



Guide to MPAs, the Scottish MPA process

and SSACN's contribution

MPAs and the Scottish MPA process

What is the Scottish MPA Project?

The Scottish MPA project is a joint initiative between Marine Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, Historic Scotland and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. The aim of this project is to carry out research around Scotland and ultimately provide advice to the Scottish Government on the selection of MPAs around Scotland.

The Scottish Government has international commitments to create an ecologically coherent network of MPAs in the seas around Scotland: these come from commitments such as the OSPAR Convention, the World Summit on Sustainable Development and [Natura 2000](#). All EU member states **have** to establish a network of terrestrial and marine protected areas.

Final decisions on the designation of MPAs around Scotland will be made by the Scottish Government following a period of public consultation.

What is an MPA?

Marine Protected Areas (or MPAs) are tools used to manage the marine environment and its shared resources. An MPA is defined by the IUCN as *“any area of intertidal or sub tidal terrain, together with its overlying water and associated flora, fauna, historical and cultural features, which has been reserved by law or other effective means to protect part or the entire enclosed environment.”*



Put simply, an MPA is an area of the marine environment that is protected against deterioration or degradation of certain features. MPAs give spatial protection to an area in order to protect biodiversity or geodiversity.

As well as helping the Government meet its own goals of a *“clean, healthy, safe and biologically diverse marine environment managed to meet the long-term needs of both people and nature,”* MPAs will help meet Scotland’s international marine conservation commitments by 2016.

At a larger scale, MPA sites in Scotland will contribute to a network of Scottish, UK and international protected areas.

MPAs are intended to complement existing site based measures (such as Special Areas of Conservation and Sites of Species Scientific Interest) and to *“plug the gap”* whilst causing minimal disruption to the use of the seas.



In Scotland, the default aim of MPAs is to *maintain* a feature, not to *enhance* it. Only in certain cases, and for certain features, will MPAs be designated with a view to habitat or species recovery. At the moment the Scottish MPA project is heavily based on “*sustainable use and development*”; not on establishing all-encompassing no-take zones.

Are there other examples of MPAs?

Yes. MPAs are a recognised and proven marine management tool that has already been widely used around the globe. Many MPAs around the world have already been in place for decades meaning the benefits of MPAs are relatively well understood.

How are MPA sites selected?

[MPA selection guidelines](#) were produced by Marine Scotland, SNH and JNCC. Search locations were selected that were considered the least damaged/most natural sites and on the presence of Priority Marine Features (PMFs).

PMFs refer to specific species or habitats that are considered to be of high importance and suited to protection in the form of MPAs; amongst others, PMFs include Common Skate, Basking Sharks, horse mussel beds and maerl beds.

What are the different types of MPA?

Scotland will create three types of MPA: Nature Conservation, Demonstration & Research and Historic MPAs.

Nature Conservation MPAs are sites that will be chosen and designated on the basis of scientific evidence using guidelines laid out in the MPA selection guidelines. The aim of nature conservation MPAs is to protect species, habitats and natural features of conservational importance. The presence of PMFs is the primary basis for the selection of Nature Conservation sites.

Conversely, Demonstration & Research MPAs are **not** based on the presence of PMFs; instead Demonstration & Research MPAs will be established for the purpose of demonstrating, or carrying out research on sustainable methods of marine management and exploitation in Scottish waters. Demonstration & Research MPAs are not necessarily rooted in conservation; they may have a different focus e.g – increasing socio-economic benefits in the surrounding area through the development of tourism or recreation.





Demonstration & Research MPAs are assessed against a different set of specific guidelines. Guidelines for the selection of Demonstration & Research MPAs cover topics such as “*how is the MPA novel?*” and “*what direct and indirect benefits would arise from the designation?*”

It should be noted that MPAs are **not** all-encompassing no-take-zones. MPAs are designated with a range of specific objectives, management measures will then be brought in to help achieve the objectives of the area. It is clearly stated in Marine Scotland’s MPA selection guidelines that “*It is not the intention for Demonstration & Research MPAs to introduce restrictions on existing or normally sustainable activities.*”

Restrictions would only be introduced if an activity was deemed to be in extremely detrimental to the environment and in direct opposition to the aims of the MPA. The aim of all SSACN MPA proposals is to develop and promote recreational sea angling in Scotland.

Historic MPAs will be designated under guidelines published by Historic Scotland, their aim is to conserve Scotland’s most important marine historic assets and heritage.

How are SSACN involved in the Scottish MPA project?

Since 2011, SSACN members have been attending MPA stakeholder workshops held by Marine Scotland, SNH and JNCC.

The aim of these workshops is to gather stakeholders from all sectors (including commercial fishing, renewable energy, oil and gas, and conservation) and allow them to make their views heard. To date, workshops have been held regarding the location and scale of search locations; search locations are areas considered for MPA designation that will be looked at more closely during 2012.

As part of the Scottish MPA project third parties, from an individual person to an organisation or industry sector, were invited to submit proposals for MPAs for either Nature Conservation MPA or Demonstration & Research MPAs.

It is important to note that third party proposals are exactly that, a proposal. Any third party could submit a case for an MPA but the power for designating an MPA ultimately lies with the Scottish Government.

Once submitted a proposal is assessed by Marine Scotland/SNH/JNCC or any other relevant body. A proposal is then either discarded (if it is deemed unsuitable for any reason) or endorsed and taken forward to the next stage of the MPA process.

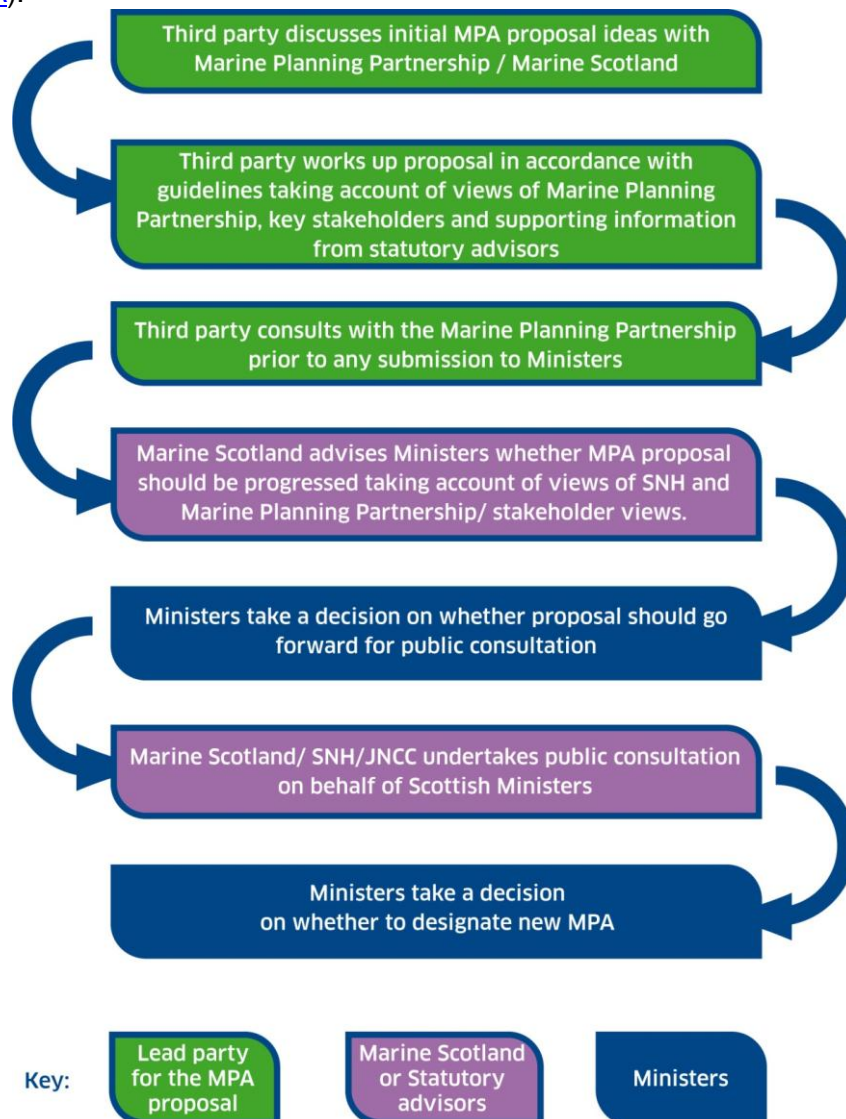
SSACN made Nature Conservation MPA proposals in Argyll from the Sound of Jura to Loch Sunart and a Demonstration & Research MPA proposal for Luce Bay in Dumfries and Galloway. These proposals will now be assessed by Marine Scotland for their suitability and how well they meet the criteria laid out in the selection guidelines.

All of SSACN’s third party MPA proposals are available in our reading room at <http://www.ssacn.org/reading-room>

Before designation, all MPAs –including third party proposals and sites selected by Marine Scotland – will be subject to a public consultation: this means that before any designation is ever put in place details regarding the sites and the reasons for considering them as possible MPAs must be made public and feedback taken from any stakeholders.



A diagram of the entire third party MPA proposal and designation process is shown below (source: [Marine Scotland, Guidelines on the selection of MPAs and the development of an MPA network](#)).



Will I still be able to fish in MPAs?

In our third party proposals we strived to show the benefits of not just allowing recreational sea angling in MPAs but *promoting* angling in protected areas. Scotland is blessed with some of the most varied and lucrative recreational sea fishing sites in the UK and our aim is to maximise sea angling and in turn maximise the revenue generated in rural areas of Scotland (we all know how much we spend over the course of a year on tackle, bait, fuel, accommodation, camping etc in pursuit of sea angling!)

A study into the [economic impact of recreational sea angling](#) was carried out by the Government in 2009; this showed that the economic impact of recreational sea angling in Scotland was comparable to the value of all freshwater angling in Scotland combined. The study also stated that there remained significant potential for the growth of sea angling in Scotland. SSACN's third party proposals emphasise these economic facts.

Our objective is more, bigger and better fish around Scotland's coast for sea anglers.



The Scottish MPA project is heavily based on “*sustainable use and development*”; not on establishing all-encompassing no-take zones (NTZs), but as any third party is able to make an MPA proposal, we are aware that some of them have suggested the creation of no-take zones.

Note :: If an MPA proposal incorporating an NTZ is brought forward to public consultation, SSACN will dedicate any resource necessary to try and ensure it is based on irrefutable scientific and economic evidence and try to ensure recreational sea anglers are not unfairly restricted.

Have SSACN asked for any activities to be banned?

No. The third party MPA proposals submitted by SSACN have not suggested any ban on any current activities.

The aim of the MPA networks is not to ban current activities, but to allow the Government to manage marine resources based on set objectives and manage any future developments within the designated area.

Useful Links

SSACN's Third Party MPA Proposals (available in our reading room) – <http://www.ssacn.org/reading-room>

MPA Selection Guidelines as published by Marine Scotland, these documents cover topics including details of the MPA designation process and how MPA sites are selected - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork/mpaguidelines>

Historic MPA selection guidelines published by Historic Scotland - <http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/historicmarineprotectedareas>

MPA FAQ's published by Marine Scotland/SNH - <http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/A559592.pdf>

JNCC's Scottish MPA project timeframe - <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-5511>

JNCC explanation of types of MPA - http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/MPAsInfoDoc_v2_2.pdf

Scottish MPA Project search location overview, these sites were put forward by Marine Scotland/SNH/JNCC - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/295194/0121928.pdf>

Scottish Government Technical Report: Economic Impact of Recreational Sea Angling in Scotland - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/07/31154700/0>

Southwick Study, covers the development of a lucrative recreational fishery through the use of MPAs - <http://www.stripersforever.org/info/southwickstudy>