

MPA 10052



MPA Network Consultation
Scottish Government
Marine planning and Policy Division
Area 1-A South
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH66QQ

Dear Sirs

I am very disappointed to see the continuing delays in implementing the proposed Marine Protection Areas (MPAs). I also feel strongly that what is being proposed is in itself very 'watered down' and should have been done in a much more robust fashion to protect our marine environment, in particular from over exploitation.

Scotland has an amazing marine life, including birds. In Scotland we have significant proportions of world populations for many species of bird and being at the edge of the continental shelf, as well as holding very important breeding colonies, we also have what were exceptional feeding grounds. Birds, which are mostly at the top of the food chain, rely for their wellbeing on a flourishing marine ecosystem. Unfortunately this has significantly deteriorated within Scottish waters in recent years and urgent action is required to restore this to prior levels.

I understand that the Scottish Government has committed to an international agreement to create an ecologically coherent network to protect the marine ecosystem around our coast. In my opinion, the proposals currently fall short of this. Living on the Isle of Bute, and having written a book about the birds of the Isle of Bute, I have particular knowledge of the Firth of Clyde and its birdlife. Ideally I would have liked to see the entire Firth of Clyde designated an MPA, but this is not happening. I certainly would wish to see significant restrictions on the exploitation of the marine environment within the three Clyde MPAs. By this I mean either a total ban on all fishing activity, or at least a very significant reduction. As well as stopping the deterioration to the marine environment currently taking place it would be very sensible to ensure that there are major recoveries within the three MPAs, as undoubtedly by failing to make the entire estuary an MPA and failing to control fishing activities to any significant extent, over exploitation will continue and the marine environment will deteriorate further.

In particular the proposals fail to adequately meet the needs of birds. For instance there are several sites, including Clyde Sea Sill which should be designated to protect Black Guillemots (added to the list of designated features) along with other species. Also the proposed Firth of Forth MPA must be designated, as recommended by the JNCC and SNH. Sandeels should certainly be protected at this site, as they form a very important food source for many bird species.

As well as writing a book on *The Birds of Bute*, I was also the senior editor of *The Birds of Scotland*, the subject of a Parliamentary Motion (**S3M-1178 Peter Peacock: Publication of The Birds of Scotland**), which described the book as 'the definitive two-volume work on Scottish birds'. The motion also said that the book 'will contribute greatly to national and international knowledge; is pleased that Scotland leads the world in studying its own bird life and its own environment with a view to ensuring sustainability and a healthy biodiversity'. I think therefore that as the senior editor of this work I am qualified to make informed comments about the state of Scotland's birdlife and in particular to suggest that at present we, as a nation, are failing to ensure sustainability and that the deteriorating marine environment will cause us to fail to maintain a healthy biodiversity. It is disappointing that the Scottish Parliament is failing to look after our marine environment in a sustainable manner to fully protect internationally important populations of our marine animals and their rich biodiversity.

Our seabirds (and other life dependent upon a rich environment) have had drastic declines over the last twenty or so years. It is time to redress the situation.

Yours faithfully



Ronald W Forrester