that economic impacts will only be negative ; ii) that static gear may increase in closed areas to unsustainable levels.

Arguments for improved economic performance at fishing ports when mobile gear is restricted are presented in the Scottish Government's Options for Change report and NEF's Nephrops working paper. Clearly the economic assessment methodology needs to consider the potential positive economic impact of the spatial management of mobile fishing.

### 2 Do you have any comments on the Screening / Scoping Report for the Strategic Environmental Assessment?

#### Do you have any comments on the Screening / Scoping Report for the Strategic Environmental Assessment?:

COAST support the initiative to introduce stronger marine management and increased protection of Scotland's Priority Marine Features, and require a commitment to ensuring the involvement of Scottish coastal communities in all aspects of this process.

COAST understand that the focus on the 11 most vulnerable habitat types/species is due to restrictions on available time and capacity but when will a review of the status and vulnerability of the remaining PMFs take place?

Specifically, we note that the Scottish Government's FEAST tool shows that several other PMFs also have "High" risks associated with bottom-contact towed fishing gear, including Tide swept coarse sands with burrowing bivalves, but have not been included. Other habitats are also listed as high risk in the Scottish Government's SEA for the MPA "Planning Scotland's Seas" Consultation. As a result of this published evidence the decision to subset the list of PMFs may be considered as non-compliant with General Policy 19 of the National Marine Plan.

The Scoping Report states "Similar to the implementation of designated site management measures, a phased approach to implementation of measures for PMFs will be taken, beginning with the 11 most vulnerable PMFs... further assessments will be undertaken should other PMFs be considered in the future." However, given the fact that Marine Scotland has made no apparent progress on management measures for 16 of the inshore MPAs & SACs, despite some of them being designated as long ago as 1996, none for the 14 offshore MPAs and no progress on any site other than the emergency Loch Carron MPA since early 2016, the commitment to take a phased approach and consider other PMFs in the future provides no certainty, and will likely leave the Scottish Government exposed on General Policy 9 of the NMP.

In addition General Policy 9 of the National Marine Plan requires that all use of the marine environment must not result in significant impact on all PMFs. There is no wiggle-room in this statement to subset the PMFs and mitigate the impact on only a subset of PMFs.

We acknowledge that the proposed methodology will take into account both direct impacts and spillover effects as well as displacement and intensification impacts of fishing activity. The monitoring processes for these must be rigorous, well designed and defensible to record change to PMFs at both site, regional and national scale. Will further resources be made available for the statutory bodies and coastal community organisations to do this ongoing work?

With regard to the environmental baseline work the NBN atlas with all ongoing updates and current omissions should be considered e.g. significant areas of seagrass flanking Arran which are currently absent. The baseline work needs to ensure areal rather than point mapping of PMFs and use predictive habitat tools to delineate areas which can then be sea-truthed through remote cameras and divers.

## **SNH advice**

### **3 Do you have any comments on the approach taken by SNH to develop the advice?**

#### **3. Do you have any comments on the approach taken by SNH to develop the advice?:**

COAST do not agree that there is currently enough data on the presence of PMFs, the locations of all bottom-trawling fisheries and the ecology of each species. We also believe that Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) are lacking resources and capacity to fill the gaps in the datasets. There are valuable PMFs that are not represented in the datasets for the project. The example of Loch Carron can be used as an illustration with Government led surveys only taking place as a result of the damaging incident occurring.

There are clearly extensive knowledge gaps within the data sources utilised for this initiative – how are these going to be filled? We encourage strong monitoring and fully support the resourcing of local community groups and other local stakeholders to take part in the monitoring and management of their local waters and to assist in the filling of the current data gaps for the baseline work.

SNH have appeared to overlook records of PMF locations without clearly stating why and this needs to be addressed. However, there are several examples where no reason has been given, for example;

Maerl or coarse gravel with burrowing sea cucumbers in Fetlar sound  
Flame shells in Loch Linnhe  
Coldwater Corals to the west of Tiree

We are also aware of SESEARCH records of seagrass records submitted for the west side of Arran but these are not included in the dataset.

Whilst we welcome the fact that SNH makes clear that they are uncertain about the full distribution of the PMFs, the management approach identified for appraisal and the wider Scoping Document appear to assume all areas without a record do not hold any PMF at all. In our opinion there is general lack of an accurate understanding of the areal distribution and mapping of PMFs.

To better understand where areas may be overlooked we believe that habitat modelling and prediction work should be undertaken to assist the project in understanding the potential distribution of PMFs and focus sea-truthing work to test the predictions. The published work of Sophie Elliott and the ongoing work by OpenSeas can assist in this type of approach.

SNH's advice on ecosystem services is viewed as basic in this document. COAST would like to see more detailed advice on the ecosystem services provided, or potentially provided by these PMFs.

In summary the approach is considered to be too accepting of the current status and dataset availability. COAST want to see areal modelling and mapping of PMFs undertaken as a matter of course and integrated with an accurate dataset of bottom-contact fishing activity. We would like to see investment in the application of high resolution seabed mapping technology integrated with data from fishing vessel monitoring technology to produce high quality datasets to underpin effective and efficient management and protection for the PMFs. The suggested overlap method to define potentially vulnerable areas is considered to be a cursory approach underpinned by inadequate data.

### **4 Do you have any comments on the specific advice for any of the PMFs?**

#### **Do you have any comments on the specific advice for any of the PMFs?:**

Our only comment at this stage is that in some cases the specific advice does give a nod toward the value of a PMF with regard to ecosystem services but in general they do not. COAST would like a lot more detail included on the value of each PMF with regard to ecosystem services and in particular to include their value as major blue carbon sinks; seagrass and maerl are particular examples of high capacity carbon sinks at this latitude.

### **5 Do you have any comments in the identification of areas for management consideration?**

#### **5. Do you have any comments in the identification of areas for management consideration?:**

Given the stated objective of these areas is "to ensure that the necessary fisheries management measures are in place to ensure protection of PMFs" it is unclear why these records and areas are being scoped out before they have even been properly considered for management and where it is clear the underlying data is inadequate. COAST along with other community groups and national organisations will challenge this identification of areas vociferously and publicly if the areas remain like this. From a solely Arran-centric point of view it is clear that the MBC01 Clyde box does not cover the known seagrass beds on the west side of Arran and the east side of Kintyre

## Knowledge gaps

### The Fishing Footprint

#### 6 Do you agree that 12 hours per year is a suitable level to define the fishing footprint?

No

#### 6. Do you agree that 12 hours per year is a suitable level to define the fishing footprint?:

12 hours per year helps define a 'normal footprint' for each fishery on a coarse mapping cell size, but it is a poor method for mapping the extent of the fisheries' impact on the seabed, especially when dredging is considered, in that a single pass by a scallop dredger can cause serious damage to most of the PMFs being considered.

#### 7 Do you have any evidence of fishing activity outwith the footprint, in particular for vessels under 12m in length?

Yes

#### 7. Do you have any evidence of fishing activity outwith the footprint, in particular for vessels under 12m in length?:

The coarse mapping does not allow us to fully investigate whether we have additional data. For example we are clear that we have small vessels creeling in and around the South Arran MPA but are unclear as to how this data would add to your very coarse and inadequate mapping of activity.

## Potential management approaches

#### 8 Do you have any views on the management approach identified for the appraisal?

#### Do you have any views on the management approach identified for the appraisal?:

COAST are concerned about the continued risk to both the selected 11 and the other 70 PMFs. The illustrative management zones appear to be straight edged boxes which do not relate directly to areal mapping of PMFs or fishing activity. Clearly the data and knowledge is incomplete. Permitting this use in these areas could well cause damage to seabed that contain PMFs. We propose a more precautionary approach ( use the precautionary principle now )and the capture of adequate data as we propose elsewhere in this response.

#### 9 Are there any other reasonable alternative approaches to management that could be tested in the Sustainability Appraisal?

Yes

#### 9. Are there any other reasonable alternative approaches to management that could be tested in the Sustainability Appraisal?:

We propose that a buffer zone, 3nm seaward from the MLWS, within which no bottom-contact trawling or dredging is permitted should be incorporated in the appraisal and the potential positive economic benefit of this limit assessed properly with all fishers and stakeholders listened to (e.g. make use of the SCFF economic report which sets out the positive economic benefit of the 3nm limit) . This should form part of an approach that puts in place a sustainable 6nm limit whereby between 3nm and 6nm all fishing is managed to be sustainable within prescribed spatial and time limits established by specific EIAs and licensed accordingly.

## About you

### What is your name?

#### Name:

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### Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

Organisation

### What is your organisation?

#### Organisation:

Community of Arran Seabed Trust (COAST)

### The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

Publish response with name

**We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact**

you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Yes

## Evaluation

**Please help us improve our consultations by answering the questions below. (Responses to the evaluation will not be published.)**

**Matrix 1 - How satisfied were you with this consultation?:**

Very dissatisfied

**Please enter comments here.:**

This is a very technical and convoluted consultation process using a plethora of documents, which does not assist responders with its structure. The public in general will find this very difficult to respond to without already having a lot of existing background knowledge.

**Matrix 1 - How would you rate your satisfaction with using this platform (Citizen Space) to respond to this consultation?:**

Slightly dissatisfied

**Please enter comments here.:**

The software platform works well but the guidance toward any supporting documentation is poor and one needs to delve deep into the documentation to comment adequately.