

Inshore Marine Protected Area and Priority Marine Features Consultation

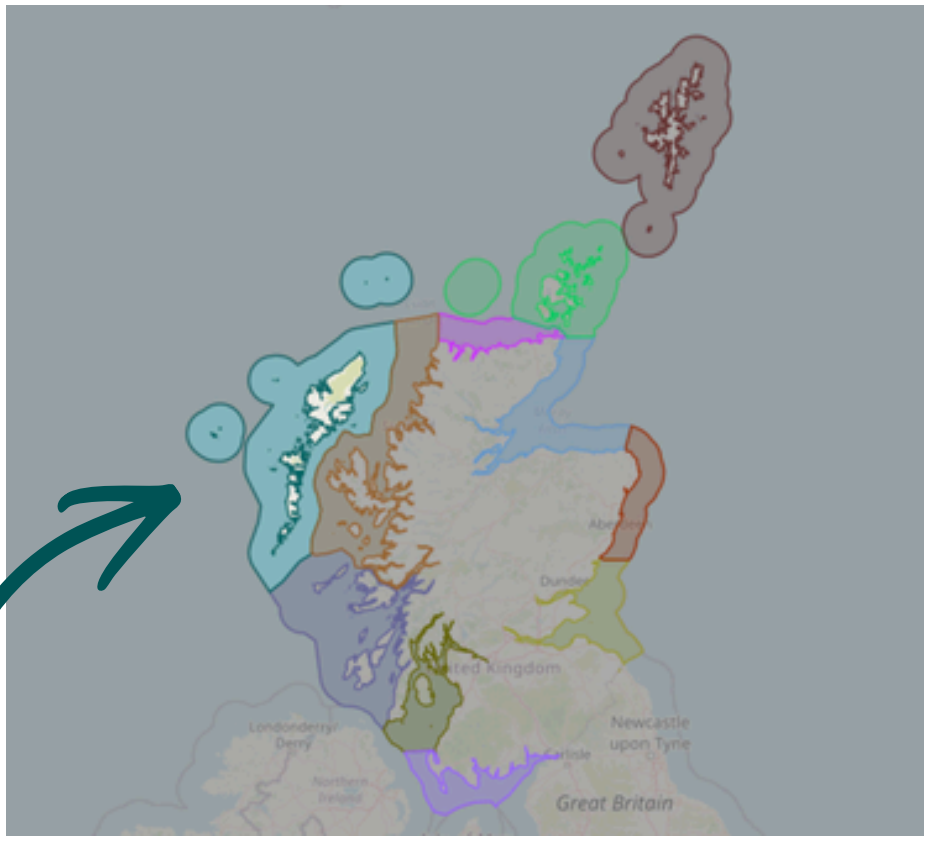
Outer Hebrides

11/11/2026

Introduction

Here you will find a briefing manual for the Proposed Fisheries Management Measures for Inshore Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Proposed Priority Marine Feature (PMF) Management Areas within the Outer Hebrides Region.

The Outer Hebrides Marine Region is a designated Scottish marine area encompassing the waters surrounding the Outer Hebrides archipelago, including St Kilda, the Flannan Isles, North Rona, and Sula Sgeir.



Outer Hebrides Marine Region

The Our Seas Coalition

The Our Seas coalition represents over 170 organisations, each with its own voice for the sea. We are united by a shared vision of greater protection for Scotland's inshore environment, however, individual members bring their own regional knowledge, priorities and perspectives on what that protection should look like. Consequently, our members will have their own individual views on the options presented within the consultation.

Our Seas encourage you to reach out to members in your area to learn more about their individual position.

Click here to be taken to the Members Directory!



The Consultation

After almost a decade of delay, the Scottish Government has finally launched its consultation on the future protection of inshore marine habitats and species. You can view it here.

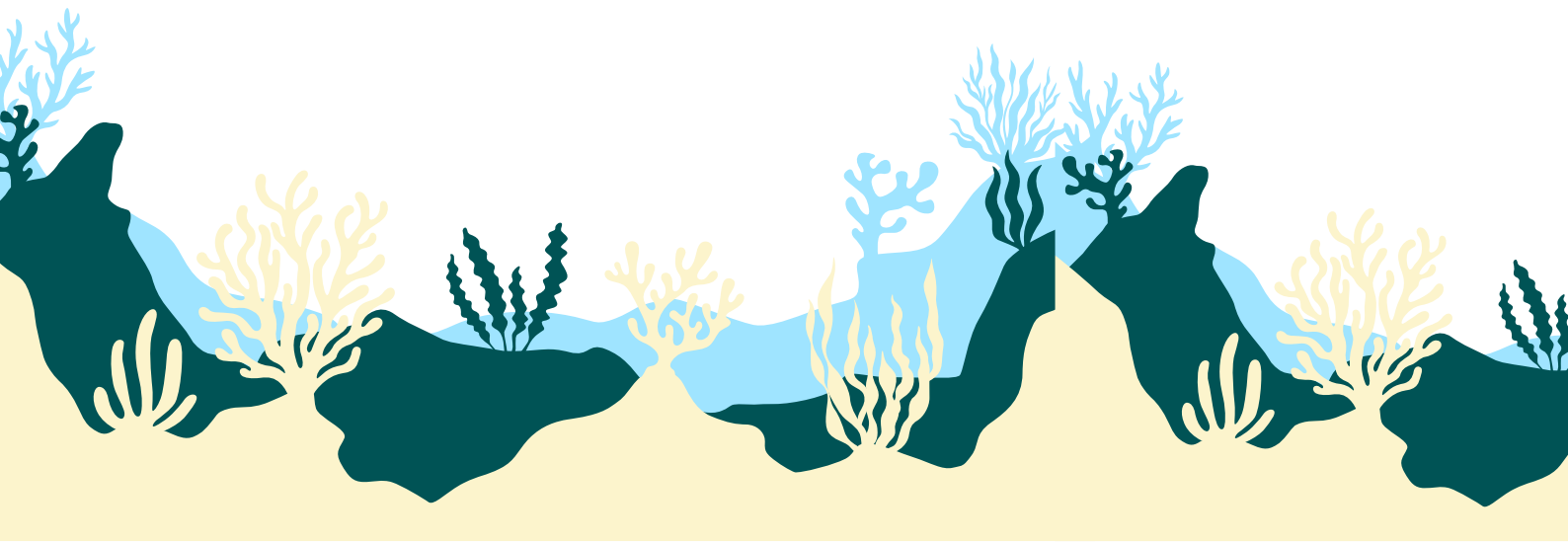
This is the chance for real protection to be implemented in Scotland's inshore waters after over 10 years of simply designation.

Within this consultation, the Scottish Government is asking for the public's opinion on proposed fisheries management measures for both sites and areas, where sites include: NCMPAs, SACs and SPAs and areas include locations where the 11 Priority Marine Features features have been identified outside MPAs.

In the Outer Hebrided, the consultation includes proposed fisheries management measures for:

3 NCMPAs | *4 SACs* | *7 SPAs* | *17 PMF areas*

This briefing will outline the sites that are designated to protect a seabed feature that is threatened by bottom-towed gear, in line with the asks of Our Seas. For more information on other sites in your area, follow this link!



MPA Sites Proposed Options

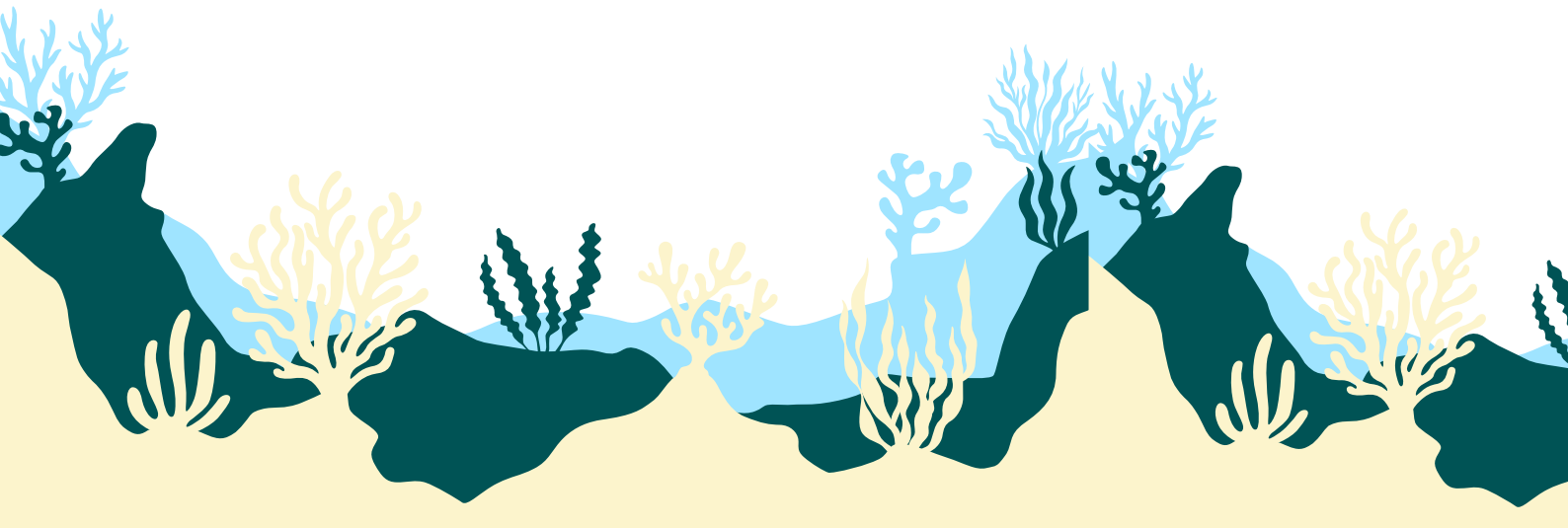
For the majority of the **MPA sites**, 2 options will be proposed. In some cases, only 1 option is proposed due to the conservation objectives of that site.

Option 1 - Zonal measures: Rules for specific fishing gears that may apply seasonally or to vessels above a certain engine power.

Option 2 - Full site measures: Rules on specific fishing gears that apply across the whole site all year round.

Other: If you disagree with both options, you can select 'Other' and explain your reasons in the comments box.

Relevant Questions in this Region: Sites: Q286 - 302



Our Seas Coalition's Position MPAs

Protect all seabed MPAs from bottom trawling and dredging to support healthy marine ecosystems, coastal communities and sustainable livelihoods.

If you agree, Our Seas suggest you could submit a response, as follows;

- Support **Option 2** for all the MPA seabed sites that propose a **full site closure to all bottom towed fishing gear**. This would mean that more damaging fishing practices such as bottom trawling and scallop dredging will not be allowed in sites designated to protect the seabed, allowing seabed habitats to recover.

- There are 3 sites that have a seabed feature designated which do not propose full site closure to all bottom towed gear, and Our Seas will be calling for stronger protections for these sites in the form of full site closure to all bottom towed gear. These are, Clyde Sea Sill NCMPA, Moine Mor SAC and North East Lewis NCMPA.

Why?

Because the sedbed should be protected. Bottom trawling and dredging physically disturb the seabed, damaging species and reducing the abundance and diversity of marine life. Closing seabed MPAs to bottom-towed fishing allows seabed habitats to recover and provides the **strongest protection** for the features the MPAs were designated to conserve.

What protection can look like...

On the Isle of Arran, Scotland's only No Take Zone and wider South Arran MPA show how effective marine protection can be, with bottom trawling and dredging restrictions helping to protect and restore the seabed.

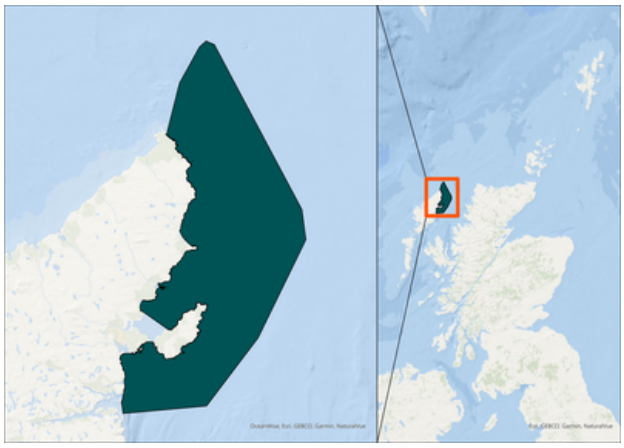
Research has found increases in king scallop and lobster numbers, greater marine biodiversity and healthier habitats, while supporting local communities through activities such as diving, snorkelling and commercial scallop diving. Go to COAST's website to read more.



📷*Howard Wood - COAST: A before and after of the seabed once protection came into place*

North-East Lewis NCMPA

OUTER HEBRIDES



The North-East Lewis NCMPA lies off the north-east coast of the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides, extending from the Butt of Lewis in the North to the mouth of Loch Erisort in the south

Protected Features



Risso's dolphin
Relatively poorly known, yet fascinating species of dolphin. The MPA provides critical feeding and nursery habitat for Risso's dolphins with individuals returning year after year.

THREATENED BY
Entanglement, vessel collision, habitat degredation and prey availability.



Sandeels
An important food species for many marine predators, often described as a corner stone of the Scottish marine ecosystem.

THREATENED BY
Bottom towed fishing practises that damage the seabed and their habitat.

Our Seas recommends:

NEITHER OPTION

For this site

Neither Option 1 or Option 2 fully closes this site to bottom towed fishing gear. Therefore we **reject both options and propose full closure to bottom towed gear.** This will protect both sandeels habitat and Risso's dolphins feeding grounds while also providing benefits for the wider ecosystem.

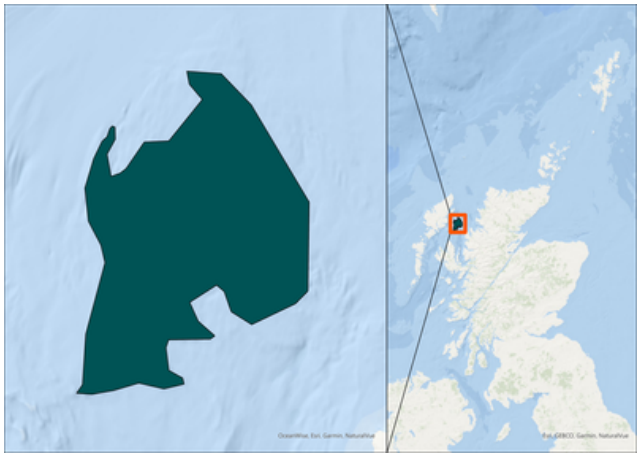
Have your say!

Read more about this site and the other option here

Respond by email by filling in the form on our website, answering Q.286 - Q.288 and emailing it to **marine_biodiversity@gov.scot**

Shiant East Bank NCMPA

OUTER HEBRIDES



Positioned in the middle of the Minch, the Shiant East Bank NCMPA has been identified to protect the biologically diverse and dynamic marine environment that has evolved over the last ten thousand years.

Protected Features



Circalittoral sand and mixed sediment communities
Support a large number of species living on and within the seabed.

THREATS
Bottom towed fishing practises that damage the seabed and their habitat.



Northern Sea Fan and Sponge communities
Form delicate and colourful seabed habitats where many species thrive.

THREATS
Bottom towed fishing practises that damage the seabed and their habitat.

Our Seas recommends:

OPTION 2

For this site

This option fully closes the site to bottom towed fishing practices and secures the strongest protection for the designated features and the wider ecosystem. This is important as both features have slow recovery rates.

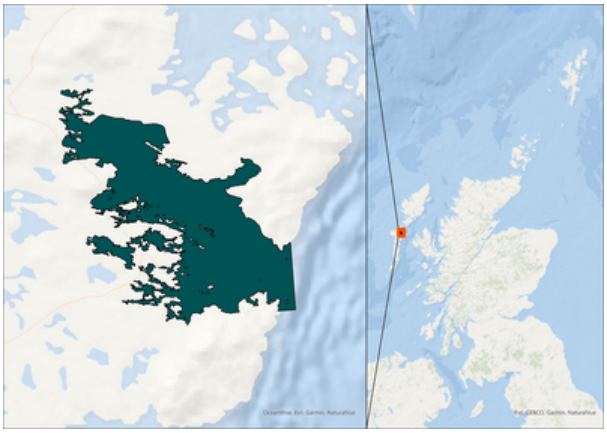
Have your say!

Read more about this site and the other option here

Respond by email by filling in the form on our website, answering Q.288 - Q.290 and emailing it to **marine_biodiversity@gov.scot**

Loch nam Madadh SAC

OUTER HEBRIDES



Loch nam Madadh SAC encompasses the sheltered waters of Loch nam Madadh (Loch maddy) on North Uist, forming a complex system of interconnected marine and lagoonal environments. Maerl beds are also found in this site.

Protected Features



Intertidal mudflats and sandflats
Coastal wetlands that are submerged at high tide and exposed at low tide

THREATS
Sensitive to physical change with typically low resilience and slow recovery



Lagoons
A shallow area of seawater separated from the open sea, providing a habitat for marine life.

THREATS
Most sensitive to permanent changes in salinity and water flow, with low resilience to physical and water quality changes.



Large shallow inlets and bays
Vary widely in habitat and species diversity according to their geographic location, size, shape, form and geology.

THREATS
Include lots of habitats so have many threats such as bottom towed fishing



Otter
A very cute species of the land, river and sea.

The otter is not discussed further as they are not a protected feature for which fisheries management measures are required.

Loch nam Madadh SAC

Continued

Protected Features



Reefs
Rocky areas that rise from the seabed and provide a home for many marine animals and plants.

THREATS
Bottom towed fishing practises that damage the seabed and thus the reef.



Subtidal Sandbanks
An important habitat of submerged sand that contributes to nursery grounds for fish.

THREATS
Bottom towed fishing practises that damage the seabed and their habitat.

Our Seas recommends:

OPTION 2

For this site

This option fully closes the site to bottom towed fishing practises and secures the strongest protection for the designated features and the wider ecosystem.

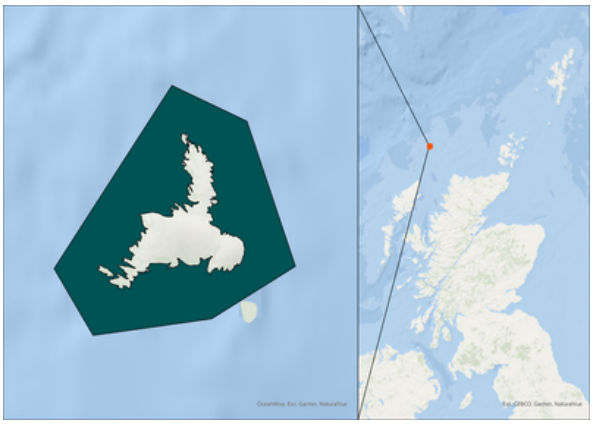
Have your say!

Read more about this site and the other option here

Respond by email by filling in the form on our website, answering Q.290 - Q.292 and emailing it to **marine_biodiversity@gov.scot**

North Rona SAC

OUTER HEBRIDES



The North Rona SAC encompasses the marine environment surrounding the remote island of North Rona, located to the north-west of mainland Scotland.

Protected Features



Grey Seal
One of the rarer seal species worldwide, its entire population is around 400,000 individuals.

THREATS
Pollution and entanglement in fishing gear to name a few



Reefs
Rocky areas that rise from the seabed and provide a home for many marine animals and plants.

THREATS
Bottom towed fishing practises that damage the seabed and thus the reef.

Our Seas recommends:

OPTION 1

For this site

Only **one** option is being proposed for this site due to the conservation objectives. It includes full site closure to all bottom towed fishing practises that could damage the seabed and the use of longlines where the site overlaps with the North Rona and Sulga Sgeir SPA in order to protect the bird species in those areas.

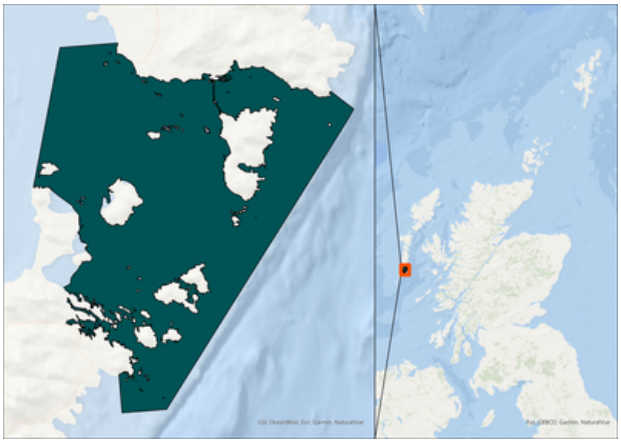
Have your say!

Read more about this site and the other option here

Respond by email by filling in the form on our website, answering Q.298 - Q.299 and emailing it to **marine_biodiversity@gov.scot**

Sound of Barra SAC

OUTER HEBRIDES



The Sound of Barra SAC spans the marine waters between the southern end of South Uist and the north-eastern coast of Barra in the Outer Hebrides. Alongside it's protected features, this site includes extensive sandbanks, reefs, maerl beds and seagrass habitats, alongside mixed sediment seabed.

Protected Features



Harbour Seal
A common, friendly species of Seal yet numbers are declining in Scotland for unknown reasons.

THREATS
Pollution and entanglement in fishing gear to name a few



Reefs
Rocky areas that rise from the seabed and provide a home for many marine animals and plants.

THREATS
Bottom towed fishing practises that damage the seabed and thus the reef.



Subtidal Sandbanks
An important habitat of submerged sand that contributes to nursery grounds for fish.

THREATS
Bottom towed fishing practises that damage the seabed and their habitat.

Our Seas recommends:

OPTION 1

For this site

Only **one** option is being proposed for this site due to the conservation objectives. It includes full site closure to all bottom towed fishing practises that could damage the seabed and the use of pelagic seine and set nets that could harm harbour seals.

Have your say!

Read more about this site and the other option here

Respond by email by filling in the form on our website, answering Q.301 - Q.302 and emailing it to **marine_biodiversity@gov.scot**

PMF Areas Proposed Options

For the majority of **PMF areas**, 2 options will be proposed, in some cases, only 1 option is proposed.

Both options restrict bottom-towed fishing gear. The consultation is about the size of the area where these restrictions will apply.

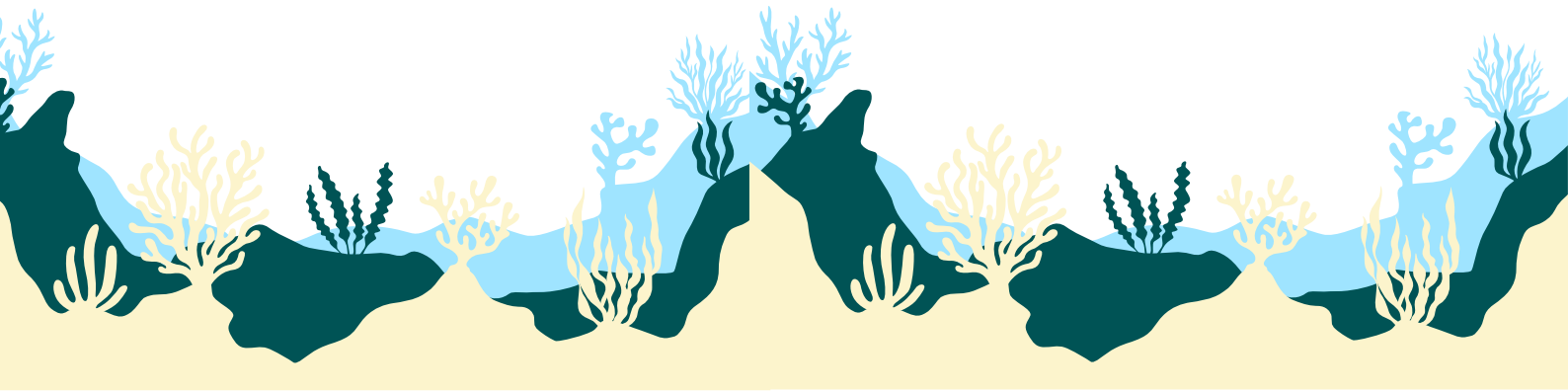
Option 1 - Smaller protected area

Option 2 – Larger protected area: Includes a buffer around the PMF, although the difference from Option 1 is small.

Other: If you disagree with both options, you can select ‘Other’ and explain your reasons in the comments box.

Both proposed options for are not adequate because:

- The areas are **not large enough** to provide real protection that is truly enforceable.
- Many populations of the 11 PMFs are **found outwith the proposed areas and therefore have no protection.**



Our Seas Coalition's Position PMFs

Neither of the proposed PMF options will provide sufficient protections; they do not go far enough to help restore the seabed, allow marine ecosystems to recover or to support sustainable fisheries. We believe at least 30% of Scotland's inshore should be protected from more damaging fishing activities like bottom trawling and dredging.

If you agree, we suggest you submit a response as follows:

- Support **Option 2 at a minimum**. We then encourage you to also ask for at least **30% of Scotland's inshore waters to be protected** from the more damaging fishing activities like bottom trawling and dredging, in line with the coalition's ask of a **modern inshore limit adapted to the needs of each Scottish Marine Region.**

- If you want to go into more detail, Our Seas suggests this could look like:
    - In the West Highlands Marine Region no dredging or trawling within 3 nautical miles of shore.
    - In the Outer Hebrides Marine Region no dredging or trawling within 1 nautical mile of shore.
    - As Shetland has it's own Regulatory Order, leave it to to resolve it's own protection.
    - Throughout the rest of the Scottish Marine Regions, no dredging or trawling within 1 nautical mile or waters shallower than 45/50m.

PMF Areas

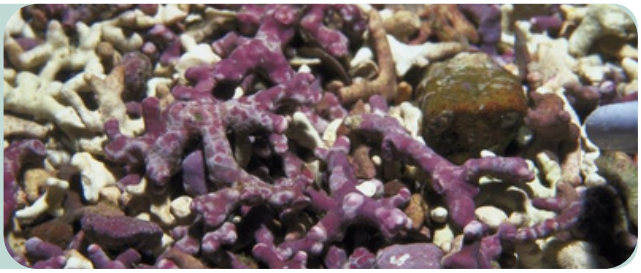
In this section, we will summarise the PMF management areas proposed for the Outer Hebrides. These are locations where populations of the 11 most vulnerable PMFs have been found outside the MPA network and where the Scottish Government are proposing protection from trawling and dredging. **Read the profile for each of these 11 PMFs here!**

If you agree that the proposals are not sufficient, answer Qs 331-390 as we have set out above.

Sgeir an Fheidh (South Uist)

Designated to protect:

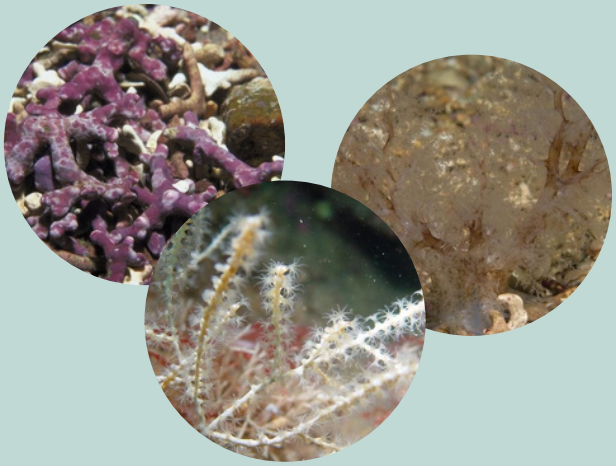
Maerl beds



Lochs Tamnabhaigh, Tealasbaigh, Reasort, and Crabhadail (Harris)

Designated to protect:

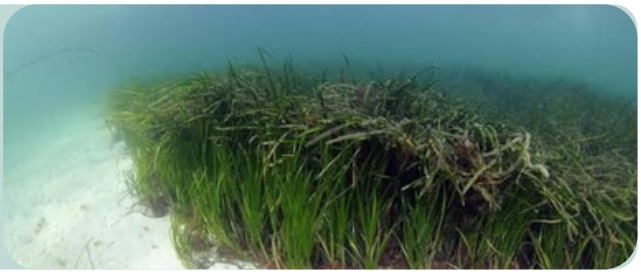
Maerl beds
Maerl or coarse shell gravel with burrowing sea cucumbers,
Northern sea fan and sponge communities.



Pabaigh, South-East (Sound of Harris)

Designated to protect:

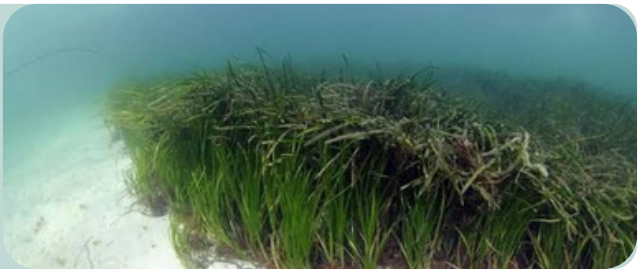
Seagrass beds



Pabaigh, South (Sound of Harris)

Designated to protect:

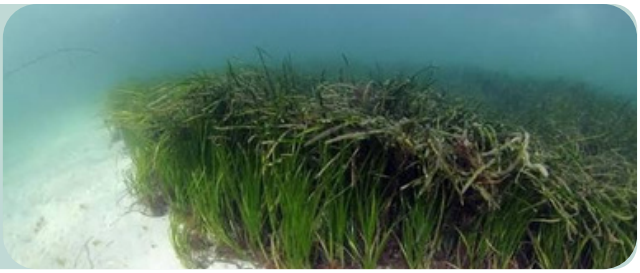
Seagrass beds



Aird an t-Sruith (Sound of Harris)

Designated to protect:

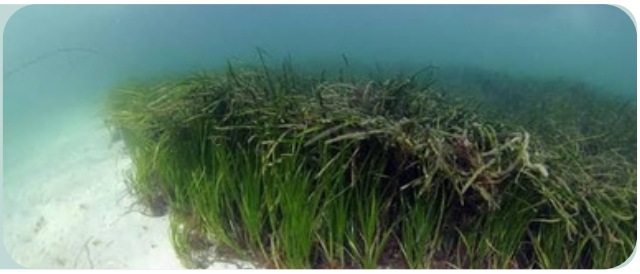
Seagrass beds



Berneray (East) Sound of Harris

Designated to protect:

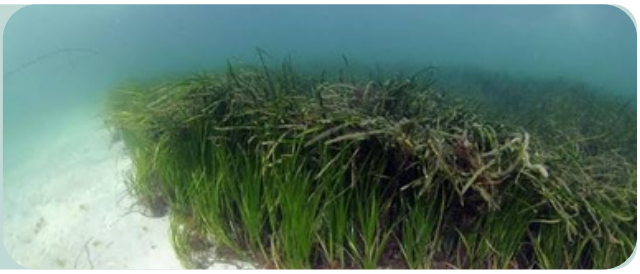
Seagrass beds



Boreray and Berneray (North Uist)

Designated to protect:

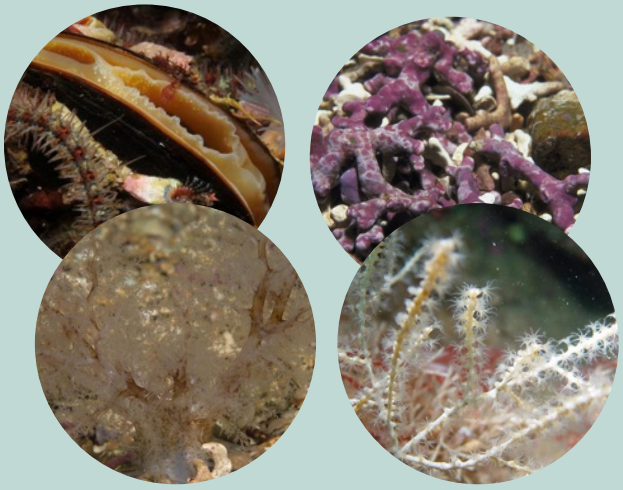
Seagrass beds



East Loch Tarbert and Scalpay (Harris)

Designated to protect:

Horse mussel beds
Maerl beds
Maerl or coarse shell gravel with burrowing sea cucumbers
Northern sea fan and sponge communities



East of Mingulay

Designated to protect:

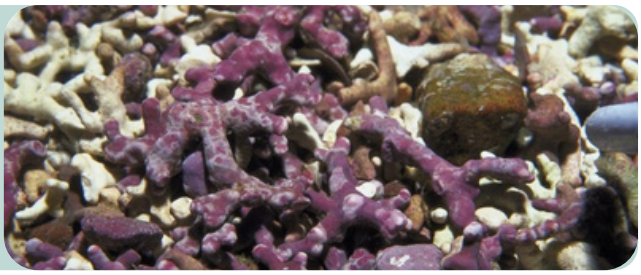
Northern Sea Fan and Sponge Communities



Loch Aineort (South Uist)

Designated to protect:

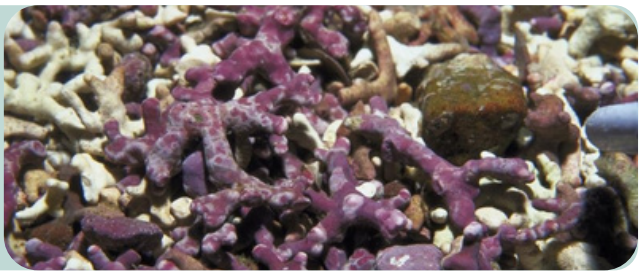
Maerl beds



Stulaigh (South Uist)

Designated to protect:

Maerl beds



Loch Baghasdail (South Uist)

Designated to protect:

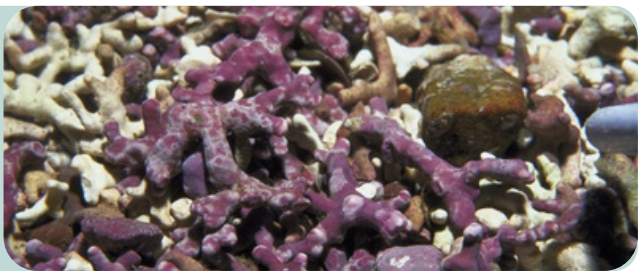
Maerl beds
Seagrass beds
Northern sea fan and sponge communities



Loch Seaforth (Lewis)

Designated to protect:

Maerl beds



Easaigh and Ceilegraigh (Sound of Harris)

Designated to protect:

Maerl beds
Seagrass beds

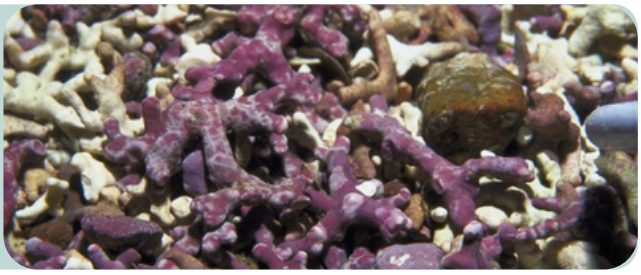




Rangas, Bhotarsaigh and Sursaigh (North Uist)

Designated to protect:

Maerl beds

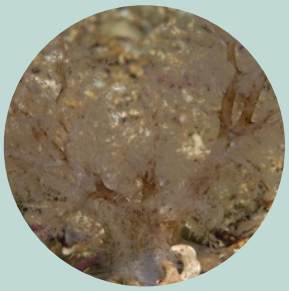


South-East Barra and Vatersay

Designated to protect:

Maerl beds
Maerl or coarse shell gravel with burrowing sea cucumbers

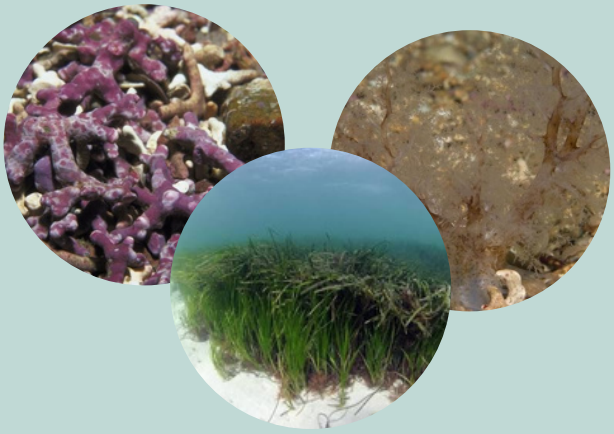




Sound of Taransay and West Loch Tarbert (Harris)

Designated to protect:

Maerl beds
Maerl or coarse shell gravel with burrowing sea cucumbers
Seagrass beds



Regional Members List

Aberdeenshire
- Ellon Sub Aqua Club
- OpenRoad Ltd
- Project Media
- Saltwater Life
- Shark and Skate Scotland

Angus
- Esk Rivers and Fisheries Trust

Argyll & Bute
- Argyll District Salmon Fishery Board
- Argyll Fisheries Trust
- Carna Coast and Communities
- Coastal Connection
- Community Association of Lochs and Sounds (CAOLAS)
- Conor Ryan Photography
- Craignish Restoration of Marine and Coastal Habitat (CROMACH)
- Eda Frandsen Sailing Ltd.
- Friends of the Sound of Jura
- Heart of Argyll Wildlife
- Kilchoan Estate
- Kyles Coastal Community
- Loch Visions
- Lochaber Sub Aqua Club
- Lochnell Oysters
- Majestic Line
- Mull Charters
- Oban Sea School
- Ocean Gives
- Puffin Divers
- Save Kintyre Seas
- Sea Freedom Kayaks
- Sea Kayak Argyll and Bute
- SeaTrek Scotland
- SeaWilding
- Sealife Adventures
- Tighnabruaich Sailing School
- Wild Argyll
- Wreckspeditions

Arran and Ayrshire
- Arran Eco Savvy
- Ayr Sea Angling Club
- Clyde Porpoise
- Community of Arran Seabed Trust (COAST)
- Fairlie Coastal Trust
- Kilmarnock Sub Aqua Club
- Mara Deli and Fish Restaurant
- Nature Library
- River Eachaig Syndicate
- Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network
- Terra Mare

Berwickshire
- Berwickshire Marine Reserve
- Firth of Forth Lobster Hatchery
- Sea The Change
- Snorkel Wild
- The Scottish Coastal Cleanup

East Lothian
- Coast to Coast Surf School
- Lawson Wood Photography
- Ocean Vertical

Edinburgh
- Black House Water Sports
- Blue Marine Foundation
- Cycle For The Seas
- Earth in Common
- Fauna & Flora
- Fish Legal
- National Trust for Scotland
- Nourish Scotland
- Open Seas
- Pam van de Brug
- Project Seagrass
- Scotland The Big Picture
- Scottish Sub Aqua Club
- Staunch Industries
- Sustainable Inshore Fisheries Trust
- Young Sea Changers Scotland

Fife
- East Neuk Seaweed
- Scottish Federation of Sea Anglers

Glasgow & Inverclyde
- Centre for Human Ecology
- Click Book Stay
- Clyde Charters
- Ecodrama
- Ethical Seafood Research
- Friends of Dumbarton Foreshore
- GalGael Trust
- Loch Lomond Angling Improvement Association
- Sunny Side Ocean Defenders
- That's Yer Dinner

Inverness
- Beauly District Fisheries Board
- Heavy Metal Munchies
- Highlands and Islands Environment Foundation
- Keltic Seafare
- Lochaber Environment Group
- Old Town Fish & Chips
- Sauna Ostara
- Wild Rose Escapes
- WildFish

Moray
- Burghead Sub Aqua Club
- Findhorn District Salmon Fisheries Board
- Findhorn Nairn and Lossie Fisheries Trust
- Gordon Castle
- Spey Fishery Board

Orkney
- Kraken Diving
- Orkney Skate Trust

Outer Hebrides
- MARA
- Outer Hebrides Fisheries Trust
- Wild Harris

Perth
- Morven Stewart

Skye and Lochalsh
- All Things Cuillin
- Cast Away with Katie Tunn
- Dive and Sea the Hebrides
- Hayley Wolcott Art
- Islandeering
- Knoydart Foundation Ranger Service
- Raasay House
- Scottish Creel Fishermen's Federation
- Skye and Lochalsh Environment Forum
- Skye and Lochalsh Rivers Trust
- Skye Communities for Natural Heritage
- Skye Scallop Divers
- Skye Seas Survey Initiative
- Skye to Sea

Stirling
- Argaty Red Kites
- Freedom Diving

Wester Ross
- 58° North Seaweeds
- Ali Mac Candles
- Applecross Sea Rangers
- Atlantic Diving Services
- Isle Martin Trust
- James Curley Fly Fishing
- Johnston and Loftus Boat Builders
- Kayak Summer Isles
- Little Loch Broom Marine Life
- Loch Laxford Shellfish
- Mikytin Ltd
- Ockran Oysters
- Plastic at Bay
- Seaful
- Sea Change
- Shellfish Safaris
- Ullapool Charters
- Ullapool Outdoors
- Ullapool Sea Savers
- West Sutherland Fisheries Trust
- Wester Ross Area Salmon Fishery Board

Outside Scotland

England
- Angling Trust
- Blue Ventures
- ClientEarth
- Frogfish Photography
- Maryport Coast Aquarium
- Oceana UK
- Patagonia
- Project Baseline
- Sea-Changers
- Shark Guardian
- Source to Sea
- SubSeaTV
- Transform Bottom Trawling Coalition
- Wilderness Foundation

Northern Ireland
- Belfast Lough Sea Angling and Conservation Club
- Marine Conservation Northern Ireland
- Northern Ireland Federation of Sea Anglers
- Northern Ireland Fly Fishing Association

International
- Aquatic Life Institute
- Blue Planet Society
- Captain Paul Watson Foundation UK
- Clean Sailors
- Low Impact Fishers of Europe

