

## Marine Protected Areas Newsletter #1

Thank you all for support, contributions and participation so far in the development of proposals for a network of MPAs for Scotland thus far. You have been crucial to the process and we are grateful for the time and effort you have made and continue to make to ensure we reach the right balance of protecting our rich and diverse seas and maintaining a productive environment for today's and future generations to enjoy.

At the last MPA workshop in June, you asked us to keep you updated on progress, so here is what will hopefully be the first in a series of newsletters, designed to inform you of development at key stages in the process.

This first edition includes progress since the June MPA workshop and our responses to questions from Workshop 5, work to progress inclusion of whales, dolphins and basking shark, the purpose of a Sustainability Appraisal, recent survey work, and progress in identifying Historic MPAs. We hope you find this informative, and please send any comments to us at the [Marine Environment Mailbox](mailto:marine.environment@scotland.gsi.gov.uk) ([marine.environment@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:marine.environment@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)).

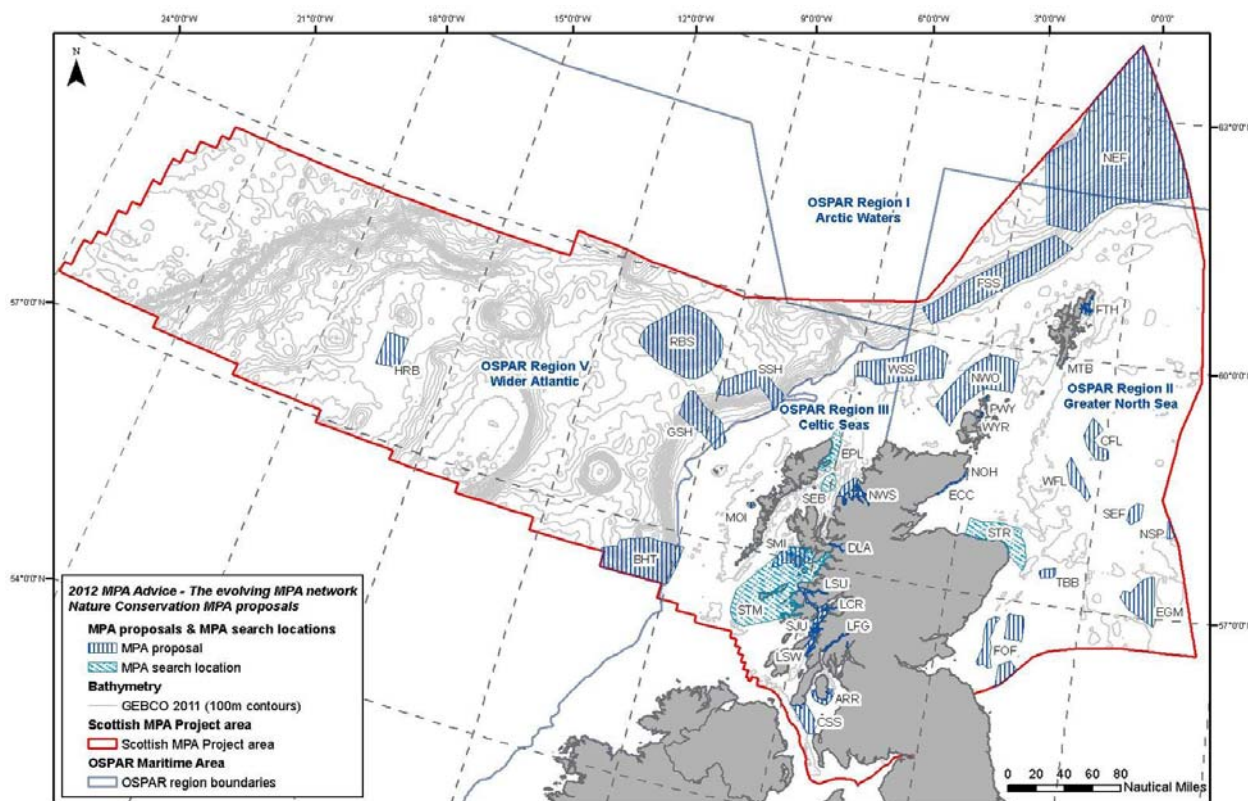
### **Progress delivering the network**

In total, SNH and JNCC have identified 33 MPA proposals.

Four MPA search locations, Southern Trench, Eye Peninsula to Butt of Lewis, Shiant East Bank and Skye to Mull are undergoing further research and analysis before SNH provides its formal advice to Scottish Ministers.

These four, as seen below, have the potential to make a significant contribution to the network and are not substitutes for any of existing 33 MPA proposals.

Of the 41 MPA search features, 38 will be accounted for within the evolving Scottish MPA network, the exceptions at this time being basking shark, common skate and white-beaked dolphin.



**5 More Offshore SACs submitted to the European Commission**

On 31<sup>st</sup> October a package of 5 offshore SACs were designated by Ministers and submitted to the European Commission. This includes Hatton Bank which is currently Europe's largest Marine Protected Area at 15,694km<sup>2</sup>. We think that this package of sites completes the SAC series for habitats in offshore waters.

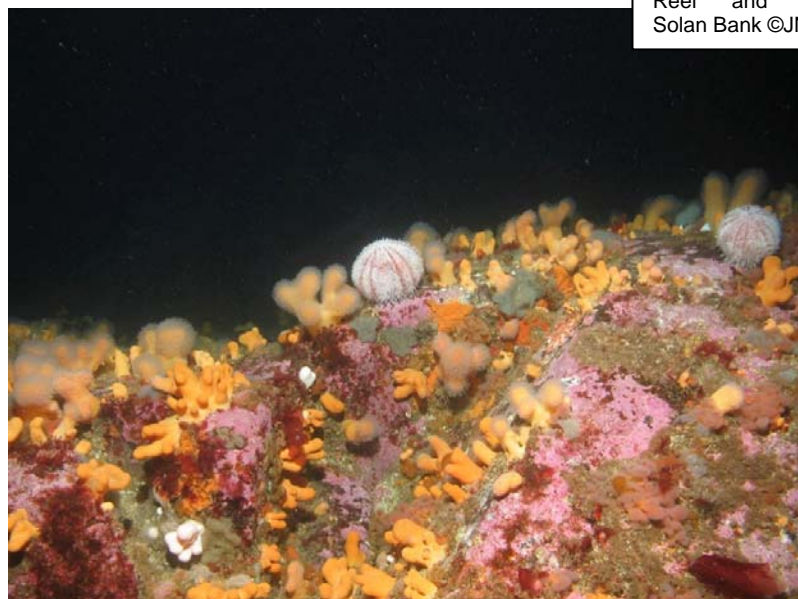
Further details about this package can be found at;

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2012/11/SAC02112012>

<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-4534>



Reef and featherstars, Hatton Bank ©JNCC



Reef and urchins, Solan Bank ©JNCC

## Questions from Workshop 5

- Stakeholders requested further information on how Stage 5 assessments were used by SNH and JNCC to determine whether MPA search features and other representative species and habitats are adequately covered within the network.
- *The Report to Parliament<sup>1</sup> was published in December and includes detail on the Stage 5 assessments.*
- Some stakeholders supported deferring the assessment of five search locations until 2013 (Southern Trench, East Caithness Cliffs, Eye Peninsula to Butt of Lewis, Shiant East Bank and Skye to Mull, see Figure 2) to incorporate the results of additional data collection and modelling. Others supported assessment now using the existing evidence base and requested further information on the implications of delay including timescale for resolution and status of search locations in the meantime.
- *SNH has been reviewing the evidence available for all search locations and MPA proposals. Subsequent to Workshop 5 a review of the original data for one of these (East Caithness Cliffs) revealed an underestimation of the number of black guillemots present. The review confirmed that the population exceeds 1% of the UK threshold (~2.5%) and the assessment of this location has therefore been progressed.*
- *Further survey work is planned for April 2013 during the black guillemot breeding season.*
- Questions were raised about when management will be implemented and how the review of management over time will happen in response to changes in activities, pressures, habitat condition and environmental factors.
- Further clarity was requested on conservation objectives including how they will operate, consideration of baselines and review timescales.
- *These will be explained through the management handbook. A draft version<sup>2</sup> is now available for stakeholders to comment on.*
- Concerns were raised by fishing and aquaculture stakeholders regarding possible displacement effects and stakeholders were informed that the Sustainability Appraisal would include this, both from an environmental and socio-economic perspective.
- *Evidence of displacement will be assessed in the site level impact assessments.*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork/MPAParliamentReport>

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<sup>2</sup> [www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork/engagement](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork/engagement)

## **Ongoing work on Marine SPAs**

Work is currently underway to identify further marine SPAs, under the duty to classify the most suitable locations. These will ultimately form part of the MPA network but are distinct from Nature Conservation MPAs and are being identified and designated under a separate process.

The process is based on the UK SPA Guidelines and involves two stages. The first stage is intended to identify areas which are likely to qualify for SPA status. These areas are then considered further using one or more of the judgments in Stage 2 of the UK SPA Guidelines to select the most suitable areas in number and size for SPA classification.

As part of the work to identify possible SPAs in the marine environment, JNCC carried out analyses of existing data on seabird concentrations and new, targeted surveys of marine birds. JNCC uses a range of analytical methods to assist in deriving estimates of total numbers of birds from sample survey counts and in mapping the distribution of these birds.

4 types of marine SPAs have been identified or are currently being considered:

### **1. Marine extensions to existing seabird breeding colony SPAs**

In the UK almost all seabirds have some of their breeding sites protected within a network of breeding colony SPAs. This type of SPA is simply extending their existing boundaries into the marine environment to protect other areas used by the species. The size of the extensions varies depending on the species breeding at the colony. This has been completed and involves 31 SPAs around Scottish coasts.

### **2. Inshore aggregations of non-breeding waterbirds**

The UK's coastal environment provides important feeding and moulting areas, as well as migration staging posts, for non-breeding waterbirds such as divers, grebes, and seaduck. 'Inshore' SPAs are being identified for the most important inshore non-breeding waterbird aggregations. 3 such marine SPAs, in England & Wales, are already designated and further work is ongoing.

### **3. Offshore aggregations of seabirds**

All seabirds in the UK rely on various parts of offshore waters throughout the year, particularly for feeding. 'Offshore' SPAs are being identified for the most important seabird concentrations in the open sea.

### **4. Other types of SPA**

Some important areas for marine birds, such as marine areas used by red-throated divers, terns and shags during the breeding season, may not be included in the above 3 categories and will be considered individually.

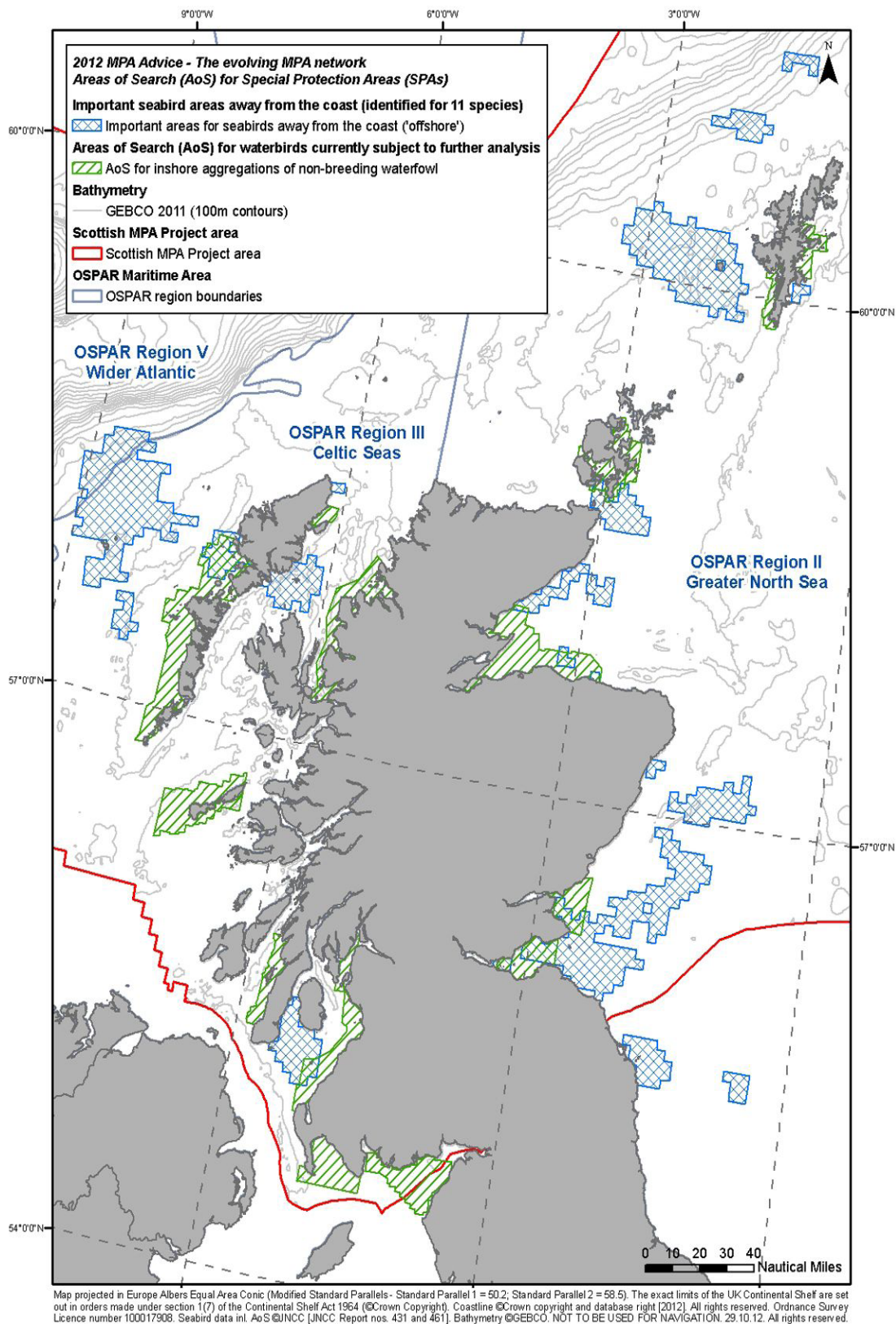
Maps showing the Areas of Search for the different types of marine SPA may be accessed from the JNCC website [http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/SPA\\_AOS\\_Maps%2020100304.pdf](http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/SPA_AOS_Maps%2020100304.pdf) and from published JNCC research reports<sup>3</sup>.

Subject to further scientific assessment by SNH and JNCC these AoS may meet qualifying criteria and be identified to Government as potential Natura sites. Analysis of data is still ongoing<sup>3</sup>; important features at each area of search are still to be finally confirmed and hence, as yet, there are no firm boundaries.

Timescales for future proposals for designation and associated stakeholder consultations are anticipated to span the period between 2013 and 2016.

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<sup>3</sup> See in particular reports 431 <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-5622> and 461 <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-6268>



Alongside work on inshore aggregations of non-breeding waterbirds and offshore concentrations of seabirds (see above map), further advice will also be provided on shags, breeding terns and important feeding areas for breeding red-throated divers.

Further maps and information are available on the Marine Scotland website:  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/Wildlife-Habitats/protectedareas/NATURA/SPAs>

### **Research and analysis - minke whales, dolphins and basking shark**

In July 2012 SNH and the University of Exeter launched a basking shark tagging project, focused on the Skye to Mull MPA search location. The aim of the project is to understand more about the fine-scale use of the search location by these animals. Some results from this work will be available in early 2013, with the rest by the end of 2013.

Alongside this, habitat modelling is underway for basking sharks and the three cetacean MPA search features, minke whale, Risso's dolphin and white-beaked dolphin.

The aim of the habitat modelling is to help understand more about the importance of the Eye Peninsula to Butt of Lewis, Skye to Mull and Southern Trench MPA search locations. The focus in identifying these search locations was on areas considered to be essential to key life stages (e.g. as nursery or feeding areas), based on the use of effort-corrected sightings data complemented by information on species behaviour/use of these areas.

The habitat modelling will combine the sightings/tagging data with relevant environmental data to improve our understanding of what is driving the use of these areas by the different species.

[The satellite tags attached to 20 basking sharks within the Skye to Mull MPA search location in August](#) are performing well with the [tracks of eight animals displayed online in near real-time](#). All but one of the 8 short-term tags have now detached as expected - the one remaining tag giving us an insight into the 'winter breaks' preferences of basking shark 6<sup>4</sup> who is currently enjoying some warmer weather off the coast of Morocco! A further 12 longer-term tags that will provide finer scale information on location, depth preference and temperature are programmed to detach in April and will inform the future progression of this location.

Following completion of this work, SNH will provide advice to Scottish Ministers on whether these areas should be taken forward as Nature Conservation MPA proposals.



Basking Shark ©Paul Naylor

<sup>4</sup> Shark 6 was given the name Cailleach meaning 'old woman' or 'hag' in Gaelic

## ***Sustainability Appraisal***

The proposals for new Nature Conservation Marine Protected Area designations will be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal, which comprises a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and a Socio-Economic Assessment of the overall combined effects of the proposals.

The Socio-Economic Assessment will make use of both quantitative and qualitative evidence, while the SEA, with its strategic focus, will be largely qualitative analyses. The Sustainability Appraisal will accompany the planned summer 2013 public consultation on the proposals for new Nature Conservation Marine Protected Area designations.

The Sustainability Appraisal will consider the proposed MPA network against the five pillars of sustainable development: living within environmental limits, ensuring a strong, healthy and just society, achieving a sustainable economy, promoting good governance, and using sound science responsibly. The SEA element will involve identifying potential effects (both positive and negative) of the proposed MPA

network and its reasonable, alternatives, identifying mitigation measures, and explaining decisions. This will include an assessment of environmental effects resulting from the potential displacement of marine activity due to MPA designations or management thereof.

The Socio-Economic Assessment will consider the overall socio-economic impacts, again positive and negative, of the proposals for new Nature Conservation MPAs. The overall economic and social impacts of the proposals will be assessed relative to a situation if the proposed Nature Conservation MPAs were not designated. The social and economic impacts on marine activities and government will be analysed, as well as the benefits to marine activities and society overall. The Socio-Economic Assessment will aim to complement the SEA's analysis of displacement by considering the aggregate and combined impacts of the proposals for designations on affected marine activities. A key stage of the appraisal will be public consultation on the Sustainability Report alongside the scientific MPA network proposals.

### **Draft Management Handbook**

Many thanks to everyone who has commented on the draft management handbook. We have been having meetings with a large number of you as representatives of the various organisations and interests who have been involved in the MPA identification process to gather comments on the handbook.

The purpose of the handbook is to provide general guidance on how management needs of all components of the Marine Protected Area (MPA) network will be assessed, and how requisite management measures will be developed and implemented as required. This is being done with the aim of implementing any required measures by the end of 2016.

A copy of the draft Management Handbook is now available on the Marine Scotland website should anyone wish to comment further. Please remember, should you wish to comment, that the key overall objective of the MPA network is to safeguard our most important natural and cultural heritage features in Scottish waters based on the principle of sustainable use, and well informed consensual management will be critical to achieving this objective.

[www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork/engagement](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork/engagement)

## **Survey results**

A programme of new survey work to inform the development of the MPA proposals started in 2010 and is still underway with the recent departure of the *FRV Scotia* to the Faroe-Shetland Channel and an existing SAC (the Wyville-Thomson Ridge) October-November 2012 (see progress at - <http://jnccoffshoresurvey.blogspot.co.uk/>).

Whilst the principle of using the 'best available scientific evidence' was enshrined in the Scottish MPA Project from the outset, it was always recognised that existing data might need supplementing in some geographic locations or in relation to some features to ensure that the MPA proposals are robust. Thus We have had 8 surveys this year since April covering approximately 1600 square kilometres, making a total of 30 surveys since 2010.

The studies completed to date have highlighted the presence of some of the biggest, deepest and best examples of seabed habitats in Scottish and UK waters. As well as these more notable observations, they have also validated historical records and noted the possible decline or disappearance of others.

The survey programme has forged closer working arrangements and relationships between Scottish agencies, vessel owners and research institutes. As well as new surveys we've also been undertaking opportunistic sampling on scheduled cruises and re-analysing existing datasets to derive new information (e.g. MSS *Nephrops* TV database).

The findings of the surveys are published routinely on SNH and JNCC websites. Video footage from recent projects can also be seen online at the Marine Scotland Interactive (and YouTube) web pages. SNH have used the visual products from similar

survey projects to generate a 'virtual dive' within the Sunart SAC (see - <http://www.snh.gov.uk/mpa/>) – making the Scottish underwater world more accessible to all. A follow-up interactive project based around the Small Isles is planned for release in early 2013.

The data collected under the auspices of the Scottish MPA Project have a much wider application, being shared to inform future marine planning and consenting decisions on development proposals such as marine renewables.

As we move into the next stage of the MPA Project the focus of new survey work will be ensuring that the evidence-base on the distribution of biodiversity and geodiversity features of interest is sufficiently detailed to inform the development of site management options for consultation next summer and on completing condition assessments of the existing suite of protected areas (e.g. offshore SAC).

Habitat modelling for mobile species is being undertaken by the Centre for Research into Ecological and Environmental Modelling (CREEM) at St. Andrews University for the cetacean species and basking sharks.

### **Marine Scotland MPA Website**

The Report to Parliament on progress on identifying an MPA network has now been laid in Parliament, accompanied by SNH and JNCC's detailed scientific network advice. These documents are also available on our website.

A big thank you to everyone who has been visiting the MPA pages to get the latest on identifying an MPA network. You have helped make us one of the most visited Marine Scotland pages!

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork>



### **Joint UK administrations statement on an ecologically coherent MPA network**

The UK administrations are committed to establishing an ecologically coherent network of MPAs. A statement agreed with all administrations has been produced to explain what this means in the UK.

The statement can be found at the following address:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/marine/protect/mpa/>

[www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork/engagement](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork/engagement)

### **Data Confidence Assessments for MPA Proposals**

The [Scottish Natural Heritage](#) and [Joint Nature Conservation Committee](#) Data Confidence Assessments, which will form part of the consultation documents for each of the MPAs when we consult, are now available for [territorial](#) and [offshore](#) waters.

### **Useful Nature Conservation MPA Links**

For further Information on the exciting basking shark work please visit:

[www.snh.gov.uk/about-scotlands-nature/species/fish/sea-fish/shark-tagging-project](http://www.snh.gov.uk/about-scotlands-nature/species/fish/sea-fish/shark-tagging-project)

[www.wildlifetracking.org/index.shtml?project\\_id=753&dyn=1345025143](http://www.wildlifetracking.org/index.shtml?project_id=753&dyn=1345025143)

For the draft MPA Management handbook:

[www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork/engagement](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork/engagement)

For details of the new SACs:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2012/11/SAC02112012>

<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-4534>

For more information on SPA Areas of Search:

[http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/SPA\\_AOS\\_Maps%2020100304.pdf](http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/SPA_AOS_Maps%2020100304.pdf)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/Wildlife-Habitats/protectedareas/NATURA/SPAs>

For the Marine Scotland MPA Report to Parliament:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork/MPAParliamentReport>

For the SNH and JNCC network advice:

[www.snh.gov.uk/MPAnetworkadvice](http://www.snh.gov.uk/MPAnetworkadvice)

<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/ScottishMPAs>

For all 5 of the workshop reports in one place:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork/engagement/WorkshopReports>

For interactive maps and downloadable, open-access GIS data:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/seamanagement/nmpihome/nmpi>

## Historic MPAs

Historic Scotland's (HS) Scheduling, Marine and Battlefields team are busy preparing the first tranche of Historic MPAs proposals, focusing on review and where appropriate transition to Historic MPA status of historic wrecks currently designated under section 1 of the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973. *The report to Parliament will provide further information.*

In 2013-14, HS will be turning attention to assess the German High Seas Fleet WW1 scheduled wrecks and any other marine heritage sites of national importance within Scapa Flow, Orkney, for consideration as a potential Historic Marine Protected Area. To support this work, Wessex Archaeology (contractors for HS) carried out a survey within Scapa Flow in 2011, in collaboration with Netsurvey and the Ministry of Defence. The report of this work is now available online (see - [www.wessexarch.co.uk/reports/83680/scapa-flow-wreck-survey](http://www.wessexarch.co.uk/reports/83680/scapa-flow-wreck-survey)).

Additional surveys have been undertaken in 2012 by Wessex Archaeology in the Firth of Forth and waters north of Ullapool and the results of these surveys are currently being finalised. They will be made available in due course through [www.rcahms.gov.uk](http://www.rcahms.gov.uk).

## Until next time...and Merry Christmas!

A big thank you again to everyone participating in the process, and another big thanks to everyone involved in getting out in the field and researching natural or cultural features; we'll finish off with a couple of pictures of surveyors working away in the Scottish seas.

We hope you find this newsletter useful and don't forget that you can get more information, including our MPA Report to Parliament, on our website: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork>



Anchor at Kinlochbervie ©HS Crown



Shetland survey ©Paul Kay